



MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR SCHOOL'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE CLIMATE AND STOP AGGRESSION

Many schools utilize a variety of programs and techniques aimed at reducing and preventing aggression, bullying and cyberbullying. The following are tips designed to maximize your return from any program.

1. **Use as much of the program as you can.** For many reasons, you may only choose to implement parts of a program, but be sure you understand how only using program elements may “dilute” the program’s effectiveness.
2. **Make programs/approaches compatible across the different schools in your district.** Don’t act alone. Consult with other schools in your system and consider how to send a consistent message. You’ll reap rewards when younger students become your students.
3. **Involve students in the effort.** No effort to change school climate will be truly successful without the input and involvement of students. Teenagers want to care; let them be involved. Even younger children are powerful allies.
4. **Make sure that students leading the effort in your school have the time and supervision they need.** When considering a program, always consider if you have the time and resources to properly implement it. A half-hearted effort is not likely to have much of an impact. If you don’t have the time and resources, consider a different program.
5. **Get buy-in from your faculty and staff,** even if it takes time. You need a majority of adults to be convinced about the effectiveness of a program before they’ll push it.
6. **Use visuals around the school.** This is a visual generation – period. You must, must use visual cues and reminders around your school. Students need to see pictures, slogans, etc., to begin to absorb the program’s message.

7. **Provide students with highly visible, anonymous methods of reporting.** Some innovative schools are using messaging, but even a feedback box is better than nothing. The message needs to be that you want to hear from them.
8. **Always get back to the reporter,** even if all you report is that you are responding to their report. Many actions taken in bullying situations are not apparent to reporters. Be sure that the reporter knows that you're not ignoring their report.
9. **Don't be dismissive of a report.** Later you may decide a report does not meet the criteria for school action, but always treat the reporter seriously and respectfully.
10. **Never say, "There's nothing I can do."** You can always offer support to victims, even when there's no possibility of jurisdiction.
11. **Make it clear to your students that you understand that bullies and cyberbullies are sometimes popular and well-liked, but that that isn't relevant when someone is bullying someone else.** A victim's greatest fear may be that everyone likes their tormentor, including the adults – so their report won't be taken seriously or won't be attended to.

Need help?

The Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center

Bridgewater State University

Bridgewater, MA 02325

(508) 531-1784

Email: marc@bridgew.edu

Website: www.marccenter.org