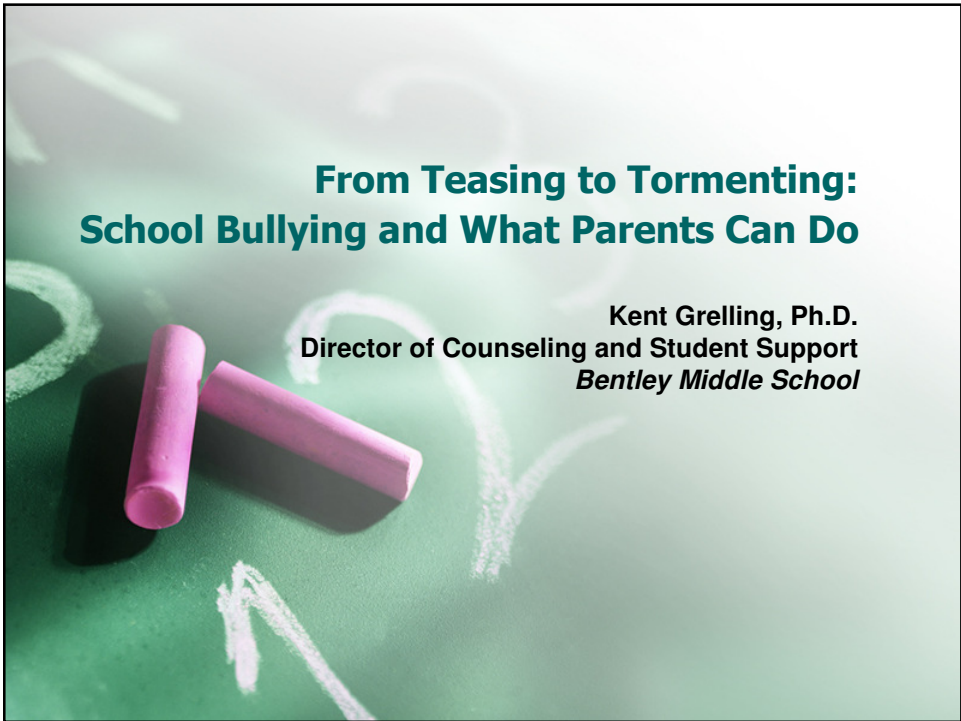




## **Parking**

You can park:  
Next to the firestorm garden  
In the lower parking lot  
Up here on the blacktop

Do Not Park:  
On Hiller up the hill from the school



## **From Teasing to Tormenting: School Bullying and What Parents Can Do**

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## Overview

- What is bullying?
- What are some developmental differences in bullying/intimidation?
- How does bullying affect victims, perpetrators and bystanders?
- What can parents and schools do to address bullying?



## Typical aggression in children

- All children express aggression in one way or another
- Nearly all young children (under 5) are physically aggressive at times
- Developmentally, children move from more overt, physical expressions of aggression to more covert, verbal and social expressions of aggression.
- This is shaped by parental, school and other social expectations



## Teasing among children

- Teasing is:
  - *“...verbal or nonverbal behaviors among peers that are generally humorous and playful, but may be annoying to the recipient on another level”*
- Some teasing is quite typical and can be means of bonding
  - *Boys “trash talking” during sports*
- Also a means of indirect, social prompting of children
  - *Child calls another “slowpoke” as means of getting them to hurry to class*
- However there is a fine line between friendly and abusive teasing



## What is bullying?

Is it simple aggression or teasing?

- *Aggression and teasing typically involve single incidents while bullying involves a repeated pattern of behaviors*
- *Aggression and teasing can occur between children of equal status or power while bullying has clear power differential*
- *Aggression and teasing have less of a social component and can happen 1:1, while bullying almost always involves onlookers and has a social function*
- *Often aggression and teasing are impulsive and not thought through, while bullying involves the intention to do harm.*



## What is bullying?

- “...dynamic and repetitive, persistent patterns of verbal and/or non-verbal behaviors directed by one or more children on another child, that are intended to deliberately inflict physical, verbal, or emotional abuse, in the presence of a real or perceived power differential.”
  - *The National Association of School Nurses 2003*



## A bullying spectrum

- We tend to think of physical violence or physical threats when we think of bullying
  - *Bully takes child's lunch money*
- In fact this is much less common today and especially among our children at Bentley
- Most bullying we see is:
  - *Covert*
  - *Social*
  - *Verbal*



## Bullying spectrum

- Physical injury
- Taking property
- Damaging property
- Physical threats and extortion
- Public embarrassment / humiliation
- Insults and name calling
- Spreading rumors
- Social exclusion
- Setting people against one another
- Online bullying
- Etc....



## Developmental differences

- Younger children more likely to be physical while older children are more likely to use verbal/social means
- Younger victims more likely to report bullying while older victims more likely to hide the bullying.
- Older bullies more likely to hide their behavior and understand that it is disapproved, while younger ones more likely to be open about it.
- Bullying peaks twice in childhood:
  - *Early elementary school (1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)*
  - *Middle school*



## Gender differences

- Girls more likely to use verbal and social means to victimize (especially as they get older)
  - *“Relational aggression”*
- Girls more likely to maintain complex social relations between victims and bullies
  - *Girls often victimized by “friends” while boys more likely to express overt dislike for each other*
  - *“Frenemies”*



## Who is victimized?

- Perceived as different in some way
  - *Physically, socially, academically, economically, etc.*
- Often more anxious and less self-confident
- Often less tolerant of teasing
- Often have strong overt reactions to the bullying
- Often perceived and perceive themselves as having less “power” than the bully



## Who is a bully?

- Research suggests NO influence of ethnicity, socioeconomic level, geography
- Can be raised by parents of many different styles though physical and harsh verbal discipline seem to increase risk.
- Bullies often have subtle anxiety about their own social status, and perceived embarrassment or loss of power can lead directly to bullying.
- Can be boys or girls, though boys get this label far more often



## What about bystanders?

- Bullying is typically a social activity and is designed to influence the behavior of others
- Some reinforce bullying, others simply avoiding intimidation themselves
- Bystanders rarely intervene, even when they feel the bullying is wrong and are concerned about the victims
  - *This is the case with adults as well*
  - *Often fail to respond for fear of being victimized themselves*



## Bullying statistics

- 13% of children will bully others during their school career
- 11% will be victims of bullies
- 6% will assume both roles at various times
- Young people who are bullied are 5 times more likely to be depressed than those who are not
- Bullied boys are 4 times more likely than average to feel suicidal. Bullied girls are 8 times more likely
- 60% of boys classified as bullies in grades 6-9 had a criminal conviction by age 24



## The effects of school bullying

- Victims:
  - *Are more likely to have sleep problems*
  - *Are more likely to have physical complaints*
  - *Are more likely to miss school*
  - *Have more nervous habits (nail biting, hair pulling, etc.)*
  - *Show decreased academic performance*
  - *Have more general anxiety*
  - *Have decreased self-esteem*





## The effects of school bullying

- Bullies
  - *We rarely think about the negative effects of this behavior on the bullies themselves*
  - *In the long run, bullies are at much greater risk than victims*
  - *Far more likely to be involved in a range of crimes in adulthood from both “white collar” crimes to crimes of violence*
  - *More problems in adult relationships*
  - *Successful bullies learn that intimidation is effective way to get their needs met*



## What can we do?

- What does not work?
  - *Ignoring*
  - *Urging victims to “fight back”*
  - *Treating repetitive bullying as an “anger management” problem and using anger management classes to address*
    - Ignores intentional and social nature of bullying
  - *Peer mediation approaches*
    - Unless there is significant adult input and support
    - Mediation assumes equal power in the situation and typically assigns equal blame



## What can we do?

- Communication
  - *Parents and teachers should talk to their children about bullying and encourage children to discuss it with them*
    - Why do people bully each other?
    - How does it feel to be bullied?
    - How does it affect victims and bullies?
  - *Schools can have class discussions about this*
  - *Parents can communicate with the school and each other about this in a non-judgmental way*
    - Understand bullying is not about bad children, bad parents or bad schools
  - *Clear procedure for students to report bullying*



## What can we do?

- Clear standards of behavior
  - *Standards against bullying, exclusion, harsh teasing*
  - *Standards in support of sharing, tolerance, support, etc*
    - Clear means of recognizing students for this
  - *Clear rules about relevance of out of school behavior to school policies*
    - Especially important for internet use as this often has very direct effect on school behavior
  - *Firm consequences for repeated bullies with clear messages to both parents and students about this.*



## What can we do?

- Proactive support for victims
  - *Teachers and parents can work to foster friendships and support for kids likely to be victimized*
    - New children, smaller children, children with previous histories of victimization
  - *Gently help students recognize social vulnerabilities ahead of time and address them*
  - *Support positive behaviors of victims and stress their resiliency*



## What can we do?

- Support bystanders
  - *Provide clear message that ALL children are responsible for making the school a safe place whether they are directly involved or not.*
  - *Empower them to work together to protect victims and distract bullies*
    - Encourage move from “bystander” to “befriender”
  - *Help them recognize role that audience can play in encouraging bullying*
  - *Stress that bystanders have greatest ability to effectively address bullying*
    - They have power and interest in stopping it



## Discussion?

- How does bullying occur here at Bentley?
  - *In what forms?*
  - *How much of a concern is this for you and your child?*
- What do you think Bentley parents can do to address this?
- What do you think Bentley teachers and administration can do to address it?