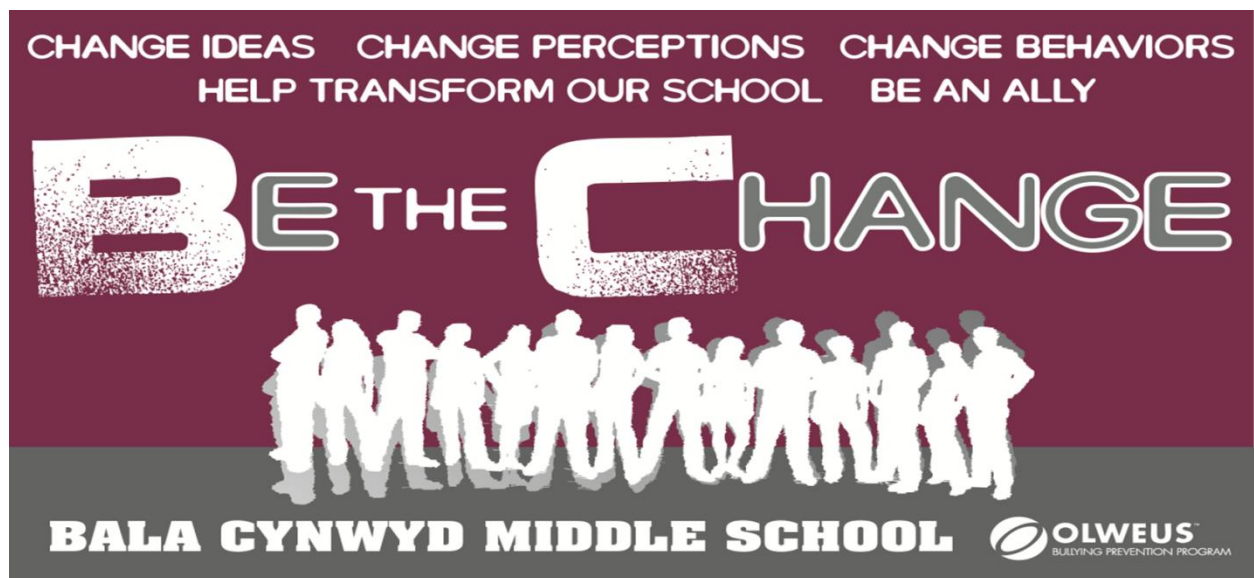


# Parent Guide to *Olweus*



Bala Cynwyd Middle School's  
Bullying Prevention Program

Bala Cynwyd Middle School  
School Counseling Department

# Parent Guide to Olweus

Introduction .....	3
Types of Bullying .....	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct and Indirect Forms of Bullying</li><li>• Relational or Social Bullying</li><li>• Roles in the Bullying Circle</li></ul>	
Negative Impact of Bullying .....	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can bullying impact children?</li><li>• What are the concerns about children who bully?</li><li>• What are the effects of bullying on bystanders?</li></ul>	
Overview of Olweus .....	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anti-Bullying Rules</li><li>• On-The-Spot Intervention</li><li>• Class Meetings</li><li>• Positive Postcards</li><li>• Parent Support</li></ul>	
Student Strategies .....	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce the Risk of Being Bullied</li><li>• What your Child can do if they are Bullied</li></ul>	
Parent Strategies .....	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Making a Referral</li><li>• Safeguard Against Cyber Bullying</li><li>• References and Resources</li></ul>	
Parent Scenarios .....	13

## INTRODUCTION

Schools across the United States face the challenges of bullying among students. A recent estimate suggests that 1 in 3 middle school students report taking part in bullying behavior. There are characteristics that distinguish bullying from other mean or problematic behavior. First, bullying is aggressive and unwanted behavior that is repeated over time. Also, an imbalance of power is a component of bullying. When an imbalance of power occurs, the student being bullied cannot either physically, socially, or emotionally defend him or herself from the bullying.

Prior to implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* at Bala Cynwyd Middle School (BCMS), we found similar rates of students engaged in bullying behaviors compared to national estimates. **In fact, 27% of girls and 25% of boys reported being bullied once or twice in the previous few months in our initial survey of all students.** For a number of years, BCMS worked toward the goal of promoting diversity and tolerance, and implemented consequences for bullying behavior. To achieve this goal, BCMS maintained a *Welcoming Schools Committee*, held the *We are the World Week Celebration* of diverse cultures, and our staff was in-serviced on Cultural Proficiency.

In 2011, BCMS made the decision to implement a school-wide bullying prevention program. *Olweus* was selected because it is research-based and provides a venue through regularly scheduled classroom meetings for students to discuss bullying and its implications on student life. *Olweus* was launched at BCMS during the 2011-12 school year with Mr. John Halligan speaking to students and parents about the tragic impact bullying had on his son Ryan.

Please know that the staff at BCMS is committed to working with parents to make sure we are addressing the complex issues of bullying. Feel free to contact any teacher, counselor, or administrator with concerns about your child. Here is a list of staff that you can contact.

Mrs. Gail Brown, assistant principal

Mrs. Tasha Gesacion, school counselor

Mrs. Meaghan Morrison, Olweus Committee Chair

Ms. Kelly Peterson, Olweus Committee Chair

Mr. Jason Potten, principal

Dr. Stuart Shore, school counselor

Mrs. Diana Zuroski, school counselor

## TYPES OF BULLYING

The following are different examples of bullying:

- being verbally bullied (being called a negative name)
- being socially excluded or isolated (not allowing someone to sit at your lunch table)
- being physically bullied (pushed, kicked)
- being bullied through lies and false rumors
- having money or other things taken or damaged
- being threatened or forced to do things (give me your lunch, or I will not let you sit with us)
- racial bullying (racial slurs)
- sexual harassment (unwanted negative attention toward one's body)
- LGBTQ bullying (derogatory names in reference to gender or perceived gender identity, or sexual preference)
- cyber-bullying - via cell phone or the Internet (spreading rumors through texting, emailing or social network websites)

### **Direct and Indirect Forms of Bullying**

It is possible to divide the different types of bullying into direct and indirect forms. In direct forms, bullying involves relatively open attacks, usually in a face-to-face confrontation. Typical examples of direct bullying include verbal bullying with derogatory comments and nasty names, and physical bullying with hitting, kicking, shoving, and spitting.

In indirect bullying, the aggressive acts are more concealed and subtle, and it may be more difficult for the bullied student to know who is responsible for the bullying. Typical examples include social isolation—that is, intentionally excluding someone from a group or activity—and spreading lies and nasty rumors. Several forms of cyber-bullying may also be considered indirect in the sense that nasty messages are delivered from a distance and not in a face-to-face way. In some cases, it may be difficult or almost impossible to find out who originally sent the message.

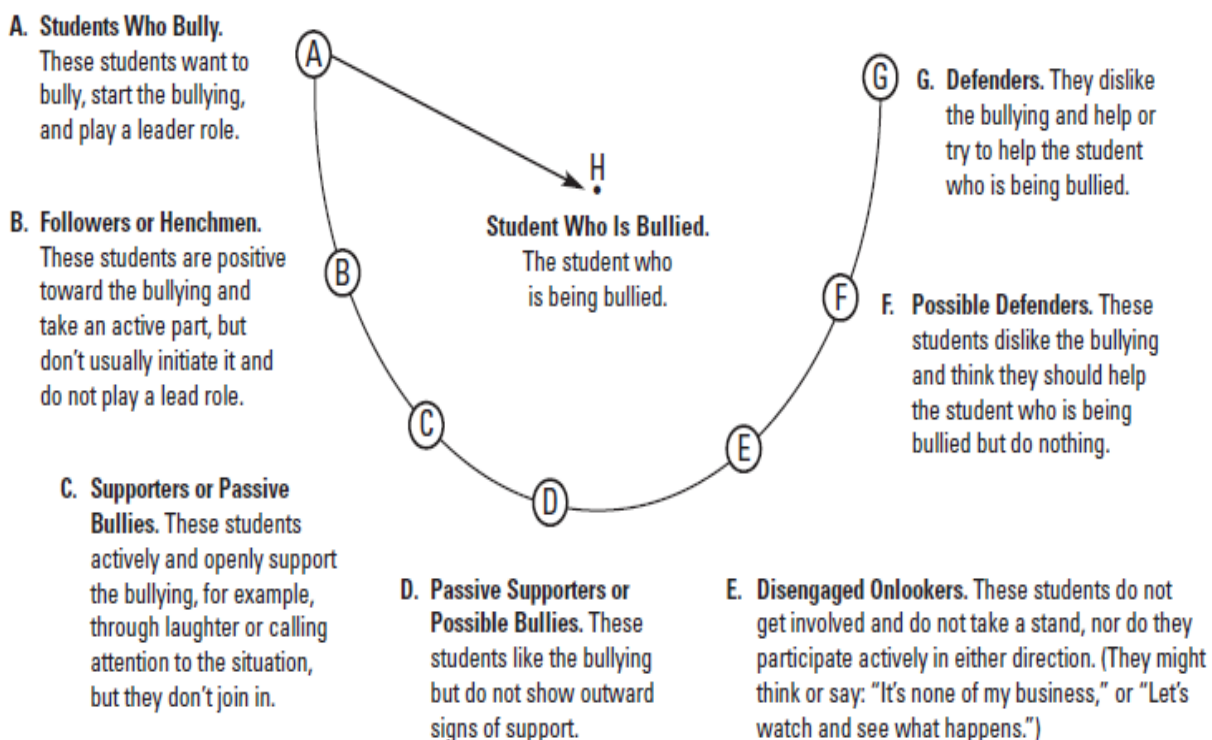
### **Relational or Social Bullying**

Other terms that have been used to describe bullying are the somewhat overlapping concepts of relational bullying and social bullying. These are behaviors that are intended to damage a student's reputation or social standing with peers, and/or use the threat of loss of the relationship to manipulate others. Included in these categories are usually aggressive behaviors that involve social exclusion or isolation, spreading of rumors, and manipulation of friendships.

## Roles in the Bullying Circle

A bullying situation is not something that affects only the student who is bullied or students who are doing the bullying. Nearly every student who is involved in or witnesses a bullying situation is affected. In Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, students are seen as occupying various roles or positions in a conceptual scheme called the Bullying Circle.

Below is a description of each role in the Bullying Circle:



## NEGATIVE IMPACT OF BULLYING

### How can bullying impact children?

- Students who are bullied are more likely to have **lower self-esteem**. These students are also more likely to become **depressed or anxious**.
- Many students who are bullied may have health problems such as stomachaches or headaches.
- A decrease in school achievement and an increase in absenteeism are also common.
- Some bullied students may have suicidal thoughts.

### What are the concerns about children who bully?

- Children who bully are more likely to get into frequent fights, steal, and vandalize property.
- These children are also more likely to drink alcohol and smoke.
- Poor academic achievement and truancy issues are more likely among children who bully.
- The Olweus Study found that bullies were 4 times as likely to have 3 or more convictions by age 24.

### What are the effects of bullying on bystanders?

- Children who witness bullying (bystanders) may often feel afraid at school.
- These children may also feel powerless to change the situation, or perhaps guilty for not taking action.
- Sometimes, bystanders may be drawn into the bullying themselves and feel guilty about it afterward.

Despite the negative impact of bullying, there are steps as parents you can take to help your child with difficult bullying situations. These strategies are outlined later in this guide.

## OVERVIEW OF OLWEUS

Our school cares about the safety and well-being of our students. We want to make sure our school is a great place for students to learn. To do this we have implemented several ways to stop bullying at BCMS.

### Anti-Bullying Rules

- 1) We will not bully others.
- 2) We will try to help students who are bullied.
- 3) We will try to include students who are left out.
- 4) If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

### On-the-Spot Intervention

Staff members have been trained to respond to bullying situations using this common approach:

#### Stop the situation

- “Stop! This looks like bullying to me.”
- Support the victim/target in any way you can.

#### Empathize with the victim and engage the bystander

- “I am sorry this happened to you.” (victim)
- “What did you see here?” (bystander)

#### Name the bullying behavior

- “I heard/saw you...” (call him a name, take his book bag, push him)

#### Deliver the message

- “Someone will be following up with you.”(bully)
- “I’ll check in with you later.” (victim)

There is an internal reporting system in place that gives staff members the opportunity to follow up with those students involved in bullying situations, as well as to identify “hot spots” for bullying. When staff members witness bullying they fill out a *Bullying Incident Report* form. A counselor and/or administrator addresses the bully incident by meeting with the victim, bully and bystanders separately and privately. **Our intervention with students is not mediation.** It is carried out to reinforce school rules and provide a safe learning environment for all students. The administrator/counselor then determines what actions need to take place, such as: review of anti-bullying rules, bully fills out reflection form, parent phone call, teachers are notified, individual counseling/follow up, and/or consequences given by an administrator.

## **Class Meetings**

### ***What is a class meeting?***

Class meetings are an integral part of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, as they provide a forum for students and teachers to discuss bullying related issues and other important concerns that are shared by a majority of the students.

### ***When do class meetings take place?***

Class meetings are held during the first 20-25 minutes of advisory (which happens once every 6 day cycle on Day D).

### ***Who helps to facilitate class meetings?***

All teachers, support staff, and administrators are actively involved in class meetings. Every class meeting has two teachers who are responsible for running the meeting and ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for all students.

### ***What are the purposes of class meetings?***

- To teach students what bullying is, the meaning of the four anti-bullying rules, and different ways of reacting when bullying occurs.
- To help students learn more about themselves and their feelings and reactions, and those of their peers, and to provide them with opportunities to express their personal opinions in a relatively safe environment.
- To build a sense of community and belonging for all students.
- To help build a commitment among students to follow the school's anti-bullying rules and truly "Be the Change."

## **Positive Postcards**

Positive Postcards are mailed home by staff members to students that have shown positive behaviors. An example of a positive behavior is when a bystander stands up for a victim of bullying.

## **Parent Support**

Your support is an important component for the success of this program. We encourage you to look for Olweus updates in the Knightly News and to explore the Olweus eBoard for resources/information. Working together, we hope to reduce the amount of bullying that is taking place in our community.



## **STUDENT STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS BULLYING**

A key component of *Olweus* is for a student who is being bullied to report the situation to an adult at home and at school. There are several factors that unfortunately act as barriers to students reporting when they are being bullied.

- Adolescents might not report bullying because “dealing with it” on their own makes them think they can regain control over the situation.
- They might also shy away from reporting it because they do not think adults will understand or they fear retaliation from the bully.
- Because not all students will report when they are bullied, we need to also teach students strategies to avoid being bullied and what to do if they are.

### **What your Child can do if they are Bullied**

- Encourage your child to talk to an adult at school
- If your child feels safe enough to do so, he or she could calmly and directly tell the bully to stop
- Sometimes using humor can defuse a bully or take away their motivation to bully
- If possible, avoid the place where the bullying is happening
- If the place cannot be avoided, walk with a friend or group of students

### **How your Child can Become an Ally and Reduce Bullying Behavior**

- Students can limit their risk of being bullied by treating other students with respect.
- It is important for adolescents to understand individual differences and not to make fun of them.
- Offering an apology after saying something mean goes a long way in warding off future bullying or retaliation for what was originally said.
- Stand up for other students being bullied by telling the bully to “knock it off” or offer the student being bullied a seat at the lunch table or the bus.
- If your child sees another student being bullied, he or she can offer to go with that student to talk to an adult at school.
- Students model the language they hear from adults so it’s important for parents to be mindful of the words they use to describe people.

## **PARENT STRATEGIES IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED**

As a parent, it is not easy to deal with your child being bullied at school. Parents are often conflicted between intervening by calling the school or allowing their child to handle the situation. Listen carefully to what your child is saying to make sure you have all of the details of what is happening, where, and how often. If your child is describing the situation as repeated, purposeful mean behavior where an imbalance of power is present, then you should contact your child's teacher or school counselor. They will help you determine how to best move forward.

Below are some strategies to use to help support your child if he or she is being bullied:

- **Try to keep your emotions on an even keel so all possible solutions can be considered.**
- Listen carefully to allow your child to tell the entire story without making initial conclusions. Ask relevant follow up questions about what happened and where.
- Praise your child for talking with you openly about the situation and reassure them that you will help solve the problem.
- Communicate that you would like your child to talk with someone at school and then follow up to make sure your child followed through. If your child is not willing or able to talk with someone at school, tell your child you will talk with a teacher or school counselor. Ask him or her who they think you should contact.
- Don't blame your child for being bullied, but help them think through anything that led up to them being bullied. Ask if they have ever bullied the other student.
- Problem-solve with your child about avoiding the bully or location if possible, or help them brainstorm how they can be around other kids in front of the bully.
- **Role playing how he or she will handle the situation is helpful and will also give you insight as to what is being said**
- Make sure your child is engaged in positive hobbies or interests.

**DON'T ASSUME YOUR CHILD WILL BE ABLE TO HANDLE THE SITUATION ON THEIR OWN. IF YOU ENCOUNTER RESISTENCE FROM YOUR CHILD ABOUT CALLING SCHOOL, YOU CAN ALWAYS CONFIDENTIALLY RUN THE SITUATION BY A SCHOOL COUNSELOR TO GET FEEDBACK ABOUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.**

### **Making a Referral**

Through *Olweus*, students, staff, and parents are encouraged to report bullying. Sometimes parents are reluctant to contact the school because their child asks them not to do so. **We can intervene in a way that the bully does not know where the referral came from, thus protecting your child from retaliation. We need you to contact us to stop the bullying. The bully needs a clear message from the school that the bullying must stop.**

Here is what you can expect as a parent if you make referral.

- A school counselor will meet with your child privately to find out the details of what has been happening. The school counselor will help problem solve with your child to help them avoid the bullying. Depending on the situation, the counselor will explain to your child that the counselor will meet with the bully privately to tell the bully he or she needs to stop.
- Depending on the severity of the bullying and if there have been previous referrals for the bully, the school counselor and/or administrator will meet with the bully. A clear message will be delivered that the bullying must stop. The counselor or administrator will help the bully to better understand the impact he or she is having on other students.
- Depending on the severity or number of previous referrals for the bully, parent contact will be made.
- The BCMS discipline code will be followed and consequences will be administered to the bully.
- The counselor or administrator will work with your child to determine what teachers or other staff need to be informed so further bullying can be prevented.
- The counselor or administrator will follow up with your child to make sure the problem has been solved.

### **Safeguarding Against Cyber Bullying**

Cyber bullying is repetitive aggressive behavior through email, chat rooms, text messaging, or instant messaging. It can be more problematic than traditional bullying for several reasons. Students have 24-hour access to electronic forms of communication which can increase the frequency of the bullying. People also feel less inhibited using electronic communication and write things he or she would not normally say in a face-to-face conversation. Cyber bullying can take place anonymously which leaves the student being bullied anxious about who is bullying them. The bullying can be widely viewed and distributed which increases the number of bystanders to the bullying.

#### ***These are some common forms of cyber bullying:***

- Harassment: sending rude or offensive messages
- Denigration: distributing derogatory or untrue information including manipulated photos
- Flaming: using angry or vulgar messages to fight online
- Impersonation: breaking into an electronic account and assume that person's identity
- Trickery: tricking someone online to reveal secrets and revealing them
- Stalking: repeatedly sending threats online

#### ***Parents can take steps to reduce the risks of cyber bullying:***

- Install filtering software or monitoring programs to view your child’s online behavior
- Require your child to give you his or her electronic passwords
- Encourage your child to tell you right away if they are being cyber bullied
- Ask to “friend” or follow your child on social media sites they are using

## **References and Resources**

The material compiled in this guide comes from our collective experience of working with adolescents, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Training Manual*, and from [www.stopbully.gov](http://www.stopbully.gov)

### **Here are some additional resources for parents**

LMSD School Board Policy on Bullying

[www.lmsd.org/documents/board/policies/200/249\\_Bullying.pdf](http://www.lmsd.org/documents/board/policies/200/249_Bullying.pdf)

Common Sense Media Internet Safety

<http://www.commonsense.com/internet-safety-guide/>

LMSD Internet Safety for Parents

<http://www.lmsd.org/sections/forparents/default.php?t=pages&p=tipsheets>

BCMS Olweus eBoard

[http://www1.eboard.com/eboard/servlet/BoardServlet?ACTION=BOARD\\_SHOW&SITE\\_NAME=lmsd&BOARD\\_NAME=BCMSOlweus&SESSION\\_ID=4itelhglg5j5jm2756](http://www1.eboard.com/eboard/servlet/BoardServlet?ACTION=BOARD_SHOW&SITE_NAME=lmsd&BOARD_NAME=BCMSOlweus&SESSION_ID=4itelhglg5j5jm2756)

Olweus Website

<http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/index.page>

Center for Safe Schools

<http://www.safeschools.info/>

## PARENT SCENARIOS

The scenarios below are designed to be realistic situations that you could encounter as a middle school parent. They are meant to help you to think about what your response would be if you were confronted with any of these situations. After reading each scenario, you should answer the following questions. It might help to discuss your answers with other parents or your child's school counselor.

- What would you tell your child?
- What would your emotional reaction to the situation be?
- What steps would you take?
- How can you problem solve with your child?
- Would you call school? If yes, what would your expectations be?

### Scenario #1 - "Dylan"

During the last six months, your son Dylan has mentioned that other boys call him names like "fag" or "queer" and they have threatened to beat him up. He is so anxious that he refuses to use the bathroom at school all day. He runs home every day and rushes into the bathroom. One of his teachers called you because he has been repeatedly late to his math class. Dylan says that he is late because the boys in PE class take his clothes and hide them all around the locker room. ***What would you do?***

When you asked Dylan to clean his room tonight, he flew into a rage. He explains to you that kids have been pouring milk through the slots in his locker causing damage to his belongings. He reported some things to a teacher, but that did not solve the problem. Dylan begs you not to call school because he'll be called a snitch. ***What would you do?***

### Scenario # 2 - "Jennifer"

Your daughter, Jennifer, has been a very popular girl since 1<sup>st</sup> grade and her friendships are important to her. Her friends are good students and are involved in many after school activities and sports. You have noticed that Jennifer does not include certain girls when they get together even though some of them are neighbors. ***What would you do?***

Tonight, when you allowed Jennifer to invite three friends over, you overhear the girls making rude comments about how some girls dress in school and making fun of their hair. They are especially mean about Amanda who lives next door. You are friendly with Amanda's parents. ***What would you do?***

The following week the school counselor calls you to let you know someone made a referral that suggested that Jennifer had been posting hurtful electronic messages about another female student. ***What would you do?***

### **Scenario # 3 – “Rachel”**

Your daughter, Rachel, is a sensitive girl who tries hard to get along with everyone. Over the past several weeks she has been telling you about a classmate, Maria, who is being teased by several other girls in her grade. She says they are mean to her right in front of her face by whispering and not letting her sit with them at lunch. Rachel says that she feels sorry for Maria, but does not know what to do. ***What would you do?***

A few weeks later Rachel asks you to read some text messages she received about the Maria. The texts were mean and hurtful and intended to destroy any friendships that Maria has. Rachel becomes tearful and tells you that she is fearful the girls will do the same thing to her if tries to help Maria. ***What would you do?***

### **Thinking it Through...**

These are some general guidelines to consider when deciding what you would do if you encounter real bullying situations.

- 1) Normalize what you are hearing – there is a strong chance your child will experience a bullying situation in middle school.
- 2) Accept any reaction your child is having to the situation.
- 3) Don't assume your child can handle the situation even if they beg you not to get involved.
- 4) Utilize the school staff to get help or just get some ideas how to handle the situations