



Bullying 101



What is Bullying?



A combination of an imbalance of power, an intent to cause harm, and repetition

Impact of Bullying

Education

School avoidance, loss of academic achievement and increase in drop out rates

Health

Physical and emotional including stomachaches, headaches, sleeping issues, depression, fear or anxiety

Safety

Harm to self or others, Including self-isolation, increased aggression, alienation and retaliation

Types of Bullying



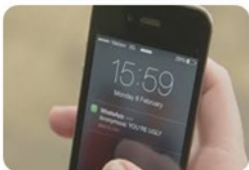
Verbal—teasing, insults, using embarrassing information, saying or writing threatening remarks



Physical—slamming into lockers, knocking books out of victim's hands, taking money, hitting



Social—purposely excluding someone from a group, making racist comments, making fun of someone's disability (often involves bullying by more than one person)



Cyber—using the internet, social networks, cell phones, etc. to hurt others



- One out of every five students (20.8%) report being bullied
- Children with disabilities are 2-3x more likely to be bullied
- 64% of children who were bullied did NOT report it
- When students in special education report bullying, they are told not to tattle almost twice as often as students not in special education

Sources of information include www.pacer.org, www.stopbullying.gov, and www.disabilityrightscalifornia.org

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What to do First

1. Stay calm and be a support to your child
2. Get the story of the bullying as accurate as possible from your child
3. Take notes and document everything
4. Notify the school district immediately in writing
5. Familiarize yourself with the district's policy on prohibiting bullying, as well as the complaint process for investigation and resolution

(in cases of a serious incident, call the police immediately)

The Law is on Your Side!

California Ed Code states every school must have an anti-bullying policy and a complaint procedure (with timelines and appeals process) in place. Further, schools are encouraged to implement strategies such as trainings and other activities that will reduce bullying.



Disability harassment is a form of discrimination, per of the Office of Civil Rights, and violates **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act**.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted to ensure students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) that enables them to access and benefit from public education as set forth in their IEP. Bullying of a student decrease their ability to benefit and may be a denial of FAPE.

Other Actions

- ◆ Use the IEP or 504 process to add in supports for your child such as: building social skills, supervision and/or separation from bullies, counseling, developing interpersonal relationships, educating school staff, and developing self-advocacy skills
- ◆ If the bullying is not being effectively addressed by the school, file a complaint with the California Department of Education (CDE) or Office of Civil Rights (OCR) if it's a form of harassment (such as disability harassment)
- ◆ Request an interdistrict transfer (CA law provides the student who is bullied be given priority for such a transfer)
- ◆ Share concerns with school board members through letters and/or attending the public meetings and request specific steps be taken

Puberty and CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

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AT A PARENT GROUP MEETING, A MOTHER ASKED, “SINCE MY DAUGHTER’S MENTAL AGE IS ABOUT A THIRD GRADE LEVEL, WHY IS SHE STARTING HER PERIOD? THIS DOESN’T SEEM POSSIBLE.”

All children go through puberty regardless of IQ or social skills. The brain does not tell the body to stop growing if the boy/girl’s developmental level is younger than their age. Puberty is a stage of development just like moving from being an infant to a toddler. Puberty is considered to begin around age 12 for girls and age 14 for boys. The physical changes of puberty are centered on the development of secondary characteristics and the onset of menstruation (in girls) and ejaculation (in boys).

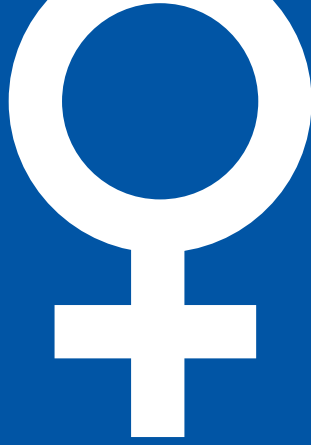
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THE AVERAGE AGE A GIRL STARTS MENSTRUATING IS AROUND 12 OR 13, BUT SOME GIRLS START AS EARLY AS 9 AND OTHERS ARE AS LATE AS 17.



GET USED TO SAYING WORDS SUCH AS PENIS, TESTICLES AND PUBIC HAIR FOR BOYS AND VAGINA, BREASTS, AND MENSTRUATION FOR GIRLS.

GIRLS. The physical changes in girls usually begin between ages 7 and 14. Girls begin to have growth spurts, develop breasts, pubic and underarm hair, and have vaginal discharge. Good hygiene by taking a shower or bath each day, washing your hair, underarms, and vaginal area is increasingly important. A girl's menstruation (period) usually follows within a year or two of these changes. The average age a girl starts menstruating is around 12 or 13, but some girls start as early as 9 and others as late as 17 (Strong, DeVault, Sayad & Yarber, 2005).

As parents see their daughter developing physical changes of puberty, they should start talking to her about menstruation. For example, a father was concerned that his daughter screams loudly and runs around the room every time she sees the sight of blood, even if the cut on her finger is small. She doesn't become calm until they put a bandage on the cut. How will she react about blood from her vagina? We suggested calling menstrual pads a very large bandage. This language would help their daughter transition to starting menstruation. In addition, the family decided to start practicing the steps of wearing a pad and changing it regularly before the important day came.

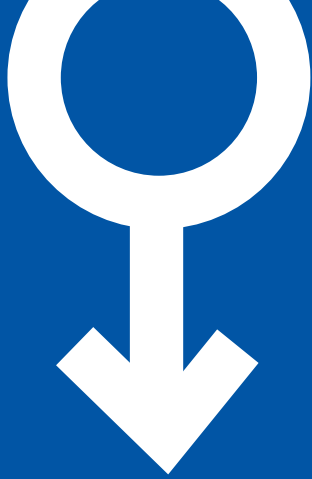
Here are some ideas to assist girls in that process:

- Put red food coloring in your daughter's underwear to show what the blood might look like when she starts her period.
- Mother should model the steps of wearing and changing a sanitary pad. If possible, include other girls in the house as well.
- Mark the pad and panties with a different color to show where the pad should be placed in her underwear.
- Go to the store and buy a few different kinds of sanitary pads. Try different sizes, thicknesses, wings or no wings, fragrances, and brands.

- Make a visual schedule of how often the sanitary pad should be changed. Remember her school schedule. Try to arrange the changing time with the times that she would change classes (normal breaks in the day) at school. The more the schedule is the same at home and school, the easier the transition will be.
- Watch a video on a teens health Web site (http://kidshealth.org/teen/sexual_health/girls/menstruation.html).
- If your daughter learns best with facts, buy a book on getting your period (see references at end of article). Having a full explanation of her menstrual phases may help your daughter transition to this part of her life. For others, the information may be overwhelming. As her parent, you know in what manner your daughter learns best.
- Plan a celebration party for when she starts her period. Growing into a woman is exciting and should be celebrated.

BOYS. The physical changes in boys usually begin around age 13. Some boys start prematurely at age 12 while others begin as late as 17 or 18 years of age. Generally, boys' puberty lags behind girls by two years. The secondary characteristics for boys include: growth spurts, bigger hands and feet, increased muscle mass, deepened voice, facial and underarm hair, and more hair in the pubic area. Their penis and testicles also develop (Strong, DeVault, Sayad, Yarber, 2005). Like girls, boys should shower or bathe each day. Be sure to wash hair, underarms, and genital area.

At puberty, boys begin to ejaculate semen. Many boys are unnerved by the first appearance of semen which will probably occur while sleeping (e.g., wet dreams). One parent shared that her son didn't want to disappoint her because he was a "big boy" now and didn't wet his bed. So when he started having nocturnal emissions,



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MANY BOYS ARE UNNERVED BY THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF SEMEN, WHICH WILL PROBABLY OCCUR WHILE SLEEPING.

he was afraid to tell her because he thought she would be disappointed. His behavior escalated until he refused to go to bed at night. It is important to assure your son that he is not urinating in bed. In addition, boys may have erections at odd or unplanned times. Explain that this is a part of puberty that will eventually stop.

Here are some ideas to assist boys at puberty:

- Don't overreact or under react. Remember your son probably doesn't have any idea of what is happening to him

when he has, for example, nocturnal emissions. Change the sheets or have him help you.

- Use a calm voice and explain what is happening during puberty with your son. Relate the nocturnal emissions to other changes he is experiencing, then explain that this is part of puberty and growing into being a man.
- Go to the library or bookstore to read about how boys bodies change during puberty.

PARENTS. When talking about boy and girl body parts, use the medical terminology. Language concepts are difficult for many individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Therefore, if they learn the word "pee pee" to mean penis when they are young, it will be awkward and inappropriate for them to still be calling their male genitalia "pee pee" when they are young adults or men. Start with the medical terminology from the beginning, and get used to saying words such as penis, testicles and pubic hair for boys and vagina, breasts, and menstruation for girls. Here are other critical points to ponder:

- Before you can effectively communicate your values about sexuality to your children, you need to know what you believe and why.
- You are the main educators of sex for your son and/or daughter. Whether you are comfortable or not, wouldn't you rather they get factual information from you than follow a classmate's or friend's advice?
- You must be "askable" (Gordon & Gordon, 2000). This means you should be prepared for any question or incident that involves your son or daughter's sexuality. Always say, "That is a good question." You can decide to answer the question immediately or say, "We'll discuss it when we get home." If you answer with a positive tone, then your child will continue to ask questions. Also, remember to answer the questions simply

and directly. Don't give too much information to your adolescent.

- Children are not perfect. They make mistakes and it's up to us to turn their mistakes into lessons.
- Remember to use the same teaching strategies that you have used to teach your children other skills. Apply these strategies to teaching them about menstruation and nocturnal emissions as they go through puberty. Some of these strategies may include visual schedules or check off lists, videos, facts in books, pictures of what is happening to their bodies, stories to predict what might occur, or specific terminology. Think of puberty as just another stage of development. Embrace this time and move forward.

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RESOURCES:

- View www.kotex.com to identify some of the options this company has available.
- Borrow books and videos from CeDIR (Center for Disability Information and Referral at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir or 812-855-6508).
- See www.familiesaretalking.org for information and talking points.



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Planning for Successful Transitions ACROSS GRADE LEVELS

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TRANSITION IS A NATURAL PART OF ALL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS.

Students with and without disabilities must adjust to changes in teachers, classmates, schedules, buildings and routines. The transition from one grade to the next can be especially challenging for a student on the autism spectrum (ASD). However, these students can make this shift more easily with careful planning and preparation.

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MANY TEACHERS MAY NOT HAVE PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM. THEREFORE, THEY WILL NEED BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT ASD AND HOW IT IMPACTS THE STUDENT.



THINKING ABOUT TRANSITION

When thinking about transition, sometimes it is helpful to start the process with a list of questions to act as a springboard for discussion. Some parents use similar questions when preparing for an IEP meeting. Other families like to hold family meetings with siblings and the individual with autism so that they can all share in the planning. Below is an example of such a list:

- What does your child like to do?
- What can your child do?
- What does your child need to explore?
- What does your child need to learn to reach his or her goals?
- What transportation will your child use to get to school and for extracurricular activities?

Many people think of school in terms of curriculum, but having friends and a sense of belonging in a community also is important. To address these areas, following are a few additional questions to consider:

- Are supports needed to encourage friendship?
- Do people in the school community know your son or daughter?
- Are supports needed to structure time for recreation? Exercise?
- Does your child have any special interests that others might share, which could lead to participating in extracurricular activities?
- Can you explore avenues for socializing with peers, such as religious affiliation or volunteer work?

Part of transition planning should be preparing the student to play an active role in all decisions that impact their life. The best place to begin this preparation is to have the student with ASD involved all aspects of educational planning, including the transition process from the very beginning. As mentioned in Student-Led IEPs (McGahee, Mason, Wallace, & Jones, 2001), given the great variance of student ability, there is a wide range of options. Some students

may just be able to state or read part of their plan for the future to the IEP team, others may go on to explain their disability, describe the need for accommodations, share their strengths and challenges (present levels of performance), and talk about plans for the future. The eventual goal is a student-led IEP meeting (under the watchful eyes of the IEP team). Dealing with the paradigm shift from being advocated for through the IEP to having to advocate for oneself after high school requires much long-term work. Starting the process of teaching self-advocacy ideally could begin before transition planning for school is mandated into the Individual Education Plan (IEP). Providing students with a well-developed sense of self-advocacy through the process should be an integral part of education. Doing so is vital for gaining a greater understanding of how to obtain the required accommodations upon entering the community, in higher education, employment, and relationships during adolescence and adulthood years.

The transition process also should involve taking action. After identifying areas of interest and setting goals, steps should be taken to meet those goals. For example, an older student with ASD who has particularly sharp computer skills is dismissed from school early a few days a week to work with an aide at a data processing office. This position was acquired through the vocation rehabilitation office, which continues to provide support. Before beginning this job, the student was taught appropriate office social skills (including unwritten rules) and important office procedures, such as using a time clock. Another student, who prefers to be outdoors, received school credits for joining peers to work on a community clean-up project.

These examples emphasize the need to develop a plan tailored to each student's skills and preferences. Many professionals and families believe that three or four different vocational experiences can be helpful in assessing a student's desires and capabilities while he or she is still in school. The bottom line for all students is to ultimately prepare them to make good choices leading to the greatest degree of independence possible and the kind of life they want after high school. Keep in mind the greater goal of experience and knowledge gained through appropriate transition planning across grade levels.

FACILITATING A SMOOTH TRANSITION

Following are some suggestions that can help ease the impact of the transition process for a student on the autism spectrum:

- Preparation for transition should begin early in the spring. Whether a student is moving to a new classroom or to a new building, it is helpful to identify the homeroom teacher, or general or special educator who will have primary responsibility for the student.
- Once the receiving teacher is identified, this person should be involved in the annual education plan process so that he or she can learn about the student's level of functioning, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, and can be actively involved and provide input into projected goals.
- Written transition plans may facilitate the student's successful movement. A meeting should be conducted to allow key participants to exchange relevant information. Responsibilities and timelines for those involved should be clearly stated.
- Either during the annual education plan conference or at the transition planning meeting, information should be exchanged about effective instructional strategies, needed modifications and adaptations, positive behavior support strategies and methods of communication. The receiving teacher should learn about the strategies that have worked in the past, so that precious time is not lost at the beginning of the new school year.
- The receiving teacher may find it helpful to observe the student in his or her current classroom or school setting. This will provide important insight into the student's learning style and needed supports.
- Instructional assistants who will be involved in the student's daily education should be identified, educated and informed about their role in the student's education.
- Many teachers may not have previous experience with students on the autism spectrum. Therefore, they will need basic information about ASD and how it impacts the student. Student-specific information about learning styles, communication systems, medical issues and behavior supports is also critical. Cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, the school secretary and the school nurse should also be included in the training. Classmates of the new student also may need information. This should be

provided in a respectful manner and without stigmatizing the student.

- Before entering a new school, any anxieties the student may have about the new setting should be alleviated. Preparation for this move can be facilitated by providing the student with a map of the school, a copy of his or her fall schedule, a copy of the student handbook and rules, and a list of clubs and extracurricular activities.
- A videotape can be developed about the new school, providing written information about specific situations so that the student can learn and rehearse for the change at his or her own pace.
- Visitations should be conducted to allow the student and his or her family to meet relevant school staff, locate the student's locker and become familiar with the school culture.
- Key people or a mentor should be identified that the student can contact if he or she is having a difficult time adjusting to or understanding a certain situation. Finding a location where the student can go to relax and regroup also is helpful, as is providing the student with a visual menu of coping strategies.
- Parents should receive information about bus schedules, parent-teacher organizations and available resources (e.g., counselors, social workers, nurses).
- Prior to the new school year, methods and a schedule should be established for communicating between home and school. Suggestions for maintaining ongoing communication include journals, daily progress notes, mid-term grades, scheduled appointments or phone calls, informal meetings, report cards and parent-teacher conferences.
- Once in the new school, peers should be identified who are willing to help the student with the transition and acclimation to the new school. By gaining the support of a friend without a disability, the student with autism may have greater access to social opportunities during and after school.

The ultimate goal is to promote a successful experience for both the student and the rest of the school community. By systematically addressing the transition process, students with ASD can be prepared to participate in their new school or grade.

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The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities has a transition summary series that helps families and students with disabilities focus on taking definite steps toward a successful transition. To read the entire article, go to the NICHCY Web site at www.nichcy.org/.



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Going TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

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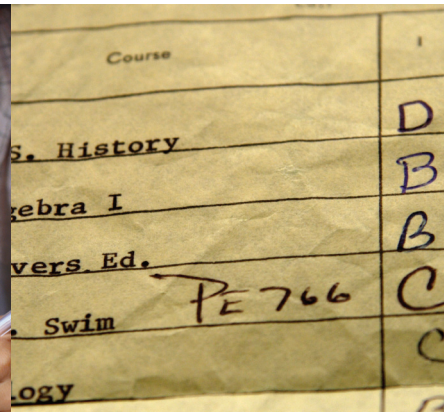
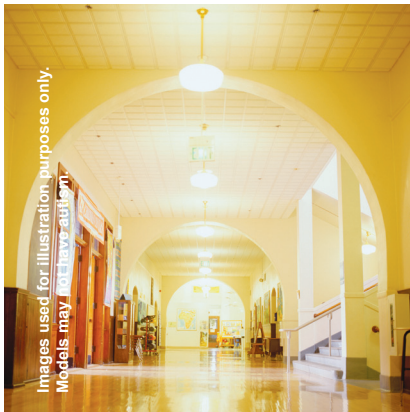
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STARTING MIDDLE SCHOOL IS STRESSFUL FOR ANY STUDENT, BUT THE PROCESS CAN BE EVEN MORE CHALLENGING FOR A STUDENT ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM (ASD) AND FOR HIS OR HER PARENTS.

Many things will be different. The school will probably be larger, the campus more confusing and the enrollment may be several times greater than in elementary school. The student likely will not know his or her new teachers and, in turn, the teachers might not know anything about the student. The aide, if one is needed and provided, may be a stranger. Many of the students will not know their classmate with ASD.

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PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION PROCESS
WILL IDEALLY BEGIN SEVERAL MONTHS
BEFORE THE ACTUAL TRANSITION OCCURS.

In any given class, the student may find no familiar faces. The student might change classes not only every period, but sometimes may have certain classes for only a semester, a quarter or on alternate days. There will be greater demands for independence in terms of work habits. The homework assignments will be more complex and involve more hours of work. There will be different and more complex social demands within the cultural setting of the school and during extracurricular activities.

But, there also are new opportunities that were not available in elementary school. Careful planning can make the transition to middle school a success. Planning for the transition process ideally will begin several months before the actual transition occurs. Following is an outline for a process that others have used in developing a successful transition plan. Of course, additional steps may be needed in individual cases.

STEP I. PREPARATION DURING THE LAST YEAR IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

It's a good idea for the elementary school team to visit the middle school to:

- Meet teachers and administrators in the middle school
- Learn about important differences between elementary and middle school, and about new expectations
- Obtain some of the middle school textbooks or course outlines to help determine placement when levels of classes are offered
- Obtain information about school policy, traditions and so forth
- Obtain information for parents about the new school, including its faculty, opportunities, challenges, rules and traditions
- Develop a list of important skills that the student might need in the new school environment

STEP II. PLANNING THE CURRICULUM, GOALS AND SCHEDULE FOR THE FALL TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

The elementary school team can:

- Gather information, prior to the individual educational program (IEP) meeting, about the student's strengths, challenges, interests, and need for technology, support and accommodations/modifications
- Discuss a potential schedule with the parents and the receiving middle school team regarding the student's need for balance in his schedule, breaks and opportunity for resource support. Sensory challenges also must be considered as the schedule is designed
- Develop a list of helpful strategies, a student portfolio or a video that shows the student's personality and strengths

STEP III. PREPARING THE PARENTS

The elementary school team can:

- Discuss with parents how they can assist their child over the summer to become ready for the transition
- Share materials to familiarize parents and the student with the new school (e.g., map, student handbook, lunch menu, yearbook)
- Discuss how parents can communicate with the new teachers to ensure an easy transition; provide



information about school activities and faculty expectations regarding homework

- Identify parent support and booster groups so that parents can become involved in school-sponsored activities
- Remind parents of school personnel serving as the case manager or primary contacts, and establish contact
- Discuss developing an ongoing means of communication with the middle school contact person and other staff

STEP IV. PREPARING THE STUDENT

The parents or school team can:

- Write a social story or series of stories to help the student prepare for the change
- Allow the student to have as many visits to the new school as needed
- Practice walking the route to classes while the building is empty, or even make a video
- Identify important areas, including a safe haven, bus stop, homeroom, bathrooms, cafeteria and gym
- Provide opportunities to practice opening and closing his or her locker
- Help the student understand school rules (even the unwritten ones)
- Review the yearbook to familiarize the student with the faculty and school activities during the year
- Take the student to parent-student orientation
- Practice scripts so that the student knows where to get help and how to ask for assistance
- Practice requesting to go to a quiet place to calm down; practice the route to get to that place
- Prepare the student to understand that each teacher has different rules and procedures, and that the student will need to be flexible with each teacher's rules
- Buy a special notebook with dividers that will help the student stay organized
- Ask for orientation and mobility training at the IEP meeting (Sayers, 2006)
- Ask for assistive technology, such as a tape recorder, for documenting the student's homework (Sayers, 2006)
- Ask for a laptop computer, such as an Alpha Smart, to assist a child with poor writing skills (Sayers, 2006)

- Arrange a carpool with another student(s) so that the child with ASD is not walking into school alone (Sayers, 2006)
- Obtain books and other resources about middle school issues and social rules (Sayers, 2006).

STEP V. PREPARING THE STAFF

The middle school or autism support team can:

- Inform the teaching staff as soon as possible that they will be receiving a student with ASD
- Plan how teachers will be prepared, informed and supported
- Provide staff with an information packet that includes the names of videos, books and web sites about ASD
- Identify whom to contact if staff have questions or problems
- Identify an older student who can serve as a mentor to the student with ASD during the new school term; have the children meet and spend some time getting acquainted prior to the start of school
- Assist staff and aides so they are ready with adaptations/modifications for the first week
- Advise staff that they will need to closely monitor comprehension of material, since many students with ASD excel at memorizing information without processing or understanding it
- Plan to meet often as a group/support team to proactively and quickly solve problems
- Discuss expectations with parents regarding the amount of homework and their role in meeting due dates and completing assignments
- Negotiate the best method of quick and reliable communication between parents and school personnel

While this list is geared toward the needs of the student who will be active in the general education classroom, many of the same steps are appropriate for the student who will be in a more restrictive program. This list is not all-inclusive, and individual steps should be added to meet the needs of specific students and their school system. Many of the same strategies will be needed when preparing for the transition from middle school to high school.

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