



getting to the heart of learning

a program of the Wellesley Centers for Women

## Preventing Bullying

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*"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

The *Open Circle Curriculum* 2010 edition includes new content to help educators identify, prevent, and address bullying behavior.

Order your copy at [www.open-circle.org/curriculum](http://www.open-circle.org/curriculum).

**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 groundbreaking 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.*



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### Open Circle Lessons that Relate to Bullying

Some key social and emotional learning skills can decrease incidences of bullying behavior: self-awareness and self-management, positive relationships and social awareness, and problem-solving skills and responsible decision-making. The lessons in the *Open Circle Curriculum* address these skills. The consistent teaching and practice of skills and Open Circle's whole school approach are critical parts of a school's bullying prevention effort. Here are some lessons that teach and reinforce these skills:

#### 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
- Recognizing Differences/Discrimination

#### 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

The *Curriculum* follows a developmentally-appropriate scope and sequence of skills. All the lessons in grades K-2 contribute to the foundation for bullying prevention. In grades 3-5, the *Curriculum* includes targeted lessons on the definition of bullying, and the role of bystanders in bullying episodes.

The *Curriculum* also includes guidelines for teachers:

- A "Do's and Don'ts" list to help teachers respond to bullying "in the moment"
- Clear connections for leveraging Open Circle concepts and skills to prevent and address bullying

### A Focused, Whole-School Approach: Open Circle Bullying Prevention Program

Open Circle has 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 how to identify, report, and effectively address bullying behavior
- The creation of a school-based bullying prevention team
- Ongoing training to support the team's whole-school activities, including assessing the school environment, gathering data, and setting measurable goals and priorities based on the data collected
- Guidance for the team to create, implement, and evaluate an action plan based on the school's specific needs for bullying prevention

**Call 781-283-3277 for details.**

**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.**