

# Bully-Proofing EJHS

Bullies, rumors, mold, and mildew, all thrive in the dark, damp, hidden places where secrecy prevails. Bring any of them out into the light of day, and they usually shrivel, shrink, and die. The first and most important step in combating bullies is what we call “Stop, Walk, Talk.” This encourages victims of bullies to first make it clear to a bully that the behavior is unwanted by saying, “Stop!” Leaving the situation if possible – “Walk,” follows this. Finally, it is very important for the victim to tell an adult what is happening – “Talk.” Only when we as adults are told what is going on can we do something about it. This brings us to our next commitment; that of aggressively following up on any and all reports of bullying. This will include any or all of the following: Interviewing the victim and the accused; parent conferences; discipline plans; contacting law enforcement; suspension and/or expulsion.

While this plan mainly addresses physical and/or verbal bullying here at school, we all know that bullying does not happen only at school. Cyber-Bullying, or bullying done through online social networks like MySpace and Facebook, and through text messaging on cell phones, is a rapidly growing arena for this kind of abuse.

All social media sites have a “Code of Conduct” or “Acceptable Use Policy” that everyone who joins the service agreed to during the registration process. All users are bound to the mandates contained in these agreements whether you read it or not. These policies outline the process of making reports of abuse. While this may take some time, it is one way to combat online abuse. Another option is for parents to contact the police and file a report if you have proof of who is doing the abuse. Be sure that you DO NOT delete any of the posts or text messages received so that they may be used as evidence in legal proceedings.

The first and most basic line of defense for parents is this: If your child is allowed to join social media sites, then YOU SHOULD TOO! Mandate that your child “Friend” you on these sites OR mandate that your child provide you with their username and password so you can check up on things yourself. Nothing beats involved, proactive parenting.

Cell phone text messaging is probably the easiest to trace and prosecute since the sender’s information is available and the text itself. If this is done at school then we can discipline the offender under the rules here at school including the actions described above. Since social media sites are blocked here at school, abuse perpetrated using these sites are more difficult, if not impossible, to address here at school. These situations should be shared with us so that we can keep an eye on anything that spills over from home to school. Please know that student safety is our number one priority at EJHS, and feel free to contact us at any time. Everything we do is a team effort!