

Dear Ladysmith Families,

Recently, I've received concerns that our district is not doing enough to address bullying within our school community. I want to assure you that we hear your voices, and I take these concerns very seriously. Still being relatively new to this school community, I want to make sure we have a welcoming environment for everyone who attends the School District of Ladysmith as either a student or a staff member.

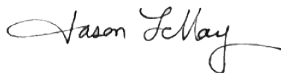
Every child deserves to feel safe, respected, and valued in our schools. We recognize that bullying—whether physical, verbal, or emotional—can have lasting effects on the well-being of students. Our commitment to creating a safe learning environment for all students is unwavering, and we are continually striving to improve the ways we address this challenge.

While we have systems in place, we also acknowledge that there is always room for improvement. We have already started to review our current trainings and policies and we plan to review trainings/changes to the process/policy to make our school/busses more safe. We are committed to working together as a community to create an environment where every student feels safe, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

If you or your child experiences or witnesses bullying, I urge you to report it immediately. This may be to a staff member, bus driver, or administrator. It is also important to keep reporting it if the problem continues. Together, we can continue to build a positive and respectful culture where everyone thrives.

Thank you for your continued support as we work to strengthen our commitment to student safety and well-being. If you would like to discuss this further please reach out to any of the building administrators (Mr. Gago ([tgago@sdlwi.org](mailto:tgago@sdlwi.org)) at the elementary and Mr. Posewitz ([gposewitz@sdlwi.org](mailto:gposewitz@sdlwi.org)) or Mr. Yudes ([kyudes@sdlwi.org](mailto:kyudes@sdlwi.org)) at the middle/high school and they will gladly discuss any situation with you.

Partners in the Future,



Jason LeMay  
District Administrator

Below are steps being taken to assist any student who may be a victim of bullying, or options that our district has available to families:

### **Collaborative Efforts with Families:**

We encourage open communication between home and school. When bullying is reported, we work closely with parents and guardians to address the situation, ensure the well-being of the students involved, and take steps to prevent further incidents. Once something is done to try to solve an issue, if we do not hear back from students, parents/guardians it gives the appearance the issue has been resolved. If that is not the case, we strongly encourage students or parents to follow-up with the administrator they were working with. Similarly, if there has been a report of bullying and you don't get a response please reach out again.

Also, it is important to note that you may not learn of a consequence for the parties involved in a particular situation, but that does not mean that no action was taken to remedy the concern. School staff and administration can not discuss other students and their consequences. If the situation continues, it is important that every instance with the parties involved is reported so further steps can be taken.

### **Clear Reporting Channels:**

We are committed to investigating every report thoroughly and taking appropriate action to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all. Reports of bullying can be made verbally, in writing, or on the school district's website using the **Speak**

**Up Speak Out** link found on the main website page. Speak up Speak Out notifies all administrators and school counselors in the respective building where it occurs and allows for a team approach to conflict resolution. Further details on Speak Up Speak Out can be found later in this letter. Regardless, all such reports, whether verbal or in writing, are taken seriously.

When incidents of bullying arise you can contact a building administrator: Mr. Gago (tgago@sdlwi.org) at the elementary and Mr. Posewitz (gposewitz@sdlwi.org) or Mr. Yudes (kyudes@sdlwi.org) at the middle/high school. If the matter is related to an incident on a school bus it is very helpful to have the bus number when calling. Reports can also be made to the bus driver, bus company, or contacting Tami Moore, Busing Coordinator, at tmoore@sdlwi.org.

When making a report it is most helpful to have the following information: student(s) involved, date/time (before or after school route) or location in the school and as many details as you can give. This helps narrow down the incident and can begin an official bullying investigation. Ideally, students are the ones who report instances of bullying when they occur. Many times, these matters are best resolved when they first happen. Both the school buses and school buildings have cameras, which allows us to try and find incidents on camera, however, that is not always a guaranteed solution.

### **Training for Staff and Students:**

Our administrators are looking at additional trainings and other methods we can utilize with staff and students on how to recognize the signs of bullying, respond appropriately, and provide support for affected students. We will also continue to provide students with the tools and knowledge they need to recognize and address bullying behavior, both online and in person.

We are also working with our transportation providers to streamline how we communicate with each other regarding bullying behaviors on the school buses.

The school district appreciates the feedback we receive and we will continue to work hard at addressing bullying issues as they occur.

## **HOW TO USE SPEAK UP, SPEAK OUT: A GUIDE TO REPORTING CONCERNS**

We believe that every member of our school community deserves to feel safe, supported, and heard. As part of our ongoing efforts to create a positive and inclusive school environment, we are proud to offer the Speak Up, Speak Out program, a confidential and easy way to report concerns related to bullying, harassment, safety, or any situation that may be affecting the well-being of our students.

Below are the simple steps for how you can use the Speak Up, Speak Out system:

### **1. Access the Reporting System**

*Online:* Visit the Speak Up, Speak Out page on our school website, where you will find a quick and easy form to fill out. The website link is: <https://www.ladysmith.k12.wi.us/families-students/speak-up-speak-out.cfm>

*Phone/Text:* Call or send a text message to our confidential Speak Up, Speak Out hotline at 1-800-697-8761.

This line is available 24/7, and messages will be reviewed promptly.

*\*In Person:* If you are not comfortable reporting online, you can visit any trusted staff member (teacher, counselor, administrator) and ask for help in using the system, or simply make a written or verbal report there.

### **2. Report Your Concern**

**Be Specific:** When making a report, provide as much detail as possible to help us understand the situation.

Include where and when the incident took place, who was involved, and what happened.

### **3. What Happens Next?**

Once your concern is submitted, it will be reviewed by our school leadership team or a designated staff member.

All reports are taken seriously and will be investigated promptly. You may be contacted for more details.

### **4. Confidentiality and Safety**

The Speak Up, Speak Out system is confidential.

The system takes your privacy seriously and will handle all reports with care.

By working together and using this tool, we can ensure that school remains a safe and welcoming place for all students. encourage everyone—students, parents, and staff—to use Speak Up, Speak Out whenever necessary.



## SOME BASIC Q & A ON BULLYING

### Q: What is bullying?

**A:** Bullying is aggressive behavior that is *intentional, repetitive, and involves an imbalance of power* between the person bullying and the victim. It can be physical, verbal, social, or even cyberbullying. Meanness is different from bullying in important ways that should be understood and differentiated when it comes to intervention. Experts agree that bullying entails three key elements: 1) an intent to harm, 2) an imbalance of power, and 3) repeated acts or threats of aggressive behavior.

### Q: What are the different types of bullying?

**A: Physical Bullying:** Involves hitting, kicking, pushing, or damaging someone's property.

**Verbal Bullying:** Includes name-calling, insults, teasing, or making threats.

**Social/Relational Bullying:** Involves exclusion, spreading rumors, or intentionally damaging someone's relationships.

**Cyberbullying:** Takes place through digital platforms like social media, text messages, or online games.

### Q: How is cyberbullying different from other types of bullying?

**A:** Cyberbullying occurs when someone uses digital platforms like social media, text messages, or websites to harass, threaten, or spread rumors about someone else. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can happen 24/7, and the target may be harassed in public forums where others can see. It can also spread quickly and widely, making it more difficult to escape from than physical or verbal bullying in person.

### Q: Why do people bully others?

**A:** Bullying behavior can stem from a variety of reasons, including:

**Insecurity:** Bullies may try to feel better about themselves by putting others down.

**Power and Control:** Some bullies seek to dominate others to feel superior.

**Learned Behavior:** If someone grows up in an environment where bullying or aggression is modeled or tolerated, they may replicate that behavior.

**Revenge:** Sometimes, bullying stems from a desire for retaliation or to settle a perceived wrong.

**Peer Influence:** Some people may bully others because they want to fit in or gain approval from a group.

### Q: What can someone do if they are being bullied?

**A:** If you or someone you know is being bullied, here are some steps to take:

**Talk to Someone:** Confide in a trusted friend, family member, teacher, or counselor. It's important not to keep it to yourself.

**Document the Bullying:** Keep a record of the bullying incidents (what happened, when, and where).

**Set Boundaries:** If possible, assertively tell the bully to stop. This may not always work, but it can help in some cases.

**Report It:** If the bullying is happening at school or bus, report it to the appropriate authority (like a teacher, principal, or bus driver).

In doubt if it is bullying? Still tell someone and let them help you work through it!

### Q: Can bullying be stopped?

**A:** While completely eliminating bullying may not be realistic, it can be reduced significantly through awareness, education, and intervention. It requires the commitment of individuals, schools, communities, and organizations to create safe and supportive environments. By addressing bullying early, supporting victims, and promoting positive behavior, the occurrence of bullying can decrease.

### Q: Is bullying only a problem for kids?

**A:** No, bullying can happen at any age. While bullying is often associated with children and teenagers, it can also occur in workplaces (workplace bullying), between adults in social settings, and even in online communities. Adults who have experienced bullying as children can also carry its effects well into adulthood.

**Still Have  
Questions?**

If you still have questions, additional concerns, or would like more information, please feel free to reach out to any members of the administrative team to assist you.

You can also contact our counseling team:  
Leah Bunton, Elementary School [lbunton@sdlwi.org](mailto:lbunton@sdlwi.org)  
Jolene Jeffress, Middle School [jjeffress@sdlwi.org](mailto:jjeffress@sdlwi.org)  
Jodi Zimmer, High School [zimmer@sdlwi.org](mailto:zimmer@sdlwi.org)