Best Practices for Addressing Student Bullying

This document provides dos and don'ts in developing bullying prevention practices. It provides concrete ways in which schools 1) can assess if they're doing the right things; 2) have tactical recommendations aimed at improving school culture and curricula. Recommendations are grounded in research findings on actions and activities that have been shown to help schools improve bullying prevention efforts.

SCHOOL CHECKLIST—DOS

I. Overall Best Practices/Objectives for Addressing School Bullying

- Address the school climate
- Assess the prevalence and types of bullying through the School Experience Survey
- Partner with your staff, parents, and students on pro-social campaigns and efforts
- Focus on the behaviors that you want to *increase*, such as kindness and positive engagement
- Set age-appropriate expectations
- Increase adult engagement and supervision
- Engage parents as positive partners
- Allot class time to focus on social emotional learning
- All of these efforts must be part of the ongoing culture of the school

II. Specific Areas for Intervention and Practice

Become familiar with the BUL-5212.2 Bullying & Hazing Policy

A. School Climate

1) DO establish a multi-disciplinary team that includes an administrator, counselor, educator, IT expertise, and student(s) charged with establishing, implementing and maintaining a culture of respect.
2) DO engage students to come up with, design, and implement creative solutions and interventions, including, for example, campaigns to promote respect and address school climate problems (bullying, cliques, judging, racism, body shaming, homophobia, etc.).
3) DO recognize that a behavior can be unacceptable without meeting the impact criteria of bullying.
4) DO implement evidence-based non-punitive programs to handle peer conflict – including "drama" that escalates – by combining conflict resolution, counseling, and peer mentoring programs. This can be achieved by implementing a holistic prevention and intervention program that integrates school climate, curricula, social-emotional

learning, and school and District policies, such as the Discipline Foundation and School-Wide Discipline Foundation Policies.

5) DO regularly assess the evolution of the school culture.

B. Curricula

1) DO engage administrators and teachers in social-emotional learning and bullying prevention.
2) DO create a clear, data-informed school practice based on generating a culture of respect (i.e., raising awareness/educating and establishing respectful social norms and informed by the inputs of students).
3) DO follow the steps for documentation, investigation, intervention, monitoring and resolution of bullying (See BUL-5212.2)
4) DO provide social, emotional, and mental health assistance and counseling for both targets and instigators of bullying.

SCHOOL CHECKLIST—DON'TS

Recommendations for what to AVOID in addressing school bullying

1) DON'T handle bullying concerns with a one-time student assembly.
2) DON'T try to scare students with frightening videos, overly dramatic statistics, or a focus on suicide as an outcome of bullying.
3) DON'T present bullying in a binary of evil perpetrators v. innocent victims. It is often more nuanced than that.
4) DON'T label children or rely only on simplistic slogans or stereotypes, such as "mean girls" or "the bully."
5) DON'T rely on punishment to prevent bullying.
6) DON'T hold children accountable to unrealistic expectations.

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