



DEFINING AND IDENTIFYING BULLYING

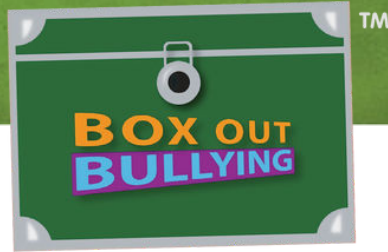
What's inside?

The following packet contains resources that will help you to define what is and is not bullying, to use that definition to develop a workable district policy on bullying, and to identify what is and is not a bullying incident.

To facilitate these tasks, educators have called for a clear, concise rubric.

The following **Bullying Rubric** is based on a definition derived from US Department of Education data and the most current research available. The rubric herein includes this definition, the four categories of bullying behaviors, criteria for a severity score, and a consequence level. This document uses the term "aggressor" for those with greater power and "subject" for those with lesser power. We find that these terms don't label the students and promote more normal social relationships after the incident is resolved.

The following pages include: 1) a definition of bullying, 2) the Bullying Rubric, 3) an explanation of the rubric's elements, and 4) a few brief case studies that illustrate how to use the Bullying Rubric.



What is bullying?

Bullying occurs when a person or group with greater power causes significant distress for another.


The distress can be physical, social, or emotional, and may not be intentional. A first incident should be carefully evaluated before being proclaimed a bullying incident.

Cyberbullying is considered posting or circulating damaging or hurtful information via electronic media.



BULLYING RUBRIC

Check all statements that are true about this incident (can be multiple in each category).

IS THIS A BULLYING INCIDENT?	WHAT ACTS OF BULLYING OCCURRED?	HOW SEVERE WAS THE INCIDENT?
<input type="checkbox"/> The incident involved a person or group with greater power (physical, social, or emotional) than the other(s) involved. [A]	<input type="checkbox"/> Threat: Of harm, damage, or release of embarrassing information.	<input type="checkbox"/> It is reasonable to conclude that the aggressor(s) intended to harm the subject(s). [D]
<input type="checkbox"/> The incident caused significant physical, emotional, and/or social distress for the subject. [B]	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Harm: May include: theft or property damage.	<input type="checkbox"/> This involved multiple aggressors . [E]
<input type="checkbox"/> The incident has a strong likelihood of reoccurring , or the incident has happened before. [C]	<input type="checkbox"/> Lie, False Accusation, or Rumor: Can be used to turn people against someone.	<input type="checkbox"/> This is known to be a repeat incident involving this/these aggressor(s). [F]
<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>**If all three of the above are checked, this is a bullying incident. Continue with the rest of the rubric.**</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Mocking: May allude to appearance, social group.	<input type="checkbox"/> This is known to be a repeat incident involving this/these subject(s). [G]
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excluding: May allude to appearance, social group.	<input type="checkbox"/> This was a public incident and bystanders could see and become involved in. [H]
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> This incident involved cyberbullying . [I]



BULLYING RUBRIC

Use the table below to calculate the scores from the rubric.

Incident Severity Score [J]	Count up the total number of checks from columns 2 ("What acts of aggression occurred?") and 3 ("How severe was the incident?").	Total:
Consequence Level [K]	Using the total calculated above: Level 1: 1-2 checks Level 2: 3-4 checks Level 3: 5-7 checks Level 4: 8-10 checks	Level:

For Administrator:

Should you call local law enforcement? [L] YES NO

NOTES:

DATE OF INCIDENT:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:



EXPLANATION

The letters for each section herein correspond to the bracketed letters [A-L] specified throughout the Bullying Rubric and scoring table.

A. If the incident was not done by one or a group with **greater power** (physical, social, or emotional) than the other, this may be retaliation by the subject for previous bullying incidents. If so, investigate the reason for the aggressor's action and determine if previous bullying occurred. Use this rubric to evaluate previous incidents.

B. Determining **emotional or social distress** is the most difficult task in this rubric. The subject, the aggressors, and even the adult community often minimize or overlook student's hurtful words and behavior. Subjects fear that showing their pain or fear will worsen the situation. Aggressors carefully hide this behavior from adults to avoid consequences. Adults don't want to believe students would be so aggressive and mean. The adults are responsible to prevent or intervene in bullying incidents. Awareness of the signs of student social-emotional problems is essential: Social withdrawal, decreased academic performance, and changes in mood (agitation, anxiety and/or depression), patterns of behavior (to avoid contact with aggressors), and appearance.

D. Just because the aggressor did not have the **intent to harm** the subject does NOT mean it wasn't bullying. Bullying is defined as an incident where one or more with greater power cause emotional and/or social distress on another. Sometimes those with greater power tease, criticize, and berate others but are not aware of the harm they are causing the subject. The behavior is bullying even if the aggressor is unaware of the subject's pain. In such cases, the aggressor needs developmental intervention to enhance awareness of the effect of their actions on others.

E. Students who commit the aggression are the primary **aggressors**. Students who are with the aggressor are accomplices to the aggression and thus are secondary aggressors. Both primary and secondary aggressors should be given developmental interventions (character lessons on fairness and respect, reflective writing on the incident and their actions, etc.).

F. A **repeat incident** means it is at least the second time in the previous two years that one of the aggressors and/or subjects have been involved in a bullying incident. The federal definition of bullying says that bullying is repeated or has the potential of being repeated. The point is that a first bullying incident should be dealt with but the administration can use restraint. Over-reacting to a bullying incident decreases the district's effectiveness. A repeat incident is more significant and should have more severe developmental consequences as it shows a pattern of bullying.

H. Some emotionally distressing incidents are between two individuals and not dependent on others witnessing or supporting it. For example, one student is upset with another and impulsively threatens, mocks, or hits the other. Though others may see or hear the incident, the aggressor was not attempting to get others to watch or be involved. This may not be considered a **public** but rather a private incident. As with intent to harm, this is a judgment call that is best made by more than one adult. When in doubt, it is better to believe a student's innocence yet also to give them developmental interventions.



EXPLANATION

Continued.

I. Cyberbullying is by definition both public and multiple because a) each person receiving the information has the capacity to circulate it to a new group of people and b) no means exist to stop circulating the information once it is released.

J. The Incident Severity Score provides an objective measure by which administrators can evaluate an incident and compare it to others.

L. The theft of \$3 may indicate the need to contact authorities in some communities. Each district must establish their protocols in consultation with **local law enforcement**.



CASE STUDY 1

Scenario:

Sixth-grader Adam was confronted at his locker by eighth-graders Lex, Bono, and Syd who asked if he could loan them some money. When Adam said he had only his lunch money, Lex pulled out Adam's wallet, took the \$3 in it, and shoved Alex down, yelling, "Don't ever lie to me again, nerd, or I'll bust your face!" Alex now wears a huge backpack with all his books in it to avoid going to his locker.

See below for how you would complete the Bullying Rubric and scoring table.

IS THIS A BULLYING INCIDENT?	WHAT ACTS OF BULLYING OCCURRED?	HOW SEVERE WAS THE INCIDENT?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The incident involved a person or group with greater power (physical, social, or emotional) than the other(s) involved. [A]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Threat: Of harm, damage, or release of embarrassing information.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is reasonable to conclude that the aggressor(s) intended to harm the subject(s). [D]
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physical Harm: May include theft or property damage.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This involved multiple aggressors . [E]
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The incident caused significant physical, emotional, and/or social distress for the subject. [B]	<input type="checkbox"/> Lie, False Accusation, or Rumor: Can be used to turn people against someone.	<input type="checkbox"/> This is known to be a repeat incident involving this/these aggressor(s). [F]
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The incident has a strong likelihood of reoccurring , or the incident has happened before. [C]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mocking: May allude to appearance, social group.	<input type="checkbox"/> This is known to be a repeat incident involving this/these subject(s). [G]
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excluding: May allude to appearance, social group.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This was a public incident and bystanders could see and become involved in. [H]
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> This incident involved cyberbullying . [I]	
⤴ **If all three of the above are checked, this is a bullying incident. Continue with the rest of the rubric.**		

Explanations:

- A. Three older boys to one younger.
- B. Alex changed his school routine to avoid them. This indicates distress: fear that the event will recur.
- E. Lex was the primary aggressor; Bono and Syd were secondary.

Mocking: Lex called Adam a "nerd."



CASE STUDY 1

Incident Severity Score [I]	Count up the total number of checks from columns 2 ("What acts of aggression occurred?") and 3 ("How severe was the incident?").	Total: 6
Consequence Level [J]	Using the total calculated above: Level 1: 1-2 checks Level 2: 3-4 checks Level 3: 5-7 checks Level 4: 8-10 checks	Level: 3

For Administrator:

Should you call local law enforcement? [K]

YES NO



CASE STUDY 2

Scenario:

Fourth graders Tricia and Megan had been friends since kindergarten but were in different classrooms. Erin moved into their neighborhood, rode their bus, and was in Megan's class. One day at recess, Megan didn't meet Tricia at their usual place but was talking to Erin. When Tricia approached, Megan gave her a hard look and turned away. Erin said to Tricia, "We don't want to play with someone who is so hateful and mean! Come on, Megan," and they walked away. Her teacher found Tricia crying in the bathroom. Tricia had no idea what Erin was talking about but later learned that Erin told Megan that Tricia had said Megan was "a hick."

See below for how you would complete the Bullying Rubric and scoring table.

IS THIS A BULLYING INCIDENT?	WHAT ACTS OF BULLYING OCCURRED?	HOW SEVERE WAS THE INCIDENT?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The incident involved a person or group with greater power (physical, social, or emotional) than the other(s) involved. [A]	<input type="checkbox"/> Threat: Of harm, damage, or release of embarrassing information.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is reasonable to conclude that the aggressor(s) intended to harm the subject(s). [D]
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The incident caused significant physical, emotional, and/or social distress for the subject. [B]	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Harm: May include theft or property damage.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This involved multiple aggressors . [E]
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<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> This incident involved cyberbullying . [I]
^^ **If all three of the above are checked, this is a bullying incident. Continue with the rest of the rubric.**		

Explanations:

A. Two girls excluding one.

B. Erin was the primary aggressor; Megan was secondary.



CASE STUDY 2

Incident Severity Score [I]	Count up the total number of checks from columns 2 ("What acts of aggression occurred?") and 3 ("How severe was the incident?").	Total: 5
Consequence Level [J]	Using the total calculated above: Level 1: 1-2 checks Level 2: 3-4 checks Level 3: 5-7 checks Level 4: 8-10 checks	Level: 3

For Administrator:

Should you call local law enforcement? [K]

YES NO

Note: This could be viewed as a private incident since it is Erin's first incident and it was between only three girls. If so, it would have an Incident Severity Score of 4. It could be argued that the Consequence Level should be 2. However, it is a dangerous incident socially and emotionally not only for these students but for the school. This type of behavior can spread, infecting other groups and poisoning a healthy school culture. Thus, it should be dealt with carefully and the students should be helped to resolve the conflict and be taught better social skills. How would this have been different if Erin had posted the lie on her Facebook page?