CONROE ISD

INFORMATION ON BULLYING

Often people dismiss bullying as "just teasing" or as a normal part of growing up. Bullying is harmful and can lead children and teenagers to feel threatened, intimidated, or afraid. Children or adolescents who bully use power to control or dominate others and have often been the victims of physical abuse or bullying themselves.

Incidences of bullying, both in and out of school, are affecting our children daily. Conroe Independent School District wants our parents and our community to recognize bullying when it occurs and to work with our schools to prevent the bullying of our children. To do this, it is important that we all understand what bullying is, and is not, and what we can do to prevent it.

DEFINITION

Bullying is defined by state law as engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, or in a vehicle operated by the district and that:

> (1) Has the effect or 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 and pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment for a student.

[Act of June 17, 2011, 82th Leg., R.S., H.B. 1942, § 7 (to be codified at Texas Education Code § 37.0832)]

 Conduct is considered bullying if it (1) exploits an imbalance of power between the student perpetrator and the student victim through written or verbal expression or physical conduct; and (2) interferes with a student's education or substantially disrupts the operation of a school.

[Act of June 17, 2011, 82th Leg., R.S., H.B. 1942, § 7 (to be codified at Texas Education Code § 37.0832)]

The Conroe Independent School District prohibits bullying as defined by state law. The District also prohibits retaliation against anyone who makes a bullying complaint. For more information about retaliation, you may go to page three.

BULLYING BEHAVIORS

- **Bullying or Normal Conflict**   Normal conflict can occur any time or place and is generally accidental and resolved by the parties in the conflict. Bullying behaviors occur where the person bullying feels safe engaging in power-seeking behavior which is intentionally harmful and directed at someone who is considered weak or vulnerable. Bullying is generally resolved by third party intervention.
- **Bullying or Harassment**   Harassment behaviors share the common themes found in the definition of bullying.   Harassment is typically directed toward a protected class of individuals.

For example, specific types of harassment could include sexual harassment or racial harassment. Harassment is discussed in more detail on page three.

- **Bullying**   Bullying, including cyberbullying, occurs when a student or group of students directs written or verbal expressions or physical conduct against another student and the behavior results in harm to the student or the student's property; places a student in fear of physical harm or of damage to the student's property; or, is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment.   [Conroe ISD Student Handbook].

- **Types of Bullying**   Bullying behaviors may be direct or indirect and include verbal and nonverbal behaviors that cause physical, social/relational, or emotional/psychological harm. Bullying can include:
  - **Written aggression - harm to person through written word.** Written bullying can occur through a hand written communication or through information or communication technology.   Examples: slam books, graffiti, texting.
  - **Verbal Aggression - harm to person through spoken word.** Verbal bullying often occurs when there is an unfair match between the bully and the victim, and can range from repeated taunting to threats of harm. Examples: taunting, intimidating phone calls, verbal threats against possessions or of inflicting bodily harm.
  - **Physical Aggression** - **harm to person or a person's property.**   Physical bullying often involves a smaller victim who is easily harmed by a larger bully; physical bullying demonstrates the bully's power to others. Examples: shoving, spitting, kicking, hitting, ruining property, stealing, physically humiliating, locking in a closed space, physical violence against friends or family, threatening with a weapon, inflicting bodily harm.
  - **Social/Relational Aggression - harm to a person's group acceptance.** Social bullies often isolate a victim by spreading rumors or lies about the victim or encouraging others to shun the victim**.** Examples: spreading rumors, ethnic slurs, setting up to take blame, publicly humiliating (reveal personal information), manipulation of situation to ensure rejection, threaten with total isolation of peers.
  - **Intimidation - harm to a person through pressure or fear.**   Intimidation demonstrates the bully's power to others and disempowers the victim. Examples: extortion, threaten to reveal personal information, graffiti, publicly challenging to do something, playing a dirty trick, threats of coercion, threatening with a weapon.

(Adapted from: Bonds, Marla and Sally Stoker, (2000). Bully-Proofing Your School: A Comprehensive Approach for Middle Schools.   Sopris West).

ISSUES RELATED TO BULLYING

- **Dating Violence** occurs when a person in a current or past dating relationship uses physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control the other person in the relationship. Dating violence also occurs when a person commits these acts against a person in a marriage or dating relationship with the individual who is or one was in a marriage or dating relationship with the person committing the offense, as defined by Section 71.0021 of the

Family Code. This type of conduct is considered harassment if the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance. Examples of dating violence against a student may include, but are not limited to, physical or sexual assaults, name-calling, put-downs, threats to hurt the student or the student's family members or members of the student's household, destroying property belonging to the student, threats to commit suicide or homicide if the student ends the relationship, attempts to isolate the student from friends and family, stalking, or encouraging others to engage in these behaviors.

- **Discrimination** is any conduct directed at a student on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law, that negatively affects the student.

- **Harassment** is conduct so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance. A copy of the district's policy regarding harassment is available in the principal's office and in the superintendent's office or at www.conroeisd.net Examples of harassment may include, but are not limited to, offensive or derogatory language directed at a person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color , or need for accommodation; threatening or intimidating conduct; offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property .

- **Sexual harassment** of a student by an employee, volunteer, or another student is prohibited. Sexual harassment of a student by an employee or volunteer does not include necessary or permissible physical contact not reasonably construed as sexual in nature. However, romantic and other inappropriate social relationships, as well as all sexual relationships, between students and District employees are prohibited, even if consensual. Examples of prohibited sexual harassment may include, but not be limited to, touching private body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature; sexual advances; jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact.

- **Retaliation** against a person who makes a good faith report of discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, is prohibited. A person who makes a false claim or offers false statements or refuses to cooperate with a district investigation however, may be subject to appropriate discipline. Retaliation against a person who is participating in an investigation of alleged discrimination or harassment is also prohibited.

- **Cyberbullying** is when a person is threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another person using information or communication technology. Examples include e-mail, cell phone, pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites or blogs, sending or posting photos via cell phone or web sites.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN BULLYING?

- **The person who exhibits bullying behaviors (bully, perpetrator)**
  Characteristics: displays power in some form (size, popularity, athleticism, knowledge, number, etc.) thrives on feelings of dominance; lacks empathy; uses blame; does not accept responsibility; craves attention; may have a small network of friends; without intervention, could continue to exhibit bullying behaviors which may escalate to other types of antisocial or more aggressive behaviors.

- **The person who experiences the bullying behaviors (target, victim)**
  Characteristics: may lack social skills such as friendship and assertiveness skills; may be passive (withdraws appearing weak) or provocative (restless with pesky behaviors or taunts); may experience isolation, frustration, hopelessness or fear leading to inability to concentrate, loss of interest in school, and, in more severe situations, suicide or violence toward others.

- **A person may be involved as both – one who exhibits bullying behaviors and one who experiences bullying behaviors**
  Characteristics: high levels of depression; punishment and zero tolerance are not effective; needs one-on-one therapeutic model in order to break the cycle of bullying/victimization.

- **The person who observes or knows about the bullying behaviors (bystander, witness)**
  Characteristics: feelings of empathy yet seldom stepping forward; feels powerless to defend support the target; actions (not reporting, joining in, etc.) protect self from becoming a target; may begin to think the bullying behaviors are the 'norm'; may feel guilt for not acting to stop the harmful behaviors; can successfully prevent or intervene if given instruction and practices intervention strategies (not join in, involve peers, assertive statements, report procedures, friendship and other social skills).

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

STUDENT

Student strategies to prevent bullying

- Choose to not participate in bullying behaviors.
- Report any incidence of bullying to a teacher, administrator, or counselor.
- Practice skills and strategies to take a stand.
- Encourage your friends and classmates to take a stand against any bullying they observe.
- Take an individual stand.
- Be friendly toward another student that is a target of bullying.
- Be a friend to new or needy students.
- If you hear bullying, change the conversation or help the student being bullied walk away from the situation.

Student strategies if you are being bullied

- Walk away with confidence, even though you may not be feeling it at the moment.
- Be calm.
- Tell the bully to stop.
- Use appropriate language.
- Do NOT argue or fight back.

- Have friends around and stay in safe places.
- Tell a responsible adult that you trust (parent, teacher, counselor, administrator).
- Keep telling until the bullying behavior stops.

PARENT

Parent Strategies to prevent bullying

- Teach your children to respect others and their differences.
- Model respectful behavior.
- Use the "teachable moments". When watching TV, or witnessing an event in public that is clearly bullying, talk to your child about that incident. "How would you feel?" "What could you have done?" "Why is this not a good (nice) way to behave?"
- Let your child know that inexcusable behavior by others (other children or even adults) is NOT an excuse for their bad behavior.
- Teach empathy. "How do you think that person feels?" "Why?" "Would you want someone to treat you or members of your family or your friends that way?"
- Talk with your child about what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior when using communication and information technologies.
- Be aware of your child's time on the computer and cell phone and the web sites he/she visits.

If your child is being bullied

- Help him/her learn coping skills.
- Alert the school if it is happening on campus.
- Continue to monitor what is happening.
- Help your child understand the need to tell.
- Don't let fear of retaliation keep you from reporting any incident.
- Know the district's policy about intradistrict transfers (FDB Legal) (Education Code 25.034).

SCHOOL

If bullying or harassment is suspected and/or reported

- School staff takes appropriate action to investigate or otherwise determine what has occurred. The specific steps of the investigation will vary depending on the nature of the allegations, the source of the complaint, the age of the students involved, and other factors including the availability of staff to investigate the complaint.
- The inquiry should be prompt, thorough, and impartial.

If school staff members believe bullying or harassment has occurred

- If an investigation reveals that discriminatory action has occurred, a school should take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the harassment, eliminate any hostile environment and its effects, and prevent harassment from recurring.
- Appropriate steps to end harassment or bullying may include separating the accused harasser and the target, provide counseling for target and/or harasser, and/or taking disciplinary action against the harasser.

CAMPUS ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

An essential foundation for learning in Conroe ISD is to maintain a safe, caring and respectful learning environment for all students. Anti-bullying prevention and intervention strategies are an integral part of

each school's plan for student safety, and each campus selects anti-bullying program(s) to meet the needs of its students. Conroe ISD utilizes programs and resources that promote acceptance and respect for others, support anti-bullying behaviors, are research-based, and are shown to be effective.

Elementary and Intermediate Programs

- **Why Try** – A program used with individuals and/or groups that teaches good decision-making skills. The program uses visual analogies that are easy to recall. Students learn that decisions have consequences for themselves and others.
- **Character Counts** – By addressing the 6 pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship, students learn to treat one another with dignity and respect.
- **Core Essentials -** A character education program offered through Chick Fil-A for grades K-5 which offers a "Value of the Month" and gives schools and their families the language to teach values in a relevant way.
- **"Think Twice, Be Nice"** – A presentation offered by the Women's Center to teach children about respect and how to treat others in a polite manner.
- **Bucket Fillers** – This program, based on the book "Have You Filled a Bucket Today?" which teaches that by filling the buckets of others with kind words and deeds, we find our own fulfillment and happiness as well.
- **Kelso's Choice** – Learning conflict management skills is the focus of this program. When students have differences, it teaches them how to resolve those differences in a kind, respectful manner.
- **Bullying Prevention Program by Sue Ellen and Paula Fried** --Grade level specific activities and lessons that teach students skills for dealing with bullying situations are found in this program.
- **Random Acts of Kindness** – Activities that teach students to participate in doing things for others that show thoughtfulness and consideration of others.
- **Empowering Bystanders** – Teaches students to stand up for other students who may be experiencing bullying.
- **Bully Alert** – This is a program offered through the Character Education Network and State Farm that consists of stories about bullying situations and how they were resolved.
- **S.T.A.R. (Stop, Think, Act, Review)** – Teaches personal responsibility through a four step process in which students learn to think before engaging in bullying behavior.
- **Developing Understanding of Self and Others (DUSO)** – This program uses the puppet DUSO to teach children about sharing, taking turns, being nice and making good decisions.
- **Get Real About Violence** – This program addresses bullying and teasing and helps build a culture of acceptance and non-violence. The lessons include videos and discussions.
- **Second Step** – This is a program that helps build social skills to teach students how to get along with one another.
- **Don't Laugh at Me** – This is a program based on the song "Don't Laugh At Me", and teaches students how to create a respectful, safe and compassionate environment.
- **Bullies Never Win** – In this program, students are given bullying scenarios and strategies on how to cope with those situations.

- **180 Days of Character –** Students are given real-life situations and are taught how to make decisions that reflect good character.
- **Peer Mediation –** Students are taught the necessary skills to help resolve conflicts among their peers. This is done with adult supervision.
- **TRIBES –** Students learn to discuss issues that arise in their learning communities. The skills learned can be used in any situation.
- **Project Wisdom –**This program incorporates daily messages promoting good decision-making, plus a character education curriculum focusing on encouragement and good decision-making.
- **Take a Bite out of Bullying –** This is a book of classroom activities that focus on students targeted by bullies, the role of the bystander, and strategies to help lessen or end bullying on a campus.
- **Bullying 101 –** This is a bullying PowerPoint for children. It focuses on targets, bullies, telling versus tattling, how to stop bullying, and what bystanders can do.
- **Bully Proof Bingo and Bully Buster Bingo—** These are games that teach and reinforce bully-proof behaviors such as avoiding or confronting bullying incidents.
- **"I Care: Peace-making Skills" –** This is a program that teaches students they are responsible for what they say and do.
- **Take a Bite Out of Bullying –** This is a collection of activities and a CD that teaches students how to identify bullies, respond to bullies and keep themselves safe.

Elementary Books
- *Billy Bully: A School Yard Counting Tale*
- *Nobody Knew What to Do*
- *Just Kidding*
- *My Secret Bully*
- *Trouble Talk*
- *Sorry!*
- *Bernstein Bears*
- *Mean Jean the Recess Queen*
- *King of the Playground*
- *Push-Shave and Playground Push Around*
- *How to be Bully-Free Workbook*
- *Kids Guide to Making and Keeping Friends*
- *Alley Oops*

Elementary Videos
- *Put Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes*
- *Don't be so Bossy*
- *No More Teasing*
- *What's a Bully?*
- *We're In, You're Out: Looking at Cliques*
- *Don't Call Me Names*

- *Safety on the Internet*
- *Auto Be Good Series*
- *Sometimes Friends Mean Trouble*
- *I'm Telling! A Tattler's Tale*
- *Harassment Hurts*
- *I Was Just Kidding*
- *Respect for Differences*
- *What We've Learned About Bullying*
- *Gossiping, Taunting, Bullying: It's All Harassment*
- *Joey*
- *The Power on One*
- *What We Learned About Bullying – Should I Say Anything?*
- *Be Cool: Coping with Bullying*

Elementary Campus-Designed Programs

- Rice Way
- Texans Band Together – The Bully Free Zone
- Tom Cox Essential 42
- Classroom meetings – Learning to Solve Problems
- Buckalew's "My Keys to Success"

Elementary Presentations from Outside Groups

- **Morris Brothers Bully Busters-** This is a presentation done by "NERDS" (Never Ending Radical Dudes). The program uses humor, music skits and audience participation to send the message not to engage in bullying behavior.
- **Dennis Lee Productions –** This program uses ventriloquism, puppets, music stories and humor to send the anti-bullying message.
- **G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training) –** This program, taught by the CISD police department, not only focuses on gangs, but on learning to make good decisions and how to avoid using violence to solve problems.

Secondary Programs

- **Challenge Day –** This is a day of experiential activities that teaches students how to respect one another through the celebration of diversity, truth and full expression.
- **Why Try –** This is a program used with individuals and/or groups of students that teaches good decision-making skills. The program uses visual analogies that are easy to recall. Students learn that decisions have consequences for themselves and others.
- **Be the Change Club and Be the Change Week –** Students work together to design activities that promote mutual respect and acceptance throughout their school. During "Be the Change Week" there are daily themes that encourage these attitudes.
- **Conflict Resolution –** Students learn how to settle conflicts in a peaceful, productive manner.
- **Safe School Ambassadors –** This program empowers student leaders from the diverse groups within a school to come together and learn nonviolent communication and intervention skills to stop bullying among their peers.

- **Project Wisdom -** This program incorporates daily messages promoting good decision-making, plus a character education curriculum focusing on encouragement and good decision-making.
- **Character Counts –** This program teaches the 6 pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Students learn to treat one another with dignity and respect.
- **No Place for Hate –** Students choose a number of anti-bullying activities, that when completed, allow the campus to be designated a "No Place for Hate" campus.
- **Preventing Bullying at School –** This is a workbook by J. Bitney and B. Title that contains many anti-bullying activities to conduct in the school setting.
- **Mix-It Up Day –** On this day, students are encouraged to sit with someone different during their lunch time. Often tables are rearranged to help facilitate this activity.

Secondary Presentations

- **Knight Pride (Knox program) –** Character education is taught once a month during athletic/PE classes. Character traits taught are tolerance, resilience, compassion, integrity, patience, commitment and perseverance.
- **Cyberbullying presentations –** Campuses have designed their own presentations for students and parents that reveal the dangers and consequences of cyberbullying and how to address those issues.
- **Freshmen bullying presentations –** Counselors on some campuses have designed a program to address bullying with freshmen. This program is presented while sophomores and juniors are taking the PSAT test.
- **Classroom Guidance lessons –** Counselors facilitate classroom lessons that address such things as respect, compassion, random acts of kindness, having character, making choices and standing up for others.
- **Camfel Productions –** This company does multimedia productions that focus on accepting responsibility for one's own actions and making the right choices.

Internet Resources

http://www.bulliesbegone.com/
http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/
http://stopcyberbullying.org/
http://www.educationworld.com/a_special/bully.shtml
http://www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org/