

Northshore Christian Academy

A Ministry of Northshore Christian Church ~ www.northshorechristianschools.org
5700 – 23rd Drive West ~ Everett ~ WA ~ 98203
Phone: (425) 407.1119 Fax: (425) 322.2386



Dear NCA Parents,

What is bullying? We seem to hear the term more and more, but it is becoming a harder question to answer, as the term is thrown around more. The New York Times stated: "...we know that "bullying" isn't the same as garden-variety teasing or a two-way conflict. The word is being overused — expanding, accordion-like, to encompass both appalling violence or harassment, and a few mean words."

When we read about incidents in the news, many of us can remember the pain of being teased or harassed at some point in our lives, and we worry about our own children experiencing similar hurt and humiliation. How can we avoid the trap of fear, yet help prevent them from having a similar experience and prepare them to deal with difficult situations if they arise?

One of our core values at NCA is to create a caring community. We want our students to learn to love God and also to love one another. We strive to help them build solid relationships and develop the skills to get along with one another. In addition, we want to not only focus on outward behavior, but also on their internal character development. Each month we focus on a character quality. These important qualities help establish our school climate. They help set a standard of high expectation as well as a tone for how we treat one another, which in turn can greatly reduce potential problems.

Parents often choose NCA because of our focus on safety, Bible-based instruction, Christian character education and a loving school community. Although we do our best to create this environment at NCA, our students are in many other environments as well and one day will move on to a variety of schools. They need to understand what bullying is and be prepared to respond if they see or experience it. The most powerful way to reduce bullying is to equip the "bystanders" to know how to respond if they witness it. Given the visibility of this issue, it is timely to review our bullying prevention and conflict resolution policies and the way NCA responds to this type of behavior at school.

Every year, we formally survey our students to assess their social and emotional experience at NCA. We ask students specifically if they have been picked on or bullied and if they have seen others bullied. We also watch and listen for students who report unresolved conflict, teasing, etc. How do we address bully-type behavior at NCA? Following is a review of our policy and other helpful information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Holly Leach".

Holly Leach
Superintendent

NCA's Bullying Prevention Policy & Information

***"Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong,
but always be kind to each other and to everyone else."***

~ Thessalonians 5:15 NIV

OUR MISSION regarding bullying prevention

At Northshore Christian Academy, we strive to instill in our students a respect for one other that is based on the infinite value that each individual person has by being made in the image and likeness of God.

PURPOSE of our bullying prevention program

Northshore Christian Academy believes every student has the privilege to learn in an environment that is free from hurt caused by bullying, intimidation, or harassment. We aim to create a school culture and environment where bullying will not be tolerated. Our policy not only meets state law, but most importantly, aligns with Biblical principles.

Our framework for this policy is to establish relationships which are grounded in God's love, compassion, reconciliation and restitution. We are called by Jesus Christ to provide our students with a wholesome academic environment. Therefore, we do not allow behaviors which harm other students, whether physically or emotionally. Our bullying prevention policy lays out our program for building such an environment and equipping our students with tools to avoid and respond to bullying behavior.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at NCA. If bullying does occur, all students should be able to report and know that the incident will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Any student who believes he or she has been the subject of bullying, or anyone (student or parent) who has knowledge of bullying is to report the incident immediately to a teacher, staff member, or school administrator. NCA will investigate the incident promptly to determine the appropriate actions that need to be taken. As a result, education, counseling, and disciplinary actions may be prescribed as determined solely by NCA.

DEFINITIONS

What is bullying? How is it different than a conflict?

Conflict between students is a normal part of growing up and much more likely to happen than being bullied. We aim to equip our students to know the difference and then how to respond effectively in either situation.

Bullying vs conflict- in conflict there is a problem that needs to be resolved and both parties have equal power and usually the desire to solve it. In a bullying situation there is an imbalance of power and typically no real problem to solve. It is one-sided with one person being hurtful or mean to the other. Bullying is intentionally hurtful and their goal is to use their power to control or intimidate. They usually tend to blame the target, do not show remorse, and show no desire to solve the situation with the other person. It continues even when distress to target is evident. The chart below shows some of these contrasts and the second chart helps distinguish further between rude and mean as well.

Normal Peer Conflict	Bullying
Equal power and possibly friends	Unequal power and likely not friends
Issue or problem at center of conflict	No apparent issue or contention between them
Accidental or unexpected	Purposeful or intentional
One incident or happens occasionally	Pattern of behavior, repeated negative actions
Usually not a targeted action toward hurting someone	Target is selected by person doing the bullying
Equal emotional reaction	Strong emotional reaction from target and little or no emotional reaction from person bullying
Does not produce great fear and anxiety	Target experiences fear and anxiety
Not serious	Serious with threat of physical or emotional harm
Each person can defend or protect themselves	Target lacks skills, resources, or relationships for protecting themselves
Goal of action is not to control or intimidate another (Not seeking power or attention)	Goal of action is to control or intimidate another (seeking power, attention, or material things)
Issues are between participants and audience is not a key factor	Instigator seeks audience support for words and actions
Participants usually want resolution to conflict	Instigator denies that there is a problem or claims it was "just a joke"
Willingness and effort to solve problem	No desire or effort to solve the problem
Remorse and will take responsibility	No remorse and blames target
<i>Adapted from James Dillon (2012) & Garrity, Baris, & Porter</i>	

CONFLICT	RUDE	MEAN	BULLYING
Occasional	Occasional	Once or Twice	Is REPEATED
Not planned; in the heat of the moment	Spontaneous: unintentional	Intentional	Is planned and done on purpose
All parties are upset	Can cause hurt feelings; upset	Can hurt others deeply	The target of the bullying is upset
All parties want to work things out	Based in thoughtlessness, poor manners or narcissism	Based in anger; impulsive cruelty	The bully is trying to gain control over the target
All parties will accept responsibility	Rude person accepts responsibility	Behavior often regretted;	The bully blames the target
An effort is made by all parties to solve the problem			The target wants to stop the bully's behavior; the bully does not
Can be resolved through mediation	Social skill building could be of benefit	Needs to be addressed/ should NOT be ignored	CANNOT be resolved through mediation

Source: Jennifer Astles, DASA Newsletter, January 2014, TST BOCES

Three Key Factors: To help further distinguish bullying from a conflict

1. **Aggression resulting in “Harm”**—either physical, verbal, social/ relational
2. **Dominance or “Unfair Match”**—imbalance of power: such as being older, bigger, stronger, smarter, more athletic, more friends/ outnumbered, more popular, having personal information about the target etc.
3. **Persistence**—or **“Repeated”** pattern (or high potential to be) or aggressor failed to stop when asked

Some of the Definitions Used:

- Conflict is a disagreement or argument between two parties where both have equal power to solve it.
- “Bullying is when a person says or does hurtful things over and over again” (Brain Pop Jr. def.)
- “Bullying is when someone is being hurt either by words or actions, feels bad because of it, and has a hard time stopping what is happening to them.” (Pacerkidsagainstbullying.org)
- “Bullying is unfair and one-sided. It happens when someone keeps hurting, frightening, threatening, or leaving someone out on purpose.” (def. from Steps-to-Respect, The Committee for Children)
- Bullying is deliberate, repeated, and involves a power imbalance. It may be done by individuals or by a group.
- Bullying means the use of aggression with the intention to hurt another person.
- Bullying results in emotional or physical pain or distress to the victim.
- Bullying is a relational problem, but also an adaptive problem, in that one behavior might appear to have stopped, but a different behavior might replace it (such as pushing stops, but then name calling begins).

Types of Bullying:

- **Verbal**—using their words to hurt by teasing, name calling, making fun of
- **Physical**—focus on hurting their body by pushing, tripping, hitting, kicking or any use of force or damaging/ taking belongings
- **Emotional**—focus on hurting them on the inside by scaring, tormenting, harassing, laughing at, embarrassing them
- **Social or Relational**—focus on hurting their relationships and reputation by excluding, spreading rumors, gossip, rallying others to tease or harm
- **Cyberbullying**—using electronic information and communication devices to send hurtful messages or images, spreading rumors on the internet, social media, cell phone, etc.

Threat: Not actually using any of the tactics above, but saying or getting the target to believe that they will

Roles in a Bullying Situation:

- “The person doing the bullying” or “The bully” (They usually benefit in some way by their actions)
 - It’s important not to label the person, as they can change. Therefore, we separate their behavior from who they are. They could also be a target or bystander themselves, even in the same day.
- “The person being bullied” or “The target”, formerly called “The victim”
 - It’s important to realize that they are not to blame and that they can choose to be an active target vs feeling and then acting like a helpless victim (since there are things they can do that will help)
- The bystander – those who see bullying occur, but don’t do anything to help
- The up-stander – those who see bullying and speak up, or seek help to support a victim

Some signs that a child or adolescent is being bullied:

- Fear of going to school / wants to stay home
- Frequent complaints of not feeling well, or health room visits
- Cuts and bruises or unexplained injuries
- Damaged clothes or belongings
- Sleeplessness, bedwetting, nightmares

- Depression or feelings of hopelessness / appears sad or withdrawn
- Loss of interest in friends, hobbies, or activities
- Frequently “lost” belongings
- Decline in academic performance
- Irritability, excessive fatigue, or heightened anxiety
- Sudden change in behavior or personality
- Self-destructive behaviors, such as self-harm, or running away
- Changes in eating habits
- Begins bullying siblings or younger kids
- Avoiding certain places or people

Some signs that a child or adolescent may be bullying others:

- Regular bragging, competitive, or worries about reputation
- Frequent name-calling (e.g. loser, wimp) or looking down on others
- Need to have their own way (need to control or dominate others)
- Difficulty maintaining friendships
- Get into verbal and physical fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Frequently getting into trouble at school and other settings
- Prefers younger or less powerful kids
- Defiant or hostile (increasingly aggressive)
- Easily takes offense or jumps to conclusions
- Doesn't accept responsibility for their actions; blames others

HOW DO WE PREVENT BULLYING AT NORTSHORE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY?

Northshore Christian Academy recognizes that even as a Christian school we are not immune to bullying. While we desire for every student to know and love God and to honor the Lord in their actions, we are each born with a sinful nature and are capable of hurting others. We realize the hurt and potential long-lasting impact that bullying can have to both the individual and the school community. Therefore, the preventative and responsive measures we have in place are essential to the deterrence and handling of bullying at our school. We prevent bullying through ongoing education from a Biblical worldview, quick action, and consistent communication. We watch for signs of unresolved conflict and bullying-type behavior, such as exclusion, cliques, hurtful words, and actions. We act by investigating and responding. We train our students and faculty by providing the tools needed to resolve conflict, identify bullying type behaviors, and then respond in an effective manner. We listen to parents when they report their child is experiencing conflict or bullying-type behavior.

OUR YEARLY TRAINING PROGRAM

School-Wide Emphasis

- We develop a culture of caring and sense of belonging by acknowledging one another's unique qualities and worth in Jesus Christ. Intentional instruction on caring for one another (i.e. character qualities, bully prevention, conflict resolution, making friends, etc.) is done from a Biblical worldview through Bible classes,

chapels, and counselor-led guidance lessons. In addition, faculty and staff model care and respect for students and adults.

- We focus on helping our students understand how to avoid conflict and resolve it using Biblical principles. These Conflict Resolution steps to “Avoid Conflict” and “Resolve Conflict” are posted in the classrooms and referred to often. They are included at the end of this document.
- The middle school drama class and the 5th grade leadership team, ‘Wi-Fi- Acts Group’, occasionally present skits on conflict, friendship and bullying prevention during chapels.
- School Counselors meet individually with students who may need support with social or emotional areas.
- School Counselors facilitate conflict resolution when students are unable to resolve conflict on their own.
- School climate survey is given to all 2nd-8th grade students each year. Students report if they have seen or experienced bullying-type behavior. This data is used to give focused-attention and education to the specific needs at NCA.

Ongoing Student Training

Elementary grades

- We start bullying prevention at the beginning of the school year, by creating a positive atmosphere, by teaching rules and routines which set our expectations for academics and desired behavior.
- September is friendship month in the elementary grades (K-5). We focus on developing friendships and including others. Having at least one friend is an important deterrent to being picked on by others.
- Teachers foster classroom environments where students establish friendships and respect one another. The teachers and counselors also train students on how to use conflict-resolution skills in upholding Biblical principles on avoiding and resolving conflict.
- October is nationally recognized as “bullying prevention month”. Each year school counselors teach students about understanding and preventing bullying, whether through chapel messages, special assembly, or classroom guidance lessons. Afterwards, teachers are able to connect with their students in the classroom and provide clarity and additional information as needed.
- We teach Bible based character qualities weekly in the elementary classrooms and chapels.
- Classroom guidance lessons are taught regularly by the counselor in all the K-2 classrooms. Each grade is taught about conflict resolution and bullying prevention at their developmental level. K focuses on getting along with others, while 1st and 2nd grades focus more specifically on bullying prevention. This includes the 3 R’s, Recognize (what bullying is), Refuse (to be bullied or allow others to be), Report (reporting to an adult is essential and not tattling). Tattling is trying to get someone into trouble, while telling is done to help yourself or another student from being hurt.
- School Counselors typically hold friendship groups, usually in 3rd to 5th grades, for 6 weeks. These groups help students connect in a small group setting while building friendship skills in making and keeping friends.
- Each spring we also have a “friendship week” to continue the focus on including others and building strong friendships, as we finish up the year. Each day has a focus, usually emphasizing our words and actions.

Middle School Grades

- In middle school, students are developing the characteristics of our eight student learning outcomes and focusing on showing respect for one another. By learning the value of honoring God in everything, students develop character. This character shapes the middle school community in being respectful, inclusive, and intolerant of bullying behaviors.
- Gator Buddies are servant leaders who help foster a caring and welcoming community at NCA. Gator Buddies are specially selected seventh and eighth grade students who assist small groups of sixth graders and new students at the middle school at orientation. They offer support throughout the school year.

- Each September the middle school has “Spiritual Emphasis Week” where students and faculty devote focused attention to Christ through daily chapel messages, prayer, and classroom discussions. This helps set the tone for a Christ-centered, positive school climate.
- In late September, or early October, the middle school students, faculty, and parent chaperones go on a special overnight retreat. The retreat is for the purpose of seeking God, developing healthy friendships, bonding with peers and faculty, and creating a caring culture for the school community.
- Middle school students participate in small group gatherings once a month in their homeroom class. Relevant topics on social issues and concerns are addressed and discussed from a Biblical worldview.
- In middle school, the school counselor collaborates with teachers and administrators to present relevant guidance lessons about important topics such as bullying prevention, digital integrity (addressing cyberbullying and social media safety), conflict resolution, etc. Our computer classes also teach the 9 elements of digital citizenship in an effort to prepare them for the digital world and keep them safe as well.
- Middle school chapel will occasionally have special speakers or presentations with related topics, such as Taproot Theater, drama team skits, and or friendship talks from our school counselors.

Ongoing Staff Training

- Teachers and educational assistant staff receive yearly training on bullying prevention, usually during in-service training before school begins. At the beginning of second semester, we train again while reviewing student survey data to assess any changes might be needed based on their feedback.
- The school counselors and principals provide guidance and support to staff in investigating any allegations of bullying.
- Teacher resources instruct and guide students in following healthy and Christ-like relationships.

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO BULLYING AT NORTSHORE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Bullying is viewed as a breach of Northshore Christian Academy’s behavior policy.

- Any reports of bullying will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken.
- The response to bullying will provide a combination of discipline, education, or counseling.
- Guidance and support for the student being targeted is provided and further support may be recommended.
- Appropriate and consistent sanctions will be instituted.
- Appropriate support for the students will also be determined and arranged as needed.

The Academy seeks to promote a climate and culture in which students will be encouraged to:

- Experience a safe and secure environment where they can thrive and grow in Christian character.
- Take positive and Biblical actions right away to stop any bullying if they observe or experience it.
- Report the bullying incident to a teacher or staff who will then report it to the administrator as soon as possible.
- Be an up-stander or leader! Make it clear to their peers that bullying is not accepted.
- Seek forgiveness and repentance when their actions or words hurt others.

HOW SHOULD PARENTS RESPOND TO CLASSMATE CONFLICT OR BULLYING?

What can parents do when their children come home unhappy because someone has been mean to them?

1. Listen to your student and take their feelings and fears seriously. Don't overreact, but listen well while showing caring and understanding. Encourage your child to be specific. Ask questions to gather information, such as
 - a. Who is involved?
 - b. What happened?
 - c. When did it happen?
 - d. Where did it happen?
 - e. Has it happened before?
2. Be careful to get a complete story hearing what your child says, as there are usually at least two sides of a story. Ask questions such as: What was going on before this started? What happened next? How did you respond? If they say "He was being mean to me!" inquire, "What did he do that was mean? or clarify, "What would I have seen or heard if I was there?"
3. Try asking, "Do you want me to do something about it, or did you just want me to know?" as a way to identify a child who needs to vent versus a problem that needs solving.
4. Let your child's teacher know any time that your child is coming home from school consistently unhappy. It is important to uncover the source of such feelings. Often there will be things that the teachers and other staff members can do to make your child feel more comfortable.
5. Determine if it is a student-to-student conflict or a bullying incident. Review the "Definitions" section above on "Bullying vs conflict".
6. If it was a conflict:
 - Have your student recount the NCA Steps to Avoid Conflict (Ignore, Move away, Tell nicely, Warn, Tell). Did they try any of these? What would they try if it happened again?
 - Did they did try to resolve things? Have your child recount the NCA Conflict Resolution Steps. Did he/she go through those steps in handling the conflict? (Stop, Take turns listening to each other, Put yourself in the other person's position, Ask for forgiveness, Forgive, Pray together) See charts below.
7. If it seems to be a bullying situation:
 - Assure your child they are not to blame. Offer support and encouragement & be available.
 - Tell a school authority immediately. Do not ignore it. Insist that your child let an adult at school know when something upsetting happens in school. Problems can't be addressed when nobody knows about them. We can deal with a situation more effectively if it just happened. If a situation just happened a student should report right away, since all the students involved are right there, it is easier to get a clearer picture of what happened and talk to potential witnesses. It also sends a strong message to those doing the wrong thing that their behavior is not acceptable and will be dealt with right away.
 - Do not try to let your child work it out on their own without adult help (it's not a normal conflict).
 - If your child is initially reluctant to share their concerns, accompany them to speak to their teacher. Let your child know that the goal is for them to learn to let the teachers know when things happen.
8. Recognize that most of us suffer when we think that our children are being hurt in ways that we remember from our own childhood. Try to separate your own feelings from the immediate situation. Help empower your child to speak up so that they don't end up feeling like a victim. Let your child know that bullying in any form is never acceptable. Make sure your child knows that being bullied is not their fault. Do try to help them feel confident and to not show a reaction in order to reduce the satisfaction of the person doing the bullying.

9. Avoid using any bullying-type tactics around your child or any name calling, such as “scaredy cat”, weak, wuss, wimp, etc.
10. Don’t tell them phrases such as “Don’t worry about it; forget it; just ignore it; toughen up; be a man; get in there and fight.” Instead, acknowledge their concern and provide support whether it be a conflict or a bullying situation that needs to be reported.
11. Do not tell the student to physically fight back. They can get hurt, it rarely helps, and they will get consequences.
12. Do not try to take matters into your own hands and confront either the other student or their parents. Report concerns to school staff and support their efforts to effectively handle the situation, knowing they cannot share discipline-related actions regarding another student.
13. Encourage healthy friendships to build support. Research shows that those who have at least one friend are less likely to experience bullying.

HOW SHOULD A STUDENT RESPOND TO BULLYING?

Steps for student to take if being bullied:

Student being bullied should:

1. Only ignore the bullying if it is very minor and the first time (if it is not physical or being hurt). Many times bullying will stop if they do not elicit a response and get what they want.
2. Do not react or show that you are scared or upset (try to stay calm). Showing you’re upset usually makes it get worse.
3. Confront the student bullying (if it is safe to do so). Stand tall and use a strong voice to assertively (not aggressively) tell them to stop. Let him/her know that his/her actions are unwanted and unjustified.
4. Get away from the bullying student, stay with other kids, and move closer to an adult.
5. Report the problem to one of the following adults:
 - a. Teacher or staff member on duty
 - b. Principal
 - c. School Counselor
6. Also, inform parents when you get home.
 - If your student has not reported while at school, when they get home parents can call or email their teacher, counselor, or division Principal right away (contact info under staff on website).
7. If any incidents happen after reporting, make sure to continue to report right away, until it has stopped.

Steps to take if you witness bullying:

Student seeing bullying should:

1. Say something- don’t just watch or be a bystander or an audience (that promotes the show).
2. Be an up-stander, tell the person bullying to stop (if it is safe to do so).
3. Tell the person being targeted, not to listen to them and stay with them.
4. Don’t join (much better to leave the scene and report than just watch).
5. Don’t laugh (even if what was said or done might have been funny).
6. Tell an adult what happened.

7. Support the student being targeted by being kind at another time.

Here are some tools we use at school deal with conflict:

If a student has a “normal peer conflict” and it is not a bullying situation, we want them to try to work it out with the other person. We encourage our students to go through the process of conflict management in day to day situations (normal type conflicts). This is Biblical and the Matthew 18 principle. ¹⁵“If your brother sins against you,^[u] go and tell him what he did wrong. [try to work it out] Do this in private. If he listens to you, then you have helped him to be your brother again. ¹⁶But if he refuses to listen, then go to him again and take one or two other people with you. ‘Every case may be proved by two or three witnesses’. [If the matter still is not resolved go to a higher authority and enlist the support of the teacher or school counselor.]

Romans 12:18 “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

If a problem or conflict begins the Avoid Conflict steps can be very effective.

STEPS TO AVOID CONFLICT:

1. IGNORE	Ignore the person (behavior) or minor offenses.
2. MOVE AWAY	Move away from the situation or person. (If the person follows, continue to step 3.)
3. TELL NICELY	Nicely, but assertively, ask the person to stop. (If they do not stop, go to step 4)
4. WARN	Warn the person that you will need to tell an adult if he/she does not stop. (If they do not stop go to step 5)
5. TELL	Tell an adult right away. It is not tattling if you have done everything you can to avoid the problem and it has not worked (It's best to report right away at this point).

STEPS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT: When a conflict has already occurred, these steps can help to resolve it.

STOP!	Stop yourself from responding in a way that keeps the conflict going. (For example: do not lose your temper, whine, nag, argue, challenge, make excuses, or blame others).
TAKE TURNS LISTENING TO EACH OTHER	Do not interrupt. Listen to every word attentively. Show the other person respect and look into his/her eyes. Be careful what tone of voice you use, and be conscious of your body language when listening and speaking.
PUT YOURSELF IN THE OTHER PERSON'S	How does it feel if someone was doing the same thing to you?

POSITION	
ASK FORGIVENESS	If you in any way played any part in the conflict, even by keeping it going, you must genuinely ask for forgiveness.
FORGIVE	Forgive the other person.
PRAY TOGETHER	Join together in a prayer. Prayer cements a bond and helps establish a close relationship with Christ.
ALTER	Change your behavior. Grow in Godly character.

There are many strategies for students to choose from in dealing with a small problem or conflict. This choice wheel is an example of nine that they might try and some choices are better in certain situations.

