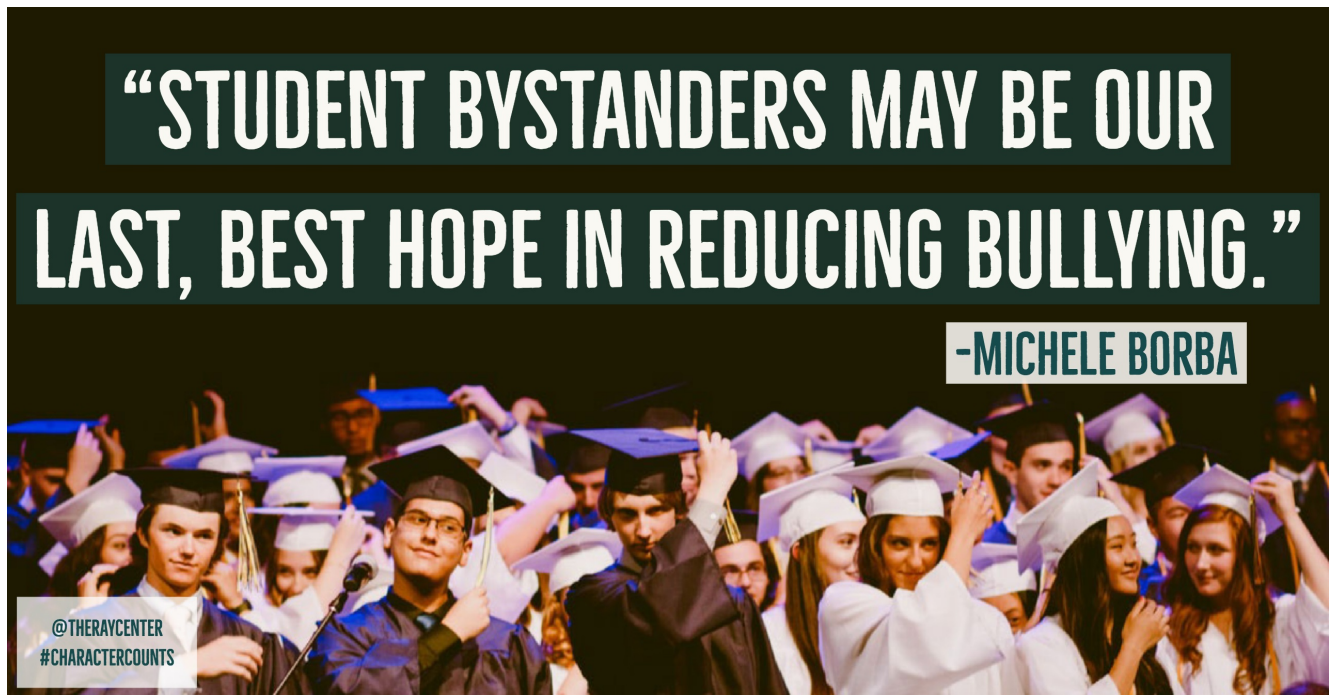


# Teach kids to stand up to bullies – Part 1



*From our guest contributor, Dr. Michele Borba.*



In this NBC's Dateline special: "The Perils of Parenting," I appear as the expert on bullying. Producers asked me to teach middle school students—when bullying peaks—specific bystander strategies to deal with bullies. I developed the techniques after reviewing dozens of studies on the "Bystander Effect" and have trained hundreds of educators in how to use them with students. The US Army also invited me to teach these skills on our 18 of our bases in Europe and the Asian-Pacific. They work (so says the students!) I'll be sharing these in with educators in Washington DC at School Safety Summits and the National Character Education Partnership Conference in October.

## **How to Teach Kids to Be Active Bystanders**

Studies show that active bystanders can do far more than just

watch. In fact, student bystanders may be our last, best hope in reducing bullying. Active student bystanders can:

- Reduce the audience that a bully craves
- Mobilize the compassion of witnesses to step in and stop the bullying
- Support the victim and reduce the trauma
- Be a positive influence in curbing a bullying episode
- Encourage other students to support a school climate of caring
- Report a bullying incident since 85 percent of time bullying occurs an adult is *not* present. Students are usually the witnesses

When bystanders intervene correctly, studies find they can cut bullying more than half the time and within 10 seconds. [Pepler and Craig] There are parameters to activate student bystanders, so get educated!

Here are a few facts to ensure success:

- To ensure success you must first mobilize students to be active bystanders.
- You must give students permission to step in.
- You must also teach specific strategies so they can step in.
- Each strategy must be rehearsed or role-played, until kids can use it alone. (I've had schools have students role-play these in assemblies, make them into chart-reminders that are posted around the school, and even have students create mini-videos of each strategy to share with peers).
- Not every strategy will work for every student, so you must provide a range of strategies.
- Ideally you must enlist your peer leaders – those students on the highest popularity tier who other students look up to – to mobilize other peers.
- Adults *must* be onboard with the approach and understand

what bullying is and how to respond. Adults *must* listen to student reports on bullying and back students up. The biggest reason kids say they don't report: "The adult didn't listen or do anything to help." Step up adults!

The best news is that child advocates and parents can teach kids these same bystander skills. Doing so empowers children with tools to stop cruelty, help victims, feel safer and reduce bullying.

We'll cover the 3 steps to teach these skills in part 2 in another post.

Learn more about character education.