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Bully Plan for Valleywood Middle School

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Senior Honors Project

4/21/14

Bullying is a problem in every school in America, and bullying affects many students in these schools across the nation. Because of this, almost every school has a “Bullying Plan” which aims to stop bullying. Even some states, like Michigan, require that a school implements a bullying plan. However, almost all of the bullying plans for these schools are largely ineffective. An effective bullying plan must consider the culture of a specific school and the students must be given strategies which empower them. Therefore, a truly effective bullying plan must be preventative of bullying actions rather than reactionary. As Fox and Boulton stated about bullying, “it may be easier to prevent childhood bullying problems rather than react to them because responding to incidents of peer victimization can be difficult” (2005).

This bullying plan is unique to the Kentwood Public School of Valleywood Middle School. There is no bullying plan which is a “cure-all” for every situation. The culture of the school should dictate many aspects of a bullying plan. Certain activities in this bullying plan are designed to fit the culture of Valleywood Middle school. However, the unifying themes for this bullying plan will be effective in any situation or school culture. Culture needs to be considered when implementing these themes into a specific school. Therefore, the activities which convey the important aspects of this preventative bullying plan will change from school to school.

As mentioned above, the bullying plan created here for Valleywood Middle school is concentrated on implementing six important themes into the culture of a school. The six themes are: show that each individual has value (team building), conflict resolution strategies, the idea of “total behavior,” the belief that the only behavior we can change is our own, the understanding that people do not make us miserable or happy, and having self-respect/discipline. All of these themes work together and make a bullying plan which is preventative

rather than reactionary to the bullying problem. These themes support a positive culture in a school which prevents bullying and empower students to avoid bullying.

This plan is designed to be implemented in a specific way. There are discussions between the students and leaders after each theme which is essential for the success of this bullying plan. In addition, most of the activities are designed for groups of 20-30 students. Therefore, it would not be useful to implement this bullying plan in a large group assembly. Furthermore, this plan should not be implemented all on one day. Rather, the bullying plan is designed to give the students one theme per day over several days. This way the students can be reflective on the themes they have learned.

Building from this, the themes should be implemented to the students in the order they appear in the following pages. The themes are designed to build from each other by allowing the students to become more and more vulnerable. The first theme of team building is used to create a general sense of trust among the students. Next, the students will be given different conflict resolution strategies. This theme is a superficial tool, and it will create more trust in the group. After the conflict resolution strategies, the students will complete the “total behavior” theme. This theme is more intellectual and not emotional. It gives another opportunity for students to build trust with each other before they need to become more vulnerable. The theme of allowing the students to understand the only behavior they can change is their own is more emotional for the students than the other themes. Therefore, this theme starts to draw on the trust created in the first three themes. After this, the bullying plan teaches the students that people cannot make us miserable or happy. This theme is the most emotional of all the themes, and thus it needs to be towards the end when students are comfortable with one

another. The last theme is having the students create self-respect/discipline. This theme displays how all the themes works together, and it is an essential skill for the students to successfully live out the other themes.

The activities and the rationale for each theme are given in the subsequent pages. Then, following the activity there are sample questions to help the discussion which the students should be able to self-guide with a little help from the leader. Just to reiterate, the themes will stay consistent across every school, but how these themes are implemented and conveyed to the students will need to change between each school.

## **Theme #1: Each Individual has value (Team Building)**

**Rationale:** An important step to stop bullying is allowing students to see the value in the others around them. Every person has something special and unique that makes them a valuable asset to the community as a whole. However, the problem is allowing students to see this value in every student. If a school creates a culture where the students see value in other students' different perspectives and ideas, the amount of bullying would greatly decrease. Students often bully other students because they do not see much value in them. Therefore, this activity works to break away the belief that a person or group of people would have nothing special or unique about them.

**Activity:** The students need to be broken up into groups of 4 to 5. Each group will be given a different Lego set. For example, one group may be building a boat while another group would be building a plane. However, before the activity starts, some pieces from each Lego set should be put into another set. For instance, the group building the plane would have some pieces to complete the boat while the pieces to complete the plane would be in a different group. Therefore, as the students realize they do not have all the pieces to finish their project, they will need to use the other groups to acquire their missing pieces.

### **Possible Discussion Questions:**

- Could any of the groups finish their project all by themselves? Why?
- Did the other groups have value to your group? How?
- Can you think of an example from the real world which models this activity?
- How would these principles fit into our school setting?
- Do you think every person has something special to offer?
- Knowing you could use what someone else has, how would that change your perception of them? How would it change your actions towards them?

## **Theme #2: Conflict Resolution Strategies**

**Rationale:** Conflicts are bound to arise in any school setting. Students are going to disagree on certain topics, issues, or situations. However, it is important that these conflicts do not become mean spirited or violent. The students need to be able to resolve these conflicts in peaceful, equitable way. Therefore, by providing students with specific conflict resolution strategies, the students become empowered because they are given knowledge on how to better approach these situations. These specific conflict resolution strategies are included because they have a focus on helping the student understand the other side of a conflict. They make the student focus on the fact that there could be a different, and yet acceptable, opinion other than theirs. Once again, by being able to understand another person's argument, it empowers the students to better resolve conflicts which arise.

**Activity:** The students will read the story of the "The Big Bad Wolf." Then, the students will be shown different movie clips from the movie Hoodwinked. The contrast of these two stories demonstrates to the students two different perspectives of the same story. In addition, the students should complete the worksheet "A Conflict in My Life." Once again this worksheet has a focus on allowing the students to understand a different perspective of an argument.

# A Conflict in my Life

## My Side vs. the Other Side

**Directions:** Think of a recent situation which involved a conflict between you and parent, brother/sister, or friend. Describe the facts of the conflict situation in the form of newspaper headline which clearly explains the conflict and the solution.

The Conflict:

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My Side:

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The Other Side:

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Possible Solutions:

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**Source:** Ready-to-Use Violence Prevention Skills (Weltmann Begun, 1999)



**Possible Discussion Questions:**

- What did these activities teach you?
- What skills did you learn?
- Did you learn to approach a conflict differently? How?
- How will these skills help you in the real world?
- How will this different “approach” to conflict help you in the real world?
- Why is it important to understand both sides of an argument?
- Do both sides have to be right? Do they have to be wrong?
- What if someone else does not follow these new skills and approach you learned? How will you respond?
- How do these new skills and approach to conflict help you solve conflict in a peaceful way?

## **Theme #3: Total Behavior**

**Rationale:** Total behavior is the idea that people have indirect control over their feelings and physiology, but they have direct control over your thoughts and actions (Glasser, 1998).

Therefore, no longer can students say, "I was just so mad I couldn't control myself!" Or, "he made me so angry I had to punch him!" The idea of total behavior frees students from these thought processes. It empowers the students by allowing them to see they have control over much of their behavior. Therefore, nothing or no one can force them to do something because of the way it makes them feel.

**Activity:** The students will be given a piece a candy. However, they will be told that they cannot eat the candy for 5 minutes. If they successfully wait to eat the candy, they will receive a reward. The reward could be another piece of candy or maybe another reward the students would enjoy such as extended recess.

### **Possible Discussion Questions:**

- What strategies did you use to control your desire to eat the candy?
- Did you try to get your mind off eating the candy?
- How does knowing you can control your feelings and physiology help besides simply not eating a candy?
- Does knowing you can control your feelings and physiology feel empowering? How?
- How will this control over your behavior help you in conflicts?
- How does this control over your behavior help you in your interaction with other people?

## **Theme #4:** The only behavior we can change is our own

**Rationale:** This theme is used as another way to empower students when they encounter a conflict. It is important to know that the only behavior in a conflict they can change is their own (Glasser, 1998). Therefore, they cannot force someone to conform to their will. They will need to change how they are acting to produce a different and more positive result. This is an important idea to understand because it allows a student to think what he/she can do to help the situation. Therefore, it takes the focus off of others in a conflict and puts the focus on the only behavior that someone can change their own behavior. If a whole student body used this thought process, conflicts would solve in a much faster more efficient way.

**Activity:** To show that the only behavior students can change is their own, the students in a classroom will play "Simon Says." The leader will pick two students to be "Simon." The two people who are "Simon" will leave the room. Then, the leader will explain to the class that they will only do what "Simon" tells them when he does something besides says, "Simon says." For example, the class would only do what "Simon" tells them to do when he/she starts the phrase with "Okay." Therefore, the Simons will believe they can control the people by saying, "Simon says." However, they really can only control the others in the class by saying "Okay" before each command. In order for "Simons" to produce the desired outcome, they must change the only behavior they can control which is their own.

### **Possible Discussion Questions:**

- What did you find frustrating? Why?
- How did it help to understand the other group's perspectives and rules?
- At first, could the "Simons" control the behavior of the other students in class?
- What did the "Simons" have to do to start getting people to listen to them?
- Can you think how this theme is used in real life?

## **Theme #5: People cannot make us miserable or happy**

**Rationale:** This is another theme to empower students in their day to day interactions with other people. It demonstrates to the students that other people have no control over how they respond to certain interactions (Glasser, 1998). This demonstrates to the students that the only person who has control over how they respond to certain interactions is themselves. Therefore, this will significantly reduce the retaliation among the students. It will cut down on this retaliation because the students will begin to understand how they respond is completely independent of what others do to them. Understanding this theme allows the students to know that it is their approach to situations which will make them miserable or happy.

**Activity:** For this theme, the leader needs to have something embarrassing happen to them. For example, they could get pied in the face. Whatever embarrassing event the leader or class chooses, the leader needs to have it happen to them twice. In these two times, the leader needs to have two different reactions to the embarrassing event. One time the leader needs to become sad or upset. Then, the other time the leader needs to respond by “laughing it off” or staying positive.

### **Possible Discussion Questions:**

- Is this situation always going to turn out negative? Why?
- Is this situation always going to turn out positive? Why?
- How can there be different outcomes to the same situation?
- Who is controlling how the outcome will be in this situation? How?
- How does this information apply to your life?
- How does knowing a situation is not guaranteed to go a certain way empower you in conflicts?

## **Theme #6:** Creating self-respect/discipline

**Rationale:** It is important that students begin to respect themselves. If a student does not respect himself/herself, they will be more likely to get into conflicts with other students.

Students need to be secure in who they are because it will free them from the “labels” or “identity” that others place on them. Therefore, if a student is treated badly by other students through their words or actions, a student with self-respect and self-discipline knows that those words or actions do not define them. Thus, they will handle the situation in a peaceful manner. The ability to gain self-respect is another empowering attribute to students. In a school where students have self-respect, the culture of that school will be largely void of violent or mean-spirited interactions.

**Activity:** The students need to complete the “Road Map” activity to help them achieve self-respect.

## Road Map:

Follow the directions below to design your road map to success in the development of self-respect

List 5 positive features about yourself

List one physical feature about yourself you dislike but will learn to “live with.”  
Tell how you will accomplish this.

List three personal features about yourself that you would like improve.

List one thing you will do to achieve each of the improvements you have listed above

**Source:** Creating the Peaceable School  
(Bodine, Crawford & Schrumpf, 1994)



Success You Made It!



**Possible Discussion Questions:**

- One is one thing you like about yourself?
- What is one thing about yourself that you wish was different?
- How will you improve the aspect of yourself you wish was different? Or how will you learn to live with it?
- Is there anybody who does not have something they would like to change in this classroom?  
How about in the world?
- Why should we feel insecure about the things that we do not like then?

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