

Blanchester Middle School

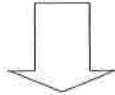


Peer Mistreatment Handbook

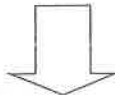
2014-2015 School Year

Blanchester Middle and Intermediate School Building Response to Harassment, Intimidation, Hazing and Bullying Incidents

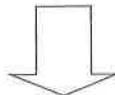
Completed Incident Report Form submitted to the school office to be given to appropriate administration/program specialist.



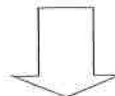
School Staff will individually interview those allegedly involved in the incident(s) described on the Incident Report Form.



Parent/Guardian notified of incident and any action taken for their child.



Disciplinary action will be taken when necessary following district policy (see student handbook).



Counseling and/or skill building for the students involved in peer mistreatment will be implemented when needed to improve school conduct.

Peer Mistreatment Vs. Bullying

Use of the term *bullying* encourages people to look for “bullies” rather than to look for mean behaviors that anyone may choose and that can do harm no matter who uses them. We should talk about what an individual does, not who the person is. For these reasons, we will use the term *peer mistreatment* instead of the word *bullying* throughout the handbook.

What Is Peer Mistreatment?

Peer mistreatment is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Typically, it is repeated over time.

Peer mistreatment can take many forms, such as:

- Physical – hitting, damaging property, etc.
- Verbal – name calling, teasing, etc.
- Emotional – spreading rumors, social exclusion, intimidation, etc.
- Cyber – use of a phone or computer to slander, harass, denigrate, impersonate and/or stalk

Why Deal With Peer Mistreatment?

As evidenced by high-profile cases, peer mistreatment plays a major role in many occurrences of school violence and child suicides. Students who mistreat others without intervention have a greater chance of becoming violent criminals later in life. Students who experience mistreatment sometimes turn to violence as a last resort to escape their torment.

Peer mistreatment can leave individuals with emotional and physical scars well into adulthood. Peer mistreatment hurts and no one deserves to be mistreated.

Students come to school to learn and grow. Peer mistreatment seriously damages that process. Adults have a responsibility to ensure that children are protected and schools have an obligation to respond promptly and thoroughly to issues of peer mistreatment.

National Statistics (stopbullying.gov & pacer.org/bullying/)

- Nearly one-third of all school-aged children are mistreated each year - upwards of 13 million students.
 - Nationwide, 20 percent of students in grades 9–12 experienced peer mistreatment. Source: (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).
 - Nationwide, 28 percent of students in grades 6–12 experienced peer mistreatment. Source: (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics).
- 64% of children who were mistreated by peers did not report it; only 36% reported the mistreatment.
- More than half of peer mistreatment situations (57%) stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student experiencing the mistreatment.
- 77% of children are mistreated by peers emotionally, verbally and physically.
- 20% of children admit to participating in peer mistreatment types of behavior.
- 60% of students say they witness someone being mistreated daily.

Warning Signs of Being Mistreated by Peers

Possible warning signs that a child is being mistreated by peers:

- Comes home with damaged, or missing, personal items (i.e. clothing, book bag)
- Has unexplained cuts, bruises and scratches
- Avoids school and/or other activities associated with school
- Takes a long, “illogical” route when walking to or from school
- Has lost interest in school work or suddenly begins to do poorly in school
- Withdraws from, or shows lack of interest, in school related activities
- Appears sad, moody, teary, or depressed when he or she comes home
- Complains frequently of headaches, stomachaches, or other physical ailments
- Has trouble sleeping or has frequent bad dreams
- Experiences loss of appetite
- Appears anxious and suffers from low self-esteem
- Appears upset after using a computer or being online and after viewing a text message on a cell phone

How Can You Help Your Child Deal With Peer Mistreatment?

- **Define peer mistreatment for your child.** Make sure that he/she understands that it is not just physical.
- **Regularly check in with your child and ask them how school is going.** By increasing communication with your child it makes it easier for them to come to you when they have a problem.
- **Talk to your child and give them advice.** For example, suggest ways to distract the student who is mistreating others. This might include using humor or making sure that there is always a good friend nearby.
- **Encourage your child to ask an adult for help immediately when needed.** At school there is always an adult nearby to give strategies or deal with the situation directly.
- **Encourage your child to make friends and be friendly.** Students seek out support from their friends/peers when coping with peer mistreatment. Students should never have to feel as though they are dealing with this alone.
- **Help your child to understand that being mistreated by peers doesn't mean there is something wrong with a person.** It's the person who is demonstrating hurtful behavior, not that of the student experiencing the mistreatment, that's the problem.
- **Instill pride and positive self-esteem.** Help your child to develop his/her own unique abilities, skills and qualities.
- **Check in with your child after discussing peer mistreatment situations to see if the behavior stopped.**
- **Discourage fighting.** If your child is being mistreated by peers, tell him or her to let the insults go and refuse to fight. Discuss ways to avoid encountering the student who engages in peer mistreatment. If that's not possible, tell your child to walk, or run, away.
- **Complete a Peer Mistreatment Incident Report Form** and turn it into the school office. Be patient, while it will be addressed immediately, it is a process.
- **Do not avoid the situation or blame your child.**

Warning Signs That Your Child May Be Mistreating Their Peers

- Positive views towards violence
- Often aggressive toward adults – including teachers or parents
- Marked need to control and dominate others and situation
- Hot tempered, impulsive, easily frustrated
- Often tests limits or breaks rules
- Good at talking their way out of difficult situations
- Show little sympathy toward others who are being mistreated

How Can You Help If Your Child Is Mistreating Others?

- **Talk to your child. Ask for their account of the situation.** Be objective and learn carefully. Calmly explain what your child is accused of and ask for an explanation of the incident and their role.
- **Make it clear to your child that you take peer mistreatment seriously.** Calmly let them know that you will not tolerate this behavior. Help your child learn that peer mistreatment hurts everyone involved.
- **Develop clear and consistent rules for your child's behavior.** Praise your child when they follow the rules. Decide on fair consequences and follow through if your child breaks the rules.
- **Spend more time with your child.** Carefully supervise and monitor their activities, including when they are online or texting.
- **Be aware of who your child's friends are.** Find out how they spend their free time.
- **Build on your child's talents and positive attributes.** Encourage him/her to get involved in social activities.
- **Work with your child's school to ensure the peer mistreatment does not happen again.** Ask the school to keep you informed. Develop strategies together to address peer mistreatment. Work together to send clear messages to your child that the peer mistreatment must stop.

Student Strategies

- **Ask for help from an adult.** Let an adult know what is happening. Often people that mistreat their peers are very sneaky which makes it difficult for adults to see it happening. If the first adult you talk to doesn't help, ask another.
- **Walk away** from the person that is demonstrating harmful peer mistreatment behaviors.
- **Join with other friends.** People who mistreat their peers lose power if they are outnumbered.
- **Don't show the person mistreating their peers that he/she is bothering you.** By not reacting to their behavior, it takes away the power that they think they have over you.
- **If you respond to peer mistreatment, respond with simple words.** In a neutral tone, respond with words such as "so", "whatever", and "okay." By not showing you are upset, the other person loses power.
- **Positive Self-talk.** Remind yourself that the problem is with the other person, not you. Focus about the positive aspects of yourself.
- **Stay near other peers or an adult.**
- **Complete a Peer Mistreatment Incident Report Form** and turn it into the school office.

Helpful Bystanders

Having Helpful Bystanders is one of the best defenses schools have against peer mistreatment!

A Helpful Bystander is a person (or group) who sees/hears peer mistreatment happening.

- **Take a stand against peer mistreatment and be inclusive** by spending time with the person who is being mistreated and listen to them.
- **Talk to students who are being mistreated to encourage them.**
- **Distract those students who are mistreating other peers.**
- **Help the student being mistreated remove themselves** from the situation.
- **Ignore rumors** about other people.
- **Don't laugh or cheer on when someone mistreats other peers** by teasing, taunting, threatening someone.
- **Complete a Peer Mistreatment Incident Report Form** and turn it into the school office.

Blanchester Middle School

Peer Mistreatment Incident Report Form

Directions: Peer mistreatment is serious and will not be tolerated. This is a form to report alleged incidents of peer mistreatment that has occurred on school property, during a school sponsored activity or event off school property, on school transportation, or on the way to and from school, in the current school year. If you feel you are the target of peer mistreatment or wish to report an incident of peer mistreatment, please complete this form and return it to the school office. Incident Report Form is available outside of Miss. Wilson's office and on the school website: www.blan.org.

Today's Date: _____ School: _____

Person Reporting Incident (Name): _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

Please Check the Appropriate Box:

Target Witness/Bystander Parent/Guardian School Staff Other

Name of Student Target: _____ Grade: _____

Name(s) of Alleged Offender(s) _____ Age _____ Grade _____ Is she/he a Student? _____

Yes No

Yes No

Yes No

On what date(s) did the incident happen?

_____/_____/_____ _____/_____/_____ _____/_____/_____
Month Day Year Month Day Year Month Day Year

Place an X next to the statement(s) that best describes what happened (choose all that apply):

- Any bullying, harassment, or intimidation that involves physical aggression
- Getting another person to harm a student
- Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks, or threatening, in person or by other means
- Demeaning and making the student a target of jokes
- Making rude and/or threatening gestures
- Excluding or rejecting the student
- Intimidating, extorting or exploiting
- Spreading harmful rumors or gossip
- Damaging property
- Cyber (specify): _____ School Owned? _____
- Other: _____

What did the alleged offender do? _____

(Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

Did anything lead up to the peer mistreatment that may help to further explain the situation? _____

(Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

Has this been reported to the school before? Yes No

If yes, when? _____ By whom? _____

Did a physical injury result from this incident?

No Yes, but it did not require medical attention Yes, and it required medical attention

Was the target absent from school as a result of the incident? Yes No

If yes, how many days was the target absent as a result of the incident? _____

Is there any additional information you would like to provide? _____

(Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please Return Completed Form to the School Office

Received by: _____ Date: _____

Helpful Resources

www.stopbullying.gov

www.pacer.org/bullying/

<http://www.nea.org/home/neabullyfree.html>

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/bullying/>

<http://www.youthvoiceproject.com/>

The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide:
What We Know and What it Means for Schools

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-suicide-translation-final-a.pdf>

Blanchester Middle School

Peer Mistreatment Contract

Everyone has the right to feel physically and emotionally safe at Blanchester Middle School. I will do everything I can personally, as a member of my school's community, to create and preserve a physically and emotionally safe environment.

Student – I agree to:

- Treat other students with kindness and respect
- Do not engage in verbal, emotional, physical, or cyber bullying/peer mistreatment.
- Be aware of and abide by the school's anti-bullying policies and procedures
- Support students who have experienced peer mistreatment.
- Notify a parent, teacher or school administrator when peer mistreatment does occur
- Be a good role model for other students

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian:

- I have read the Peer Mistreatment Handbook thoroughly and discussed it with my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Once signed, please return to the school office.