Team Up with The Tigers

Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying
A message from
Ian Kinsler

One of the great things about playing Major League Baseball is that you get to be part of a team. You get to play with great players, and work together to achieve common goals.

In my two years with the Tigers, we have achieved a lot of success by working well together.

And you can achieve success working together, too.

This is especially true if you have to deal with bullying in your school or neighborhood.

It is why this year’s Tigers anti-bullying program is called “Team Up with the Tigers. Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying.”

And it’s the reason I wanted to be the spokesperson for the program for a second straight season.

Standing together is the best way to solve something like bullying.

You are a lot more powerful when you stand together than when you try to handle a situation alone. If a bully believes that you’re going to stand together and not give up on each other, that bully is more likely to back off. So get together with your friends and make a pact to look out for each other.

Even when you stand together, you need to keep your cool. You can’t lose your cool because that is exactly what the bully wants you to do. And never resort to violence.

So as you start the new school year, I want you to “Team Up with the Tigers” to put an end to bullying.

Team Up with the Tigers to tell bullies it’s NOT OK to pick on people because they are smaller, less strong or less confident.

Team Up with the Tigers to tell bullies it’s NOT OK to use the Internet or social media to threaten or put down other people.

Team Up with the Tigers to tell bullies it’s NOT OK to make people feel bad because of the way they look, where they live or what their families are like.

Join me to put an end to bullying.

“Team Up with the Tigers. Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying.”

How Standing Together Stopped a School Bully

By Ian Kinsler

When I was growing up, I had an experience that shows how you can stop a bully by standing together.

On the basketball court at recess, there was a kid who decided every day that it was his ball and if he didn’t get to play or be on the team no one else could play. To deal with this, we all decided to stand together. We got our own basketball and we made him stand on the sidelines. We took a stand and only allowed him to play if he decided to play the right way. When we began playing, he decided to join us and played along with us the right way.

Standing together stopped what the bully was trying to do. He had to decide to play the game the right way or he couldn’t play at all. He had to stop bullying. So he stopped what he was doing and we were all able to get along.
Statistics show one out of every three students experiences bullying at some point in their lives.

But in Michigan, students like you have taken a stand against bullying by teaming up with the Tigers, the Detroit Tigers Foundation, Michigan K.I.D.S., the Detroit Free Press and The Detroit News to reduce the threats and dangers of bullying.

This is the fifth year the Tigers have led this anti-bullying effort, and nearly 500,000 students across the state have taken part. Thousands more will “Team Up with the Tigers” and “Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying” as part of the program this fall.

Community support for standing together against bullying was on full display at Comerica Park August 23, when more than 30,000 students, families and fans turned out to take part in the third Tigers “Strike Out Bullying” day at the ballpark.

Before the Tigers game with the Texas Rangers, students from around the state led a parade around the field, carrying banners highlighting the seven principles of the Tigers Pledge to Stop Bullying (see Page 12). Thousands more signed the pledge at stations located throughout the ballpark.

Other students carried an oversized “Strike Out Bullying” banner in the parade, and more than 6,000 students 14 years old and younger received “Strike Out Bullying” dog tags from the Michigan State Police that they could wear around their necks. The dog tags carry the Detroit Tigers logo and the message “Strike Out Bullying.”

Jason Gelsey, a student at West Bloomfield High School, threw out the first pitch as a representative of students who have taken a stand against bullying. He was chosen as a result of the contributions and commitment he has shown as a member of the Upstander anti-bullying program run by the Defeat the Label group. Defeat the Label is a nonprofit organization working to promote “a bully free society without social labels and stereotypes.”

Breaking down barriers is at the core of the Tigers anti-bullying program, and it’s one reason the program was recognized in 2013 by Major League Baseball with baseball’s top community service award.

It was evident throughout Comerica Park on “Strike Out Bullying” day.

“It was inspiring to see people from all backgrounds, neighborhoods and communities taking part,” says Ellen Hill Zeringue, the Tigers Vice President for Marketing. “This program continues to grow because more and more people realize we need to stand together to strike out bullying.”

Why Do People Bully?

People bully others for many reasons.

Some people bully because they want to impress a peer group or a group they want to get “in” with.

Some bully because they are having problems or feel bad about themselves, and think bullying others will make them feel better or stronger.

Some bully because they see other people behave like bullies — brothers, sisters, parents or other kids in the neighborhood.

Some bully because they feel if they don’t bully someone, someone else will bully them.

Both boys and girls can be bullies and both boys and girls can be the targets of bullies. Boys are more likely to use physical violence — or the threat of violence — to bully.

Girls are more likely to use words, gossip, putdowns and stares to bully or intimidate others. At the same time, some girls are violent bullies and some boys use words or putdowns to bully. And both boys and girls use the Internet, text messages, e-mail, Twitter and social sites like Facebook for electronic bullying — called “cyberbullying.”

If you see bullying, or are the victim of bullying, a statewide anti-bullying hotline has been set up to report it — and you don’t have to give your name. (For details, see Page 11.) The hotline is part of the OK2SAY program, because state leaders want students to know it’s “OK2SAY” something when they see bullying.

To report bullying:

- call: 1-855-5OK-2SAY
- text: 652-729 (OK2SAY)
- email: ok2say@mi.gov
- download the OK2SAY mobile app from Google Play or the App Store
- visit the website: www.mi.gov/OK2SAY
In his eight seasons with the Tigers, Miguel Cabrera has been one of the most fearsome hitters in the American League. He has hit 30 or more home runs six times, and twice hit 44 in a season. He has driven in more than 100 runs seven times and has won three American League batting titles. He has been the league’s Most Valuable Player twice, and in 2012 he became the first player in 45 years to win the Triple Crown as the league leader in home runs, batting average and runs batted in.

Off the field, his achievements have been just as impressive. His Miguel Cabrera Foundation supports a variety of children’s funds, and in both 2012 and 2013, he was nominated by the Tigers for the Roberto Clemente Award that honors the Major League Baseball player who best represents the sport both on and off the field. This season he has joined with the Tigers to help kids in a new way by encouraging them to stand together against bullying.

“Even at a young age kids can do something to stop bullying by coming together,” he says. “It is great when kids come together and not back down — to stand together and unite against bullying.”

Growing up in the South American nation of Venezuela, Cabrera was never bullied himself. But he took a stand when he saw others being bullied.

“I don’t like it when other kids bully, because there’s no fun in that,” he says. “What I did was step up and tell the bully to stop because bullying doesn’t make you tough. It doesn’t make you the best kid in school, so you need to stop bullying others.”

When kids stand together against bullying, it sends a stronger message to bullies than one person standing up alone, Cabrera says. “Bullies need to listen to others and stop being a bully to other people because it’s just not right,” he says. “Bullying is not going to make you a better person, it’s not going to help you move along in life, and it’s not going to make you the coolest guy in school. Bullying makes you a bad person.”

Bullies may think it’s cool to pick on people who are weaker, but they often don’t think how bullying others could affect their own lives, Cabrera says. Facing students who are standing together can be what is needed to get bullies to see the consequences of their actions.

“At some point in a bully’s life, they are going to get into trouble,” Cabrera says. “There are going to be issues if they continue. When they grow up, nobody will look up to them and they will not be viewed as a responsible person. Bullies need to listen to others. Things will turn out better in the end.”

In Cabrera’s baseball career, things have turned out better for him more often than not. Before joining the Tigers, he played five seasons with the Florida Marlins (now the Miami Marlins), winning a World Series title with them in 2003.

In his career, he drove in more than 100 runs in 11 straight seasons until he lost time due to an injury this season. He hit over .300 seven years in a row and in 10 of his last 11 seasons. He has hit more than 30 home runs nine times and twice hit more than 40. He has had more than 30 doubles 10 times, more than 40 six times and more than 50 twice.

Even losing time to injury this year, he was voted the “best hitter in baseball” for the fourth straight year by the Baseball America group.

With all those achievements, the 32-year-old Cabrera has earned the respect of teammates, opponents and the community. And that respect makes him someone people listen to.

This fall, he wants people to listen to what he has to say about bullying.

“Stand together,” he says. “That is the right thing to do. Things will turn out better in the end.”
Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying

The Tigers mascot PAWS is always looking for ways to make communities better.

So this fall he is joining Tigers players to get students to “Team Up with the Tigers” and “Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying.”

The goal is to show how everyone becomes stronger when they stand together to face down bullies and demonstrate that bullying is not a cool or acceptable way for kids to treat each other.

Standing together has always been a big part of the “The PAWS Plan for Fair Play.” As the Tigers mascot, PAWS knows first hand how powerful people can be when they team up — whether they are on a baseball diamond or on a school playground.

The PAWS Plan contains advice from bullying experts that can help you if you are bullied and show you what to do if you see someone else being bullied. And remember that each piece of advice will be even more effective when you “Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying” with your friends and classmates.

If You Are Bullied …

1. Speak Up. Nobody likes to be picked on, but ignoring the situation will make it worse. Calmly tell the bully “Stop it.”
2. Never Fight Back, but firmly tell the bully “leave me alone” and walk away with confidence.
3. Stand Together. Staying with a group will help discourage bullies. Supporting each other discourages bullies because bullies like to pick on people who seem alone.
4. Tell an Adult You Trust. Many kids feel embarrassed they have been bullied, but you need to tell an adult who can offer ways to help you. Telling an adult is part of standing together as a community.
5. Remember It’s Not Your Fault. Nobody deserves to be bullied. Talk to a friend or trusted adult about how you feel. This is also part of standing together.

If Someone Else Is Bullied …

1. Speak Up. If you feel safe in the situation, tell the bully “Stop it.”
2. Tell an Adult. Kids who are being bullied are sometimes scared to tell an adult. But a bystander can tell an adult — and should. This is part of standing together as a community. At school, tell a teacher, an aide, a coach, a custodian, a guard or the principal.
3. Be a Friend. Even if you don’t know the person being bullied, go over to them. Let them know how you think they are feeling. Walk with them. Stand together with them.
4. Stop Untrue Messages. If someone spreads rumors or messages you know are untrue, tell the person you know this is wrong, and tell others as well. Stand together to say spreading rumors is uncool.
5. Get Friends Involved. Get your friends to help a person who is being bullied. Together you can make a difference.
6. Refuse to Be a Bystander. If you see friends laughing along with a bully, let them know that by laughing they are also being bullies to the victim. Get them to join you to “Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying.”


Members of the Michigan Opera Theatre Children’s Choir prepare to recite the Tigers Pledge To Stop Bullying at the August 23 Strike Out Bullying Rally at Comerica Park.

Learn with the News
Tigers All-Star Miguel Cabrera says that when kids stand together against bullying, it sends a stronger message to bullies than one person standing up alone. “That is the right thing to do,” he says, and when that happens “things will turn out better in the end.” In the newspaper or online, find words and images that show the positive things that can happen when people stand together to stop bullying. Clip or print out the words and images and use them to create a poster titled “Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying.”
In his baseball career Tigers third baseman Nick Castellanos has been singled out over and over again. But always for the right reasons.

He was a star in high school at two different schools, a member of the U.S. team that won a gold medal in Pan American Junior Championships, a prized recruit of the powerhouse University of Miami and a top pick of the Tigers in the Major League draft in 2010.

At the same time, he knows that other people haven't been as fortunate in the way they've been singled out. And he wants to change that by getting people to stand together against bullying.

“A lot of times a bully will single out someone who they think is alone so they become the target,” he says. “But if the person being bullied has friends who can stick up for them, the bully may get the message and begin to believe that maybe what they're doing is not right and their behavior will not be tolerated.

“This is the message standing together gives,” Castellanos says. “It says bullying is not OK. Bullying is terrible from every aspect.”

Castellanos was never bullied himself when growing up, but he learned the value of standing together by sticking up for his younger brother.

“My little brother always hung out with me and my friends,” he recalls. “I’m two years older than he is and a lot of times he was the butt end of jokes.”

By standing together with his brother “I would try to protect him and let the bullies know it was not all right. Once I stood up for him and let the bullies know I had his back, it made the whole situation a lot better.”

When kids don’t have someone to stand together with them, it can make life miserable in school.

“School should be a safe place for kids to be able to grow and learn skills that they need for the rest of their life,” Castellanos says. “The last thing they need in school is to be concerned or worried about being picked on because of what they look like or the clothes they wear or things like that.”

For the 23-year-old Castellanos, who’s in his second season with the Tigers, respect is the key to putting an end to bullying.

“I think it’s important for kids to respect each other and learn to respect everyone,” he says. “I believe most bullying is when kids pick out differences. When kids learn to appreciate each other for who they are, it just creates a better school environment.”

Castellanos learned that approach from his parents when he was growing up in South Florida.

“They told me to realize that just because someone is not as skilled as I was that I should not make them feel any less of a person,” says Castellanos, whose mom grew up in Detroit. “They told me that even though they may not be as good at sports or other things, they may be good at something else. That does not make them less of a person, and they do not deserve to be made fun of or picked on.”

That message is now one that Castellanos wants to pass on to kids who are dealing with bullying in their school or neighborhood. And he may get some help from his younger brother, Ryan, who was drafted by the Tigers in this year’s Major League draft.

Ryan knows something about the value of standing together to deal with bullies. He is the younger brother Nick Castellanos stood up for when they were kids.
How Law Enforcement Stands Together With Students

It's hard to stop bullying alone, but when you “Stand Together to Strike Out Bullying” you gain the support of friends, other students and trusted adults. Among those trusted adults are members of the state’s law enforcement community — the Michigan State Police, the Police Department of the City of Detroit and the Sheriff’s Departments in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and other counties. Here are some of the things police and sheriff’s departments are doing to make schools, neighborhoods and the Internet “bully free.”

**Detroit Police Department**
**Police Chief James Craig**

The Detroit Police Department offers a variety of programs and activities to “empower … youths with the tools that they need to help them make better decisions” when confronted with bullying or other pressures, says Police Chief James Craig. Programs designed to improve social skills, self-esteem, assertiveness and conflict resolution include the Law Enforcement Explorers program, the Junior Police Cadet Corps, the Police Athletic League, Citi Camp and the Gang Resistance Education and Training program (G.R.E.A.T.).

For more information about these programs, visit www.detroitpublicsafetyfoundation.org/youth-violence-prevention/

Chief Craig feels strongly that it is important for students to stand together when dealing with bullies.

“Bullying and peer pressure often develop into a pack mentality,” Craig says. “Usually, a child is bullied or harassed by a group of kids, which frequently occurs within social media. To combat this, it is important for kids to stand together. Throughout history it has been noted that more can be accomplished in unity than could ever be accomplished through individual efforts. When everyone works together toward a common goal, the outcome can be positive.”

**Macomb County Sheriff’s Department**
**Sheriff Anthony Wickersham**

The Macomb County Sheriff’s Department is a big believer in education as a way to reduce or prevent bullying. Which is why members of the department spend a lot of time in schools.

“Being involved in the schools and building relationships between students and law enforcement opens up the lines of communication,” Sheriff Anthony Wickersham says. “Students look to police in those settings as a friend and resource to help solve a bullying problem and find solutions. Educating kids on the legal consequences of their actions also helps deter bullying.”

Wickersham believes that standing together when faced with bullying makes kids more powerful than they realize.

“Peer pressure can cause kids to make bad decisions,” he says, “but kids can also unite to not be victims of bullying. The bully will know they are outnumbered and stop their threatening behavior. When the bully knows that their actions are not having an effect on their victim and the victim has support, the bully’s power is diminished.”

**Wayne County Sheriff’s Department**
**Sheriff Benny Napoleon**

The Wayne County Sheriff’s Department meets frequently with youth groups and young people in the community to talk about ways to stay safe at home, at school and in the neighborhood. And a big part of that is discussing the importance of kids staying away from people that Sheriff Benny Napoleon calls the “bad actors.”

These are kids and adults involved in gang activity or drugs, who break the law or bully others.

“Often you find that bullies do a lot of these things, because they want to control individuals around them,” Napoleon says. “Bullying is all about control and intimidation. It’s important that kids share what they’re experiencing when it comes to bullying — whether it is in person or on social media. Keep the lines of communication open between you and your parents, your teachers and friends you trust. …

“Kids don’t realize adults were once their age and could have been bullied themselves,” says Napoleon. “They may actually know what kids are feeling and can relate. Adults are around to help in situations where kids can’t help themselves.”

**Oakland County Sheriff’s Department**
**Sheriff Michael Bouchard**

The school liaison officers of the Oakland County Sheriff’s Department work closely with students and school officials to spot warning signs of bullying. But they go beyond that, involving parents as well.

As a result “we create an individualized approach for each situation with everyone involved to resolve the conflict in the most appropriate manner,” says Sheriff Michael Bouchard. “Involving adults is important when you are faced with bullying, especially cyberbullying, which can get out of control very quickly.

“By working through problems with friends and adults, students will realize that this is not something they have to face alone,” Bouchard adds. “It may help eliminate the potential feeling of hopelessness they or another may be experiencing.”

“It is imperative students know they can help prevent bullying by treating everyone with respect and solving conflicts peacefully,” Bouchard notes. “It’s also important they know they have a role to play in creating a safe environment by not standing idly by when bullying occurs and by telling school officials.”
As a catcher, one of the most important parts of James McCann’s job is handling the Tigers pitchers. He calls what pitches to throw, works to keep the pitchers focused and if one gets unsettled, he goes to the mound to calm him down.

Sometimes the infielders join him at the mound as he talks to the pitcher. “There is strength in numbers,” he explains. And often the simple act of standing together gets the pitcher back on track.

Standing together with friends and classmates is also important for students when they face problems like bullying.

“When you stand together to stop bullying it is a lot easier than having just one person stand up to a bully,” McCann says. “Bullies may overpower one person, but a group is more powerful than just one person. There is strength in numbers and it sends the message to the bully that he [or she] needs to stop. The bully won’t be able to overcome the larger number if people stand together.”

When McCann was growing up in Santa Barbara, California, he saw first hand the power of standing together when dealing with bullies.

“When I was in elementary school, we had a new student come in that was a special education student and he started to get bullied by a few guys,” he recalls. “So a few of my friends and I stood together and invited the new student to hang out with us during recess and lunch. Over time, more and more people began to hang out with him and there was a lot less pressure and a lot less bullying.

“It’s hard to be the one that stands out, the one who’s different,” he adds. “When you can stand together, it’s a lot easier.”

The 25-year-old McCann, who is now 6’2” tall and weighs 210 pounds, was never bullied himself. He was a good athlete who excelled at Dos Pueblos High School and later for the University of Arkansas and the U.S. national baseball team.

But he has seen the effects of bullying and feels it is everybody’s responsibility to stop it.

“When you see bullying, it’s each person’s job to stand up to it, especially those of us who are capable,” he says. “It is our job to help protect those that are less fortunate and less powerful.”

McCann certainly has taken advantage of the opportunities he has been given. At the University of Arkansas, he hit .306 with six home runs, 14 doubles and 38 runs batted in in 61 games his junior year and was a semi-finalist for the Johnny Bench award presented to the best catcher in NCAA Division I baseball.

He won a silver medal playing for the U.S. national baseball team in the 2011 Pan American Games and was drafted by the Tigers in the second round of that year’s Major League draft.

When he got his first Major League start in 2014, he had two hits, a stolen base and two runs scored. This season, his first career home run was an inside-the-park homer and his next two were walk-off homers that gave the Tigers victories.

It was the first time a Major Leaguer had done that in 83 years, and it helped establish McCann as a leader for this year’s team.

Now he also wants to be a leader putting and end to bullying.

“It takes all kinds to make the world go round,” he says, “and there’s no place for bullying.”

Learn with the News

Tigers catcher James McCann says “When you see bullying, it’s each person’s job to stand up to it.” That is just what high school student Jason Gelsey has done at West Bloomfield High School with the anti-bullying group Defeat the Label. The key is to respect people’s differences and not judge or bully them based on stereotypes. In the newspaper or online, find and read a story about people learning about — and from — the ways other people are different. Use what you read to write a short poem, rap or rhyme about what you can learn by making the effort to understand the differences between people.
Seventeen-year-old Jason Gelsey knows what it means to be bullied. Growing up, he says other students made fun of him for the way he talked.

“I was bullied because I’m talkative. I talk fast and I used to stutter,” Jason says.

But when Jason became an 11th grader at West Bloomfield High School, he decided to take action. He became an “Upstander” with the anti-bullying group called Defeat the Label. The group brought together students of all kinds from around the school to share their experiences.

“There were people in the band, there were athletes, and people of all different religions and ethnicities,” Jason says. “I feel like everyone has been bullied at least once in their life. Everybody has a story.”

Because Jason has been so effective in stopping bullying in his school, he was recently named as one of America’s “Outstanding Upstanders” by the national Defeat the Label organization.

In honor of the award, he was chosen to throw out the first pitch at the Tigers “Strike Out Bullying” rally before their game with the Texas Rangers August 23.

But more important to Jason is that the work he and his classmates have done to stop bullying has had such a great effect on his school.

More than just share stories, the students have found ways to help their classmates and stop bullying. Some students made posters to hang in the hallways, while others painted a mural. They even made and shared videos with their classmates.

One important video that the group found on the Internet was of a person dancing alone at a music concert. At first, a small group of people came over and started to make fun of the person for dancing in a goofy way. But then, dozens of other people ran over and joined the person in a wild and fun dance circle.

“Usually there are only a few people who will judge or bully first,” Jason says. “But then it’s up to everyone else to take action to stop it.”

Jason says he’s been teaching students in his school to use lessons from the video. When his classmates see bullying, he tells them to be brave and speak up.

“It’s as simple as saying, ‘That’s not cool’,” Jason says. “It might be a small thing but it can go a long way. Being a part of this made me realize I wasn’t alone. It made me feel better about the school I was in.

“To see people supporting each other is so awesome.”

Wayne County Sheriff Benny Napoleon knows first hand about the effects that bullying can have. Here is his story:

“I was definitely mistreated by bullies when I was growing up because we didn’t have these great conflict resolution programs in place when I was a kid. You basically got beat up or mistreated, and adults really didn’t pay as much attention to that as they do now. However, my brother had a particularly hard time when we were in grade school. These guys kept pushing him around and taking his lunch money, every day, for a long time. One day he was confronted again by these two mean boys in the bathroom, and he had been so fed up with being mistreated he wound up fighting them and really hurting them because he was so frustrated with what they were doing to him every day.

“The crazy part is if an adult had intervened on his behalf, it never would have gotten to that point. We both eventually entered law enforcement, and as we dealt with situations and raised our own children we knew first hand how it felt to be bullied. So we worked hard to protect other children from that.”
As center fielder for the Tigers, Anthony Gose has to cover a lot of ground. He has to get a quick jump on the ball to make plays on balls hit in front of him, and he has to be ready to go deep on balls hit over his head.

He also has to work with the outfielders playing in left and right fields to protect the “alleys” between them in left-center and right-center to prevent extra base hits.

To be successful, the three outfielders have to work together, communicate and make smart decisions on how to play different hitters. The same is true for kids when they face bullying situations in their school or neighborhood.

They need to stand together, communicate and make strong, smart decisions.

“By standing together, kids can put an end to bullying and further retaliation,” Gose says. “Bullying leads to further things, including violence. By standing together kids can put an end to violence and make their school a safer place to live and grow.

“Standing up to bullying shows the bully that you’re not scared,” Gose adds. “It also sends the message to the bully that enough is enough and that you’re not going to keep taking the punishment or whatever the bully is doing.”

By standing together, kids can show that they are unified in their desire to stop bullying. And they can speak with one voice to tell bullies that their behavior is not cool.

“Kids should always stand up for themselves because that is the best solution,” the 25-year-old Gose says. “It is better to stop people from bullying and acting out. By standing together you can stand up and fight back.”

Gose is in his first season with the Tigers, having come over in a trade with the Toronto Blue Jays last winter. But he has known the importance of setting a good example all his life.

Growing up in California, he was a standout at Bellflower High School, hitting .443 and also pitching with a 97 mph fastball!

He was a natural base stealer with speed that also made him a track star in the 100- and 200-meter sprints and the 4x100 and 4x400 meter relays.

His speed and abilities earned him a scholarship to the baseball power University of Arizona, but he chose to turn pro when he was picked by the Philadelphia Phillies in the second round of the 2008 Major League Draft.

He stole 76 bases in his first year in the minors, earning attention as a top prospect, and later followed that up with another 70-steal season. A pair of trades took him to the Blue Jays organization, from whom the Tigers acquired him to play center field.

He’s covered a lot of ground in his first season, and now he wants kids to stand their ground when they have to deal with bullies.

Learn with the News

Center fielder Anthony Gose says that when kids take a stand against bullying they “make their school a safer place.” The state’s OK2SAY anti-bullying hotline gives students a way to report bullying without giving their name and facing the risk of retaliation. With friends or classmates, talk about why it is sometimes important for students to be able to report bullying without giving their name. Then write a short editorial for the newspaper, giving your opinion on why the OK2SAY hotline is a valuable resource for kids.
When Michigan launched its anti-bullying hotline one year ago, it was a first for students in the state.

For the first time, students anywhere in Michigan could call a statewide hotline to report bullying or a student safety issue — and they didn’t have to give their name.

The OK2SAY hotline was a huge step forward in the effort to reduce bullying and other forms of school violence. And now the state has taken another step to provide resources students need to deal with bullying, cyberbullying and other issues.

The OK2SAY website not only allows students to report bullying or other issues online, but it offers a wealth of resources for students, parents, schools and community groups.

Both the hotline and the website want students and others to know it’s “OK2SAY” something about bullying to put an end to it.

The hotline and website quickly made a big difference in the battle against bullying.

“Since coming on-line in September 2014, OK2SAY has received over 1,300 tips, of which 517 were related to bullying or cyberbullying,” says Colonel Kriste Kibbey Etue of the Michigan State Police, which operates the OK2SAY program. “The OK2SAY program is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to take reports from anyone who has a school safety issue, including bullying, cyberbullying, threats of violence, feelings about suicide or mental health concerns.”

When a tip is received, specially trained technicians screen and forward information to the appropriate agency, including local law enforcement, schools, community mental health organizations and the state Department of Health and Human Services office.

“When a bullying tip is received, OK2SAY technicians work with the school district to ensure the proper officials are notified and action is taken to address the bullying,” Etue says.

The hotline has made a huge difference in some cases. In one instance, a bullied student who was thinking about suicide received mental health assistance and help from school after calling the hotline. At another school, a fight was averted after an OK2SAY tip alerted school personnel. And in a third case, a student was arrested and gun confiscated after an OK2SAY tip alerted law enforcement.

The OK2SAY program gives students a variety of ways to report bullying, cyberbullying with the Internet and other threats of violence.

You may call in information by phone (1-855-50K-2SAY), by text (652-729) or by email ok2say@mi.gov. You may download an app for smart phones from the Apple Store or Android. Or you may file a confidential tip through the OK2SAY website www.michigan.gov/OK2SAY.

The website offers a wide range of support materials in addition to its link for reporting bullying. The site has links for Student Resources, Parent Resources, Mental Health Resources, Frequently Asked Questions, an OK2SAY Newsletter, OK2SAY Posters and ways to schedule School Presentations.

The site also has a powerful message from Michigan State Men’s Basketball Coach Tom Izzo about the importance of using the OK2SAY hotline and website.

“The threat of school violence is something that affects everyone and needs to be taken seriously,” Izzo says. “Keeping others safe is a community project that begins with you. OK2SAY is a confidential way you can report anything that threatens your safety or the safety of others. By paying attention to what is going on around you, you can be a life-saving difference.

“If you see or hear something that doesn’t seem right, submit a tip to OK2SAY,” Izzo adds. “Your tip is confidential so you don’t have to worry about retaliation, rejection or being labeled a snitch. You could be the one person who helps to prevent a tragedy.”
To stop bullying in my school, I will
• Peacefully stand up for kids who are being bullied.
• Tell an adult when I see bullying happen.
• Tell a trusted adult if I am bullied.
• Never fight back but calmly walk away from bullies.
• Never bully others if I am bullied.
• Stop rumors and bullying on the Internet
• Let classmates know bullying is not cool.

Signed,

Michigan K.I.D.S. Says THANK YOU Detroit Tigers

Detroit Tigers Foundation, an affiliate of Ilitch Charities

and these additional sponsors

For Supporting This Newspapers In Education Program