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## Vocabulary

There are 38 tricky vocabulary words throughout this issue underlined in blue. Can you find them all? Go to Choices Online for activities to help you master these words.

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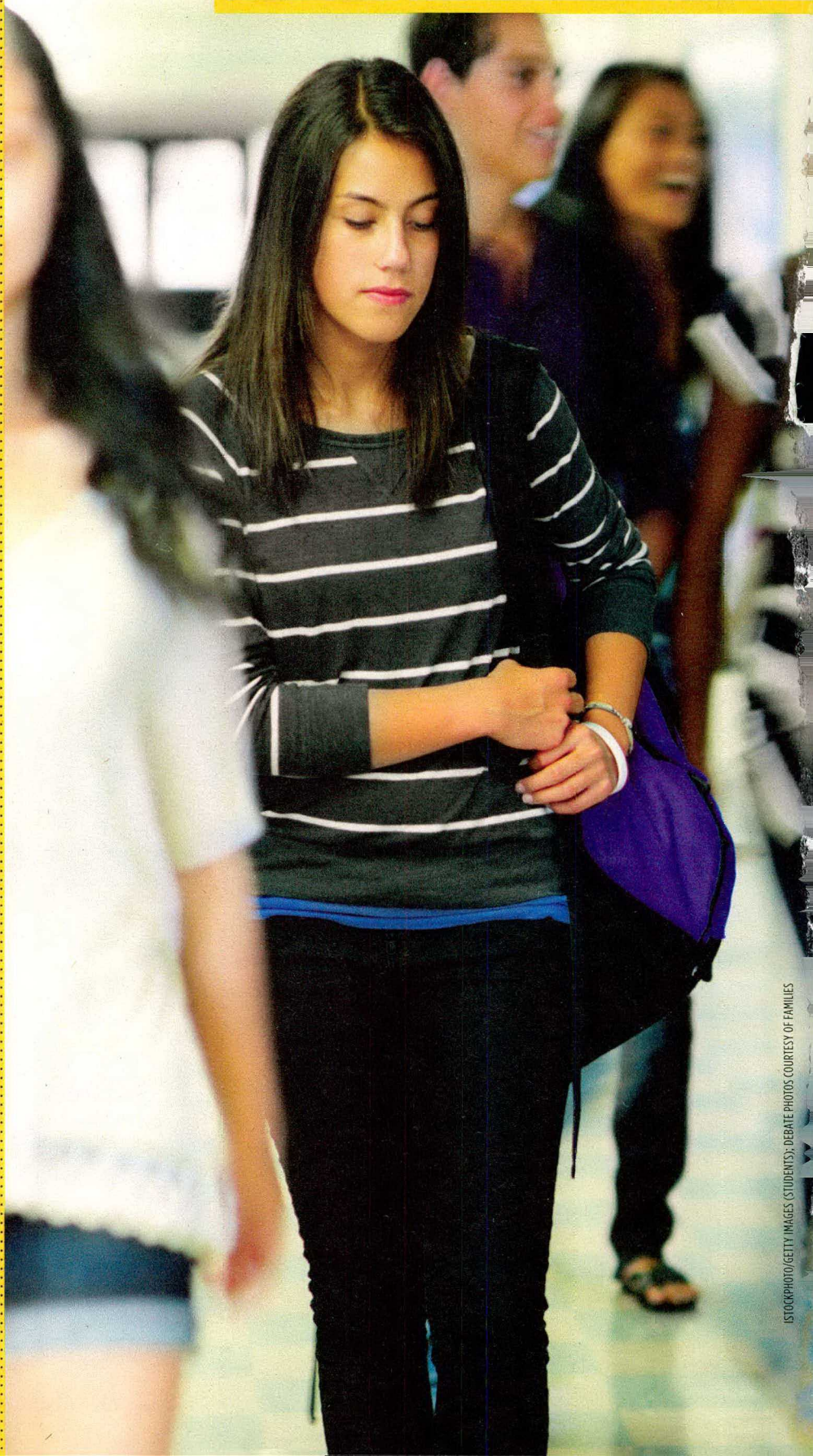
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# SHOULD



# BULLIES BE EXPELLED?



Many schools have adopted a zero-tolerance policy on bullying: One strike and you're out. But is expulsion fair? What if the bully needs help too? Two *Choices* Teen Advisers weigh in.

**YES**

**"Expulsion helps bullies and victims heal."**

*Jordan Mallory,  
a high school senior  
in Indiana*



**Feeling safe at school** is important, and bullying completely destroys that sense of safety. That's why I support automatic expulsion for bullies. It may seem harsh, but so are the effects of bullying. Targets face a huge amount of stress, which can lead to depression, and they can suffer academically too. In fact, some might even avoid coming to school. It's time to end their suffering by removing the problem: the student or students who →

**NO**

**"We need new, inventive ways to deal with this issue."**

*Alex Ismael,  
a high school senior  
in Maryland*



**I think that automatic** expulsion is too harsh a punishment for bullying and that it also fails to deal with the root of the problem. Bullying stems from students not understanding each other, not communicating enough, not speaking up to protect others, and not valuing the school community. Expulsion doesn't give problem students a chance to learn how to get along with and respect their peers. →

**YES** (continued) are not respecting the rules of the school community.

Why do I feel so strongly? I've seen expulsion work. At my high school, there is a strict policy on bullying and violence. It's simple: Anyone found guilty of bullying is expelled. But this policy comes with a twist. Students who are expelled are sent to an alternative learning center called the Renaissance School, which serves all students—not just bullies—who have acted out in some way.

At Renaissance, students attend regular academic classes, but they're also taught social skills. They learn about respect. They learn why certain behavior, like bullying, is destructive. And they learn how to have a more positive impact in a learning environment. Then, once they finish their courses, they can return to their old school. This gives bullies a second chance—while also making sure the person they were bullying doesn't have to deal with any stress or harassment in the meantime.

From what I've seen, kids return from Renaissance calmer and friendlier than before they left. For example, a girl I've known since middle

school was sent to Renaissance. When she returned to my high school, I saw how much she'd changed. She was kinder, and she said that Renaissance helped her develop better skills for working with classmates and making friends.

Expulsion is definitely an eye-opener for bullies—and everyone else too. It sends a direct message that bullying will not be tolerated, while protecting the person who is being bullied. But expulsion works only when bullies are given a chance to reform. Through my school's approach, bullies become better members of the school community after getting special help to develop traits like civility and respect. Imagine a world where every school had this program!

**ALEX'S REBUTTAL:**

**What about school districts that can't afford to run separate schools for the sole purpose of rehabilitating bullies?**



ROBBEBALL/MIKE KEMP/GETTY IMAGES (BULLY)



# What *IS* Bullying,

Recognizing the difference between true bullying and everyday drama—like fights between friends or one-time teasing—is important. Why? If every mean thing that happens gets labeled with the b-word, bullying loses its power. Here are tips to help you spot bullying, so you know how to react.

**IT'S DEFINITELY BULLYING IF:**

- The person is using their power over someone else.**  
Physical strength, a leadership position, popularity, age—whatever power the bully has, they are using it to push someone else around.
- The hurtful behavior is clearly intentional.**  
That could mean a social media account aimed at a specific person, a physical shove, or targeted threats.
- It's not a one-time thing.**  
Saying "stop" hasn't made it stop.

**NO** (continued) Think about it: Expulsion is just a short-term solution that is centered on scaring students into better behavior. And how efficient is expulsion anyway? When you remove one bully, there's no guarantee that another won't pop up. Plus, the bully expelled from one school just winds up at another school. Why make that person someone else's problem?

We should be educating students, not threatening or expelling them. To do that, prevention is key. Unfortunately, many common approaches to bullying, like school assemblies, tend to miss the mark. Why? Their messages are repetitive and often don't resonate with students. Case in point: The majority of my classmates tune



out every time the word bullying is used. When an eight-year-old video on the topic was recently shown to my senior class, it didn't grab our attention. I noticed people napping, laughing, and generally ignoring it.

So what can we do instead? Maybe we can embed lessons about bullying in regular classes like English or social studies. Using anecdotes from history and stories that inspire students to think about kindness and respect might make them think about bullying from a wider perspective.

But that's not all. Schools should also invest some time and energy into learning why people turn to bullying in the first place. That way, they could work on those root causes more, which might lead to less bullying too.

Of course bullying will still happen from time to time. But instead of automatically expelling bullies, there should be a series of punishments with increasing severity, starting with contacting the bully's home. This would allow a chance for the bully to self-reflect, learn what behavior is and isn't acceptable, and make a change.

## Anyway?

### KNOW YOUR NEXT MOVE:

● **If you're being bullied or aren't quite sure:**

Tell an adult you trust, like a parent or coach. Say "Hey, can you help me figure out how to handle this?"

● **If the bullying is happening online:**

Don't respond, but keep the evidence: screenshots, emails, and text messages.

● **If you see bullying happen to someone else:**

Feeling brave? Say "That's not cool—stop." Otherwise, just offer your support to the victim: "Hey, are you OK? We should probably tell someone about this."

### POSITIVITY PROMISE

School is hard enough without negative drama. Why not make a pledge to keep things positive? We've got one.

**I promise to do my part to shape our school's environment by treating everyone with common courtesy, speaking up when I see or hear cruel behavior, and striving to contribute positivity every day—with a smile, a kind word, standing up for someone, telling a goofy joke, or welcoming a newcomer.**

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