

# Bully-Free for Me!

A Comprehensive Action Plan Dedicated to  
Establishing Bully-Free Schools  
For the Children of Nevada

A Collaborative Partnership  
Between the  
Nevada Attorney General's Office,  
Nevada Department of Education,  
and Nevada Communities



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Nevada Attorney General's Office  
100 N. Carson Street  
Carson City, NV 89701-4717  
(775) 684-1114  
<http://ag.state.nv.us>

Nevada Department of Education  
700 East Fifth Street  
Carson City, NV 89701-5096  
(775) 687-9200  
[www.nsn.k12nv.us/nvdoe](http://www.nsn.k12nv.us/nvdoe)

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The Nevada “Bully-Free For Me” Task Force extends its deep appreciation to Alameda County Office of Education Superintendent Sheila Jordan, and the School Violence Reduction Coordinator’s Sherry McLaughlin and Hilda Quiroz, for their gracious assistance and cooperation in developing our Action Plan for Nevada schools, and to the Clark County Public Education Foundation for its invaluable assistance in setting up and maintaining our web site.

# *1. Introduction*

## *Preface*

### *Summary Action Plan*

#### *Preface*

*A new report finds bullying and teasing topping the list of children's school troubles. The pain brought about by taunts and shunning at school appears to have played a role in recent fatal school shootings—evidence that this unrelieved stress may explode into tragedy. The report finds that more than two-thirds of school shooters said they felt persecuted or bullied by other students. The motive for the shooting was often revenge.*

CNN News Report  
March 8, 2001

Providing welcoming, peaceful school campuses are of special interest to Nevada's Attorney General and State Superintendent of Public Instruction. To achieve this end, a strong school/law enforcement partnership is being formed to address the issue of bullying in schools.

Nevada is in the enviable position of being ahead of the curve regarding school violence resulting from bullying, hazing, slurs and harassment. While other states are "putting out fires" on a daily basis, Nevada will be able to work on a proactive basis to better ensure student and staff safety.

#### *Introduction to the Issue*

Are the kids who are the butt of everyone's jokes the ones who are most likely to be violent? How could name-calling and rumormongering inspire murder?

People who study the brain will tell you that there is a biological reason that cruelty can lead to tragedy: Exposure to social abuse can re-engineer the brain. That's what a study published in 1998 by researchers at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center is showing. Work with hamsters revealed that tormented adolescents changed their brains as well as their behavior, significantly upsetting the structure and function of two chemical pathways previously shown to be critical to the regulation of aggression.

This is not an argument that lab animals in a cage are equivalent to human teenagers in a suburban high school—but it does demonstrate that life experiences have biological

consequences. Experience and physiology are inseparable because the human brain is born with questions that need answers. Is my world safe? Can other people be trusted?

Brain researchers have shown that chronic social stress, particularly the misery caused by bullying, is just the sort of insult that hammers at the brain until it's a nervous wreck. Biochemically, the bullying leads to hair-trigger stress responses and persistently elevated levels of stress hormones. Behaviorally, they erode the ability to cope.

Adolescents can't just leave an unfriendly school, meaning that a teen who's perceived as a social misfit can be trapped in an environment as toxic as an abusive home. They depend on the adults around them to set and enforce limits on bullying.

Los Angeles Times  
March 14, 2001

### ***Executive Summary of Action Plan***

***The single most important strategy for developing a bully-free school environment is to rigorously enforce intervention strategies at all grade levels while installing a strong prevention program in the lower elementary grades.***

An effective prevention program will, over time, change the culture of each school campus. However, existing bullying behaviors need to be addressed while we wait for systemic cultural changes to occur. Lasting change may not be noticeable until an entire generation of students experience the program.

This is where so many programs go wrong and why parents, legislators and critics are able to point to many well-intended efforts that have not worked as intended. We are rarely able to address systemic change while we deal with crisis.

It is easy to understand why so many programs are unable to follow this approach—it dictates working a double shift. It is twice as labor intensive and expensive. It relies heavily upon community partnerships that bring volunteer labor and coordinated funding streams to the project. And, this hard work needs to be sustained over time.

Some partners may not wish to commit to this project. Many people want to see change now or at least by tomorrow. They want to be able to take the credit during their watch. They are happy with changing a few students in a few schools for a few months.

For those who decide that the goal is worth the effort, oh what an experience it will be! One can only imagine the effect of the reality that children can be educated in a bully-free school environment. Nevada can serve as a National model.

The School/Law Enforcement administrators recognize the value of community partners in moving this *Action Plan* forward. The strength of this community partnership will be honored at every level and the *Action Plan* will include input from all identified stakeholders interested in furthering the social health of Nevada's children.

The following *Action Plan Synopsis* is a two-page summary of the effective components necessary for creating and maintaining bully-free school campuses for Nevada.

***Synopsis:***  
***An Action Plan for Eliminating Bullying Behaviors:***  
***A Two-Pronged Approach***  
***Grades K-12***

The single most important strategy for developing a bully-free school environment is to take a two-pronged approach to prevention and intervention. This approach must:

***Rigorously enforce proven intervention strategies at all grade levels while installing a strong, developmentally appropriate prevention program at the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade levels.***

By working with this model, schools will experience whole school change over time. This approach addresses existing bullying behaviors while installing systemic, cultural changes at the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade levels. Lasting change will probably not be noticeable until an entire generation of students has experienced the two-pronged program.

This is where so many programs go wrong and why parents, legislators and critics are able to point to many well-intended efforts and call many prevention programs failures. We are rarely able to address systemic change while we deal with crisis.

***It is easy to understand why so many programs are unable to follow this approach—it essentially dictates working a double shift.***

It is twice as labor intensive and expensive. It relies heavily upon community partnerships that bring volunteer labor and coordinated funding streams to the project. And, this hard work needs to be *sustained over time*.

Some partners may not wish to commit to this project. Many people want to see change now or at least by tomorrow. They want to be able to take the credit during their watch. They are happy with changing a few students in a few schools for a few months.

For those who decide that the goal is worth the effort, what an experience it will be! One can only imagine the effect the program will have on children. They will be educated in a bully-free school environment.

***The following is a description of the effective components necessary for creating and maintaining bully-free school campuses.***

**Bully-Free Schools: An Action Plan**  
*(the following work is to be done concurrently)*

**Intervention Strategies (K-12):**

*Addressing and Assessing current bullying behavior on k-12 campuses:*

- ??Hold regional **conferences** for parents, law enforcement partners, and students.
- ??Offer **staff training** focusing on identification of and responses to bullying.
- ??Communicate clear and consistently enforced **behavior standards**.
- ??Encourage volunteer **parent supervision** in less structured campus areas.
- ??Prepare **SRO's to act as student advocates** and confidantes regarding bullying.
- ??Encourage **student reporting**: it is *not* tattling, it is reporting a behavior that is unsafe for self and others.

**Prevention Strategies (Focus on 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades):**

*Designing activities at the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade level which promote bully-free school campuses:*

- ??**Form an advisory group** of all stakeholders to explain why 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grades have been chosen for the prevention this is the time when the concept of “community” is being taught to young children. *See state Health Frameworks*) Explain why ‘developmentally appropriate’ materials are important.
- ??**Assess the current perceived bullying activity** by age level, severity and type.
- ?? **Identify needs** based upon current school strengths, weaknesses and gaps in service. What is the school already doing that IS working.
- ??**Set realistic, measurable goals, objectives** and appropriate grade-level activities. Select grade-level focus for program based upon themes and activities that are developmentally appropriate for the interests, abilities, and strengths of the selected age group.
- ??**Select research-based strategies** and programs appropriate for individual school.
- ??**Forge appropriate school/community partners** to carry out plan and tasks.
- ??**Implement strategies** and activities with assistance of law enforcement, education, community partners.
- ??**Evaluate** work of program each year, **revise** strategies if needed and **report** progress of program to state leaders, legislators and media.
- ??Once it is determined that the program design is effective, determine ways to **continue the work**.

As young students matriculate through the system, current bullying behavior now seen at the older grade levels will be severely reduced. At that time, most of the bullying work will consist of less expensive (and less time-intensive) prevention activities. A systemic, school culture change will begin to occur.

## *2. Defining the Issue*

### *Defining the Issue*

**Dr. Dan Olweus, Leading International Expert on Bully-Victim Problems  
Professor of Psychology at Bergen University  
Former Fellow at Stanford University  
Norway, 1986 & 1991**

“A student is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. A negative action is when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another.”

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**Dr. Ken Rigby, Researcher  
New Zealand, 2000**

A desire to hurt a person or group  
+ hurtful action  
+ an imbalance of power  
+ (typically) repetition  
+ an unjust use of power  
+ satisfaction for the aggressor  
+ a sense of being hurt on the part of the target

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**Kristi Koiv, Researcher  
Estonia Study, 1997**

...a form of child maltreatment, largely determined by the school environment.  
...a form of directed aggression in which a bully deliberately hurts or causes discomfort to one of his/her peers. Can be physical and/or psychological.

***The Three Types of Bullying Behavior***

- ?? ***Physical bullying:*** harm to another's body or property
- ?? ***Emotional bullying:*** harm to another's self-worth
- ?? ***Social bullying:*** harm to another's group acceptance

**Spectrum of Bullying Behaviors**

Physical/Psychological Aggression

Mild → Moderate → Severe

Pushing Shoving Spitting	Kicking Hitting	Defacing property Stealing	Physical acts that are demeaning and humiliating but not physically harmful Locking in a closet or confined space	Physical violence against family or friends	Threatening with a weapon Inflicting bodily harm
Gossiping Embarrassing someone	Setting up to look foolish Spreading rumors	Ethnic slurs Setting up to take the blame	Publicly humiliating Excluding from a group Social rejection	Maliciously excluding Manipulating social order to achieve rejection Malicious rumor-mongering	Threatening with total isolation by peer group
Mocking Name-calling Dirty looks Taunting	Teasing about clothing or possessions	Teasing about appearance	Intimidating phone calls	Verbal threats of aggression against property or possessions	Verbal threats of violence or of inflicting bodily harm
Threatening to reveal personal information Graffiti	Defacing property or clothing Playing a dirty trick	Taking possessions (lunch, money, clothing, toys)	Extortion	Threats of using coercion against family or friends	Coercion Threatening with a weapon

### ***What is bullying?***

School bullying is when a student or staff member keeps doing or saying things to have power over another person. Some of the ways they bully others are by calling them names, saying or writing mean things about them, leaving them out of activities, not talking to them, threatening them, making them feel uncomfortable, taking or damaging their things, hitting or kicking them, or making them do things they don't want to do.

### ***Why do some students and/or staff members bully?***

There are a lot of reasons why people bully. They may see it as a way to be more popular, or make themselves look tough or more powerful. Some bullies bully to get attention or make others afraid of them. Others might be jealous of the person they are bullying. They may be being bullied themselves at home or by siblings. Some bullies may not even understand why they bully or how it makes others feel.

### ***Why are some students and/or staff members easy targets?***

Some people are bullied for no particular reason, but sometimes it is because they are different in some way – perhaps it's the color of their skin, the way they talk, their size or their name. Sometimes it is because the targets do not stand up for themselves or talk back.

### ***What Does Bullying Look Like and Why Do We Need to Know So Much About It?***

Bullying can be expressed directly or indirectly (Olweus, 1993). Although it is common for children to experience more than one type of bullying, children need different skills to recognize and cope with different forms.

It is unrealistic to assume we can develop an *Action Plan* or even know how to assess the scope of our bullying problem in our schools without understanding what children are experiencing. We wouldn't even know the appropriate questions to ask.

### ***How Serious is the Problem?***

Although it is common for adults to view bullying normal, as a passing stage of childhood, or as a problem that children should be left to work out on their own, **feeling lonely, frightened, insecure or unsafe is not a normal part of growing up!**

#### **The Bullying Definition of Yesterday**

Name calling, nasty notes, leaving someone out, ignoring someone, threatening, scaring, hitting, kicking, coercing, damaging property

#### **Today's bullies**

Humiliate and manipulate, isolate and ostracize. The most worrisome punch, poke, strangle, suffocate, pull hair, bend fingers, bite, stab, burn, poison and shoot victims. In the most extreme cases, cornered victims fight back with firepower, killing their tormentors or committing suicide.

Children themselves have provided some of the most troubling data regarding the problem of bullying. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation “Talking With Kids About Tough Issues” survey revealed the following data:

Percent of children who say bullying is a real problem at their school:

3 <sup>rd</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> graders	55%
7 <sup>th</sup> - 10 <sup>th</sup> graders	68%

Percent of children who say kids at their school get teased or bullied continually:

3 <sup>rd</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> graders	74%
7 <sup>th</sup> - 10 graders	86%

### ***Are There Harmful Consequences?***

#### *For Children Who Bully:*

The bullying behavior in childhood persists into adulthood for a large group of children (Eron, Huessmann, Dubow, Romanoff, and Yarnel, 1987). In a follow-up study of children who bullied, Olweus found that 60% of the boys identified as having serious bullying problems between sixth and ninth grades had a least one criminal conviction by the age of 24, 40% had three or more arrests.

Some students who bully actually have leadership potential with peers, but their reliance on negative ways of influencing others keeps them from developing this potential. Over time, students who bully are more likely to experience a decline in their peer group status.

#### *For Children Who Are Targets of Bullying:*

The effects of bullying on students are devastating and increase over time. Other students tend to judge targeted students quite negatively and blame them for the bullying they endure (Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler, 1994). Peers apply negative labels, such as ‘weak’ or ‘nerdy.’ When you ask many adults, years after they have left school, if they remember ever being bullied, they will often be able to tell you when, who did it, what their name is, what they were wearing and how it felt. **That is powerful.**

These findings suggest that the experience of being bullied can lead to further peer rejection and the development of a painful cycle in which the students who are most in need of support from their peers are the least likely to receive it.

*Most students are not involved in bullying. They are neither a bully nor a target of bullying. They know it's wrong, but unless they are made to feel they have a*

*genuine responsibility or duty to act, they will  
silently collude with the abuse.*

The unfortunate reality is that many children and staff members are enduring bullying in silence without assistance from others. One study found that only 47% of bullied students told anyone about the bullying (Ziegler & Pepler, 1993). Furthermore, children do not believe that teachers will respond effectively if they respond at all.

Research has also established a link between being bullied and having both emotional and academic difficulties. Being the target of peer aggression has been shown to lead to emotional problems in children. Feelings of loneliness often persist even after the bullying stops (Boulton and Underwood, 1992). Children begin to blame themselves for the bullying and may see themselves as social failures (Graham and Juvonen, 1998).

The link between being bullied and developing negative feelings about school has been documented (Kochenderfer et al, 1996). Academic problems seen in targeted children include avoidance and dislike of school, leading in later years to a greater risk of truancy and school dropouts (Sharp, 1995). A study of American teenagers found that 17% said bullying had interfered with their academic performance (Hazler et al, 1992).

### ***What are the Solutions?***

Adults can have a positive impact on the problem of bullying when they become actively involved. In particular, school-based prevention programs have been shown to decrease bullying.

The effectiveness of prevention programs varies across schools. In general, the schools with the largest reductions in bullying were those that **most thoroughly and consistently** implemented their selected program (Eslea and Smith, 1998; Roland, 2000). Researchers emphasize the importance of a “whole school” approach to bullying, with specific components at the school, class and individual levels (Olweus, 1991, 1993). (See section 3, *An Action Plan for Success*)

Research Foundations of  
Steps to Respect Bullying Prevention Program

### ***3. An Action Plan for Prevention and Intervention***

#### ***An Action Plan for Prevention and Intervention***

Dr. Olweus, one of the foremost authorities on bullying in the school setting, recommends that adults closely supervise recess and enforce “strict and straightforward” rules of behavior. He also advises that teachers administer consistent, nonphysical punishment to misbehaving children and to generously praise good behavior. If class rules are adhered to, Dr. Olweus says, bullying victims will enjoy the support of well-adjusted classmates.

Basic to any anti-bullying program is a “clear repudiation of repeated physical and mental maltreatment,” he says. In *Aggression in the Schools* he writes:

*Naturally, this repudiation should be directed primarily against the bullying, not the particular bully; but it seems inevitable that it will also affect the bully to some degree. Such an emphasis ought to come from many different sources: from the school authorities (admonitions that physical and mental abuse will not be tolerated in the school); from the teachers (clear statements and active intervention in situations where bullying occurs); from the classmates (active intervention with the aim of protecting the victim); and, from the parents of bullies (through serious discussion, but not physical punishment). Even though the peer group can play an important role, I believe that the adults, at least at first, must assume the main responsibility for stressing such repudiation. This requires a certain amount of courage on the part of the adults, especially since all suggestions of even a slightly controlling character have come to seem so unfashionable. However, to fail to stop these activities implies a tacit confirmation—an attitude that seems very inhumane.*

International authorities on schoolyard bullying met in May of 1987 at Harvard University for a “Schoolyard Bully Practicum”. They were asked to develop a five-point prevention program for the United States. According to Practicum participants, five central ideas must be acknowledged by the public and school administrators in trying to address the phenomenon of bullying.

These ideas are:

- ?? School bullying is a significant problem.
- ?? Fear and suffering are becoming part of the everyday lives of victims, making them avoid certain areas at school, stay home from school, run away or kill themselves.
- ?? Young bullies are more likely, when they reach adulthood, to become criminals and suffer from family and professional problems. Practicum participants strongly believe early

prevention or intervention programs can not only stop school bullying but also can save victims, the bully and society from years of potentially tragic problems.

- ?? The prevailing attitude that *kids fighting each other is a manifestation of normal youthful aggressive behavior* must be discarded.
- ?? The United States should follow the lead of Scandinavia and Japan, whose governments have addressed bullying problems with national intervention and prevention programs. Their efforts have been successful in reducing bullying incidents and can work in the United States as well.

Practicum participants identified a wide range of strategies to help educators control bullying:

- ?? Assess the scope of the problem through a questionnaire answered by teachers and students.
- ?? Communicate clear and consistently enforced behavior standards.
- ?? Closely monitor playground activity.
- ?? Be visible on campus, and
- ?? Watch for symptoms of bullying in children such as withdrawal; decline in study habits or grades; anxiety; and cuts, bruises or torn clothing.

*Using the above research information and findings, the Nevada Bully-Prevention Task Force has developed the following Action Plan for schools:*

**It is recommended that districts:**

- ?? **Assess** current curricula and programs that prevent and respond to bullying.  
(See Below: *Curriculum, Teacher and Community Assessment*)
- ?? Support any curricular program with sound anti-bullying policies and school rules that **promote the message** that bullying is harmful, dangerous and unacceptable, and in certain cases breaks the law. *Curricular programs need to promote the norm that bullying is unacceptable.*
- ?? Concentrate efforts on identifying and implementing bullying prevention programs at the **early elementary level** as a foundation for all other programs. Select these early elementary programs based on sound theory, developmental appropriateness, and cultural responsiveness.
- ?? Adopt an **articulated k-12 bullying intervention program** that builds from the program above.
- ?? Forge viable **community partnerships** that can assist with each selected program.

***Assessment:***

**Curriculum Assessment**

Identifying k-12 bully-prevention programs or special activities that address the identified instructional themes as a deterrent to bullying behaviors.

*Identified Instructional themes:*

Belonging  
Getting Along with Others  
Defining and Understanding Teasing  
Defining and Understanding Bullying  
Reviewing School Rules and Consequences Regarding Bullying  
Recognizing Bullying Behaviors  
Exploring Peer Norms Regarding Bullying  
Understanding Short and Long Term Consequences of Bullying  
Identifying the Rewards of a Bully-free School  
Understanding How Media Influences Bullying  
Reporting Bullying and Getting Help  
Helping Friends or Others Who are Bullied  
Being a Role Model: Practicing Anti-bullying Behaviors  
Taking a Stand: Advocating for a Bully-free School

**Teacher, Counselor and School Staff Training Assessment**

To attend training that will help school staff to identify and respond to bullying behaviors on campus  
To identify activities or programs that promote bully-free schools  
To implement those identified activities in their classrooms and on campus

**Community Partnership Assessment**

Law Enforcement: To identify activities or programs that promote bully-free schools

Parent and Family Partners: To identify activities or programs that help parents promote bully-free schools and respond to bullying

Social Services Partners: To identify any referral and service systems for severe or special needs regarding perpetrators or targets of bullying

Community Based organizations: To identify any special programs or services to help schools deter bullying

Legislators/Government Leaders: To advocate for any legislation which would support the bullying prevention effort.

## *4. A Sample Bullying Prevention Curricula Grade Three*

### **Sample Curriculum Materials from Researched-based Programs Grade 3**

#### **About the Curriculum**

The *Bully-Free for Me* program is collection of lessons and materials designed for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students. Third grade has been selected because it is the first time students begin understand *feelings* of community (others) around them. It is a very simplistic understanding; however, if we wait until fifth grade (when the student again addresses the concerns of “the larger community”) we feel it will be too late. This is based on all the new research coming out that is showing us that bullying is beginning at earlier ages each generation.

The themes and activities are developmentally appropriate for the interests, abilities, strengths and developmental benchmarks of this age group.

The goal of the curriculum is to help students:

- build an appreciation** for a school where all students belong and are respected
- explore peer ideas and thoughts** about belonging and being respected by others.
- identify feelings** that are a part of belonging and being respected.
- personalize feelings** of belonging and being respected.
- describe the elements of** a classroom and school where all students belong and are respected.
- identify the rewards** of a classroom and school where all students belong and are respected.
- express the intention** to act in ways that make other feel like they belong and are respected.
- take a stand and advocate** for a school where all students belong and are respected.

The lessons are simple clear and concise. The activities support students in constructing their own meaning about creating and maintaining a school where all students share a sense of belonging and respect. The activities help students practice the following skills:

- Communication
- Perspective Taking
- Self-assessment
- Decision-making
- Advocating
- Accessing Support

### The Role of the Facilitator (teacher, SRO, parent volunteer, grandparent, etc)

The Facilitator provides one of key elements for promoting welcoming and respectful schools for all students. He/she will serve as a *role model* for students by demonstrating:

- a commitment to helping create welcoming and respectful schools for all students
- an interest in establishing a relationship with students based on care and interest.
- the willingness to be a resource for students and teachers.
- the thoughts, attitudes and actions of a respectful person.
- the role of promoting the civil rights of all human beings.

### Developing a Video

The program also needs to include a video that will serve as a trigger and model for classroom discussion. The video should be designed to illicit classroom discussions regarding peer thoughts, ideas and opinions about belonging and being respected in one's classroom and school.

The video should be designed to address the questions outlined in Lessons #1 - #3 and should record peer responses. **The questions correspond to the curriculum design.** It should carry the thematic thread of the unit and help to move the lesson activities at a quick and engaging pace.

A music or song clip should also be used in the video. It should be appropriate to and responsive to the individual school population. Letting the students write or develop the song is also a good way to get "buy-in" for the program.

(A video has already been developed for this grade level and can be obtained by calling 510-670-4220. Ask for the *Welcome to School: Helping Kids Belong* video. You can also develop your own video using students in your own school or district.)

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### Lesson 1 (week one)

**(Music, Introduction and invitation to Listen, Talk and Learn)** The video can use the "Child in Me" or the "Don't Laugh at Me" song. The responses should be 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students from across Nevada – "Talking heads" on a playground, in hallways, etc.

- What does belonging mean?
- How does it feel when you belong?

### **Lesson 2 (week two)**

#### **(Music, Introduction/Review and invitation to Listen, Talk and Learn)**

- What does being respected mean?
- How does it feel to be respected?

### **Lesson 3 (week three)**

#### **(Music, Introduction/Review and invitation to Listen, Talk and Learn)**

- What would it be like to go to a school where you belong and were respected?
- What kinds of things can you do to make your school a place where everybody belongs and is respected?

**\*Each video segment should last approximately 2-3 minutes. One segment of the video will be shown during each of the 3 lessons. The entire video length would be from 15 to 18 minutes including opening music and credits.**

Each video segment should be followed up with a classroom discussion. A homework assignment should be given for the next week: i.e. “Write a story about what it means to .....”

The three-week program should be reinforced by having each student draw, paint, etc. a poster about the lessons. The facilitator should assist the students in posting the drawings around the school. This should be discussed all during the year.

**Additional sample Bullying Prevention Curriculum materials for other grade levels can be obtained from the Alameda County Office of Education, Bully Prevention Office, 510-670-4220. There is a fee for this service.**

## **Nevada *Bully-Free for Me* Task Force Members:**

Nevada Attorney General Frankie Sue Del Papa  
Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack McLaughlin  
Steve George, Public Information Officer, Nevada Secretary of State's office  
Sherry McLaughlin, School Violence Reduction Coordinator, Alameda County Office of Education  
Michael Fitzgerald, Education Coordinator, Nevada Department of Education  
Chopin Ki ang, Nevada Department of Education  
Jean Ann Berkich, Nevada Attorney General's Office  
Shari Pheasant, Reno Parent Patrol  
Michael Pennington, Nevada Attorney General's Office  
Valerie Wiener, Nevada State Senator  
David Parks, Nevada Assemblyman  
Dennis Nolan, Nevada Assemblyman  
Bonnie Parnell, Assemblywoman  
Barbara Clark, Nevada PTA  
Debbie Cahill, Nevada Education Association  
Rene Yeckley, Legislative Council Bureau  
Ruth Aberasturi, Carson School District  
Jane Gruner, Sierra Regional Center  
Hilda Quiroz, California Department of Education  
Augie Orci, Clark County School District  
Sara Gardner, Clark County School District  
Loretta Thomas, Washoe County School District  
Jerry Holloway, Washoe County School District  
Pat Casarez, Washoe County School District  
Dr. Leonard Beckum, WestEd  
Judi Steele, Clark County Public Education Foundation  
Kevin Nielsen, Clark County Education Association  
Gail Palchikoff, Washoe County School District  
Jerry Cornell, Clark County School District  
Stephanie Parker, Nevada Attorney General's Office  
William Miller, Clark County School District  
Rosemary Virtuoso, Clark County School District  
Jeannine Sherrick, Washoe ARC/PBS Nevada  
Danielle Bowen, Washoe County Parks & Rec. Dept.  
Jennifer Hoff, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center  
Terri Peltier, WCSD Behavior Mgt.  
Rod Smith, WCSD Behavior Mgt.