

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 fieldtested.

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,

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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 <u>www.MARCcenter.org</u>.



## **Curriculum Objectives for Fifth Grade**

### **Curriculum Objectives**

- Definition and identification of specific bullying and cyberbullying challenges that occur in school or online.
- Learning to brainstorm student-initiated solutions and approaches to reduce bullying and cyberbullying.
- Learning about children of similar ages who have addressed similar social issues.
- Learning to transmute brainstorming ideas into concrete action plans.
- Utilizing concrete action plans as Class Projects.
- Constructing social rules for behavior based upon previously identified challenges.
- Assessing the success of Class Projects or Class Rules.
- Beginning awareness how older elementary students impact and influence the development of bullying and cyberbullying among younger students.
- Modeling positive social behavior for the benefit of kindergarteners.

### Fifth Grade Lessons include the following:

- Considering how bullying and cyberbullying happen in your own life
- Learning how to label and identify bullying and similar problems
- Considering how to brainstorm ideas for solutions that kids can be directly involved it
- Learning how to make an action plan from a list of brainstorming ideas
- Thinking about younger peers and how older children have an impact on their perceptions of bullying and cyberbullying.
- Helping younger peers learn about bullying, how to reduce and prevent it, and how to respond to it.



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

Goal: the object of this lesson is to help fifth graders begin to define and label the bullying problems that occur at their school and/or among their peers. This lesson utilizes the Checklist or open-response Problems Worksheet which can be found on the next pages.

#### Activity #1: Introduction

- Today we're going to begin talking about bullying and cyberbullying by defining what YOU think is the problem here at our school, or between kids you know.
- I'm going to start by passing out a Checklist to you. I want you to check off all the items that you believe really happen, here at school, online, or just between kids you know.

#### Activity #2: Checklist

- (Begin by reading the checklist aloud with the class.) Each student should check off the items that they believe do occur at their school or among their peers.
- Alternatively, you can use the "open response" version (included here after the Checklist version).
- Once the students have all completed the checklist, instruct them to crumple the page into a ball.

### Activity #3: Throwing

- Place a clean, empty waste can or box in the center of the room.
- Instruct the kids to throw their paper balls into the box. (They will enjoy this.)
- Pick up any balls that miss and place them in the box.

### Activity #4: Discussion

- Ask for a volunteer to randomly choose one ball from the box.
- Ask them to open it up and to read aloud slowly which items were checked. As the child reads, make a list of the "issues" on the whiteboard.
- Repeat at least 4 or 5 times. You may repeat as many as 10 times.
- Ask the students to look at the list on the whiteboard. Ask them:
  - Do you agree that these are the major problems here?
  - What other problems do you see, that aren't on the list?
    - Students may bring up problems that have nothing to do with bullying. In that case, acknowledge the problem but remind the students that the list is about bullying problems.
- \*\* Keep the list up on the whiteboard. You will be using the list in future lessons.

## Discussions to have at home:

- I know that kids and adults call all sorts of things "bullying." What kinds of bullying problems have you seen at school? Did any of the problems you discussed in class involve adults?
  - Note: it is important to permit children to identify what they may consider problem behaviors that occur between adults. However, during this discussion, keep your child focused on actual behaviors – not just their opinions about teachers. It's ok to criticize teachers, but it should be done respectfully.
- At school you learned about other kids who have made impressive efforts to end bullying. Which person did you admire the most? Who did you think did something really interesting or effective?
- Did studying other kids give you any ideas about what YOU might like to do about bullying and cyberbullying?
- What did your class decide to do for an anti-bullying project?
- At your school, who are the adults you would go to for help and support?
- Why do you think that it's important for bystanders to help out? Would you want bystanders to help YOU if someone were bullying you?
- Have you ever seen someone in a computer game say something mean to someone else? Show me the games you play! Let's talk about how to handle it if you do see someone be mean.
  - Most games have REPORT buttons. Ask your child where it is. Ask them if they've ever used it.
- I know it's sometimes very hard for kids to talk to grownups about bullying and cyberbullying. Why do you think that's true? What could we all do about that?