Everyone Matters And It Starts With Me:
A public forum on Harassment and Bullying
Essex High School
March 24, 2004

Small Group Discussion Guide

I. Welcome 15 minutes

1. Introductions
   - Say your name and what town you are from

2. Explain Purpose of discussion
   - Share our experiences and develop a better understanding of the problem of bullying
   - Brainstorm some ideas about what we can do to address this issue

3. Explain Role of Facilitators
   - Help the group have a productive discussion
   - Help the group work on solutions
   - Will not join the conversation or take sides

4. Establish Groundrules
   - Suggested Groundrules
     - Listen well, and treat each other with respect
     - Each person gets a chance to be heard.
     - One person talks at a time.
     - Speak for yourself, and not as the representative of any group
     - If you are offended, say so, and say why.
     - It’s OK to disagree.
     - When telling personal stories don’t mention names
     - Personal stories stay confidential unless we all agree to change that

II. Sharing Our Experiences 20 minutes

1. What personal experiences have you had with bullying or harassment?
   - Use the following questions to help with your discussion
- Share a time when you or someone you know was bullied.
- How old were you? Where did it happen?
- What was it like for you?
- What made a difference?
- Share a time when you or someone you know have taunted or bullied someone else
- What was that like?
- How did the situation get resolved?

2. As you listen to people share their experiences, do you:

- hear anything that concerns you;
- hear anything that surprises you?

**III. Understanding the Problem of Bullying**

20 minutes

1. Large group discussion

Before we come up with ideas to address the problem of bullying and harassment in our community, it will help to have a better understanding of what’s going on. Let’s begin by reading the statements below (Go around the circle with each person reading one statement out loud until all are read. If you don’t want to read, just say pass.)

**Here’s what some people say about bullying**

1. Getting picked on is just part of growing up. It happens to everyone.

2. If you are getting bullied, telling an adult will only make things worse. Kids just need to deal with it themselves.

3. Popular culture tells us that being mean is cool and acceptable. Just look at how Simon treats contestants on American Idol or listen to the way radio hosts play cruel tricks on people.

4. It’s not cool to stand up for someone who is getting picked on. In fact, standing up for someone else makes you a target, too.

5. Now that we have computers, people can say especially cruel things because they aren’t face to face. Kids who are getting harassed at school are now more likely to also get picked on when they are at home.

6. When kids are getting harassed, adults are totally oblivious to what’s happening.
Now, let’s talk about these statements.

- Which of these statements fits with your view of the problem?
- Are there any points of view missing? What might other people you know say about this problem?
- As we reflect on the discussion so far, what are the main areas of concern expressed by the group?

**IV. Sharing Ideas About How to Address Bullying in Our Community 20 minutes**

1. Take a few minutes to jot down some ideas about how to address bullying in our community. You can include ideas that people can accomplish as individuals, families, schools or the community as a whole.

2. Each person share one idea at a time until all the ideas are written on newsprint.

3. Briefly discuss the list.

- Are there any themes that emerge?
- Are there any ideas that seem like they could really make a difference?
- If the group could only implement one idea, is there one that everyone would support?

**V. Closing 5 minutes**

1. Ask for a volunteer to recap the main ideas of our conversation when all the groups reconvene.

2. Thank you for participating in this discussion. Just by talking together you are helping make our community a better place.