

# The Childhood Scene



A regional newsletter for early childhood professionals, parents and the community provided by Child Care Resource & Referral Region 13 serving Chatham, Harnett, Johnston, Lee and Wayne Counties

## Bullying in Preschool

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School age bullying is in the news with increasing frequency, so people’s awareness of it and its consequences are on the rise. However, because most people think of bullying as something that happens in this older age group, they are often surprised to learn that bullying can occur in preschool age children. In addition, because of the important learning that occurs during the preschool age, what these young children see and experience can either reinforce bullying or help children develop the social and emotional skills to reduce it and its impact.

**Bullying is different from occasional rowdiness and behavior problems observed under “normal” circumstances.**

Occasional roughness in play is fairly normal and can be addressed using customary corrections. And aggressive behavior, if uncommon or if observed for a short period of time, is often the result of physical or

emotional stress caused by situations such as hunger, anger, fatigue, illness, or family changes such as divorce, a new sibling, or

death of a pet. In these circumstances, appropriate corrections and interventions need to take place, and as a result the unacceptable behavior is most often short lived. The most common forms of bullying are repeated hitting, shoving, chasing or threatening. Other forms include name-calling, teasing, telling lies, excluding and taking or destroying another child’s belongings.

**Too often, teachers and parents take a wait-and-see approach with preschoolers or dismiss such bullying behavior as “kids just being kids.” Often intervention doesn’t happen at all or only happens once the situation reaches a crisis point or someone gets hurt.**

This is not helpful for anyone—the child who is bullying or the target of the bullying—and it makes for an unpleasant classroom for the teacher.

This attitude also ignores the very cognitive and emotional developmental leaps children make in late toddlerhood. After age three, a child’s brain has the ability to understand another point of view and it’s also about this age that premeditated and purposeful aggression can begin. Another way to think of this is,

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### Region 13 Partners



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after age three, children who misbehave should and can know there are consequences for doing so.

The reasons children bully are varied. Often, children imitate what they see adults or other children around them do. Some children, bully to get attention, either from a teacher, parent or from other children. Others bully for more complex reasons, which may include being bullied themselves by those in the home.

When groups of young children, who often differ significantly in physical size, skill level, and family experience, get together regularly, patterns of hurtful behavior often emerge.

**Children make mean faces, say threatening things, grab objects, push others aside, falsely accuse, or refuse to play with others. These behaviors are precursors to verbal, physical, or indirect bullying, although they are not always recognized as such.**

Some young children are also capable of engaging in actual bullying behaviors that include deliberately and repeatedly dominating a more vulnerable peer through name-calling, taunting, physical attacks, manipulating relationships, excluding classmates, spreading rumors, telling secrets, and threatening not to play if their demands are not met. Lastly, because bullies don't want to be caught, they are often sneaky and secretive in their actions. These behaviors need immediate intervention.

**Among children two to six years of age, bullying usually develops in a well-defined progression.**

For example, a child may begin by targeting and dominating a vulnerable peer. If these early examples of coercive behavior are ignored or remain unchecked, the child is likely to increase her/his levels and/or increase the number of children targeted. Then, other children who observe this "success" and perceived power are likely to join in—dominating the same victims repeatedly or using similar tactics to target and dominate victims of their own. If these early forms of direct bullying are allowed to continue over several months, power

hierarchies may form, with groups of dominant children regularly bullying others who give in to their demands by crying and yielding.

Results of bullying are significant and can become lifelong sources of hurt and pain.

**Targets of bullying become shy, isolated and fearful. The instigator of bullying is encouraged to believe that conflict is best resolved using threats or force; bullying behavior provides a false sense of the child's own importance and power and sets him or her up for social failure.**

By helping children develop the right skills early, later incidents of bullying can be prevented. Teaching those skills with patience, good humor and consistency is key.

The first step in creating a bully free classroom is teacher diligence and alert attention.

**Caregivers need to develop "eyes in the back of their head" and super sensitive hearing so that incidents are caught.**

- Centers should include as a part of staff meetings reports of concerns regarding potential bullying and should include the development of an "intervention plan."
- Every caregiver should be trained on pre-bullying and bullying behaviors as well as being trained on how to intervene.
- Empathy should be included in the social skills being developed through classroom activities including as a part of free play.
- Adults should interrupt bullying behaviors and remind the children that they have hurt the other child through their words or actions.
- It's also a good idea to ask the child to apologize to the child they have hurt.
- Activities that encourage sharing are good.
- Teaching children to tell others when their feelings are hurt is helpful.

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### Don't Forget the Parent

Finally, don't forget the parent. Include information about recognizing signs of bullying in their children in newsletters or other communications. So they are active partners in bullying interventions, parents should be made aware of all policies that relate to bullying. If interventions are needed, keep parents informed so they can reinforce the efforts in the home.



### It's Best to Be Proactive

When it comes to bullying, it's best to be proactive. Put into place policies and procedures to deal with incidents of bullying before they are needed. Become informed by reading on the subject, being trained and providing training to all those who interact directly or indirectly with the children. Children who feel good about themselves and their classmates are happy and can learn, grow and develop to their greatest potential. Creating a safe, nurturing and bully-free environment is key to helping children develop to their greatest potential.

**Parent Education Handouts related to Bullying may be found at NC Cooperative Extension's website:  
<http://www.ncfamilies.com>**



## Infant & Toddler Time

### Discovering the World of Science and Nature with Infants and Toddlers

As infants and toddlers become interested in the world around them, learning begins. As very young children begin to explore their environment, they show excitement at their discoveries. Since they use all of their senses (touch, sight, sound, taste and smell) to study their surroundings it is appropriate to include many hands-on experiences for learning about science and nature.

Here are some ideas:

#### Provide access to some pictures, books and toys that represent nature realistically.

- Books showing animals and nature
- Photos of animals and nature
- Plastic or rubber zoo animals, farm animals or insects
- Puzzles with nature or science content
- Plastic fruits and vegetables
- Animal-shaped rattles
- Mobiles with birds or butterflies

#### Create daily opportunities for infants and toddlers to experience the natural world inside.

- Explore scent boxes or "smelling" containers, Nature Jars\*.
- Play with large magnets and safe metal things (such as jar lids) for the magnets to attract (toddlers).

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Infant and Toddler Time ... Continued from Page 3

- Use magnifying glasses to inspect leaves, insects, and so on (older toddlers). Watch rain, leaves falling, trees, squirrels, birds, and so on, through a window.

### **Provide daily experiences with nature outside, weather permitting.**

- View grass, trees, squirrels, birds, while lying on a large blanket outside or taking a stroller ride.
- Explore flowers and trees, look for bugs or worms, watch the clouds float by or feel the grass or wind blowing.

### **Include some daily experiences with living plants or animals indoors.**

Place a plant or animal in an area that is accessible to the children. Be sure to draw attention to the living plant or animal with *each* child. Children can take part in feeding the classroom pet or watering the plant while the adult points out characteristics of the pet or plant.

### **Use everyday events as a basis for learning about nature and science.**

Take advantage of the opportunity to experience nature that each day offers. Describe what infants and toddlers see, point out details, ask questions and share more information. For example, when a child notices a worm after it rains, take advantage of this opportunity to talk and ask questions about worms, using books or the internet to find out more information if needed.

Explore all kinds of weather. After it snows take the children outside. Talk about and explore the snow. Snow can also be brought into the classroom to enjoy.

### **Show interest in and respect for nature.**

Act as a role-model and send a *positive* message about how you value and feel about nature.

Be respectful by avoiding doing harm to natural objects and living creatures. For example, if a spider is in the classroom, point out his characteristics before carefully placing it outdoors.

By providing these opportunities you will be encouraging the children to show interest in the world and sharing their excitement as they discover more about it and how it works.

**Author:** Barbie Moore, Region 14 Infant Toddler Specialist

**Source:** Cryer, Debby, Harms, Thelma, & Riley, Cathy (2004). *All About the ITERS-R*. Kaplan Early Learning Company: Pact House Publishing.

### **\*Nature Jars**

Find or buy a plastic quart jar and add nature items such as pinecones, sweet gum balls, leaves, bugs, etc. Seal shut with electrical tape, wrapping it around the lid 4 or 5 times, to keep the lid on tight. Babies can now safely look at these nature items. Items can be taken out of the jar when teachers are supervising this activity so that children can explore the nature item using their other senses.





# The School Age Corner

## The “Village” After School Community

After school programs working to establish good rapport by reaching out to parents are rewarded in multiple ways. After all, parents and families are the “third leg” of the stool that is the after school program. Building better connections between program, staff and families many times is easy to do, and not time consuming. By thinking creatively, before you know it, you’re feeling the difference—the warmer interactions, the supportive offers, and the much appreciated “thank you’s.”

### Parent’s Corner

One easy and popular idea is to create a “Parent’s Corner” somewhere close to where they come and go. This is the spot for easy to grab or check out great resources such as:

- Program and school information
- Calendars and schedules
- Suggestion box
- Local theater and other cultural events such as art and pottery shows
- Message center for swapping information
- Wish lists
- Coupon exchange
- Recycled magazines and books (appropriate)
- Community recreation and sport opportunities
- Educational information, tips for parenting

### Cozy Corner

Some programs have found a space for parents to sit and visit or just take a load off and rest for a minute or two, watching their children interact. These parent “cozy corners”, if space allows, afford a unique chance for parents to feel not only welcomed into the environment but actually integrated.

### Home Away From Home

Why does this matter? Why isn’t it OK to just run the best program we can for the children and accept the fact we are filling in for the parents in the afternoons? Because a high quality after school program doesn’t “just fill in” for the family. Yes, creating a homey atmosphere where children feel like it’s their “home away from home” is the feeling we want to achieve—but there is more to quality in after school.

### Right Nuts and Bolts

We have paid attention to all the right “nuts and bolts” best practice recommends:

- developmentally appropriate materials and centers
- ample outdoor and socializing time
- stimulating activities
- friendly and warm interactions
- nutritious snacks

All good, and necessary, but there is more to supporting the children in our programs, and we can do that by supporting the families they belong to. A very little can go a very long way.

So whether you’re considering developing a Parent’s Corner or a Parent Cozy Area, or both, the fact that you are making that outreach will be noticed, and appreciated by the parents in your program. The

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## The Healthy Child Care Provider

*Taking Care of Yourself So You  
Can Take Care of Others*

### Mindful Eating:

#### Savor the flavor

The concept of mindfulness means paying attention to the events, activities, and thoughts in your daily life. Mindfulness means doing things with purpose, not just going through routine motions with little awareness of what is being done at any given moment.



When applied to eating habits, mindfulness means eating with awareness of what is on your plate and what you are putting in your mouth. You may have heard the expression "savor the flavor." This is part of what is involved with mindful eating. Being more conscious of the entire eating experience is another part.

#### Remember the ice cream?

Consider sitting down to watch television, bowl of ice cream in hand. You may be aware of the first few bites and the last few bites. But often all the ice cream eaten in between is lost to whatever program is on the screen.

It has been suggested that we can improve our eating habits by making small behavioral changes over time. Studies have shown that those who adopt ways to live and eat more mindfully have improved health and are better able to control their weight.

### Focusing on the "Bite"

Follow these suggestions to live and eat more mindfully:

- Set realistic expectations. Select one meal or snack each day and commit to focusing on mindful eating for just that time.
- Eat only at the table. Minimize mindless eating by sitting and giving the meal your full attention. Do not eat while driving or working at your desk.
- Set aside time for eating without distractions. This means no cell phone, television, computer or newspaper.
- Use utensils and put them down between mouthfuls. By eating more slowly, you may notice the difference between satisfaction and being overly full.
- Focus on each bite. Think about the flavor, texture, and sound of the food in your mouth.
- Aim for quality, not quantity. This will raise awareness of how much you eat while you learn to enjoy smaller portions.

*Extension's Successful Family Newsletter  
Winter 2011, NC Cooperative Extension*

## Attention Readers!

Region 13 Training Calendar is  
available on-line at

[Region 13 Training Calendar](#)

Click on the training date in which you are interested. Other training details will appear. So that we can keep you better posted on important items, please contact your CCR&R and give them your email address.

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## Turning the Page from Summer to Fall



### National SIDS Awareness Month

- |      |                       |
|------|-----------------------|
| 5    | Do Something Nice Day |
| 5    | World Teacher's Day   |
| 7    | World Smile Day       |
| 9-15 | Fire Prevention Week  |
| 22   | Make A Difference Day |



### Child Safety Protection Month National Adoption Awareness Month Native American Heritage Month

- |    |                             |
|----|-----------------------------|
| 8  | National Young Readers' Day |
| 11 | Veteran's Day               |
| 13 | World Kindness Day          |
| 15 | America Recycles Day        |
| 20 | World Children's Day        |
| 24 | Thanksgiving                |



### Write A Friend Month

- |          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| 18       | Bake Cookies Day |
| 25       | Christmas        |
| 26-Jan 1 | Kwanzaa          |





## When A Parent Becomes Unemployed

When a parent loses their job, it causes a great deal of stress within the family. Not only are the adults worried and concerned, but the children are affected as well. Job loss creates anxiety and economic hardship for families.

### Here are some of the issues unemployment can bring:

- ✱ Increased stress in the family
- ✱ Negative change in economic status (worse with single parents)
- ✱ Poverty status
- ✱ Resignation (frustration over the situation can cause a hopeless feeling and bring about an attitude of “why bother?!”)
- ✱ Lower self-esteem (children may feel they are not as good as others)
- ✱ Delay in social skills

### Watch for the following warning signs:

- ✱ Child lacks basic necessities (food, clothing, shelter)
- ✱ Child is tired, listless
- ✱ Child feels insecure, fearful, possessive
- ✱ Child is withdrawn/depressed

### How to help the child and the family during this time:

- ✱ Address hunger first ( giving extras )
- ✱ Provide a special place for child’s possessions
- ✱ Provide a safe, stable, predictable environment
- ✱ Understand the child’s possessiveness

- ✱ Offer support and encouragement to the family
- ✱ Provide information on community support
- ✱ Respect parents and offer empathy

### Tips for parents:

- ✱ Be truthful and realistic. Do not tell a child nothing is wrong. Children will sense it anyway. Children need to be able to trust the adults in their life.
- ✱ Discuss feelings. Parents should say if they feel angry or upset.
- ✱ Using words like “fired” or “laid off” should be avoided. Children need to be told what is happening in words they can understand clearly.
- ✱ Parents should not burden children with things that may not happen like the possibility of selling the house.
- ✱ Children will worry about their parents and how they are doing, so it is essential that parents take care of themselves.
- ✱ Big transitions such as potty-training should be avoided at times of high stress.
- ✱ Parents should use this event as a way of helping children become stronger (more resilient).
- ✱ Routines and schedules should be kept consistent. It is reassuring!
- ✱ Create moments of joy and positive memories for the child

*Child Care Resources, Inc.*

*Tip Sheet: HSB 14*

**Parent Education Handouts related to Unemployment may be found at NC Cooperative Extension’s website:  
<http://www.ncfamilies.com>**