

INFO ABOUT BULLYING @

HMS/FWA

Answering your questions about bullying and how to handle situations of bullying taking place at Hortonville Middle School and Fox West Academy.

What is Bullying?

As a school, we define bullying as unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is **repeated**, or has the potential to be **repeated**, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors (gossiping), attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction goes further to state that bullying is deliberate or intentional behavior using words or actions intending to cause fear, intimidation, or harm. Bullying can involve hurting a person's body or possessions, saying or writing mean things, and hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Bullying may be repeated behavior and involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. Bullying can occur at school, at home, in the community, or through social media or the internet. Both children who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

Questions to ask your child about bullying...

If your child should state that he or she is being bullied at school, it is important to sit down with him or her and ask some basic questions. As a parent, it is your natural reaction to want to protect your child, but it is important in these situations to keep a level head and try to get as much information as possible to determine if what is occurring is truly bullying and if further steps are necessary.

More open-ended questions will help your child talk about the situation he or she was in. As the PACER Center suggests, ask questions such as:

- Who hurt or said mean things about you?
- When and where did this occur?
- What led up to the event?
- How often does this occur?
- Did the other child hurt you on purpose or was it an accident?
- Did the other child know you were being hurt?

Source: <http://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-2.pdf>

Reactions to avoid...

When kids tell their parents that they are being bullied, parents may tell their children to stand up to the bully, tell their child to ignore the bully, or to tell their child to take matters into their own hands. While these are natural reactions and have good intention, they are mostly ineffective. Instead, let your child know that he or she is not alone, that it is not up to them to stand up to the bully alone, that no one deserves this treatment, and that we all must work together to stop the behaviors from occurring.

Source: <http://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-2.pdf>

When should I get school officials involved?

Much, of course, depends on the severity of the problem. If the behavior towards your child has been going on for 2-3 weeks (sooner if more severe especially involving physical actions), the school should be told. PLEASE DO NOT WAIT MONTHS BEFORE CONTACTING OUR SCHOOL. Oftentimes, matters can be resolved rather quickly if school officials are given the opportunity to intervene. While we want parents to inform of us bullying behaviors, it is also important that we work together to teach our students to advocate for themselves as well. This is an important part of growing up during their middle school years.

Steps to informing school officials...

1. Start with your child's classroom teacher or homeroom teacher. Most problems originate in the classroom and our teachers want to get involved and be kept in the loop right away. Most issues can be resolved very quickly if the classroom teachers are informed immediately.
2. Provide your child's classroom teacher or homeroom teacher with an update about a week after your initial report. Let the teacher know if things are improving or if things seem to be getting worse.
3. After giving your child's classroom teacher or homeroom teacher ample opportunity to intervene and still no progress has been made, it is now time to involve the following individuals in this order...
 - A. School Counselor – Mr. Jeff Nault
 - B. Associate Principal – Mrs. Tanya Lange
 - C. Principal – Mr. Steve Gromala
4. Students and parents may also use our 'Report of Bullying / Harassment Form', which is available on our website and with our school counselor.

What are kids at HMS / FWA taught?

Students at Hortonville Middle School and Fox West Academy are taught three basic steps when it comes to bullying behaviors. They include:

1. **STOP** – Tell the bully to stop. Oftentimes children do not understand that their actions are indeed hurtful.
2. **WALK** – Walk away from the bully and DO NOT ENGAGE him or her. Engaging the bully makes you just as guilty as the bully and this is exactly what most bullies want. They want a reaction.
3. **TALK** – Inform a school official, beginning with the classroom teacher, school counselor, associate principal and then the principal.

Should I contact the School Resource Officer?

It is always your right as a parent to contact the School Resource Officer if you feel that your child is being bullied; however, we always recommend that you allow school officials to get involved first. If the bullying continues, our school generally always contact the SRO to get him or her involved.

Should I ever contact the bully's parents?

Generally, it is never a good idea to contact the bully's parents directly. Most often, this will only make the situation worse. Please allow our school the opportunity to remedy the situation.