

# PEACE POWER TOOLS

([www.peacepower.info](http://www.peacepower.info))

## *System-wide Bullying Prevention Projects*

---

### **Summary:**

Most school-aged youth in the United States have either participated in or experienced bullying. Bullying is a common community problem where an individual or certain group is intentionally and repeatedly exposed to the negative actions of their peers which can have profound and long-lasting developmental effects. System-wide bullying prevention projects can help eliminate these negative actions. By simultaneously targeting the school, classroom and individuals, system-wide bullying prevention projects help adults and youth create positive environments characterized by warmth, adult interest and involvement in and outside the school setting.

### **Resources Needed:**

- Dan Olweus's book, *Bullying at School* (listed below) is a detailed manual for initiating and maintaining system-wide bullying prevention, not just in schools but in any system working with young people over time. The other resources listed may also be helpful in tailoring a plan to a particular setting.

### **Implementation Steps:**

- The goal of system-wide bullying prevention projects is to create a school environment that fosters good peer relations inside and outside of the school setting. This goal is based on the following three principles:
  1. Creation of a positive school or home environment characterized by warmth, adult interest and involvement.
  2. Setting firm limits for intolerable behavior
  3. Consistent non-physical and non-hostile application of sanctions for violation of limits
- Adults at home, as well as at school, will need to map the extent of the bully/victim problem in and outside the school (on the way to and from school).
- Adults at home and at school will need to engage in a meaningful plan to change the bully/victim problem at the school, classroom and individual levels.
  1. School level
    - Adults can organize a school conference in an effort to establish an overall long-term detailed plan of action.
    - Adults will need to develop and provide a good and smooth functioning supervision plan for student activities (i.e. recess, lunch time)
    - Adults who are present during student activities will need to monitor, intervene and report bully/victim attempts and actions to the regular classroom teacher.
    - Contact between adults at home and school will need to be maintained for each bully/victim occurrence (i.e. school social worker, case manager or psychologist).
    - Schools may choose to discuss bully/victim problems at regularly scheduled Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, teacher forums, or other awareness and strategy development activities for parents.
  2. Class level
    - Work with students to establish and adhere to class bullying prevention rules. Also, allow students to help establish sanctions for violation of those rules. This can be done during regularly scheduled class meetings, cooperative learning exercises, and class PTA meetings.

# PEACE POWER TOOLS

([www.peacepower.info](http://www.peacepower.info))

- Post the rules and sanctions for violation of rules on the bulletin board or other blank wall space for public viewing.
  - Offer praise to students for following bully prevention rules, including intervening in a bully/victim situation, avoiding aggressive behaviors and showing helpful or friendly behavior.
  - Finally, make concerted effort to include those students who are generally excluded from activities or group exercises.
  - There are also a number of ways to help increase awareness among students, such as: a) videotapes or CDs on bullying, b) literature on the bully/victim problem (to be read aloud), and c) role playing
3. Individual level
- If bullying is suspected or witnessed, without delay, have a serious talk with the bully or bullies.
  - Speak quickly with the victim of the bullying behavior and work to ensure that the student is protected from further harassment.
  - Speak immediately with the parents of both the bully(s) and the victim, in an effort to establish open communication and cooperation with the parents. It may be important to involve the school social worker or psychologist.
  - Communicate regularly with the parents after a bully/victim situation.
  - Similar to the school environment, parents will need to establish rules and sanctions for bully prevention violation at home. This action shows the child that bullying behavior is taken seriously and will not be tolerated. Also similar to the school environment, the parent will need to be sure to praise inhibition of negative actions toward peers.

## **Variations:**

- See resources listed

## **Rational and Evidence Base:**

Bullying generally starts with negative actions, such as obscene faces or gestures, peer exclusion or isolation. There is evidence that these negative actions are carried out by individuals or groups of individuals and imply an imbalance in power or strength.

Considerable research shows that bullying often follows mean spirited teasing and serves as a precursor to violence. Research also suggests that those who show aggression toward peers are at a greater risk for later engagement in antisocial behaviors such as criminal activity and alcohol abuse, as well as relationship problems.

Garbarino, J., & deLara, E. (2003). *And words can hurt forever: How to protect adolescents from bullying, harassment, and emotional violence*. New York: Free Press.

Lee, J. (1993). *Facing the fire: Experiencing and expressing anger appropriately*. New York: Bantam Books.

Mattaini, M. A. (2001). *Peace power for adolescents: Strategies for a culture of nonviolence*. Washington, D.C: NASW Press.

Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying a school: What we know and what we can do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

## **PEACE POWER TOOLS**

([www.peacepower.info](http://www.peacepower.info))

Olweus, D. (1994). Annotation: Bullying at school: Basic facts and effects of a school-based intervention program. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 35(7), 1171-1190.

Orpinas, P. (2006). Selection and Implementation of Universal Bullying Prevention Programs. In P. Orpinas & A. M. Horne, *Bullying prevention: Creating a positive school climate and developing social competence*.

Walker, H. M., Colvin, G., & Ramsey, E. (1995). Antisocial behavior in school: Strategies and best practices. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Julia Wesley & Mark A. Mattaini