

The Safety and Security Program

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What the Program is about

The Safety and Security Program is a series of programs designed to ensure that parents and children experiencing bullying and/or poverty have a safe, secure, and trustworthy setting to rely on. The programs aim is to help families and children in any of these situations and ensure that they are getting the resources and support they need for themselves and their families.

Next, the Safety and Security Program focuses on providing stability, support, and security to children who are experiencing bullying and/or poverty through creating a stable, loving, trustworthy environment, and a safe space to talk using books and friendships as a base for starting conversation. Parents in the program are supported with resources, one-on-one parent matching, support services, and conversations in a confidential, secure, trustworthy manner.

Each individual helping parents and children alike is trained in identifying symptoms of bullying and poverty and are there to offer resources and support as needed to families and children. Lastly, the Safety and Security Program works to ensure that no child is hindered in the educational process due to circumstances such as bullying or poverty. It works to ensure that every child is supported and is provided with the same opportunities to grow and learn despite their circumstances. Children are the future of our country, so it is up to us to ensure they grow up to be great leaders, educators, and people of society no matter what.

Bullying

Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Bullying behavior is repeated, is done on purpose, and includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, and physical or verbal attacking. There are 3 types of bullying which are verbal (name-calling, taunting, teasing, threats), social (exclusion from groups, embarrassing someone, spreading rumors, cyberbullying), and physical (hitting, spitting, tripping, breaking someone's belongings) (2016).

Solutions

- A. Identify the problem and those involved: In order to effectively put an end to a bullying situation, it is important to identify the students involved; both bully(ies) and victim(s). Without proper identification of all involved in the process and act of bullying, the bullying of the individual may not completely stop. Once every student is identified, then teachers and administrators can discover the proper way to stop the issue of bullying. The way this school follows is through immediately placing the bully(ies) and victim(s) in the Safe and Secure Bullying Program. The Safe and Secure Bullying Program uses the following 5 steps to do a complete identification and turnaround of bullying behavior.
 - a. Conversation and discussion: Once students involved are identified, each is talked to on an individual basis by a trained teacher or administrator as to the reasons behind why the bullying is happening, if it should be happening, how it makes them feel, how it makes the other people involved feel, how to correct bullying behavior, and what to do instead of bullying.

- b. **Group meeting:** After the initial one-on-one discussion, the students involved (bullies and victims) will meet together in an open setting with 2-3 trained school administrators and/or teachers to discuss feelings to one another. In the group meeting, the students will be able to discuss their feelings, effects of bullying, and the reasoning behind the bullying in an open, confidential, and safe setting. The key to getting to the root of bullying is through conversation and discovering insecurities or emotions behind the bullying.
 - c. **Daily check-ins:** Consistency is key to solving any problem, so daily check-ins with the bullies and victims is a must. These daily check-ins will consist of simply finding the students in any setting (lunch, recess, in the halls, etc.) and having a short discussion with them about how their day is going, how they are feeling, and if they have participated in bullying that day. Honesty is appreciated and respected in this situation because the students are in a learning process and a slip-up is expected every once in a while. If the student is caught to be lying about their bullying activities for the day they may face consequences such as school suspensions, detentions, or taking away of activities.
 - d. **Weekly check-in meetings:** Each week, one mandatory meeting will be held in which progress, regression, feelings, ideas, and strategies for bullying will be discussed with both the bully(ies) and the victim(s). The weekly check-in meetings, along with the daily check-ins will continue to be held until a breakthrough happens or the bullying stops. As stated above, if students miss meetings or are caught lying, consequences may be imposed.
 - e. **Bullying prevention training:** The last step in preventing bullying is training on prevention. Once the students have made a breakthrough and have stopped bullying, it is time to give them the knowledge to identify bullying and the tools to stop it. This is done through a one week course work that focuses on strategies to prevent and stop bullying. Hopefully, through this program, bullies can turn themselves into preventers of bullying, and victims can help others who are experiencing what they have already gone through.
- B. **School prevention:** Since a majority of bullying happens in the school setting, this school has developed a series of prevention methods and plans to educate students and prevent bullying.
- a. **Assemblies:** Assemblies are a tool to use to inform a large group of students in one setting. Assemblies on bullying are a good source of information from how to identify bullying, steps for stopping bullying, becoming a victims friend, how to report bullying, and steps to prevention. Simply getting the students aware of bullying and how it can affect everyone is the first step to completely stopping bullying in our school.
 - b. **Early prevention:** Teaching students about bullying and its effects at a young age will dramatically reduce the number of children who engage in bullying in later years of school. When children are taught young, they have more time to comprehend the information they are learning, and the information is repeated each year, so they become very familiar with bullying and its effects. Having a

knowledge of bullying, its effects, and prevention, the children are less likely to engage in bullying simply because they are knowledgeable in the subject.

- c. Increased supervision: Increased supervision by trained teachers and administrators during busy times in the school day such as recess, lunch, and hallway time can drastically help catch and prevent bullying situations (Olsen, 2012). Each day, 2-3 teachers and/or administrators will be supervising during these times to ensure that no child is bullied or attempted to be bullied upon. If caught bullying (1st time offense) students will be sent to the principal's office and talked to. If caught bullying (2nd time offense) students will be sent to the principal's office and will have to call home. If caught bullying (3rd time or more offense) students and victim(s) will be referred to the Safety and Security Bullying Program for intervention.
- d. Books as a tool: Books are powerful tools to communicate and teach about everyday situations in a nonthreatening way. This is why books will be used in every classroom to teach about acceptance and bullying to students ages 4-12. Some examples of these books are *The Ugly Duckling*, *We Both Read- Stop Teasing Taylor!*, *Don't Pick on Pepper!*, and *Bullying: Deal with It before Push Comes to Shove* (Olsen, 2012).

Poverty

Poverty is defined as the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support. It also includes making not enough money during the course of the year to provide for a families basic needs (2017). In the U.S., the poverty level for a family of two is \$12,490, a family of 3 is \$15,670, and four is \$18,850. Since those experiencing poverty do not have enough money to provide for basic needs, needs such as food, safe shelter, and healthcare are at risk (Olsen, 2012). Along with having little to no money comes stress and conflict for families, and as a result, children of impoverished families also have higher stress levels.

Solutions

- A. Our teachers are highly instructed in how to deal with each child no matter their socio-economic status, race, gender, or learning abilities. Since children are of utmost importance to this school, we have implemented the Safety and Security Poverty Program which works with teachers, students, and families who are of low-income. The goal of the program is to ensure first and foremost that student's needs are being met, second, that parents receive the support and resources they need, and third, that the teachers are well equipped to form relationships with the students and their families. There are 5 steps to the program to ensure that every student and their family's needs are being met. These steps are:
 - a. Meet basic needs: In order to learn and succeed in school, students basic needs need to be met first. Being tired, hungry, or dirty can drastically decrease a student's ability to learn properly, function at a higher intellectual state, or impair

their ability to make friends in social settings. Teachers need to be prepared for these situations by having snacks ready such as an apple or granola bar, allowing the student to take a short nap before learning, or helping the child to wash up. Even though allowing the child to nap or wash up may take time away from learning, ultimately it will help the child because they will be ready to learn and not be distracted on basic needs.

- b. Meet educational needs: Once the child's basic needs are met, then they are ready to learn. Meeting the educational needs of low-income students is the same as meeting the needs of any other type of student. The exceptions are that teachers need to consider accessibility of resources outside of school, and out of school responsibilities of students. To combat these issues, homework requiring technology should be assigned to be completed in school, and little to no homework should be required to be finished at home. Teachers need to keep in mind that they should have the same expectations and goals for students of low-income families as they do of students from higher-income families.
 - c. Focus on the family: As with any family, families of low-income need to have a focus, but a special focus in that they may require help, support, or resources. Teachers need to be open to conversation with families even if it is not school related. Simply having someone to talk to and confide in can help parents feel much better. Teachers also need to involve the parents in their child's education in any way possible. For low-income families this may be hard since they are very busy, but being flexible for conferencing and sending home progress reports are small ways to involve parents and let them know how their child is doing in school. Lastly, teachers and the school can offer resources to families such as brochures and information on where to get assistance, find jobs, obtain meals, or anything that may help. Teachers and the school are there for the families just as much as they are there for the students.
 - d. Educate other students: Students need to be aware of who is in their classroom and the best way to do it is to encourage diversity talks, use books that talk about diversity, and teach about diversity in a positive light. During the diversity talks, the teacher and students can discuss differences, and answer and discuss any questions about diversity. Books are also a great way to discuss difficult issues. Some examples of books that discuss poverty are *A Day's Work*, *Tight Times*, *Someplace to go*, and *Home is Where We Live: Life at a Shelter through a Young Girl's Eyes* (Olsen, 2012). By having an awareness of who is in the classroom, students are better equipped to be accepting and understand that differences are okay.
- B. School prevention: There are five principals that educators must abide by to contribute to the well-being of students of low-income families (Olsen, 2012). Each of these principles is in place to ensure students from low-income families have their needs met in terms of physical needs, emotional needs, and relationship needs.
- a. Do not stigmatize children: Simply because students are from low-income families does not mean that expectations, goals, or individual strengths should be

lessened or underestimated. Despite being impoverished, many students from low-income families still have the same hopes, dreams, and desires as other children of their age from higher-income families. So, teachers will place the same expectations on low-income students as they do for higher-income students. This creates equality and gives every student a fair chance to succeed.

- b. **Make the school a safe haven:** The family and community life of students from low-income families can be very unstable, so it is important for schools to be safe havens that promote a sense of security and belonging. Schools and teachers can provide hope, trust, encouragement, and support in a time of hardship for students (Olsen, 2012). Creating a safe and positive environment is also the goal as how to foster learning and community in the classroom and promote a sense of belonging. So, not only will students experiencing hardships have their teachers and school to lean on, but they will also have their fellow classmates there for support.
- c. **Think of all needs:** Teachers need to consider every need of the child. When looking at needs, teachers need to consider the students educational needs, but more importantly they need to consider their students basic needs. Are they hungry, tired, or dirty? If so, these needs may prevent the student from learning to their full potential and they need to be addressed before any learning takes place. Meeting these needs is easy to do by simply providing a healthy snack such as a granola bar, allowing a small nap, and having soap and a washrag on hand to wash up. These seemingly small items can make a world of difference to meeting the child's needs and helping them to learn.
- d. **Work with parents:** Parents who are of low-income have the same goals and dreams for their children as do other parents. These parents may be stretched thin, balancing many demands, and have fewer resources (Olsen, 2012). So, teachers must be flexible with parents when meeting, send out weekly newsletters and progress reports to inform them of their child's academic success, and work with parents to create obtainable goals for their children. By allowing low-income parents to come in and help create goals for their children, it gives them a say in their child's success and it also is a way to help the parent feel in control of something positive when other things are going wrong. It is important to remember that low-income families want their children to succeed and do the best they can in school just as other families do.
- e. **Reach out to the community:** Community outreach is very important to building a school-community network and for mounting an effort to help children and families of low-income. This can be done by providing a positive outlook on the school setting as not only a place of learning but also as a place of support, trust, and safety. It can also be done by getting out in the community, talking to the people, and seeing how their way of life is. Understanding and reaching out to the community is the first step in creating a positive relationship and helping children in poverty.

Resources

Olsen, G., Ruller, M. L. (2012). *Home and School Relations: Teachers and Parents Working Together*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

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