

## **What is Bullying? Definition and Basic Facts**

Bullying occurs when a student is repeatedly harmed by another student or a group of students. This abuse can be psychological, physical, or both. The prevalence of bullying has ranged from 10% of children reporting severe bullying to 75% reporting being bullied at least once in their academic year. Nationwide, it is suspected that approximately 25% of children will be bullied during their academic career.

Bullies are typically physically, psychologically or socially stronger than their victims. Both boys and girls engage in bullying behaviors, but the way that they go about it may be different. Boys often engage in direct, overt bullying, including physical assaults or verbal threats and taunts. Girls typically use more indirect approaches such as spreading rumors and intentionally excluding the victim from groups.

Chronic victims of bullying report physical and emotional problems at a higher rate than their peers and may develop depression, a lowered self esteem, and even thoughts or attempts of suicide. Bullying can create a climate of fear that not only affects those directly accosted, but also the bystanders and the school community as a whole.

Bullies usually have below-average academic achievement, are more likely to become abusive spouses and parents, and engage in more criminal activities as adults.

While bullying is becoming a daunting problem nationwide, there are things our local school community can do. Education and prevention are the most powerful tools against bullying. Creating a comprehensive plan that includes imposing strict policies against bullying and implementing division-wide prevention and education programs are necessary components. Additionally, parent and family participation and communication are critical in understanding and addressing the underpinnings of the dynamics that lead to bullying. This also assists in providing early identification, reporting, and intervention by the school and local community in partnership with our families to assist the victim and address the bystanders and the bully.