

EDITORIAL

EL GATO • FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 2016 • WWW.ELGATONEWS.COM

• LGHS STUDENTS SHOULD STOP STEALTH BULLYING

LGHS students need to be more conscientious about bullying

by Sean Clark

Editor-in-Chief

Many believe that bullying is no longer an issue at LGHS; however, the student body of our school has simply evolved past stereotypical methods of bullying. Name-calling, lunch money-stealing, and physical assault are almost nonexistent problems at our school. Thanks to years of anti-bullying messaging, the majority of students dissociate themselves from bullies. Consequently, the bullies of our generation have taken on more socially-acceptable, stealthy strategies to alienate students while avoiding the stigmatized label.

Throughout my years in high school, I have constantly watched my classmates ironically befriend the "weird" kids for entertainment. This invites other students to do the same, and eventually, that student is celebrated in a bizarre, cruel way. For example, when one of my classmates asks a question, a group of boys will holler at him as they would at a circus animal jumping through a ring of fire. In the end, the punchline is the supposedly absurd idea of someone actually wanting to be friends with the "weird" kid.

This type of bullying goes under the radar because, on a surface level, it seems well-intentioned. This allows the bully to combat accusations and ignore the moral ambiguity of his or her actions. Although the bully may claim to be the victim's friend, there are many obvious indicators of whether or not a friendship is ironic. Referring to an acquaintance as "your best friend" or "future husband" followed by a smirk is dehumanizing and degrading. Posting a Snapchat story of the "weird" kid doing nothing funny implies that their existence is enough to make people laugh.

Anti-bullying programs ignore ironic friendships and further perpetuate the idea that all bullies are up front and easily identifiable. This builds a limited perception of who the bullies are and contributes to the idea that LGHS is a bully-free environment. I believe a crucial factor in this problem is a lack of

awareness or sensitivity training.

There are a myriad of reasons why a student may be labeled as "weird" by the student body, but at LGHS, students who fall into the gray area of mental disorders are usually convenient targets. It's impossible to be certain if another student falls on

bullied in this fashion are not), but I am saying the bullies at our school take advantage of some students' inability to understand certain social cues in order to victimize an easier target.

To better understand why this happens, we must take into account the "spectrum" aspect of autism spectrum disorder. This is an umbrella term

These statistics relate to bullying at LGHS in two ways. First, autism spectrum disorder is more common than many people think; second, people are unaware that mental disorders can range from debilitating to unnoticeable in their effects, making them hard to identify based on classroom interactions.

Considering that autism spectrum disorder is increasingly prevalent, it's time to focus on raising community awareness about all mental disorders. Within LGHS, we should work toward expanding the peer-to-peer program's mental disorder awareness past depression and anxiety. Our health curriculum should do the same. Ultimately, it's each person's personal responsibility to become knowledgeable on this subject. AutismSpeaks.org and Nami.org (National Alliance on Mental Illness) are great places to start learning.

As I have previously mentioned, not all victims of bullying at LGHS have some kind of mental disorder. Neurotypical students may also pick on other neurotypical students in the same way. Many friend groups have a designated punching bag or someone whom they keep around as an inside joke. Because it isn't necessarily common knowledge that calling someone your "friend" isn't an excuse to treat them poorly, neurotypical students should take it upon themselves to find friends who aren't bullies. However, that is much easier said than done in the complicated social hierarchy at our school. If you see a peer caught in this situation, say something. They might not be

aware of what's going on.

Combating stealth bullying is a group effort, and we all must take responsibility in allowing or perpetuating the problem at some point. Speak up to ignorant students, educate your peers on mental disorders, and most importantly, don't turn someone's existence into a joke for the sake of your Snapchat story.



the autism spectrum, has an anxiety disorder, or suffers from a communication disorder, but many students do not take this possibility into account. I'm not arguing that all bullied students have a mental disorder (because a large percentage of students

for many disorders that can limit a person's social capabilities, communication skills, and brain development in varying degrees. Prevalence rates are increasing, and according to US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Autism now affects 1 in 68 children and 1 in 42 boys."



JANUARY 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 December Break	2
3	4 First Day of 2nd Semester	5	6 School Site Council 6:15 PM FAFSA Workshop 7 PM	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 MLK Day - No Classes	19	20	21 Home and School Club Meeting 8:45 AM	22 Freshman Guided Conversation 9:30 AM	23
24	25	26 8th Grade Welcome 7 PM	27	28 Thursday Night Live 7 PM	29	30
31						



EL GATO

Los Gatos High School • 20 High School Court
Los Gatos, CA 95030 • (408) 354-2730 ext 285

Editors-in-Chief
Hyuntae Byun
Sean Clark
Antonia Salisbury
lghselgatochiefs@gmail.com

Advisor
Doug Garrett
dgarrett@lgsuhsd.org

News Editors
Rowyn van Miltenburg
Sophie Domengeaux
Sanna Hakkarainen

National Editor
Neil Lugovoy

Editorial Editor
Dakota Rogers

Opinion Editors
Madeline Hagar
Lauren Sanders

World Editors
Charlotte Pla
Jack Zukin

Center Editor
Jessica Blough

Culture Editors
Lark Breen
Sarah Sullivan

Humor Editors
Danika Lyle
Olivia Hill

People Editors
Kate Hinsche
Jordan Evans

Sports Editors
Elizabeth Monsef
Shreya Koushik
Cole van Miltenburg

Web/Graphics Editors
Cole Potter
Violet Wallerstein
Camille Fowler
Abbigale Berry
Sophie Comeau

El Gato is an independently funded publication of the Writing for Publication class at Los Gatos High School. Editorials reflect the majority opinion of the staff. El Gato is an open forum for the exchange of ideas and welcomes signed letters and e-mail. Names can be withheld upon request. All stories, graphics, and layout are done by El Gato staff. We reserve the right to refuse ad contracts.

Subscriber \$30, Patron \$65, Sponsor \$105.