

Bullying Clarification

After completing our first trimester this school year, we'd like to clarify the definition of bullying and our administrative response.

While in Middle School, and throughout life, your child will experience conflict. While conflict can be uncomfortable and hurtful, it does happen. It is important that we understand the difference between conflict situations and bullying so that we can help our children understand how to navigate both situations in helpful ways. In addition, it is important for you as parents to understand that the administrative response strategies used in a bullying situation will be different than those used to respond to a conflict situation between peers.

The definition of bullying includes **repeated** behavior and/or an imbalance of power. See below. Bullying is: intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive. There is an actual or perceived imbalance of power between the student engaging in the prohibited conduct and the target of the behavior and the conduct is **repeated** or forms a pattern, or materially and **substantially interferes** with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.

While our school takes many measures to prevent bullying from happening, we do understand that despite our efforts, bullying does occur in our school. We have noticed however that some situations have been incorrectly reported as bullying. For example, Kyle tells Josh that he doesn't want to be his partner in gym because 'Josh is a loser.' Josh's parents call and report that Kyle is a bully and something must be done. We investigate (all reports), and upon investigation it is determined that this is the only time Kyle has ever said anything like this to Josh. This would be a peer conflict situation that is both unfortunate and inappropriate and is not in keeping with supporting and building South's **Kind and Cooperative Community** and so the event will be addressed and resolved. It is not an event however that fits the definition of bullying.

We have to remember that just as no parent wants their child to be bullied, no parent wants their child to be labeled a bully. We have to continue to help all students gain the skills to respond to situations that make them feel sad, angry, or hurt. It is a skill that will help them throughout life.

We want to be clear that we recognize the potential for bullying to occur in our schools and that we will provide a supportive response when it does occur. We understand how detrimental it can be both socially and academically. No student should ever have to fear going to school. Please don't hesitate to contact your child's counselor or administrator with any questions or concerns. We are here to work with you to make middle school a positive experience for your child.

We are teaching your child how to recognize a bullying situation if it should occur so we can keep them safe. We have taught your child the 'Stop, Walk and Talk', protocol. Please discuss this with your child and ensure that they understand how to use this strategy. If you feel that your child is being bullied, please contact administration or Jennifer Nistler, our Bully Prevention Specialist.

Ms. Nistler, has included a note to families introducing herself and her role at South. 'Hello. My name is Jennifer Nistler, a licensed school counselor and Bully Prevention Specialist at South Junior High. My role is to provide bully prevention education to all South students through all-school activities, individual, and group interventions. I assist students in developing and enhancing interpersonal, self-management, decision-making, and conflict resolution skills to improve peer relations in and out of school. I help students take an active role in creating a caring and safe school climate through collaborating with parents, teachers, administrators, and staff. If you have any questions or concerns I can be reached at Jennifer.Nistler@isd742.org or (320)251-1322 ext. 1854.'

Included is a summary of an incident report regarding bullying:

1. Student/Staff/or parent reports an incident.
2. Administrator or Bully Prevention Specialist always conducts an investigation. This typically includes interviewing multiple people, could include video or media review, and includes a file review to determine if a pattern exists.
3. The report is substantiated, meaning found to be true and deemed an incident that requires disciplinary action therefore is put in discipline file in Skyward. Code of Conduct followed, which could include meeting with our Bully Prevention Specialist and/or consequence. Parent contact occurs at this point.
4. Or the report could be deemed unsubstantiated, which means there was not enough evidence to warrant a disciplinary action.

See more at: <http://stcloud742.schoolwires.net/Page/5689#sthash.PckPX5bV.dpuf>

Bully Prevention and Intervention Tips for Families - See more at:
<http://stcloud742.schoolwires.net/Page/5689#sthash.lggxgAPh.dpuf>