

VIEWER'S GUIDE

A Student, a School, and a Case that Made History

# BULLIED

# Using This Guide

*Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case that Made History* tells an inspiring story of a young gay man who took a stand against the bullying he experienced in school. It is designed to create empathy for victims and to encourage others to take action. Part One provides standards-aligned activities for classroom viewing of *Bullied*. In Part Two, we offer guidance for educators to create environments that are safe for all students, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students.

For further information and updates, visit [tolerance.org/bullied](http://tolerance.org/bullied). Send feedback and ideas to [editor@teachingtolerance.org](mailto:editor@teachingtolerance.org).

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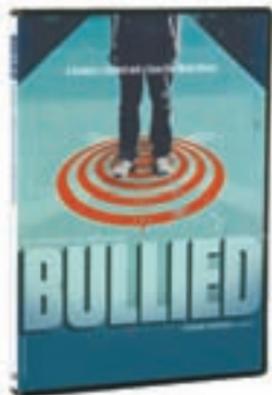
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## Using *Bullied* in the Classroom

### A Guide for Teachers

The film tells an inspiring story of a young gay man who took a stand against the bullying he experienced in school. It is designed to create empathy for victims and to encourage others to take action.

### GUIDELINES FOR VIEWING AND DISCUSSION

Before viewing *Bullied*, discuss ground rules with students. Post the agreed-upon guidelines in a prominent place. Here are some suggestions:

- One person speaks at a time
- Listen with understanding and empathy
- No slurs
- Refrain from labeling individuals as “gay” or as bullies
- Focus on school climate, rather than religious beliefs/morality

After viewing the film, share your impressions about what you noticed as students watched the film.

When discussing issues relating to sexual orientation, refrain from placing any student in the spotlight. Allow students to enter the conversation as they feel comfortable.

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 For additional suggestions on how to create a discussion-friendly classroom, visit [www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied).

## PREPARING TO SEE *BULLIED*

### Objectives

Activities will help students:

- Think about the problem of bullying
- Consider the role students, teachers and administrators play in ensuring that schools are safe for all students

Before you watch *Bullied*, complete the following activities.

Make photocopies of pages 4-7 to distribute to students.

### Starting Points

Review Starting Points (pages 4-6) and discuss the following in small groups.

1. Examine the statistics presented in *Bullying by the Numbers*. What do you observe from the data? Do any of the statistics surprise you? Why? What conclusions can you draw?
2. How do you explain the fact that 70 percent of teachers surveyed claim that educators “almost always” intervene when bullying occurs while another statistic says 66 percent of bullying victims believe school professionals respond poorly?
3. Do any of the facts in the bullying quiz relate to your school? Which ones?

### Rights and Responsibilities

Take the anonymous *How Safe Is Your School?* survey (page 7), and discuss class responses and survey results. What is the significance of the results?

## STARTING POINTS

### What Is Bullying?

Bullying happens when someone is subjected to negative actions from one or more people and has a hard time defending himself or herself. Bullying takes various forms, including:

- Teasing, taunting or verbal abuse
- Punching, shoving and physical acts
- Spreading rumors
- Excluding someone from a group
- Ganging up on others

### In your own words, how would you define bullying?

*Cyberbullying* is when bullies use the Internet, mobile phones or other electronic devices. It can include:

- Sending mean text, e-mail or instant messages
- Posting damaging pictures or hurtful messages in blogs or on Web sites
- Spreading rumors or lies about someone, sometimes using a fake identity

*Adapted from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov) and Psychology Today*



## CURRICULUM STANDARDS

*Bullied* addresses a range of curriculum standards. A comprehensive list of standards aligned with the film and classroom activities can be found at [www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied).



## QUICK QUIZ FACTS AND MYTHS ABOUT BULLYING

### True or false?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Nearly one-third of American teens are involved in bullying.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Fewer than 10% of American teens admit to bullying others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Students who are bullied usually participate in class and have good attendance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Most students who bully are insecure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Male bullies are not usually bigger and physically stronger than their peers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Witnesses often end friendships with the victim and feel guilty for not reporting the incident.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Bullies have trouble making friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Bullies do poorly in school compared to students who do not bully.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Most bullies discontinue aggressive behavior in adulthood.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Nine out of 10 LGBT students have been bullied.

*Adapted from [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org)*

Answers to the quiz are on page 11.

## VOICES

“I’ve often wondered about the kids who watched [the bullying] happen—why they didn’t say anything, how they felt about what was going on?”

—T. C. LARGAESPADA  
SOCIAL WORKER AT YOUTH SHELTER

Largaespada’s quote refers to “bystanders.” A bystander is a person who sees unacceptable behavior but does nothing to stop it. What do you think prevents bystanders from taking action?



### BULLYING BY THE NUMBERS

**160,000**—Estimated number of U.S. students who skip school daily to avoid being bullied

**32%**—Students who report being bullied at school during the school year

**86%**—Gay or lesbian students who report being bullied

**70%**—Teachers surveyed who say that educators “almost always” intervene when bullying occurs

**35%**—9th graders who believe their teachers are interested in trying to stop bullying

**66%**—Bullying victims who believe school professionals responded poorly to the bullying they observed

**10–20%**—Bystanders who provide any real help



Visit [www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied) for more statistics and sources.

## HOW SAFE IS YOUR SCHOOL?

### Assessing the Climate of Your School Community

Take this anonymous survey by checking AGREE or DISAGREE for each question.

Bullying is a problem in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/> AGREE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAGREE
Someone I know is sometimes afraid to come to this school because of harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/> AGREE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAGREE
My school is unsafe for some students.	<input type="checkbox"/> AGREE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAGREE
I'm not sure what the procedures are for reporting bullying in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/> AGREE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAGREE
I've heard adults in my school make negative remarks about a student or about a particular group of students.	<input type="checkbox"/> AGREE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAGREE
I feel uncomfortable reporting bullying and harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/> AGREE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAGREE
At my school, there are no consequences for bullying.	<input type="checkbox"/> AGREE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAGREE
In my opinion, some kids deserve to be picked on or bullied.	<input type="checkbox"/> AGREE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAGREE
<hr/>	
TOTALS	<input type="checkbox"/> AGREE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAGREE

### Understanding Survey Results

Compile student responses. What do the results suggest about bullying in your school?

*Adapted from Responding to Hate at School (www.tolerance.org), Mix It Up (www.mixitup.org), and the U.S. Department of Education's "Creating a Safe and Connected School Climate" (www.scusd.edu/safeschools)*

## AFTER VIEWING

### Themes and Voices

After viewing *Bullied*, select one of these quotations. Write a reflection on what it means in the context of the film and in relation to one or more of these themes: discrimination, courage, empathy and justice.

“Kids get harassed for all kinds of reasons. They’re too fat. They’re too thin. They’re too tall. They are too smart. They’re too dumb. Gays and lesbians are picked on.”

—NINA BUXBAUM, HOME ECONOMICS  
TEACHER AT ASHLAND HIGH

“Mrs. Podlesny said that ‘boys will be boys,’ and that if Jamie was going to act so openly gay he had to expect this stuff to happen to him.”

—CAROL ROSIN, JAMIE’S MOTHER

### Themes in Focus

After watching *Bullied*, talk about these questions in small groups and share in class discussion. Suggested answers available online at [www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied).

#### Courage and Empathy

1. What did Jamie hope to accomplish by filing a lawsuit?
2. What do you think Jamie felt on a typical day?

#### The Impact of Bullying: Dealing with Discrimination

1. What role did bystanders play in Jamie’s bullying?
2. What are some common misconceptions about bullying?

#### Making History: Standing Up for Justice

1. What is the constitutional basis of Jamie’s case?
2. What are Jamie’s key messages when he speaks at the assembly? What lessons do you take away from his story? (See page 19 for more details on *Nabozny v. Podlesny*.)

## RESPONDING TO BULLYING: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

### Objectives

Activities will help students:

- Understand the “bystander effect” by using scenarios from *Bullied* and their own lives
- Propose appropriate action in response to acts of bullying

A *bystander* is a person who sees unacceptable behavior—including bullying—but does nothing to stop it. Consider this story:

When Steve Tower, a youth health coordinator ... visited a fifth-grade class as part of an anti-bullying program, he showed students a photograph of an 11-year-old boy in a football uniform and invited the students to “write down as many things about what you imagine that person in the picture is like.” Later, he showed them a second photo of the same boy—but this time, the boy was in a casket. When students asked how the boy died, Tower explained: “He was bullied ... some boys accused Carl of being gay, even though he wasn’t, and then mercilessly taunted him. And no one, no one, did anything. There were no leaders in that bystander group. ... All of you are bystanders,” Tower says. “All of you can be leaders.”



—Adapted from “The Secret to Stopping a Bully?”  
by Neil Swidey, *The Boston Globe*

**Discuss:** What is a bystander? What can bystanders do to protect victims and prevent bullying?

## Acting with Courage

In a small group, consider one of the *Bullied* scenes below.

### 1. In each of these scenarios ...

- If you had witnessed the scene, what might you have done?
- If you saw this happening to a friend, what would you do?
- If you saw this happening to someone you didn't know—or to someone you didn't like—what would you do?
- If someone you know was doing this, what would you do?

### SCENARIO I

**BULLY:** Hey, homo.

**JAMIE NABOZNY:** I just know that it hurt a lot to hear those words on a daily basis—people calling me queer, fag, homo ... saying really disgusting things about ... sex ...”

### SCENARIO II

**JAMIE:** When I was walking down the hallway I'd have things thrown at me ... I'd be kicked, tripped, spit on, kicked.

### SCENARIO III

*One day Jamie's science teacher stepped out of the classroom.*

**JAMIE:** And the two boys started harassing me. And they had started touching my legs and telling me, you know, that “you like it” and stuff, and I kept pushing them away. And then eventually I tried to get away from them and they pushed me to the ground. One of them got on top of me and were just continuing to—to touch me and being vulgar, I guess.

### 2. Now come up with your own scenarios to discuss with classmates. What would you do?

## NEXT STEPS: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

What can you do to bring about change in your school and community? Revisit the questions in the How Safe Is Your School? survey (page 7) to identify your school's needs. Develop an action plan. Here are some possible ideas.

- Screen the film for other classes and lead a discussion
- Create a guide for parents and other members of the community
- Plan a “No Bullying in Our School” day, week or assembly
- Plan to participate in GLSEN’s “No Name-Calling Week”
- Launch an anti-bullying awareness campaign

### Answers to Quick Quiz from page 5

1. **TRUE** In a recent survey, 13 percent admit to bullying, 11 percent admit to being bullied, and 6 percent have been bullied and also bully others.
2. **FALSE** See above.
3. **FALSE** Students targeted by bullies sometimes avoid school or have trouble concentrating. They can also develop disorders like depression and anxiety.
4. **FALSE** Studies show that most bullies have confidence and high self-esteem.
5. **FALSE** Male bullies are usually bigger and stronger than their victims.
6. **TRUE** Witnessing an act of bullying has negative consequences even if you are not directly involved.
7. **FALSE** Bullies seem to make friends easily, particularly with other students who are aggressive and may join them in bullying.
8. **TRUE** Behaviors associated with bullying include impulsiveness, disliking school and getting in trouble often.
9. **FALSE** 60 percent of bullies will go on to have at least one adult criminal conviction because the behavior carries over.
10. **TRUE** The 2007 National School Climate Survey released by GLSEN found that nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students (86.2%) experienced harassment at school in the past year.



*Adapted from [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org)*

# Using *Bullied* in Your School and District

A Guide for Teachers and Administrators

## COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT *BULLIED*

### What is the film, *Bullied*, about?

*Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case that Made History* tells the story of Jamie Nabozny, a gay student who endured relentless bullying in both middle and high school despite seeking help from school administrators. The film shows how Jamie's legal battle helped him secure justice and underscores how important it is to confront anti-gay bullying.

### Why is a film on anti-gay bullying necessary?

Some educators are wary of raising issues relating to sexual orientation or gender identity because the subject is seen as politically or religiously charged. While they would promptly take action in the case of bullying based on race, religion or ethnicity, they may hesitate when bullying is based on sexual orientation or the perception that a student is gay.

### What are the risks to students?

Victims of anti-gay bullying often believe that no safe haven exists. Subject to physical and verbal harassment, as well as isolation, they endure an array of physical, behavioral and emotional effects, including lower grades, suicide attempts and depression.

### What is at stake for the school?

Schools that don't deal explicitly with anti-gay bullying risk sending the message that some bullying is acceptable. School personnel must understand that, unless all students feel safe, the school is not providing the best environment in which to learn. Treating all students—including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)—with fairness and respect is essential.

### Does the ruling depicted in *Bullied* apply to my school?

*Nabozny*, together with numerous other federal cases across the country, established that districts and administrators may be held liable for the harassment of LGBT students. Although these rulings have arisen in the public school context, private schools are likely to be found to have an obligation to provide safe school environments for all students as a contractual matter or as a consequence of receiving federal funds.

### What about a teacher's, student's or parent's personal beliefs?

Whatever one may think about homosexuality, we can all agree on the need to protect students from psychological and physical harm. Schools must be safe for ALL students.

## COMPARED TO THEIR PEERS, LGBT YOUTH ARE

two to three times more likely to be bullied

up to four times more likely to attempt suicide

seven times more likely to miss a day of school because they feel unsafe

more likely to experience physical bullying



Visit [www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied) for more statistics and sources.

**How can I explain the decision to use *Bullied* to my school community?**

Some members of the community may not understand the need for school programs that address equality for all students, including those who are LGBT. As an educator, you can point out that the film and accompanying lessons:

- Are motivated by the need to protect all children, especially those most vulnerable to harassment
- Uphold the principle that schools must provide a safe environment for each and every student
- Underscore the legal obligation of school leaders to respond promptly and effectively to student harassment

*Bullied* can be used in school while accepting the fact that some administrators, teachers, students and their families may object to homosexuality on religious or other grounds.

**My school already has an anti-bullying policy that protects all students.**

Anti-bullying policies that simply state that “all students” must be protected are not as effective as those that enumerate particularly types of bullying—such as that based on race, religion and sexual orientation, for example—that are particularly common and destructive.

## USING *BULLIED* IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

### Screen the film for staff

*Bullied* carries a powerful message about the need and obligation to take action to protect LGBT students, and those perceived as such, from harassment and bullying.

After viewing the film with staff, consider using these questions to lead a discussion about the situation in your school.

- Could this happen at our school?
- Does it happen here?
- Are we prepared to stop it?
- Do we have an effective anti-bullying policy? Does all staff know the policy?
- Do we think students know the policy?
- Are students scared to come forward here?
- Do educators understand their obligations?
- Are we comfortable discussing this topic with students and their parents?
- What kinds of reaction should we anticipate from students viewing the film? How can we defuse inappropriate responses?

## ASSESS YOUR SCHOOL CLIMATE

Using the survey on page 16 in a staff development session can help you to assess the situation in your school. As an alternative to a pen-and-paper survey, consider having teachers indicate their response by, for example, standing up to express their views.

Some schools find it useful to poll students separately, using the student survey on page 7. Do teachers and students share a common view of the school's policy and safety? If not, what actions should administrators and staff take?

## STAFF SURVEY

I have heard students use slurs or have seen derogatory graffiti.

- AGREE  
 DISAGREE

Bullying is a problem in our school.

- AGREE  
 DISAGREE

Students feel comfortable approaching me about bullying.

- AGREE  
 DISAGREE

I feel comfortable intervening when I witness bullying.

- AGREE  
 DISAGREE

Students and adults listen to each other at our school.

- AGREE  
 DISAGREE

Some students are afraid to come to school for fear of being harassed.

- AGREE  
 DISAGREE

Our school has an effective anti-bullying policy.

- AGREE  
 DISAGREE

The school has a clear procedure for reporting acts of bullying.

- AGREE  
 DISAGREE

Members of our school staff work actively to create a safe and welcoming environment for all students.

- AGREE  
 DISAGREE



### Red Flags

- Any staff member sees a problem.
- A gap between staff responses and student perceptions.

## RESOURCES

### **Find Youth Info**

[findyouthinfo.gov/topic\\_bullying.shtml](http://findyouthinfo.gov/topic_bullying.shtml)

A clearinghouse for information prepared by the federal government to help prevent and address bullying in communities.

### **Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**

[glsen.org](http://glsen.org)

A leading national educational organization focused on LGBT issues in K-12 schools. GLSEN offers a variety of resources and materials focused on anti-LGBT bullying, including No Name-Calling Week and Ally Week.

### **Safe Schools Coalition**

[safeschoolscoalition.org](http://safeschoolscoalition.org)

This public-private partnership aims to reduce bias-based bullying in schools by raising awareness among students, educators and parents. The site has classroom materials, content on public policy and Spanish-language resources.

### **National Education Association (NEA)**

[nea.org/tools/30420.htm](http://nea.org/tools/30420.htm)

The NEA provides a Diversity Tool Kit, links to anti-bullying resources and a school employee's guide to LGBT issues.

### **Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**

[community.pflag.org](http://community.pflag.org)

PFLAG provides tools to create safe schools, a training program, updates on national legislation and advice for supporting LGBT parents of school-aged children.

### **Committee for Children**

[cffchildren.org](http://cffchildren.org)

The Committee for Children develops evidence-based bullying, child abuse and violence prevention education curricula that teach social-emotional skills to children, families and educators.



For a more comprehensive list of resources visit  
[www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied).

## ACTION STEPS FOR EDUCATORS TO TAKE TO STOP BULLYING

TO STOP BULLYING BEFORE IT STARTS, WE CAN	IF WE HEAR OR SEE EVIDENCE OF BULLYING, WE CAN
Adopt and publicize an anti-bullying policy that includes clear procedures and consequences	stop the bullying immediately
provide school-wide training	offer guidance to bystanders on how to intervene appropriately
IF WE SEE OR LEARN OF A PATTERN OF BULLYING, WE CAN	WE SHOULD ASK QUESTIONS WHEN WE SEE
Bring staff together to discuss the behavior and agree on a unified course of action	ripped or damaged clothing
Let an administrator know right away	students who isolate themselves from others



Use this chart as a starting point to help participants in your staff training identify specific actions they can take. A printable chart can be found at [www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied).



## THE NABOZNY CASE

In 1995, 17-year-old Jamie Nabozny sued the school district and administrators from his middle school and high school. Nabozny based his suit on the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which provides for equal protection.

OCTOBER 1995

A district court dismisses Jamie's case. Jamie appeals.

JULY 1996

The Seventh Circuit reverses the lower court's dismissal.

The court held that Jamie presented a viable claim that the defendants had violated his right to equal protection "by discriminating against him based on his gender or sexual orientation." The idea behind this holding was that the defendants would have protected Jamie from harassment from other boys had he been a girl or had he not been gay. The court also held that the defendants were not immune from liability because a reasonable person in their position "would have concluded that discrimination against Nabozny based on his sexual orientation was unconstitutional."

NOVEMBER 1996

Based on this appeal, Nabozny and his lawyers returned to a lower court and presented their case to a jury.

The jury returned a verdict against school officials. The school district settled the lawsuit for \$900,000. This landmark case was the first successful legal challenge to anti-gay violence in public schools.

## ENDORSEMENTS

Anti-Defamation League  
**adl.org**

Committee for Children  
**cfchildren.org**

Encompass  
**encompassnw.org**

Fortunate Families  
**fortunatefamilies.org**

GLSEN  
**glsen.org**

Groundspark  
**groundspark.org**

Mississippi Safe Schools Coalition  
**mssafeschools.org**

New York State United Teachers  
**nysut.org**

PFLAG National  
**community.pflag.org**

Welcoming Schools/HRC  
**hrc.org/welcomingschools**

Charles Haynes, Sr., Scholar  
**First Amendment Center**

Kevin Gogin, Program Coordinator  
**Support Services for LGBT Youth, SFUSD**

Sandra Lee Fewer, Commissioner  
**San Francisco Unified School District**



For a complete list of endorsers,  
visit [www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied).

“It would serve us all to remember that the core mission of public schools is to prepare young people for citizenship in a democratic society. This means, first and foremost, maintaining a school environment that respects the rights of students to free speech and free exercise of religion while simultaneously ensuring that student speech does not degenerate into name-calling, bullying or attempts to silence other views.

Under the First Amendment, a school is both safe and free when students, parents, educators and all members of the school community commit to addressing their political and religious differences with civility and respect. A safe school is free of bullying and harassment. And a free school is safe for student speech even about issues that divide us.”

—PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION:  
A FIRST AMENDMENT GUIDE FOR FINDING COMMON GROUND

TEACHING  
TOLERANCE



A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

[WWW.TOLERANCE.ORG](http://WWW.TOLERANCE.ORG)