

Peace Education Program Develops Bullying Prevention Workshops

Bullying has become big news. It seems as though we hear horror stories of bullying and its' affects daily. As a result, Peace Education Program has been receiving an increase in requests for anti-bullying work. As conflict resolution practitioners, we are well prepared to tackle the issues that cause young people to mistreat each other. That being said, Peace Ed is getting involved in anti-bullying work very carefully. We want to acknowledge the seriousness of true bullying incidents, while being aware that much of what is being labeled as bullying in our current climate is actually conflict.

Central to our approach at Peace Education Program is making the distinction between *bullying behavior* and *bullies*. Getting caught up in labeling children as bullies or victims can be counterproductive. Instead we focus on the behaviors individuals engage in that lead to conflict. There are definitely cases of bullying occurring in our schools and neighborhoods, young people being harassed and abused by their peers. These incidents need the attention of adults and definitive resolutions. In addition to these critical bullying incidents, our young people are also facing daily conflicts with their friends, classmates and neighbors. Our goal at Peace Education Program is to equip people with the tools to resolve these conflicts independently and nonviolently.

Bloom Elementary has been partnering with Peace Education Program for seven years. Each classroom participates in conflict resolution workshops every school year. During the 2011 – 2012 school year Peace Education Program is piloting a series of workshops that address bullying behavior. During these sessions, students brainstorm what bullying behavior looks like, and discuss which behaviors they have seen, have had done to them or done themselves. After learning the difference between aggressive, passive and assertive responses to bullying behavior, students wrote and performed role plays that showcased assertive responses. As we continue to grow our programming to meet the needs of our community, we learn new ways to teach young people conflict resolution skills.

Interesting articles on bullying can be found:

1. Bullying As True Drama: Why Cyberbullying Rhetoric Misses the Mark
By Dana Boyd and Alice Markwick - Click on the following link for the article

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/opinion/why-cyberbullying-rhetoric-misses-the-mark.html>

2. An Alternate Approach to Stop School Bullying: Fix the Victims by Hans Villarica – click on the following like for the article

<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2011/11/an-alternate-approach-to-stop-school-bullying-fix-the-victims/247548/>