

Bullying #1 - Definition

Dear Parents:

As I shared with you at Back to School Night, one of my initiatives this year is to share as much about bullying with you as possible in regular messages.

And, so it begins today.

Here is the definition of bullying. Please note how there are very definite components that are part of what comprises the State definition of bullying. This is something we refer to when we are making a determination of whether a conflict is actually bullying or not.

Here is the NJ definition of bullying:

- Harassment, intimidation, or bullying means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:34-14, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents that:
 - Is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability; or
 - By any other distinguishing characteristic; and that
Takes place on school property, at any school sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds, as provided for in N.J.S.A. 37-15.3, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other pupils; **and that**
 - A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a pupil or damaging the pupil's property, or placing a pupil in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property; **or**
 - Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any pupil or group of pupils; **or**
 - Creates a hostile educational environment for the pupil by interfering with a pupil's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the pupil.

As I shared, we always look at the ethnic portion and always check to see if there is an imbalance of power. If those things are missing, we probably have a conflict, *which we will still address*.

Conflicts vs. Bullying

During a conflict, name-calling, threats and other conduct that might look like bullying can occur. However, a conflict and bullying are very different.

Unlike bullying, during a conflict people are equally involved in some type of disagreement. Conflict is considered mutual, meaning everyone is more or less evenly involved.

Bullying, on the other hand, involves one or several people (the bullies) intentionally committing a mean or violent act against another person(s) or group of people (the victims). When bullying occurs, there is no mutual participation in a disagreement; it is one-sided. Bullying victims have a hard time defending themselves. The victims want the bullying to stop, but the bully continues the behavior.

Finally, here is what I shared with our students, and with you, on Back to School Night:

- **When someone says or does something unintentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's RUDE.**
- **When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's MEAN.**
- **When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they keep doing it - even when you tell them to stop or show them that you're upset - that's BULLYING**

Our goal is to approach everything with a growth mindset. We will handle the issues that come our way appropriately, and teach, discipline, and point to better ways to self-manage to help our community be a safe place to be.

More to come...

Have a great day!

Dr. Saxton