Preventing Bullying

"In this time when bullying has captured legislative attention, we are so grateful to have a program that helps our children learn to resolve conflicts, express their feelings and resist bullying."

Principal Louise Kuhlman, F. Lyman Winship Elementary School, Boston, MA

"[We just began using Open Circle at the beginning of this school year, and] Teachers are noticing an increase in friendship-building skills and a decrease in incidents involving bullying."

Principal Craig Lankhorst, Emily A. Fifield School, Boston, MA

Research shows that when schools take specific steps to improve school climate and encourage positive interactions among students and staff, they can significantly reduce bullying. When schools build bullying prevention efforts around an evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) program like Open Circle, they proactively address many of the social, emotional, and environmental issues that can lead to bullying.

Open Circle is listed in the U.S. Department of Education Expert Panel guidebook of Exemplary and Promising Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools Programs and has been designed as a "Select" program by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. A program of the Wellesley Centers for Women (WCW), Open Circle benefits from consultation with leading scholars at WCW who have conducted ground-breaking work on issues of bullying, harassment, and equity in schools.

Many Massachusetts schools use Open Circle as a component of their overall bullying prevention strategy. Here's one system's story:

Preventing Bullying with Open Circle

by Cheryl Maloney, PhD
Superintendent, Weston Public School System, Weston, MA

As educators, we must work to figure out the most effective way to prevent bullying from ever happening, the best approach to addressing it when it does occur, and a way to publicize and maintain a safety net for students if all else fails. In my school district, our bullying efforts begin in kindergarten using Open Circle.

Open Circle helps schools foster a caring classroom community so that children feel supported by and empathic toward others, reducing the likelihood that bullying behavior occurs. Open Circle provides a common language in which to discuss these often difficult social issues.

The faculty teach lessons from the Open Circle Curriculum *that directly address teasing and bullying. The lessons are designed to develop student resilience, empathy, and social skills. They also work with students to identify dangerous and destructive behaviors and help them determine when adult intervention is needed, as well as encouraging students to speak up when they are bystanders to a bullying situation.*

Coming soon: A Focused, Whole-School Approach to Bullying Prevention

Open Circle is currently developing a new program for schools to strengthen their strategy for preventing and addressing bullying. Building upon a school's existing work with Open Circle, this program's unique, whole-school approach is multi-faceted, including:

- Informational training for the entire school team, including research on bullying, how Open Circle can help, and best practices for intervention
- Training and support for the creation of a school-based bullying prevention team
- Ongoing support of the team's whole-school activities, including assessing the school environment, gathering data, and setting measurable goals and priorities based on the data collected
- Support for the team's creation, implementation, and evaluation of an action plan based on the school's specific needs for bullying prevention

Call 781-283-3277 for details.

To discuss how Open Circle can help schools prevent bullying, contact:

Heather Gallant
781-283-3277
info@open-circle.org

Open Circle Lessons that Relate to Bullying

The Open Circle approach, when implemented consistently, creates a caring school community and teaches children social and emotional skills for healthy relationships. Every lesson in the *Open Circle Curriculum* lays the foundation for bullying prevention. Here's a sample of some of the lessons that relate to bullying and teasing:

All grade levels

- Lesson 8: Including One Another
- Lesson 10: Dealing with Double D behaviors
- Lesson 12: Dealing with Teasing
- Lesson 13: Recognizing Differences/Discrimination
- Lesson 14: Speaking Up
- Lesson 19: Being Calm
- Lesson 20: Getting Calm When You Feel Upset

Supplementary Lessons for Kindergarten through Grade 3

- S-4: The Golden Rule
- S-13: Friendship
- S-14: Sharing/Showing Respect for One Another
- S-15: Additional Speaking Up Activities

Supplementary Lessons for Grades 4 and 5

- S-10: Talking to Someone Who Can Help
- S-12: Showing Respect for One Another
- S-13: What is a Bystander?
- S-14: What Should a Bystander Do?
- S-15: What is Bullying?
- S-16: Classroom Rules on Teasing and Bullying
- S-17: Additional Speaking-Up Activities

Open Circle's mission is to work with school communities to help children become ethical people, contributing citizens, and successful learners. By helping schools implement Open Circle, we foster the development of relationships that support safe, caring, and respectful learning communities of children and adults.

open circle®
getting to the heart of learning

a program of the Wellesley Centers for Women

Open Circle Research Findings

In an April 2007 survey of 130 principals at schools using Open Circle,

- 68% of respondents felt Open Circle helped to create more cooperative classroom environments in their schools.
- 90% agreed that Open Circle united their school communities with a common vocabulary to describe student behavior.

In a March 2008 survey of 670 teachers trained to use the *Open Circle Curriculum*,

- 79% of respondents reported an increase in students using cooperative learning strategies.
- 51% reported spending more time on academics, less time on discipline.
- 68% saw a decrease in peer-to-peer exclusion.
- 60% saw a decrease in teasing and bullying.
- 69% of teachers reported an increase in students' application of Open Circle problem solving strategies.
- 71% reported an increase in students' use of calm breathing, a technique taught in Open Circle for managing emotions.

Recent research demonstrates Open Circle's impact:

Increased Self-Assertiveness, Higher Social Skills, Improved Self Control, and Fewer Physical Fights

Taylor, C. A., Liang, B., Tracy, A. J., Williams, L. M., & Seigle, P. (2002). Gender Differences in Middle School Adjustment, Physical Fighting, and Social Skills: Evaluation of a Social Competency Program. The Journal of Primary Prevention, 23(2), 259–72.

Design: This study assessed the effects of Open Circle on 277 sixth grade middle school students with varying levels of exposure to Open Circle during elementary school. Data collected included students' self-reports and parents' and teachers' perceptions using the Social Skills Rating System and a modified version of the Survey of Adaptation Tasks—Middle School, which explores peer relationships, substance abuse, and interpersonal conflict.

Results: Middle school girls who had previously participated in at least two years of Open Circle showed a significant increase in self-assertiveness when compared to non-participants. Middle school boys with at least two years of Open Circle reported higher levels of social skill and self-control and fewer problems with physical fighting.

Improved Social Skills and Fewer Problem Behaviors

Hennessey, B. A. (2007). Promoting Social Competence in School-Aged Children: The Effects of the Open Circle Program. Journal of School Psychology, 45, 349-360.

Design: This study involved 150 fourth grade students and their teachers in eight classrooms at four elementary schools. Four classrooms used Open Circle and were compared to four matched control group classrooms. Data collected included pre and post-intervention students' self-reports and teachers' perceptions using the Social Skills Rating System. In the fall, students in the Open Circle classrooms appeared similar – both academically and socially – to those in their matched control classrooms.

Results: After one year of Open Circle, participants showed significantly greater teacher-reported improvements in both social skills and problem behaviors than did control group members. Although the largest gains were made by students in urban areas, significant positive effects of program participation were shown by all students, regardless of school setting.

© Open Circle • Wellesley Centers for Women – STC • Wellesley College • 106 Central Street • Wellesley, MA 02481
Phone: 781-283-3277 • Fax: 781-283-3717 • Email: info@open-circle.org • Web: www.open-circle.org

Recognition

Open Circle is one of only several dozen evidence-based programs in the country to appear in the U.S. Department of Education Expert Panel guidebook of Exemplary and Promising Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools Programs, which lists programs that show **"promise for improving student achievement."**

Open Circle has also been named by the Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning (CASEL) as one of only 22 programs nationally identified as "**Select SEL Programs** that are especially effective and comprehensive in their SEL coverage, their documented impact, and the staff development they provide."

In addition, Open Circle fits CASEL's criteria for strong SEL programs: well-designed, evidence-based, teacher-led, with rigorous and universal training, and using a curriculum that follows the S.A.F.E. Standards.

Open Circle's Commitment to Ongoing Assessment

Open Circle continually assesses its program effectiveness through training evaluation forms, class and school observations, and surveys of teachers, principals, other school staff, and students. As one principal noted,

> *"The people at Open Circle work to make the program fit the school. The program is constantly being revised to respond to the needs of teachers and students. It's not just a curriculum. It's a live thing."*

CASEL Research on Social and Emotional Learning

Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., and Schellinger, K. (in press). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. Child Development.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) recently released a meta-analysis of 207 rigorous research studies. The studies evaluated over 700 SEL programs serving more than 288,000 children from urban, suburban, and rural schools. The meta-analysis indicated that school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs like Open Circle provide massive benefits to students who use them:

- Increased achievement test scores in reading and math by 11 percentile points
- Improved social and emotional skills by 23 percentile points
- Improved attitudes about self, others, and school by 9 percentile points
- Improved pro-social school and classroom behavior by 9 percentile points
- Decreased conduct problems by 9 percentile points
- Decreased emotional distress by 10 percentile points

These results are shown to persist over time, making SEL programming a worthwhile long-term investment.

The programs that provide these benefits are those which:

- Are well-designed and evidence-based.
- Are well-implemented by teachers, rather than by outside practitioners.
- Follow CASEL's S.A.F.E. Standards: **S**equenced and grade-differentiated lessons, **A**ctive learning tools, **F**ocused time for SEL, and **E**xplicit social and emotional skill development.

Open Circle's mission is to work with school communities to help children become ethical people, contributing citizens, and successful learners. By helping schools implement Open Circle, we foster the development of relationships that support safe, caring, and respectful learning communities of children and adults.

How Open Circle can Contribute to Bullying Prevention

Bullying is a complex issue and one that has serious consequences for everyone involved. Consistent implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs like Open Circle contribute to the prevention of bullying behavior in a number of significant ways. Open Circle takes specific steps to encourage positive relationships among students and school staff in order to create a caring, empathetic, and respectful school climate for all students. These factors can contribute to reduced incidences of bullying behavior.

A report published by the Collaborative for Academic and Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the Education Development Center (EDC), and the American Institute for Research took a close look at how SEL programs like Open Circle and bullying prevention are connected. The report states that "when schools are able to scaffold bullying prevention onto a larger, more comprehensive framework for prevention and positive youth development, they strengthen their prevention efforts while also addressing some of the underlying contributing social, emotional, and environmental factors that can lead to bullying."

The goals of the *Open Circle Curriculum* include the development of self-awareness, self-control, relationship skills, social awareness, and problem-solving skills. The CASEL report indicates that the explicit teaching and practice of these skills contribute to a reduction in bullying episodes among students. In addition to helping students acquire pro-social skills, Open Circle provides the whole school community with a common approach for creating and maintaining a safe school climate for all students.

Ragozzino, K. & M. Utne O'Brien (2009). "Social and Emotional Learning and Bullying Prevention." Chicago, Illinois: Report prepared for the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the Social and Emotional Learning Research Group at the University of Illinios at Chicago.

 © 2010 OPEN CIRCLE

Open Circle and Bullying Prevention

There are some key social and emotional learning skills that play a role in decreasing incidences of bullying behavior. These skills include self-awareness and self-management, positive relationships and social awareness, and problem-solving skills and responsible decision-making. All of the lessons in the *Open Circle Curriculum* address one of more of these skills in some way. Some examples of lessons that teach and reinforce these skills are listed below.

The *Open Circle Curriculum* follows a developmentally appropriate scope and sequence of skills. While all the lessons in grades K-2 contribute to the foundation for bullying prevention, the lessons that address specific bullying issues begin at the third grade level. In grades 3-5, the *Curriculum* includes targeted lessons on the definition of bullying, and the role of bystanders in bullying episodes.

The consistent teaching and practice of skills in the *Curriculum* and Open Circle's whole school approach to social and emotional learning are critical parts of a school's bullying prevention effort.

Self-Awareness and Self-Management:
Being Calm
Getting Calm When You Feel Upset
Practicing Self-Talk
Speaking Up
Understanding Feelings
Body Language
Expressing Anger Appropriately

Friendship Skills (Positive Relationships and Social Awareness):
What Students Have in Common
Listening Skills
Compliments
Including One Another
Cooperating
Leadership Skills

Problem-Solving Skills:
Dealing with Double D Behaviors
Dealing with Annoying Behaviors
Dealing with Teasing
Problem Solving
Calm Down and Identify the Problem
Decide on a Positive Goal
Think of Several Solutions Using Brainstorming
Evaluate the Solutions
Make a Plan and Try It

 © 2010 OPEN CIRCLE

What Is Bullying?

OBJECTIVES: **To help students define "bullying"**
To help students understand that bullying can take many forms
To help students recognize how harmful bullying can be
To help students recognize that bullying is a Double D behavior

MATERIALS

- *newsprint pad and markers*

NOTES

- *Open Circle uses the definition of bullying as written in the Massachusetts 2010 anti-bullying legislation, which states that bullying is:* ***the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act of gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying (bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication).***[1]
- *In addition to direct words or actions that harm someone, bullying also involves indirect actions such as relational aggression—spreading rumors and gossip, exclusion, isolation, and attacking a person's reputation.*
- *Bullying is not like a typical conflict. Putting the child who bullies and the targeted student together to "work things out" is ineffective and potentially more damaging. Using the structure of an Open Circle Meeting to discuss a specific incident of bullying in the classroom can be risky and unsafe for the targeted child or children and others involved. It can lead to further emotional upset and feelings of vulnerability.*
- *Once you start talking about bullying in your Open Circle Meetings, it is likely that the reporting of bullying incidents by students will rise. Therefore, it is important to be informed about your school's policies and procedures in order to know the protocol to follow when a bullying incident is reported to you. It is also important to be prepared to support children who report a bullying incident. (See the tip sheet "Addressing Bullying: Strategies for Teachers" in the Training Resources section.)*

An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Section 37O, Chapter 71 of the General Laws. April 28, 2010.

DRAFT

- *Rather than talking about someone "being a bully," we focus on bullying as a behavior. We use this approach because often more than one person is involved in bullying behavior and because people who bully others can learn to stop bullying.*

REVIEW

- Ask students how many of them noticed situations since the last Open Circle Meeting in which they were bystanders. How did it feel to be a bystander while someone else was having a problem?

- Ask how many of them noticed a time when they had a problem and other students were bystanders. How did you feel?

INTRODUCE

Ask students: What do you think the word "bullying" means? What are some things that you think students do to another student when they bully him or her? *(Hitting, saying hurtful things, excluding, or spreading rumors over and over.)* Use the students' responses to fill in a word web for "bullying."

How do you think bullying is different from two students getting into an argument or a fight? *(Bullying happens over and over again or is severe, the student who is bullied finds it difficult to defend him/herself.)*

How do you think students feel when they are being bullied? Add these students' responses to the word web for "bullying."

Summarize or focus the discussion by sharing that bullying is when one or more people severely or repeatedly harm someone with words or actions.

Ask students: When and where is bullying behavior likely to occur? *(Playground, hallways, on the bus, walking to and from school, instant messages, blogs, texting.)*

Remind students that bullying is a Double D behavior. If they see this type of behavior, it is important to tell a responsible adult.

PRACTICE/APPLY

Read aloud the following scenarios and lead a discussion about which situations involve bullying behaviors. Encourage students to explain their thinking.

- Every day for a month Janelle tells all her friends not to sit with Keisha on the bus or in the cafeteria. Janelle says that anyone who is Keisha's friend will not be her friend. Even though many of Janelle's friends like Keisha, they refuse to sit with them on the bus and don't let her sit with them on the bus. *(This is an example of harming someone with words and actions.)*

DRAFT

- Anton comes to school one day with a new haircut. His best friend calls out, "What happened to your hair?" Anton says, "I left it at the barbershop!" They both laugh. *(This is not bullying. It is teasing that is OK between friends.)*
- Maria uses an online social network to send her friends unkind rumors about Ava. The friends spread these rumors around school. *(This is an example of cyberbullying.)*
- Several times a week while walking to school, Geno tells Juan to hand over his lunch money, or he'll hurt him on the playground. *(Geno is repeatedly threatening physical harm to Juan, which is an example of bullying behavior.)*

EXTEND

Ask students to notice problem situations around school. Have them think about whether these situations involve bullying or not. Remind students to tell a responsible adult if they see bullying behavior.

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Recorvits, Helen. *Yoon and the Jade Bracelet*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

An older Caucasian girl uses her age and popularity to take away a valuable bracelet from Yoon, a younger Korean student. Yoon uses her courage and "wisdom" to speak up for herself and reclaim her bracelet and her dignity.

Discussion Prompts: What are some of the ways the older girl convinces Yoon to "loan" her the jade bracelet? What happens when Yoon asks the girl to return the bracelet? How does Yoon feel when she can't get her bracelet back? What does the author mean when she says that Yoon had been tricked by a tiger? Are the older girls' actions examples of bullying behavior? Why or why not?

Ludwig, Trudy. *Just Kidding*. 2006.

D.J. is the target of bullying by Vince, who repeatedly uses the excuse that he is "just kidding" when he publicly insults his classmate.

Discussion Prompts: How does D.J. feel when Vince repeatedly makes fun of him in front of other students? Are Vince's actions examples of bullying behavior? Why or why not? Who does D.J. talk to about this situation? Is it hard or easy for D.J. to talk to his teacher about what Vince is doing?

 © 2010 OPEN CIRCLE

Bullying

When one or more people severely or repeatedly harm someone with words or actions

DRAFT

© 2010 Open Circle

What Should a Bystander Do?

OBJECTIVES: **To help students understand the role bystanders play in helping to solve or worsen other people's problems**

To acknowledge that taking action as a bystander in a bullying situation can be difficult

To discuss specific things students can do when they witness a bullying incident

To reinforce the importance of telling a responsible adult when a problem involves a Double D behavior

MATERIALS

- *newsprint pad and marker*

NOTES

- *Bystanders are present in most bullying incidents; however, often they don't intervene. Many times bystanders cheer on the person who is doing the bullying or watch passively.*
- *Bullying is not like a typical conflict. Putting the child who bullies and the targeted student together to "work things out" is ineffective and potentially more damaging. Using the structure of an Open Circle Meeting to discuss a specific incident of bullying in the classroom can be risky and unsafe for the targeted child or children and others involved. It can lead to further emotional upset and feelings of vulnerability.*
- *Increased awareness about bullying and what to do about it may result in increased reporting of bullying incidences. Therefore, it is important to be informed about your school's policies and procedures in order to know the protocol to follow when a bullying incident is reported to you. It is also important to be prepared to support children who report a bullying incident. (See the tip sheet "Addressing Bullying: Strategies for Teachers" in the Training Resources section.)*

REVIEW

Ask students if they noticed any situations since the last Open Circle meeting where someone was being bullied in school. How did it make them feel? What did they do? Were there other people present? What did they do? Remind them that bullying is a Double D behavior and if they observe bullying taking place they should tell a responsible adult.

INTRODUCE

Ask students if they've ever been in a problem situation with another person and someone else (a bystander) stepped in to help in some way? How did they feel? Ask if

SAMPLE

they've ever been the one to step in? Was that easy or hard to do? Why did they make the choice to step in?

Remind students that bullying is when one or more people severely or repeatedly harm someone with words or actions. Explain that often bystanders do not take action when they see bullying behavior.

When might it be easy to help in a bullying situation? *(The target is your friend.)*

When might it be hard to help in a bullying situation? *(The target is not your friend or you didn't like him/her very much, the person bullying is a friend, you are afraid of getting hurt, you don't want to be the next target, you might make things worse for the target, you don't know what to do.)*

Why might the target in a bullying situation need someone to step in?

What are some things you could do to help the target of a bullying incident? Brainstorm a list together and record on newsprint. In addition to the students' ideas, include the following actions on the list.

- Talk to the target privately.
- Refuse to join in.
- Include the targeted child in a game.
- Provide a distraction – shift the attention away from the target.
- Talk to the person who is bullying.
- Ask others to join you in standing up to the child who's doing the bullying.
- Use one-liners and humor to diffuse the situation ("C'mon, give me a break"; "Hey, that's harsh"; "You have got to be kidding!")

Tell students that there may be times when stepping in to help stop a bullying situation is unsafe. Why might it not be safe to intervene? If students feel like intervening is unsafe, they should immediately find an adult to help.

PRACTICE/APPLY

Read the following scenarios and ask students to discuss some ways that the bystanders could take action in order to improve the situation for the target of the bullying behavior. For each scenario, ask students to identify the bystanders, the students who are bullying, and the target.

- Maria sits alone at lunch everyday. Some older students, Deshawn, Louis, and Leah, walk by her lunch table each day and intentionally knock part of her lunch on the floor and laugh when she tries to pick up the mess. Tomas and Jose , who eat lunch at a table nearby, watch this happen for three days in a row.

DRAFT

- Josh is a new student in the fourth grade and doesn't have many friends. Callie posts mean comments about Josh online for the whole class to see. The next day, Devon and Micah see Callie making fun of Josh.

Emphasize that in a school community, it's important to take care of each other. Ask students to describe their responsibility if they witness a bullying incident in school. *(Tell an adult, get help, step in to help the target.)*

Remind students that bullying is a Double D behavior and it is important to tell a responsible adult about it. If an adult is not around at the moment of a bullying incident, it is still important to report the situation to an adult as soon as possible.

EXTEND

Read aloud one of the books suggested in the Literature Connections section of this lesson, or other books that involve bullying behavior. Ask students to identify the characters who bully, the target of the bullying, and the characters who are the bystanders. Lead a discussion about what actions the bystanders take, and/or what they could do to help the target .

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Ludwig, Trudy. *Just Kidding*. 2006.
D.J. is the target of bullying by Vince, who repeatedly uses the excuse that he is "just kidding" when he publicly insults his classmate.

Ludwig, Trudy. *Trouble Talk*. Tricycle Press, 2008.
A story about the destructive effects of rumor and gossip.

Heller, Janet Ruth. *How the Moon Regained her Shape*. Syllvan Dell, 2006.
Moon feels small and worthless when Sun insults her. Although Comet doesn't witness the Sun's bullying behavior, he notices Moon's reaction to it. Comet takes action to reassure Moon that she has friends who need and appreciate her.

Mohr, Nicholosa. *Felita*. Puffin, 1999.
Felita's parents decide to move to a "better" neighborhood. When Felita's new neighbors repeatedly insult and exclude her, her family makes a difficult decision to move back to their old apartment.

SUPPLEMENTARY LESSONS

The following supplementary lessons can be used after this lesson:
Tattling versus Telling

DRAFT

open circle®
getting to the heart of learning™

Home Link

Dear Family:

In a recent Open Circle Meeting, we talked about the issue of **bullying**. Together we talked about what bullying is and children learned that bullying is defined as: when one or more people repeatedly harm someone with words or actions. We also talked about how bullying is different than an argument or a fight, and explored some of the reasons why students may choose to bully and how it might feel to be bullied. We ended our conversation with a reminder that bullying is a Double D behavior and that if a child witnesses or is the target of a bullying incident, she/he needs to tell a responsible adult right away.

We also explored reasons why students think bystanders often don't help. Because bystanders can play such a critical role in diffusing a bullying situation, children brainstormed some ways that bystanders could safely intervene. In our discussion, I emphasized that stepping in can be difficult, but never should a student intervene in a situation where she/he is going to be put in danger or risk of physical harm.

At home, have a conversation with your child about bullying. Share your own experiences. Have you had any experiences yourself with being a target, a bully, or a bystander? How did it feel? What did you do? Did you ever go to an adult for help? What did she/he do? Talk with your child about whether she/he has had any experiences with bullying. Ask your child why they think bullying happens. Ask your child how she/he feels about going to an adult for help? How might it help? What might be hard about going to an adult for help?

Yours truly,

DRAFT

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Ludwig, Trudy. *Just Kidding*. 2006.
D.J. is the target of bullying by Vince, who repeatedly uses the excuse that he is "just kidding" when he publicly insults his classmate.

Ludwig, Trudy. *Trouble Talk*. Tricycle Press, 2008.
A story about the destructive effects of rumor and gossip.

 © 2010 OPEN CIRCLE

Heller, Janet Ruth. *How the Moon Regained her Shape*. Syllvan Dell, 2006.
Moon feels small and worthless when Sun insults her. Although Comet doesn't witness the Sun's bullying behavior, he notices Moon's reaction to it. Comet takes action to reassure Moon that she has friends who need and appreciate her.

Mohr, Nicholosa. *Felita*. Puffin, 1999.
Felita's parents decide to move to a "better" neighborhood. When Felita's new neighbors repeatedly insult and exclude her, her family makes a difficult decision to move back to their old apartment.

DRAFT

© 2010 OPEN CIRCLE

Addressing Bullying: Strategies for Teachers

DO:	DON'T:
• Talk about bullying as a behavior.	• Label children as "bullies."
• Intervene immediately if you witness or hear about bullying.	• Ignore bullying or see the situation as "kids being kids."
• Talk to the targeted child and bullying child separately once they are calm.	• Put the targeted child and bullying child together to work it out.

• Validate and support the targeted child.
  • I hear you.
  • I believe you.
  • It's not your fault.
  • I will help keep you safe.
	• Blame the targeted child for the bullying.

• Collaborate with guidance counselor and/or parents to empower the targeted child with assertive responses to bullying behaviors.	• Encourage aggressive or retaliatory responses.
• Emphasize the importance of telling an adult if students see bullying behavior.	• Tell children to go "work it out" if they report an incident to you.
• Hold children who bully accountable for their behavior in accordance with the school policy.	• Lecture the child who is bullying in front of his or her peers. Your goal is to end the behavior, not to humiliate or shame. Lecturing and scolding often provides the child who bullies with attention that he or she finds rewarding.
• Know and follow your school's policies and procedures around reporting bullying incidents.	
• Encourage bystanders to intervene safely in the bullying. Tell them their involvement makes a difference, and reinforce the intervention strategies taught in the *Open Circle Curriculum* for your grade level.	
• Talk with your students about mean teasing and bullying. Emphasize that bullying is a Double D behavior.	
• Be an effective role model. Teach by example.	
• Seek out other adults in the school community to collaborate with around bullying prevention.	
• Talk with administrators and colleagues about providing more supervision in areas of school where bullying is likely to happen.	

 © 2010 OPEN CIRCLE

Home Link

Dear Family:

In Open Circle, we have been talking about what it means to be a bystander. A bystander is a person who observes a problem situation taking place. Students explored their own experiences of how it feels to be a bystander. They considered situations where they were having a problem and other students were bystanders. We talked about what bystanders can do to make a situation better or make it worse.

Share with your child your own experiences being a bystander and how it felt. Ask your child whether she/he has ever been a bystander and what she/he did. Why did she/he act the way she/he did? How did it feel? Talk with your child about when it might be easy to help someone who is having a problem? When might it be hard? What are some of the qualities bystanders need to have?

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Estes, Eleanor. *The Hundred Dresses*. Harcourt, Inc., 1972.

Wanda is the target of repeated mean teasing by Peggy and her friends. When Wanda moves away because of the teasing, Maddie regrets that she never spoke up in Wanda's defense.

Brisson, Pat. *The Summer My Father Was Ten*. Boyds Mills Press, 1998.

What starts out as a harmless prank results in the destruction of someone's treasured vegetable garden.

DRAFT

 © 2010 OPEN CIRCLE

Bystander

A person who observes a situation taking place

DRAFT

© 2010 Open Circle

What Is a Bystander?

OBJECTIVES: **To help students understand the concept of "bystander"**
To help students recognize situations in which they are bystanders

MATERIALS

- *newsprint pad and markers*

NOTE

- *Students who are bystanders have a key role to play in addressing a wide range of problems among their peers. When students recognize that other students are in trouble and respond in a caring way, the climate of the classroom and the school benefit. We define the term "bystander" broadly to encourage students to recognize the role they can play in improving or worsening problem situations.*

REVIEW

Ask how many students have tried to deal with teasing or annoying behavior. How many were successful? Invite two or three students to share what they did and said, without using names.

INTRODUCE

Invite students to share what they think the word "bystander" means. Record students' ideas on chart paper. Explain to students that a bystander is a person who observes a situation taking place.

Ask students to give a thumbs-up if they have ever observed a problem situation taking place in school.

PRACTICE/APPLY

Ask students to think about some situations fourth graders might have during the school day. On a piece of newsprint, make two columns, labeling one column "Problems Between Students" and the other "Individual Problems."

As students brainstorm types of problem situations, have them work together to place problems in the appropriate column.

As they look over the list, ask students to identify which problems are ones in which other people might be around in the role of bystanders. Circle those problems. Ask students what they notice about the kinds of problems that involve bystanders. Are bystanders involved in both group and individual problem situations?

DRAFT

 © 2010 OPEN CIRCLE

Have students describe situations at school in which they might have been bystanders. Remind them not to use names when talking in the Open Circle Meeting about these situations.

Ask students: How does it feel to observe a problem situation taking place? Why might you feel the way you do?

Explain that sometimes being a bystander can be challenging or uncomfortable, but the way a bystander responds in a problem situation is important. One person can change how a situation ends up. Tell students that in an upcoming Open Circle Meeting, you will be talking with them about some of the actions that bystanders can take when they observe a problem situation.

HOMEWORK/EXTEND

Until the next Open Circle Meeting, ask students to pay careful attention to situations in which they are bystanders when a problem is happening at school. Invite them to notice how they feel and what they do. Ask them also to notice situations in which they are having a problem and other students are bystanders. What do the other students do? Tell them they will have a chance to share their experiences at the beginning of the next Open Circle Meeting.

Alternatively, ask students to notice examples of problem situations in stories they are reading, or have read in the past, in which characters are bystanders.

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Estes, Eleanor. *The Hundred Dresses*. Harcourt, Inc., 1972.

Wanda is the target of repeated mean teasing by Peggy and her friends. When Wanda moves away because of the teasing, Maddie regrets that she never spoke up in Wanda's defense.

Discussion Prompts: What did Peggy's friends, including Maddie, do when Peggy repeatedly teased Wanda? How did Maddie feel when Wanda moved away? What are some things that Wanda's classmates could have done to help her?

Brisson, Pat. *The Summer My Father Was Ten*. Boyds Mills Press, 1998.

What starts out as a harmless prank results in the destruction of someone's treasured vegetable garden.

Discussion Prompts: Who are the bystanders in this story? How did they feel? What could they have done?

DRAFT