

Safe Learning

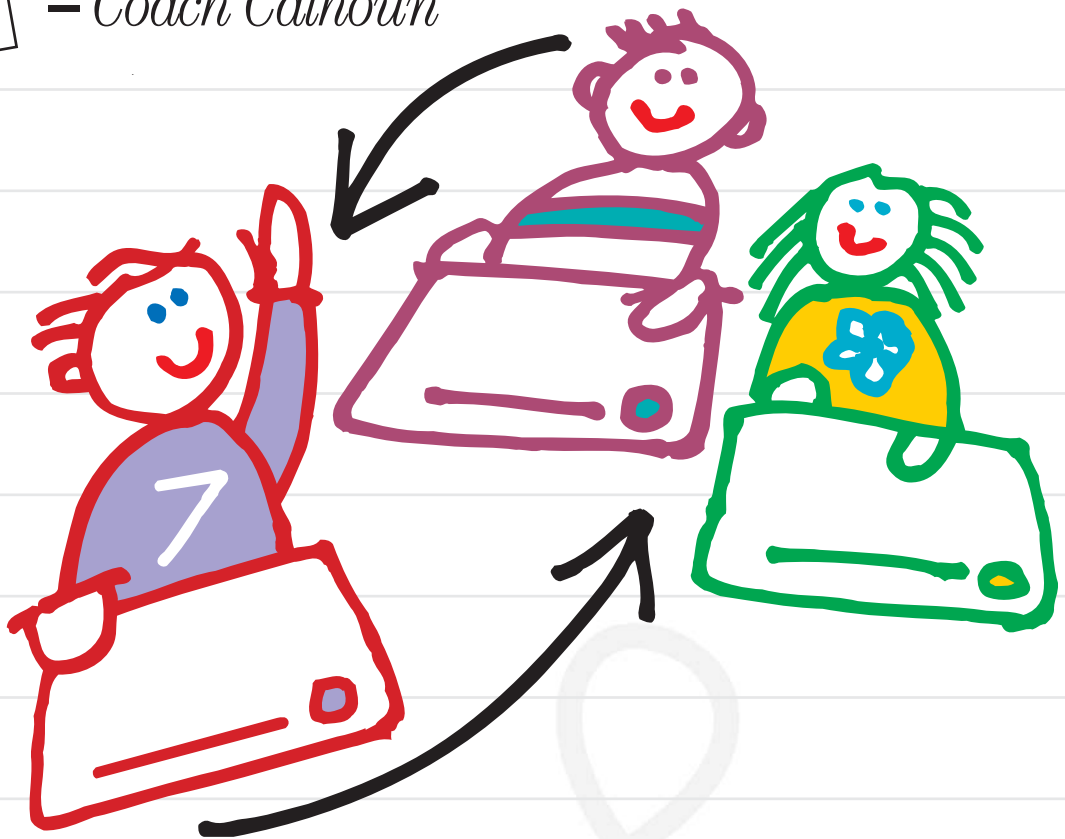


Safe Learning

“Winning starts with respect for each other.”



– Coach Calhoun



➔ Tactics of intimidation and fear hurt a team's chances to win just as they take away from a child's safety and ability to learn and grow into a successful adult.

Moment of Victory

All students attend school in a safe and supportive learning environment.

Game Situation

In order to achieve academic success, students need safe, caring school communities that provide nurturance, high expectations and intellectual challenge.

Team Stats That Don't Cut It

- In 2005, one-third of Connecticut high school students – and more than 40 percent of the state's 9th graders – reported having been bullied on school property in the past year.
- Among boys who were classified as bullies in grades six through nine, approximately 60 percent were convicted of one crime and approximately 40 percent were convicted of three or more crimes by age 24.
- Bystanders usually choose not to take action when they witness a bullying situation.
- According to the U.S. Secret Service, "almost three-quarters of the attackers" in school shootings "felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others prior to the attack."

By creating a safe and secure school environment, teachers and school leaders partnering with parents can enrich the lives of all students, fostering learning and personal growth. Safe school climate involves ensuring children's physical and emotional safety, as well as developing shared fundamental values of respect and tolerance.

Schools that develop positive school climate stress: 1) the development of students' sense of self worth and acceptance; 2) student safety; 3) mutual trust; 4) positive interactions between staff, students and parents; 4) value for individual differences; 5) a sense of caring among individuals, and 6) a collective sense of responsibility for student success.

A student is bullied when he or she is the target of negative actions by one or several other individuals who are more powerful than the target in some way. Bullying can begin with name calling or social isolation and can build to actual attacks or attempts to injure or humiliate the target. It may involve physical or verbal aggression, intimidation, or racial, ethnic or sexual harassment.

A target can only take so much before he or she explodes and defends himself.

Know your opponent

The bully can be recognized most clearly by looking at character traits rather than physical attributes. The bully values aggression for the rewards it brings. He or she often lacks empathy for the target and tends to lack guilt, believing that the target deserved the attack. A bully likes to dominate others. Bullies often lack specific social skills such as seeing the point of view of other people, taking responsibility for their own actions, and accepting constructive criticism. Contrary to general belief, a bully is generally not insecure or anxious, and does not have low self-esteem.

Bullying is out of bounds.

When we fail to prevent bullying, the results can be harmful to all involved. Without prevention and intervention of bullying:

- **Bullies** establish patterns of antisocial thinking. They frequently need disciplinary action for aggression, are more likely to commit other antisocial acts such as truancy, fighting, theft, intoxication, and vandalism, and drop out of school more frequently than their peers.
- **Targets** often have a negative view of their situation and of themselves, feeling a sense of shame and failure. They are often isolated, lonely or depressed.

→ **Bystanders** usually choose not to take action when they witness a bullying situation, often due to fear that the attack will spread to them. Later, they frequently feel guilty that they have not stepped in to help. Bullying is also contagious. Sometimes observers join in the stigmatization.



Winning teams have no prima donnas.

“Full Court Press” Game Plan

Change the rules and you change the game.

Fortunately, there are cost-effective, evidence-based programs that can prevent bullying and later crime and violence. One program proven to reduce bullying, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a model program.

What parents and youth can do

- Students:** When you see someone bullying a student, don't just stand there *say something!* Tell the bully it's not funny, say something kind to the target, tell an adult.
- Parents:** Talk with children in your family about bullying and your expectations about their behavior. Take immediate action if you suspect bullying.
- Students:** Be a leader by telling adults that you want to "lend a hand" to stop bullying. Schools in Connecticut are required by law to have an anti-bullying policy and bullying-intervention strategy. Schools may include students in the development of these policies and plans.
- Let your state and local lawmakers know about bullying at your school.
- Testify before the state legislature on bills that affect school bullying.

What schools can do

Create a safe school climate plan. Involve parents, teachers, students, community and town officials. Components should include:

- A school survey to determine the prevalence of bullying;
- Training, through a school conference day, for all school personnel and parent and student representatives, to review the survey results and plan program implementation;
- A bullying prevention coordinating committee (including a school administrator, a teacher from each grade, a guidance counselor, a school-based mental health professional or school psychologist, and parent and student representatives) to implement the program;
- School rules prohibiting bullying and appropriate consequences for those who engage in bullying and recognition for those who help prevent bullying;

- Adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom, and other specific areas where bullying is likely to take place;
- Class meetings to discuss the problem of bullying;
- Individual interventions with the bully, parents, and school staff, and interventions with the bullied child, parents, and school staff;
- Parent involvement through participation in meetings, trainings, and individual interventions, as well as through information dissemination.

Ask the state Department of Education to help you implement this approach.

- Engage students, teachers, administrators and parents in ensuring a safe learning environment.

What policy leaders can do

- Encourage schools to implement proven approaches to prevent bullying by providing incentive grants for schools that implement evidence-based best practices.
- Give schools the information and tools they need to prevent and address bullying by establishing model policies for bullying prevention, pre-service learning curriculum on bullying for all new K-12 teachers, and a state anti-bullying resource center.
- Ensure that every school implements proven approaches to prevent bullying by requiring them to implement a safe school climate plan based on the Olweus model or a similarly evidence-based anti-bullying model approach.
- Bring statewide results-based accountability to the bullying issue by conducting ongoing state review and analysis of the effectiveness of bullying policies and practices adopted by Connecticut schools.
- Expand the Safe Learning Grant Program to assist school districts in developing a school environment where children learn in safety without fear of physical or verbal harm.
- Require regular statewide review and analysis of the effectiveness of bullying policies adopted by schools as part of Results-Based Accountability.
- Establish an anti-bullying team at the state Department of Education to offer ongoing support and technical assistance to help schools achieve a safe learning environment.

So much depends on creating the right team chemistry.

Seven years ago, my family lived in a town that had a very small Jewish population. This apparently made me stick out, though I didn't realize it until the start of middle school, when I was immediately called "that Jewish girl" by a group of kids. They began teasing me. It started with someone tossing a coin and saying, "Go fetch, Jew girl." As the year wore on, the taunts grew worse. I'd be greeted with a "Heil Hitler" and a Nazi salute, followed by comments like, "I wish I could bring back Hitler from the dead to finish the job he started."

Teachers and other students overheard all of this, but they did nothing; in fact, teachers sometimes giggled at my uneasiness. Soon, my friends no longer wanted to be seen with me, afraid of being taunted along with me.

It was not until my friends abandoned me that I found the courage to tell my parents what I had been experiencing.

Shocked and concerned, they demanded

that the boys be punished. Only after much persistence from my parents did the principal act. He gave the boys a lunch detention.

This just made them vengeful. But with summer approaching, no one, including me, thought it would be worthwhile to complain again. Even so, what happened then still stings.

If anyone had spoken out for me, the harassment might have ended. But no one did, because the hate was not against them. So now I turn to you and ask, Will you be brave enough to speak up next time you hear words of hate?

*First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew.*

*Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist.*

*Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for me
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.*

-By Martin Niemöller-

Bullies will follow you to the end of the earth just to pick on you.

It really did affect my learning.



Nicole

Read More About Safe Learning and Bully Prevention

The Connecticut Psychological Association

The association has set up a website, www.ctstopbullying.com, for its Stop Bullying Campaign.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

This national coalition of law enforcement leaders and violence survivors devotes part of its website to bullying, at www.fightcrime.org/bullyingleg.php. It also has published the report, "Bullying Prevention Is Crime Prevention," which is also on the site.

National Center for Children Exposed to Violence

The mission of this nonprofit group is to train and support the professionals who assist children and families affected by violence and increase awareness of the effects of violence on children. It's online at www.nccev.org.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

This federal agency offers Stop Bullying Now!, a Web resource for kids, at www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov.

The U.S. Department of Education

This agency offers the publication, "Exploring the Nature and Prevention of Bullying." Read it online at www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/training/bullying/index.html

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program at Clemson University

Designed for use in elementary, middle, or junior high schools, this program has been used in more than one dozen countries. For more information visit www.clemson.edu/olweus or call Research Associate Marlene Snyder at (864) 710-4562.

The Connecticut Commission on Children

Visit the Bullying section of the Commission's website, at www.cga.ct.gov/coc/bullying.htm, or call (860) 240-0290 for materials. Be sure to read the report "Brave Enough to be Kind," which is on the website and available in print.

Names Can Really Hurt Us

Nicole is part of the Names Can Really Hurt Us program. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) created this program in response to educators' requests for a vehicle to teach students respect for differences. Learn more by contacting ADL's Connecticut Region Office at (203) 288-6500 or visiting www.adl.org.

Bullying is a way to get heard.

The teacher just gives the bully a detention, but it doesn't help. Detention doesn't stop it.

NOTES

