

Oklahoma Parents Center

Winter 2009



Mission Statement

Oklahoma Parents Center is dedicated to the inclusion and **equality of children** and adults with disabilities. Our mission is to train, inform, educate, and **support parents**, families, professionals and consumers in **building partnerships** that **meet the needs** of children and youth with the full range of disabilities ages birth through twenty-six.

Northeast Oklahoma Special Education Institute

The **Oklahoma Parents Center**, in partnership with the Oklahoma State Department of Education - Special Education Services and Oklahoma Family Network is delighted to present our next regional Special Education Institute. The **Northeast Oklahoma Special Education Institute** is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 8, 2009** at **Tulsa Tech - Broken Arrow Campus**, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. This institute will include information on education, transition services, and other valuable information and will highlight the resources available in our great state all at **no cost** to families and professionals who live and work with individuals with disabilities, birth through 26 years.

Please visit our website, www.OklahomaParentsCenter.org, for additional information to be announced in the coming weeks.

Tips for Teaching Children about Online Safety



Discuss unsafe information to share online

Even the smallest details can be pieced together and used for harm. Teach children about information that is unsafe to share online unless they are absolutely positive that the person they are talking with is a [trusted individual](#) whom they have met in person. This includes their real name, school, phone number or address, picture, or other identifying information. Make a "Do Not Share" list with this kind of information and post it next to the computer as a reminder.

[NetSmartzKids](#) (www.netsmartzkids.org) has fun, interactive games and activities to help kids practice and understand safe online interactions.

Make kids aware that what they post online is not private

Even if they think that only friends can see it, there is no guarantee that the information will not be saved, copied, or circulated. Assume that anything posted on the web is there [forever](#). Accordingly, encourage kids not to post pictures, thoughts, or information that they would not be comfortable showing complete strangers (or their grandmothers!). [ThinkUKnow](#) (www.thinkuknow.co.uk) has a CyberCafe and lots of other fun activities for kids to practice keeping information private and themselves safe.

Explore the subtleties of the written word

Statements meant to be funny or sarcastic can easily be misinterpreted online if they are taken literally. Help children understand the language of friendship and practice their social skills both online and off. Role play by giving them various statements and situations to react to, and then guide them through accurate interpretations and responses. Encourage the use of emoticons, or visual icons that express feelings, when a statement your child is typing could be misinterpreted. Social networks that make safety their number one priority, like [Woogi World](#) (www.woogiworld.com) or [YourSphere](#) (www.yoursphere.com), are great places to practice.

Teach responsible online citizenship, or netiquette

Keep children from being pestered by cyberbullies or from becoming cyberbullies themselves by helping them recognize and avoid malicious online behavior. Use pre-task rehearsal to model appropriate and inappropriate interactions, and teach children ways to escape and report cyberbullying. [STOP cyberbullying](#) (www.stopcyberbullying.org) is an online guide to cyberbullying with content tailored to individuals of all ages.

Stay involved and set reasonable limits

Ask questions about your children's online behavior, and encourage a continuous dialogue about their online experiences. Check their profiles periodically for inappropriate content, and place the computer in a public place in your house or classroom. Sit down with children and create guidelines for acceptable and safe Internet usage, post them next to the computer, and then monitor and set consequences for compliance. Use [PBS's Children and Media](#) (www.pbs.org/parents/childrenandmedia/) guide to learn about ways to encourage kids in their media usage while ensuring that they remain safe.



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However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policies of the funding agencies and endorsement should not be assumed.

Your Three-Step Plan to Stopping Bullying

Discovering that your child is being bullied can be devastating. You may feel bewildered, scared, sad, guilty, angry, or helpless. You may even feel like a target yourself. While it is important to recognize and acknowledge all those emotions, remember that feelings alone will not change the situation. The most effective thing you can do is focus on the issue and develop a plan. Here are tools, strategies, and tips that can help you develop successful short-term and longer-term plans for protecting your child from bullying.

1. First, make sure that the issue is bullying and not routine childhood conflict.

It's bullying if the action is hurtful, intentional, and repetitive, and there is a power imbalance between the children. Sometimes, children are afraid or embarrassed to talk about bullying. If you suspect your child may be a target of bullying, you may want to try these approaches to find out for sure.

Ask and listen:

- Did someone hurt you on purpose?
- Is the other person bigger than you or scary to you?
- Did the child know you were being hurt?

Watch for signs, such as:

- Suddenly wanting to be driven to school instead of taking the bus
- Unexplained stomachaches or headaches
- Changes in sleep routines or temperament



2. If your child is being bullied, you can take action at home to help your child learn how to respond more effectively.

Teach direct and indirect techniques for dealing with bullies. You may want to encourage your child to:

- Avoid situations where bullying occurs
- Hang out with classmates, friends, peers, or siblings
- Tell the child who is bullying to stop
- Do something the bully does not expect or want: yell, blow a whistle, laugh

Encourage group involvement. Children who interact with peers are less likely to be bullied.

You may want to help your child:

- Join an after-school program or activity
- Develop a hobby that allows interaction with others

3. If your child is being bullied at school, you can work with teachers and administrators to create a safe environment.

Talk with teachers and administrators.

- Notify them of the situation in writing. Schools are obligated to respond to bullying.
- Discuss ways the school can help, such as by developing a bullying awareness program.

Be part of your child's school.

- Join the PTA and raise awareness of bullying as an issue.
- Offer to speak to the school board and be the "bullying expert."
- If your child has disabilities, you can build bullying prevention goals into your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

1st Annual Kids Against Bullying Contest

Drew W.

3rd Grade—Weatherford Elementary School

KIDS AGAINST BULLYING

When people steal things from me,
I get a bad feeling inside me.
Then I get mad and sad. I tell the
teacher. That is a good feature! Weggies
make people cry. Why do that? I don't
know why. If I see a bully punching,
I don't get involved with that thing.
If I see someone getting a drink in the
toilet. I tell the teacher. Man is that a
handy feature! If someone is shoving me, I
ignore them and they stop doing that to me.
If someone kicked me, I think they will stop
doing that to me if I ignore them.

Bulies are bad. They make people
sad. I don't want a bully as a
friend. I want someone who is a good
friend.

Caleb

1st Grade - Skelly Elementary School

Kids Against Bullying

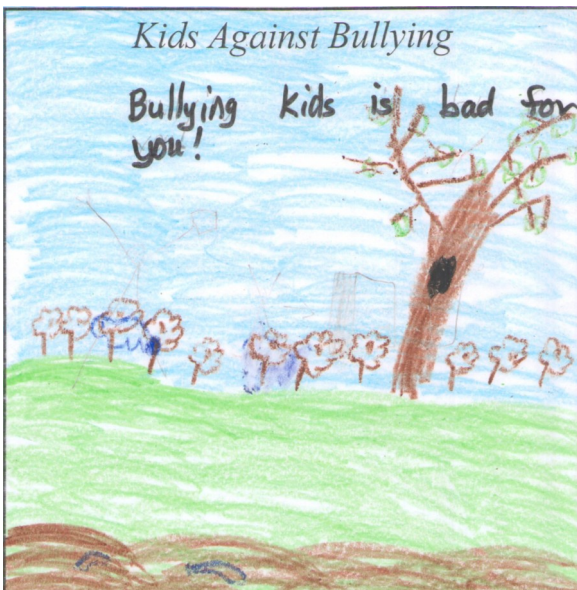


Sariah P.

5th Grade—Lincoln Elementary School

Kids Against Bullying

Bullying kids is bad for
you!



Judy M.

4th Grade - Skelly Elementary School

Kids Against Bullying

Everyone should be kind to people. Bullying
is not good if it hurts people's feelings. If you did
not do nothing to that person and they boss you around
tell a adult because they shouldn't boss you
Because you are not doing nothing.

Bullying X

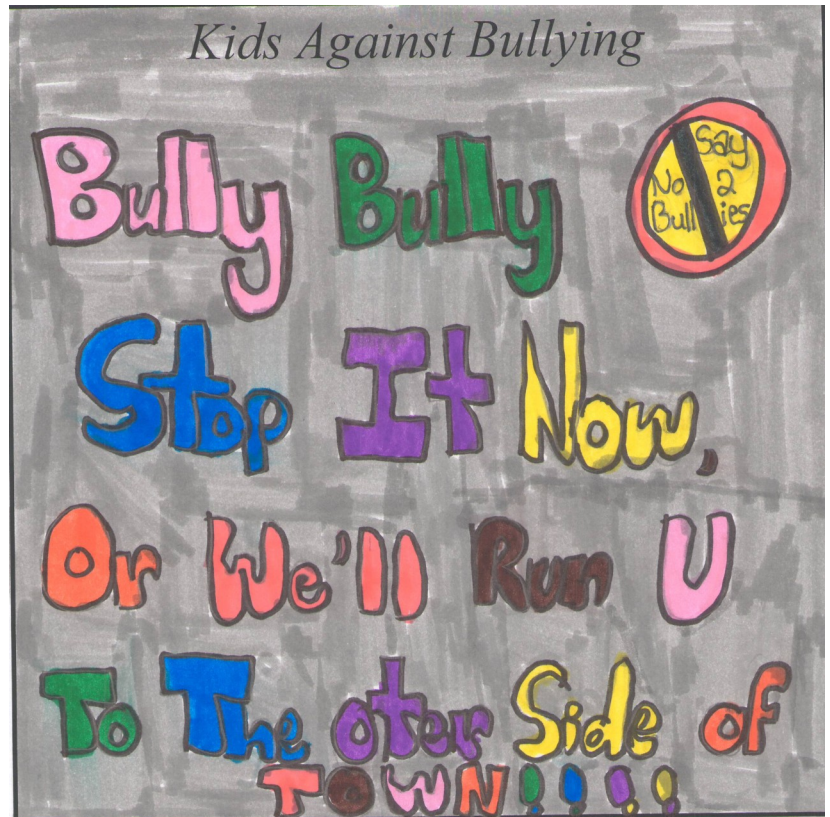


Friendship



1st Annual Kids Against Bullying Contest

Destiny G.
6th Grade—Latta Elementary School



Taylor M.
4th Grade - Swinney Elementary School

Kids Against Bullying

A trick on bullies

*I have been bullied
so I know how it feels.
It scared me alot and
she was little and pretty everyone thought.
But she was not a nice person inside,
and what's inside is all that matters
so one day I just ignored her
and the next day she stopped
so if you just ignore them they might stop too.*

Landon M.
3rd Grade - Garber Elementary School

Kids Against Bullying

*No bullying if makes
you look like a fool!!*



Lela E.
3rd Grade - Weatherford Elementary School

KIDS AGAINST BULLYING

*No kids should be bullied.
There once was a little girl
named Jenny. All the bullies
said she was too skinny.
There once was a boy named
Jim. All the bullies liked
to punch him. Jim and
Jenny didn't let them
have their way. They
told Mr. Bennett who took
these bullies away. They
couldn't play until they
would say, 'I'm sorry I treated
you that way.'
Don't be a bully, be a friend!*

Letter Writing and the Need to DO SOMETHING!

When parents fire off a letter to the school, they are usually in the middle of a crisis that involves their child. At that moment, they want to **DO SOMETHING**. They may be trying to right a wrong or protect their child from harm. Sometimes, parents write angry letters after a series of bad experiences or incidents that have occurred over a period months or years. Before you send a strongly worded letter to the school, it is important for you to keep several things in mind.



First, after you send a letter to the school, it is out of your hands forever. **You can never change it!**

Second, your letter will be read by strangers. Schools are bureaucracies. In many cases, important decisions will be made by administrators who are a level or two above your contact person. These administrators don't know you or your child. They don't know the "history" behind your letter.

Third, no one will wade through a long letter to a nugget of gold. This means that you have to capture the reader's interest and attention within the first few sentences. If you don't capture the reader's interest quickly, the reader will skim a page or two and put your letter away.

Fourth, your letter is a personal statement about you and your situation. What are you saying about yourself if you give in to the urge to DO SOMETHING and write an angry, threatening, or demanding letter? The decision-making strangers who make decisions in the school bureaucracy don't know or care that this was the last straw or that the letter is the culmination of many negative experiences. A letter gives you an opportunity to make an impression and tell your side of the story. You need to think about the impression you want to make on the stranger. Do you want the stranger to see you as an angry, negative complainer? Or, do you want the stranger to see you as a rational, thoughtful parent who is expressing valid concerns?

12 Rules for Writing Effective Letters

If you follow these Rules, you make it more likely that you will get the relief you want.



1. Before you write a letter, answer **WHY** and **WHAT**.
2. First letters are always drafts.
3. Allow time for "**cooling off**" and revisions.
4. You are always negotiating with the school for special education services.
5. Never threaten. Never telegraph your punches.
6. Assume that you won't be able to resolve your dispute, that the dispute will escalate, that a special education due process hearing will be held, and that you won't be able to testify or tell your side of the story.
7. Make your problem **unique**.
8. Write the letter as if you are writing to a stranger.
9. Write letters to the school as business letters.
10. **NEVER** make judgments.
11. Write your letter chronologically.
12. Write letters that are clear and easy to understand.

A Special Needs Guide To Beating The Flu

Winter is coming, and I have to say that although fall is my favorite time of year, I feel this year it has been dampened with unseasonably cold and rainy weather and WORRIES about the flu.

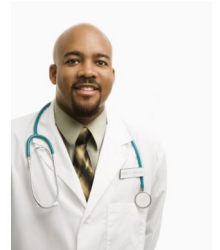
What is a parent to do? Do we give our kids the vaccines and hope for the best, or don't and still hope for the best?

Follow these tips to make the right decision for your family:

- ⇒ **Educate** yourself. Read all that you can find from reliable sources. Utilize the Center for Disease control website at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu
- ⇒ Practice good **hand-washing**, good oral hygiene, and cough into your sleeve. Children learn best from your example.
- ⇒ Keep doorknobs, telephones, remote controls, and other hard surfaces **germ free**. Alcohol based sanitizers are most effective in fighting flu germs.
- ⇒ **Stay home** when you are ill or if your children are ill to avoid exposing others .
- ⇒ If your child uses a communication board, include **cards** for hand washing, covering the mouth, and for feeling ill.



- ⇒ Eat **healthy**, drink plenty of water, and continue to exercise.
- ⇒ Take a daily **vitamin** and make sure your children take one as well.
- ⇒ Work with your doctor to make a **plan** in case of the flu. Each doctor may want to handle things differently.
- ⇒ Be **proactive**. Watch symptoms carefully, and have basic medications and supplies on hand in case of illness.
- ⇒ Discuss the need for **vaccinations** with your family physician and get them when available.



To Vaccinate or Not to vaccinate is a personal choice. The recommendations are for your safety and health but you alone must decide what is best for your family. Following the other tips to keep healthy will ensure that you have done your part in keeping your family well.

Happy Fall... Happy Flu season. May we all avoid it this year.

Staff of the Oklahoma Parents Center

How to Make a Pine Cone Bird Feeder



Things You'll Need:

- ♦ Pine cone
- ♦ Paper plate
- ♦ Butter knife
- ♦ Smooth peanut butter
- ♦ Birdseed
- ♦ Ribbon or yarn
- ♦ Scissors

1. Cut a long length of yarn or ribbon to hang the bird feeder.
2. Tie the ribbon in a knot around the pine cone near the top (about 3 sections down).
3. Tie a knot in the end of the ribbon.
4. Use the knife to get a large clump of peanut butter on the paper plate.
5. Use the knife to spread peanut butter inside the pine cone and around the edges.
6. Sprinkle the birdseed over the pine cone.
7. Roll the pine cone in the birdseed that is on the plate.
8. Hang the bird feeder on the tree.
9. Enjoy watching the birds eat their treat!



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Contact Us

Nov. 12 th	Communication Training* <u>Piedmont</u> *6:00 p.m.
Nov. 16 th	Bullying Prevention Training* <u>Okmulgee</u> *6:45 p.m.
Nov. 16 th – 17 th	Learning Disabilities Association of Oklahoma Conference
Nov. 19 th	Parent 2 Parent Support Group* <u>Shawnee</u> *7:00 p.m.
Nov. 23 rd	CNHS*Communication Training* <u>Tulsa</u> *3:00 p.m.
Dec. 1 st	CANAR Conference*Basic Rights* <u>Norman</u> *3:15 p.m.
Dec. 1 st	Basic Rights Training*CNHS* <u>Bennington</u> *6:00 p.m.
Dec. 3 rd	ODDS*OKC*9:00 a.m.
Dec. 4 th	TRHS*Positive Behavior* <u>Okemah</u> *8:30 a.m.
Dec. 7 th	Basic Rights Training*CNHS* <u>Durant</u> *6:00 p.m.
Dec. 8 th	Regional Special Education Institute* <u>Broken Arrow</u> *8:00 a.m.
Jan 5 th	Basic Rights Training*CNHS* <u>Idabel</u> *5:00 p.m.
Jan. 6 th	Bullying Prevention Training* <u>Norman Public Schools</u> *1:00 p.m.
Jan. 12 th	Regional Special Education Institute

CALENDAR OF EVENTS