

# Breaking Up Fights

## Basic Techniques for School Personnel

Occasionally, arguments between students escalate and erupt into fights. It is important that school personnel know basic techniques for breaking up fights and dealing with students who are physically aggressive. Here are some suggestions from Johns and Carr (1995):

Never ignore aggression. If ignored, small acts of aggression can quickly grow to more violent aggression.

Go toward the scene of the violence. Sometimes just the presence of an adult will stop a potentially violent situation.

Quickly review the situation. Try to determine what has happened, who is there, and what is likely to happen. If the situation includes members of rival gangs, send an onlooker for more adults.

Look to see if there are any weapons present.

In a strong voice, tell students that they must stop doing what they're doing. Sometimes students are hoping an adult will tell them to stop fighting so they will have a "graceful" way out.

Tell any onlookers to leave the area. Call students by name if you know them, and tell them specifically where to go. For example, "Brian, go back to your class now!" is more effective than saying, "Everyone get out of here now!"

Tell onlookers, and those involved in the aggression, the consequences of not following your directions.

Make a mental note of the names of onlookers.

Never get between students who are fighting.

If the situation does come to blows, tell the students to stop. Sometimes just directing students to stop fighting -- in a loud, demanding voice -- is enough to make them stop. Again, in many cases the students actually are looking for an excuse to stop.

After the incident, document what happened, and share this with other adults as required.

Support victims in any way you can. Get them any help they may need.

## Reference

Johns, Beverly H., & Valerie G. Carr. 1995. *Techniques for Managing Verbally and Physically Aggressive Students*. Hawthorne Educational Services, Inc.