



Assessing for a Power Imbalance & Repetition¹

The new law in Massachusetts specifies that faculty and staff must be trained in the role of power imbalances and repetition in the incidence of bullying and cyberbullying. Those who investigate alleged bullying and cyberbullying problems need to assess for these. This document is intended to assist investigators in that process.

Elements that should be assessed when considering the presence of a power imbalance between two students:

1. Different levels of popularity or social success between the students
2. Students who differ in their personal self-confidence, especially around peers
3. Students who differ in their athletic, academic, or other achievements
4. Students who belong to a group that is frequently targeted and is generally low-power (e.g., GLBT students; special education students; ELLs; etc.)
5. Students who differ in the degree to which adults like and admire them
6. (Sometimes) Students who differ markedly in personal appearance
7. (Sometimes) Students who differ markedly in physical size
8. Online behaviors that consistently target one student

Assessing for repetition:

1. Before this incident, what was your relationship to this “bully”?
2. Have you had any electronic contact online or through texting?
3. Any contact (electronic or in person) with his/her friends, teammates, etc.?
4. Do your families socialize together outside of school?
5. Do you see him/her in any extracurricular activities or places?
6. Have you had problems in the past with any of his friends?
7. Have you initiated any contact with him/her before these incidents?
8. Have you ever been in a fight with him/her?

¹ By Elizabeth Kandel Englander, Ph.D. As with all materials, this document is a work in progress and I strongly welcome practical feedback about ways to improve it. Email marc@bridgew.edu with any ideas or suggestions. Copyright ©2010 Elizabeth K. Englander.