

I am Vicki Price, Education Director at CAPS (Child Advocacy and Parenting Services) in Salina, Ks. and have been presenting bullying prevention programs in the Saline County area for over 20 years. I go to several school districts and present about 160 classroom programs in grades 3 through 6 every school year.

In that time, I have seen some wonderful changes in our schools and how they address bullying. It is no longer considered a “rite of passage” and I have seen teachers, para’s, administrators, bus drivers and lunch ladies work hard to do all they can to combat this serious problem.

However, we can do more. In addition to all the things you have heard from across our state, there are 3 components I would like for you to consider, and they are: Policy, Parents and Power.

First, **policy**—Each school district has in place language that addresses bullying and its consequences, but I would offer that some places still use the wording “repeated” or “more than once” for it to be considered bullying. Some acts of bullying are so horrific that they need to occur only once to be considered bullying. Please advise districts to look at their policy language and adjust accordingly.

Second, **parents**—they need help on this issue, as do their children. Many parents do not know how to best help their child, whether their child is a victim, witness or a bully. I have attached a paper that we use at CAPS that we give to all 3rd grade parents. When you are looking at helping a child deal with bullying, you should look to helping their family as well. Schools and parents must work together. All adults must teach children this skill of empathy as we demonstrate it for them.

Here’s what we can say to help parents: (read from the attached paper)

“LISTEN carefully when your child reports bullying.

Your understanding and support gives them the strength to handle the situation.

Instead of dismissing the concern with “Stop tattling.” or “Work it out!” say: “What things have you tried?” or “Let’s figure out a plan.”

TEACH your child to be assertive, but not aggressive.

Your child’s body language and tone are as important as what they say—teach them to use a strong, calm voice. Confident posture, facial expression and speech are what they need.

If your child is the target, teach them to reply to the bully with things like: “That’s out of line. I treat you with respect and I expect the same from you” or “Back off. We’re not doing this.”

If your child is the witness, teach them to reply to the bully with things like: “We don’t bully in this school” or “Cool it.”

If you child is the witness, teach them to reply to the target with things like: “You don’t deserve to be treated like that. No one does.” or “Come and play with us.”

MODEL what you want your child to become.

Realize the impact of your words.”

Third, **power**—the strength of any bullying curriculum must have at its core the empowerment of the witnesses. That’s where the strength lies to successfully eliminate bullying. I give witnesses many options with which to respond to either the bully or the victim, and I use role plays—I have even made 2 movies that have real live Salina kids (in 3rd and 6th grades) instruct students on how to handle bullying. Kids teaching kids is always the best. But, whatever the form is, it must stress that kids have more power than their teachers to end bullying—and that if they stand together, it won’t be very hard at all.

Thank you very much for your time and attention to this most important issue. Bless you as you go forth.