



Dear Parents,

We are happy to inform you that your child's school will be utilizing *the K-5 Bullying and Cyberbullying Curriculum*, provided to all Massachusetts schools by the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University. Schools in the Commonwealth do not pay anything for the Curriculum.

Please note that many schools utilize more than one resource in their quest to educate children about bullying and cyberbullying, and your child's school may be using other programs in addition to this Curriculum. The Curriculum is specifically designed to dovetail with, and not to contradict, current best practices in the field. It is a new Curriculum and is currently being field-tested.

The Curriculum is based on best practices identified through decades of research on bullying prevention, age-appropriate teaching methodologies, and recent research about the roots of cyberbullying that can be addressed during elementary school. Although most cyberbullying occurs during middle and high school, elementary-aged students are increasingly involved and the Curriculum is designed to help prevent these problems.

On the next page, we have provided basic information about the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center and the curriculum that your child's class will be utilizing. You will also find a Parent's Guide with a sample Lesson Plan and suggestions for family discussions about the relevant topics. We strongly encourage all parents to consider discussing some of these issues with their child. For more free resources for parents, visit our webpage at <http://www.MARCCenter.org> and click on PARENTS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth K. Englander". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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## **The Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center and The K-5 Bullying & Cyberbullying Curriculum**

### **What is MARC?**

The Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center is an academic Center located on the campus of Bridgewater State University in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Our goal is to bring low- or no-cost services to K-12 education, law enforcement, and other professional caregivers for children in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Our services include school programs, conferences, workshops, consultation, and research, in the area of bullying prevention, cyberbullying education and prevention, and violence prevention. Most of our programs are available at no cost to schools in the Commonwealth.

MARC was founded and is directed by Dr. Elizabeth Englander, a professor of Psychology at the University, and an expert in the field of bullying and cyberbullying. MARC also benefits from the services of other academics and faculty members, graduate students, undergraduate students, and other support staff.

### **About This Curriculum**

The goal of this curriculum is to educate children in grades K-5 about bullying and cyberbullying, raise their awareness about how these behaviors impact children, help children identify the adults in the school they can feel safe to go to for help and support, and help children develop additional strategies to deal with all aspects of bullying. It utilizes both Teacher-As-Educator and Peer Learning Models. Interactions between grades, intended to dispel stereotypes and promote social pressures to model appropriate behaviors, occur in the curriculum in kindergarten, first grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade. The curriculum also teaches about bystander behaviors and how these can unwittingly contribute to bullying in school and how online bullying feels and can lead to more problems in school as well. Bullying and cyberbullying are not treated separately or even as though they are significantly different. In fact, one of the goals of the curriculum is to underscore the idea that positive social behavior is important in *all* realms – online and offline.

**For more information about the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, please visit our website at [www.MARCCenter.org](http://www.MARCCenter.org).**



## Curriculum Objectives for First Grade

### Curriculum Objectives

- Learn definitions and examples of bullying.
- Learn from older peers as they model pro-social and anti-bullying behaviors.
  - Older peers can be powerful influences on the social development of children.
- Learn about human differences and how a negative focus on them can make others feel negative or inferior.
  - A great deal of bullying and cyberbullying focuses on differences between children. Therefore, making children more sensitive to this issue is an established method of reducing bullying and cyberbullying.
- Begin to become aware of online behaviors that either promote or decrease enjoyment of a game.
  - The ultimate goal of playing online is to have fun. Cyberbullying incidents reduce that fun, so making children aware of this reduces any motivation to cyberbully.
- Begin to become aware of the emotions evoked by antisocial behaviors in online and offline settings and activities.
  - Research shows us that children frequently underestimate how hurtful casual remarks made during online games can be. These lessons are intended to sensitize children to the impact of their remarks.
- Begin to become aware of safety rules for computer use.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Lessons include the following:

- Learning about differences and similarities in people utilizing a power point slide and the book “The Sneetches and other stories by Dr. Seuss.”
  - This book is ideal for first grade discussions. In it, Dr. Seuss portrays a society in which there are “superior” and “inferior” creatures (Sneetches) and, ultimately, how such distinctions cost everyone in the society significantly.
- Rereading “The Sneetches” and class discussion.
- Art project reinforcing the lesson from “The Sneetches.”
- Discussions of online games and offline games.



## Sample Lesson Plan and Parent Discussion Guide First Grade Bullying & Cyberbullying Curriculum

### ***SAMPLE LESSON***

The GOAL of this lesson is to introduce children to the idea that cooperative play makes games fun, and that meanness spoils the fun. The ultimate goal is to associate prosocial behavior with increased fun. We begin by discussing online play, but in future lessons will progress to off-line play as well.

#### Activity #1: DISCUSSION

- **Today I want to talk with you about the kinds of computer games that you like to play.**
- **What kinds of computer games do you play?**
  - Expect to hear: NeoPets; Nick Jr.; Club Penguin; Star Dolls; Habbo; Poptropica.
  - You do NOT need to know all these games. It is fine to let the children explain the games to you in the activity below.
- **Do you ever play computer games in which you play with another player? (I.E., online)**
- **What character are you?**
- **What do you look like? What do you wear? What do you do in the game?**

#### Activity #2: ART

- **Draw a picture of the game you like best to play on a computer.**
  - You may have a few students who do not play any computer games.
  - Ask them, **“Have you ever played a game at a friend’s house or somewhere else?”** If the answer is still “no” (very unlikely), ask them to sit with a buddy and help the buddy draw his/her picture.

#### Activity #3: SHARING

- Ask each child to stand briefly and explain their picture – describe the game. Ask them, **“What do you like about this game? What is fun about it?”**

**\*\* BE SURE TO RETAIN THESE DRAWINGS. YOU WILL BE USING THEM AGAIN IN THE NEXT LESSON. \*\*\*\***

## Discussions to have at home:

- I heard you learned today about bullying and cyberbullying in school today. What did you talk about in class? Can you give me examples of the kinds of behaviors you discussed with your teacher?
- Would you like to read *The Sneetches* at home with me? I would love to read this book with you, and talk about it.
- What did you think about how the starred Sneetches were treating the other Sneetches? Do you think that they were wrong to treat them the way they did?
- At your school, which grownups which you go tell if you needed help and support?
- Can you show me the games you play online? Show me what makes the game fun.
- Are other players ever mean to you in the game? Let's talk about how to handle that.
  - Most games have REPORT buttons. Show your child how to click on that button if anyone is ever mean to them.
  - Discuss how you really want your child to talk to you if this ever happens to them.
- Can you show the computer safety rules Sheet that you prepared in school? Explain these rules to me. Let's post your list above the computer, so we all remember it.