

MILTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BULLYING/PEER AGGRESSION

RESPONSE AND REPORTING PROCEDURE

Reporting

1. The adult should decide the seriousness of reported or witnessed incident. Children who are victims or perpetrators should be not making those judgments
2. Interview the target first, then the aggressor.
3. Do not ask to see the victim in the alleged aggressor's presence, and emphasize that the victim will not be mentioned to the aggressor and will not be part of the discipline.
4. Make dealing with the aggressor(s) your job and not the victim.
5. Mediation should not be used with bullying situations

Victim interview

1. Affirm the child's feelings, i.e. "You were right to report this. I'm glad you told me."
2. Ask the child what s/he has already attempted to do, to stop this situation.
3. Make it clear that the aggression was not his/her fault.
4. Think carefully before giving advice, as often times the targets have already tried and failed to stop this aggression by the strategies we usually suggest, i.e. walk away, and tell aggressor to stop, etc.
5. Remind the target to always report aggression.
6. Brainstorm solutions with him/her after identifying what has and has not worked in the past. Note: even solutions that seem obvious to adults may not be apparent to children, such as merely avoiding the bully.
7. Recruit peers to befriend isolated targets. Do this aggressively (that is, approach peers you think will be sympathetic and ask them deliberately to befriend the target; even temporarily, this can be a big help).

Accused interview

1. Identify the problem and diffuse reporting responsibility, i.e. "I have been hearing that..." "I have an Incident Report that states..." Alternatively, own reporting responsibility or attribute it to another adult, i.e., "I am disturbed by what I have been seeing..." or "Ms. So-and-so saw you..."
2. Focus more on the aggressor child's behavior than on a particular incident. For example, "I have a report here that you are calling kids names," rather than "I have a report that you called Susie Smith a bad name."
3. Provide incentives for honesty. For example, if the aggressor denies any wrongdoing, you can tell child that if s/he tells the truth about the incident you can mention his/her honesty when calling his/her parents.
4. The procedure differs somewhat, depending on whether the child who is accused of being the aggressor admits wrongdoing or not.

5. **Denial** – (be prepared for this) If there is any corroborating evidence or witnesses, tell the child that. Do not mention the victim or the witnesses by name (unless they are adults), if possible. Go to Number 8 below: “Assigning Consequences”.
 - a. If there is NO corroboration and the “aggressor” continues to deny everything – one child’s word against another’s: Tell the “aggressor” that you hope s/he is right and that nothing happened, and that you will be keeping a very close eye on the situation and so will the other adults in the school. The critical element here is that the children know there will be a response to the report even if there appears to be no immediate disciplinary action. NOTE: If the aggressor denies, regardless of whether there is corroboration, conduct an investigation. You may tell the aggressor that you will talk to him/her some more about this matter, but do not mention that you may be talking to other students, as this may result in the aggressor threatening them as well.
6. Feel free to use a non-disciplinary response at first, such as requiring the child to have a weekly “check-in” with you, so the aggressor child knows that the adults are paying particular attention to his/her behavior. Do not frame the weekly check-in as a punishment; rather, stress that you want to be sure that the child is doing well and want to hear weekly how he/she is doing.
7. **Aggressor admits wrongdoing:**
 - a. but minimizes the behavior: respond by firmly asserting that s/he may feel it is “no big deal” but that the school and the community thinks that such behaviors are indeed a big deal.
 - b. if student finally admits wrongdoing after initially denying it, acknowledge the difficulty of shifting out of denial.
8. **Consequences**
 - a. If student admits wrongdoing or an investigation leads staff to believe student was engaging in bullying behavior, student should look up consequence on the **Discipline Rubric**. Explain that consequences are not arbitrary and that any child who engages in this behavior will in fact experience the same consequence.
 - b. Principal or Vice Principal contact parent.
 - c. **Document incident** and consequence.
 - d. Principal or Vice Principal help student complete the **Think About It Form**. The sooner this is done, the more effective it will be. This step of reflection is the first in many that the student can take to change his/her aggressive behavior. Students should either write out answers to open-ended questions or be able to dictate answers to an adult who writes them down for him/her. Students must make statements that accept the negative effects of his/her behavior on others, e.g., “I hurt Sam when I called him stupid.”

** Note: sharing the outcome of the incident with all involved parties is critical for maintaining a school climate where adults and children feel able to report such behaviors. Even if the information shared is only brief and nonspecific, such as “this is more complicated than it appears and I can’t by law give you any more specifics,” it assures adults and children that their reporting is not being ignored. A general policy which states that “action will be taken” should never replace specific outcome reporting.