

## This week's issue:

# ARE KIDS RESPONSIBLE FOR STEPPING IN TO PREVENT BULLYING?



Kendra started at a new school in the seventh grade. During her first week, a group of girls started teasing her. Then more kids joined in. Now she gets called names every day. People push her in the hallways. They steal her backpack and throw it in the trash. Kendra wants help, but she is embarrassed to tell her parents or her teachers. She feels like everything is her fault.

Bullying is a big problem in schools today. Both boys and girls can be bullies or victims. Punching, teasing, and spreading rumors all **constitute** bullying. About half of all kids say they have been bullied at some point during their time in school. Many kids who are bullied have low self-esteem. Some try to avoid school. Some even think about killing themselves.

It is important for schools to promote **equity** among all students. No one should be treated like they are less than anyone else. Therefore, many people believe that schools should pass rules to **legislate** an end to bullying.

However, all schools have rules against bullying and these generally do not **resolve** the problem. Perhaps peer intervention constitutes the only resolution to bullying. Should kids step up when they see bullying incidents? Some researchers state that the bystanders who look on and do nothing are as guilty as the bullies.

Many bystanders are afraid to intervene, fearing they themselves will be targeted by the bullies. Furthermore, many kids just don't know what to do. They say it is easier to walk away. So rather than **amending** the rules about bullying, maybe schools should teach kids what to do when they see a bullying incident.

Is it fair to blame bystanders for not intervening to resolve the bullying incident? Should kids put themselves in danger to protect their classmates?

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amend | equity | constitute | resolve | legislate

## USE THE FOCUS WORDS \* and alternate parts of speech

**amend** (*verb*) to change; to add to

➞ *Sample Sentence:* Many schools have chosen to **amend** their rules to make it clear that bullying will not be tolerated.

🗣️ *Turn and Talk:* What rules would you **amend** at your school to make it safer for all students?

**equity** (*noun*) equality; equal status

➞ *Sample Sentence:* Anna wants to promote **equity** among all her friends.

🗣️ *Turn and Talk:* Is there more **equity** among students in elementary or middle school? Explain.

**constitute** (*verb*) to form; to create

➞ *Sample Sentence:* Punching, teasing, and spreading rumors all **constitute** bullying.

🗣️ *Turn and Talk:* What **constitutes** cyberbullying?

**resolve** (*verb*) to solve a problem

➞ *Sample Sentence:* Sammy's mother always let him and his brothers **resolve** their problems themselves.

🗣️ *Turn and Talk:* At what point should adults become involved in **resolving** conflicts between young people?

**\*resolve** (*noun*) determination to do something; commitment

➞ *Sample Sentence:* Nothing could get in the way of Xin's **resolve** to run for class president.

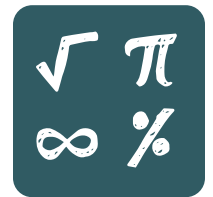
🗣️ *Turn and Talk:* What are some obstacles that might weaken a person's **resolve** to do well in school?

**legislate** (*verb*) to create or control by making laws or rules

➞ *Sample Sentence:* Many people believe that schools should pass rules to **legislate** an end to bullying.

🗣️ *Turn and Talk:* Do you think it's possible for a school to **legislate** good behavior? Explain.

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## DO THE MATH


Some bullying experts say that to stop bullies, we must **amend** the way we think about bullying. Bullying affects everyone. School communities should be based on **equity** and respect. How can this be true if some students torment others?

**Legislating** anti-bullying rules is only a start. One expert named Dan Olweus says that to stop bullies, entire school communities must **resolve** to end bullying. He says that onlookers who watch victims get bullied **constitute** part of the problem.

**Option 1:** Last week at Victory Middle School, there were 11 bullying incidents in 11 different classrooms. Say that for each incident, there are at least 5 onlookers. Which of the following is true?

- A. There were a minimum of 55 onlookers.
- B. There were at least 35 onlookers.
- C. There were a minimum of 20 onlookers.
- D. There were a maximum of 50 onlookers.

**Option 2:** The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 2011, 28% of students aged 12–18 reported being bullied in the past year. If this is still true today, and three students are chosen at random, what are the chances that at least one of them has been bullied in the past year?

 **Discussion Question:** When bullying makes the news, people react angrily. Principals **resolve** to establish **equity** among students. Teachers **amend** classroom rules. Government bodies debate anti-bullying **legislation**. But bullying is not a problem that flares up occasionally. Statistics show that bullying is widespread. In 2011, 28% of students in the U.S. aged 12–18 reported being bullied at school in the past year. For 18%, the bullying consisted of teasing. For other students, the bullying involved tripping, shoving, spitting, or other cruel behavior.

Do these statistics sound right to you? If 28% of students are bullied, then what percent of a school community is likely to be involved in bullying, either as bullies, victims, or onlookers? Fifty percent? Seventy percent? One hundred percent? Explain your estimate.

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## THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

In 2010, President Obama made a speech about bullying to support the “It Gets Better” project, which was founded to bring attention to bullying, and to young people who had committed suicide because they were gay or were thought to be gay. In his speech, the President said:

*“We’ve got to dispel the myth that bullying is just a normal rite of passage – that it’s some inevitable part of growing up. It’s not. We have an obligation to ensure that our schools are safe for all of our kids.”*

Although parents, teachers, and especially young people agree with the President, bullying is still a difficult issue to **resolve**. Most teens know what **constitutes** bullying, but they still engage in it or feel powerless to stop it. Some people believe laws should be **amended** to make bullying a crime. Others are concerned that harsh legislation just creates more rules instead of teaching teens how to treat each other respectfully. They worry about equitable treatment for children who have been bullied as well as appropriate consequences for children who have bullied.

The students in Mr. Seemy’s class want to find out how common bullying is at Franklin Middle School. They have identified four types of bullying: verbal, physical, social, and cyberbullying. Mark how often you notice the different types of bullying in your school: 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = About once per week; 4 = A few times per week; 5 = Once or more per day.

Type of bullying	Description	Approximately how often do you see this type of bullying in your school?
Verbal	Insulting, name calling, making derogatory remarks, or teasing.	
Physical	Pushing, shoving, tripping, spitting, or hitting. May also include stealing or hiding belongings.	
Social	Excluding or isolating from play, activities, or events.	
Cyber	Sending hurtful texts or emails, posting embarrassing pictures online, or starting rumors on social networking sites. May also include creating fake websites or profiles.	

Average your class’ answers to find out what they think.

- According to the data you collected, what type of bullying is most common at your school? Least common?
- What other types of questions could you ask to find out about bullying at your school? What else would you like to know?



