

## Do TV and Film Encourage Bullying in Schools?



# Bullying in School

Thirteen million students will be bullied in the United States this year. Bullying prevention and school safety are two of the top conversations taking place in school communities across the country. It is important to have a common understanding about how bullying is defined in order to have a meaningful conversation about how to deal with bullying in schools.

Think about what you already know about bullying and write a definition below. Be prepared to share your definition. Bullying is:

Bullying is experienced in a variety of ways. There are four types of bullying that students report they experience during the school year: verbal, physical, emotional and cyberbullying. Categorize the various behaviors below by writing each one on the chart next to the type of bullying you think it is. Once you have categorized all of the behaviors listed below, define each type of bullying in your own words. Be prepared to share your answers.

<p><b>Verbal bullying</b></p> <p>Definition:</p>	
<p><b>Physical bullying</b></p> <p>Definition:</p>	
<p><b>Emotional bullying</b></p> <p>Definition:</p>	
<p><b>Cyberbullying</b></p> <p>Definition:</p>	

Word Choices	
writing inappropriate posts on Twitter	writing inappropriate blogs
giving dirty looks	prank calling
sending inappropriate texts	verbally threatening
name-calling	spitting
ignoring	spreading rumors
shoving	pushing
sending inappropriate emails	writing inappropriate posts on Facebook
stealing	taunting
excluding people	giving rude gestures
physically threatening	sending inappropriate pictures
mocking	teasing
kicking	hitting

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**Bullying in TV and Film** Many TV shows and films include characters who bully in a variety of ways (for example, a group of girls making fun of a new girl who looks different or a group of athletic boys stuffing a smaller boy in a locker). As weaker students endure cruel behavior, many times the bullies are portrayed as cool or funny.

Think about the TV shows and films you have recently viewed and respond to the following questions:

1. List the titles of three TV shows and/or films that include a character who bullies another student:
2. How are boy bullies portrayed in TV and film? How are girl bullies portrayed in TV and film?
3. How are boy victims of bullying portrayed? How are girl victims of bullying portrayed?
4. What type(s) of bullying occurred in these TV shows/films (i.e. verbal, physical, emotional and cyberbullying)?
5. What happens to the bully by the end of a TV show or film? (Give a specific example from the TV show or film.)
6. In your opinion, do you think TV shows and movies influence students to bully other students? Explain your response.
7. Why is it important for students to have a bully-free school and community?

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# Bullying in the News

Read the excerpt from USA TODAY's article *Should bullies be treated like criminals?* and form an opinion about what you think should happen to students

who bully other students. As you read, Think about the TV shows and films you have recently viewed and respond to the following questions:

1. Today, I found myself most interested in:
2. The most surprising thing I read or heard today is:
3. This article relates to me because:
4. One thing I still want to know is:
5. In my opinion, when a student bullies another student:

## Extend Your Learning

Want to find out more about what to do when bullying occurs in your school? Check out the following websites:

- ▶ Find out more about how you can speak up in your school and stop bullying: [thebullyproject.com](http://thebullyproject.com)
- ▶ Find out more about cyberbullying and what you can do to prevent it: [www.cfchildren.org/programs/hot-topics/cyberbullying](http://www.cfchildren.org/programs/hot-topics/cyberbullying)
- ▶ The Geena Davis Institute provides research and resources to change female portrayals and gender stereotypes in children's media and entertainment. To find out more, go to: [www.seejane.org/index.php](http://www.seejane.org/index.php)
- ▶ Learn how to be an "active viewer" when watching a TV show or movie: [www.pbs.org/parents/childrenandmedia/tvmovies-grade.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/childrenandmedia/tvmovies-grade.html)

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[Many] educators [hold] a zero-tolerance stance on bullying, and a recent analysis by the U.S. Department of Education shows that state lawmakers nationwide are increasingly willing to criminalize bullying behavior, even as experts wonder whether doing so will have the intended effect: to curb the behavior and improve the learning atmosphere.

As millions of students head [home from school], they might leave behind the face-to-face bullying that includes everything from simple taunts to brutal beatings, but too often they can't escape the digital world that gives the predators access to their prey day and night and well beyond the schoolyard gates.

Though bullying is as old as classrooms, only in the past decade or so have states moved to address, legislatively, what once was simply the domain of schools. In 1999, only Georgia had an anti-bullying law. Now every state but Montana does. In the past 13 years, states have [passed] nearly 130 anti-bullying measures, half of which came since 2008. Eighteen states have laws that allow victims to seek legal remedies for bullying, either from schools that don't act or from the bullies themselves. Among other recent trends:

- 32 states require that schools have procedures for investigating bullying incidents.
- 17 states require that school staff report bullying to a supervisor, much as they report suspected abuse and neglect.
- Nine states require administrators to report bullying to police.
- 11 states require that schools allow anonymous reporting by students of bullying.

Russlynn Ali, the Department of Education's assistant secretary for civil rights, said schools should think hard before turning discipline cases over to police. "It's hugely important to set the (school) culture right and make it safe for all," she said. "That is different from sending children to jail."

Yet in state after state, legislators are stepping forward to address what has been called a national epidemic, one that has gained even greater visibility in recent years as singer Lady Gaga, actress Anne Hathaway and scores of other celebrities have helped to elevate the cause.

Source: *Should bullies be treated as criminals*, June 13, 2012. USA TODAY