



# PRINCETON

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS



### Preventing Bullying in Princeton Public Schools October 9, 2017

Dear Community,

October is bullying prevention month, and here is an update on what we are doing in our district. Here are the strategies that work best in preventing bullying in schools.

#### **Have a Clear Definition of Bullying**

We have a clear definition of bullying in our school board policy 514:

“Bullying” means intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and:

1. an actual or perceived imbalance of power exists between the student engaging in the prohibited conduct and the target of the prohibited conduct, and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or
2. materially and substantially interferes with a student’s educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.  
The term, “bullying,” specifically includes cyberbullying as defined in this policy.
3. A “threat” is a statement of an intention to inflict pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action on someone in retribution for something done or not done.

We investigate offensive behavior of all kinds, and if the behavior meets the definition, we follow our policies and procedures.

#### **Set Clear Expectations**

Every year, our administration analyzes student behavior data and adjusts expectations of proper and civil behavior in our schools. These expectations are written in each

school's student handbooks. These handbooks are then approved by the school board. One example of alterations of expectations might be the incorporation of cyber bullying.

We use PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support) in each of our schools. PBIS is a framework of school discipline which focuses upon schoolwide systems of support and incorporate proactive strategies. Students are taught to create a positive school environment by using a continuum of positive behavior support.

### **Educate the Staff**

Every year, we have learning sessions with all of the adults in our district, with the opportunity to learn about bullying prevention. Last summer, we had a PBIS all day session for people to attend. This fall we had an all staff workshop on Social Emotional Learning. Our administrators and grades 6 through 12 teachers and coaches also had a workshop on harassment and bullying prevention. It is an ongoing process.

### **Reward Positive Behaviors**

It is no secret that each school in our district takes PBIS, or Tiger Pride, seriously. At each level, from our Early Childhood, through our High School, the adults are looking for behaviors aligned with our expectations, and we reward the behavior.

In order to learn positive behaviors, we use evidence-based curriculum to teach appropriate behaviors.

At the Primary School level, each teacher spends time, instructing our students by the use of the Second Step curriculum. Using the Second Step curriculum has been shown to decrease problem behaviors and increase school success by promoting self-regulation, safety, and support. The Intermediate School teachers and administration work together every summer, designing a curriculum which reflects the students' greatest needs. This year their theme is to "Let Tiger Pride Be Your Guide." The Middle School uses the Olweus curriculum, which is the most researched and best-known bullying prevention program for Middle School students. For the High School level, students themselves have planned strategies to prevent any offensive behaviors. Student Council participated in Kindness in Chalk on Monday, October 2nd. Students wrote positive messages on the sidewalk that students saw as they walked into school. They will also have a school dress-up day for people to wear Blue on Wednesday, October 18th. Blue is the color to promote "Being Nice To People." They are also making clothespins that have a blue ribbon on them to promote kindness. The clothespins will also have positive messages on the back side. There is a PBIS committee with a year long plan of ways to engage student in positive behaviors.

### **Have Open Communication**

It is very important for everyone to work together to prevent bullying in schools, and so students and staff are encouraged to report any incidents of concern. On the parent portal, there is a button available to report any offensive behavior. This is monitored by each school's administration.

### **Engage Families**

Bullying prevention takes the cooperation of all of the adults in students' lives. We ask families to help us by:

- Staying connected with your child to listen for any concerns.
- Explain to your child what bullying is, by teaching them the definition.
- Tell your child to report anything that he or she may experience or witness.
- Teach your child to be empathetic. Being kind is the root of all good!
- Set a good example as your child's first role model.
- Look for any warning signs that your child may be the victim of bullying.
  - Unexplainable injuries.
  - Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry.
  - Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness.
  - Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating
  - Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares.

### **Statistics**

We have good statistics here in Princeton. Our schools have been named Exemplary by PBIS many times. Our whole district is engaged in this framework, and getting the awards reinforce our fidelity of the program.

Every three years, for the past 30 years, our students have participated in the Minnesota Student Survey. One section of the questions include safety of students at school, related to bullying. Thankfully, we had better statistics than the state average.

From our yearly Families and Student surveys, our 2017 results showed 83% of our families feel their children are safe in our schools. Students themselves reported the 86% of them feel safe in our schools.

We will never be satisfied until we have 100% of our students and their families feel safe in our schools.

### In Summary

All of us at Princeton Public Schools want our children to feel safe and secure then they are at school. We want them to be able to concentrate on getting the best possible education we can provide. One of our core values is respect, and we define it as: Listening to, accepting, and valuing each individual in the school district and community. We value each student, and please know we will do our very best in bullying prevention--not only during Bullying Prevention month, but all of the time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia A. Espe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.

Julia A. Espe, Superintendent  
763.389.6190 Office Phone Direct Line  
[julia.espe@isd477.org](mailto:julia.espe@isd477.org)