

SVRC

Briefing Paper Bullying

Bullying is repeated, unprovoked behavior intended to cause harm or distress (oppression) to a victim who is vulnerable due to a real or perceived imbalance of power (Oliver, Oaks, and Hoover, 1994; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2001).

Bullying behavior is categorized as:

- ◆ **Physical:** hitting, kicking, spitting, choking, pushing, tripping, slapping, poking, hair pulling, biting, fighting, unwanted touching, threatening gesturing, theft, and written harassment including oppressive notes and e-mails. Bullying behavior also includes sexual harassment, gang or group initiations, and hazing.
- ◆ **Verbal:** insults, taunting, degrading teasing, name calling, threats, slander, passing blame, defaming, and blackmail.
- ◆ **Psychological** (often called indirect or social bullying): social ostracism, rumors, shunning, intimidation, extortion, manipulation, and character assassination.

The Prevalence of Bullying

Because of its prevalence, bullying is the most pervasive form of school violence. It can begin as early as pre-school but generally starts in elementary school, peaks in middle school, and declines throughout high school (Whitney & Smith, 1993). A recent survey found that teasing and bullying were the greatest concerns among 8 to 11 year-olds and 12 to 15 year-olds, ahead of alcohol, drugs, discrimination, sex, and racism (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001). Physical and verbal bullying is most significant among males, while psychological bullying and spreading rumors are foremost among females.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development estimated that 1.6 million children in grades 6-10 were affected by weekly bullying in the United States. Of those, 13 percent were bullies, 11 percent were victims, and 6 percent were bully/victims (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton & Scheidt, 2001).

Sporadic bullying (which occurs monthly or even less frequently) affected between 15-30 percent of all students (Tanner, 2001; Whitney & Smith, 1993). One-half of all students reported being pushed, shoved, grabbed, or slapped in or around school, and one-quarter reported being kicked, hit, or bitten during the school year (Binns & Markow, 1999). Peterson, Pietrzak, and Speaker (1998) found that 63 percent of students had been verbally

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threatened during the past year. Seventy-five to 85 percent of students witnessed bullying within the last year (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001).

Bullying Risk Factors

Bullies

- ◆ Difficulty following rules, defiant, or antisocial.
- ◆ Impulsive, overly aggressive, or easily frustrated.
- ◆ Enjoy dominance or control over victims.
- ◆ Lack of empathy or respect for others; inappropriately perceive hostile intent in others' actions.
- ◆ See violence as appropriate, justifiable, or admirable.
- ◆ Environmental or contextual factors such as inappropriate parental discipline/reward systems (Oliver, et al., 1994), negative peer influences, and community influences (Espelage, et al., 2000).
- ◆ Opportunity for bullying behavior such as lack of supervision (Viadero, 1997), reluctance of others to intercede, acceptance of bullying, or lack of consequential actions for bullying (Whitney & Smith, 1993). Approximately three-quarters of bullying is unobserved or ignored by teachers (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Froschl and Gropper, 1999). A majority of bullying episodes in the former study occurred when students were involved in solitary, unsupervised tasks.

Victims

- ◆ Physical weakness, negative body language, immaturity, or physical differences. As Froschl and Gropper observe, "The perception of 'difference' is at the root of teasing and bullying among young children. Almost any perceived difference—gender, race, ethnicity, language, social class, disability, sex—can become fodder for hurtful words and actions" (1999, 73). However, it should be noted that research does not support popular stereotypes that victims, in general, have common physical traits.
- ◆ Lack of assertiveness, insecurity, easily upset, fearful, anxious, and lacking self-confidence.
- ◆ Weak social skills, difficulty making positive friendships, and alienation.
- ◆ Poor or no conflict resolution or communication skills.
- ◆ Opportunity for bullying behavior (e.g., reluctance of others to intercede, acceptance of bullying by adults and peers, being alone in an unsupervised area, or lack of consequential actions for bullying).

(NOTE: Bullies and victims sometimes share several risk factors.)

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Why is Bullying a Problem?

Short-term effects

- ◆ Physical pain and stress-related illnesses caused by abuse.
- ◆ Social humiliation and loss of friends who do not want to be associated with victims.
- ◆ Destruction of property.
- ◆ Psychological effects including fear, poor self-esteem, insecurity, and depression.
- ◆ Absenteeism, truancy, and dropping out of school. Survey data from the Centers for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (DHHS, 2000) reported that the number of students who occasionally felt "too unsafe" to go to school increased from 4.4 percent to 5.2 percent between 1993 and 1998.
- ◆ Poor academic achievement.
- ◆ Avoidance of certain bully-prone areas such as restrooms, playgrounds, halls, etc.

Long-term effects

- ◆ Poor school environment characterized by fear, anti-social behavior, poor learning climate, and lack of trust. Half of bullied pupils will not tell teachers or parents because of fear, embarrassment, or concerns that nothing will be done (Whitney & Smith, 1993).
- ◆ Antecedent to severe forms of school violence including: vandalism, fighting, retribution by victims, weapons possession and/or use, drug and alcohol use, and counter bullying.
- ◆ Helplessness causing deep psychological illnesses and possibly suicide.
- ◆ Increased criminality of bullies as adults. Bullies were three times more likely to be convicted of crimes as adults than non-bullies. Recidivists were four times as likely to have been bullies (Olweus, 2001). Bullies are more prone to domestic violence.
- ◆ Litigation.

Warning Signs for Victims

Physical

- ◆ Changes in physical appearance, such as torn clothes and injuries.
- ◆ Loss of appetite, headaches, stomach aches, or sleeping problems.
- ◆ Lost items or money.
- ◆ Weapons carried to school for protection.
- ◆ Clues from writings or drawings.

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Psychological

- ◆ Fear of attending school.
- ◆ Distressed upon return from school.
- ◆ Loss of self-esteem, insecurity, humiliation, or sudden mood shifts.
- ◆ Depression and other mental health problems including suicidal tendencies.

Social

- ◆ Difficulty interacting with peers/classmates and making friends.
- ◆ Withdrawal and loneliness.
- ◆ Poor school performance.

Model Programs/Anti-Bullying Methods

Because bullying is a systemic problem (Atlas & Pepler, 1998), permanent, comprehensive anti-bullying programs are most successful when they involve all school personnel, the entire student body and their parents, and the community (Hazler, 1998). Core program elements, such as teaching social bonding, promoting norms of nonviolence, establishing clear behavioral standards, responding to peer conflict, and establishing and enforcing anti-bullying rules and regulations, are imperative (Cromwell, 1999). To reinforce program principles, parents must discourage bullying behavior at home and support victims through open communication (Pepler, Connolly & Craig, 1997).

Successful anti-bullying programs must also involve peers of bullies and their victims. Researchers have observed that peers were involved in 85 percent of all bullying episodes as either active participants, interventionists, or passive onlookers (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Anti-bullying programs must transform this “silent majority” of onlookers into a “caring majority” of willing interventionists to ensure program success (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager & Short-Camilli, 1997). Quick intervention is critical because research shows that bullying episodes are reduced four-fold (from 40 to 10 seconds) in one-half of all interventions.

Research also shows that children who develop and maintain close positive friendships are less likely to become victims of bullying (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro & Bukowski, 1999). Often, bullying behavior decreases after positive peer groups are formed. Conversely, gangs expedite bullying behavior by promoting anti-social values and behaviors that prompt acts of violence against other students. Consequently, anti-bullying programs that promote social interaction and cooperation are most desirable.

Finally, anti-bullying programs must discourage stereotypical beliefs that bullying is an acceptable part of growing up. Surveys illustrated the pervasiveness of adolescent thinking that bullying is normal or acceptable in certain circumstances. Oliver, et al. (1994) found that a large majority of students believed that it was “acceptable to tease or ridicule another student when his or her actions were at variance with peer group norms” (p. 416) or that bullied students were somewhat to blame for being victimized.

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Each of the programs summarized below encourages comprehensive involvement of students and adults, positive anti-bullying intervention strategies, establishment and enforcement of acceptable behavioral standards, and open communication.

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

Developed by Norwegian Professor Dan Olweus, this program was the first, and is arguably the best, anti-bullying program in the world. Dr. Olweus' program provides anti-bullying strategies at the following levels:

- ◆ **School:** To raise awareness about the nature and prevalence of bullying, anti-bullying surveys are conducted, and results are disseminated to staff, parents, and students. School officials increase supervision of student activities, begin developing anti-bullying curricula, and enforce schoolwide anti-bullying policies.
- ◆ **Classroom:** Teachers formalize classroom rules against bullying, implement curricula promoting a positive environment, lead anti-bullying class discussions and activities, conduct parent-teacher meetings, and respond appropriately to bullying behavior.
- ◆ **Individual:** Staff intervene with bullies, victims, and their parents as necessary. Communication will be ongoing.

Dr. Olweus' program restructures the learning environment by creating a positive social learning climate characterized by inclusion of all students and faculty, well-defined and enforced rules, and positive adult role models. Evaluations in Europe found that bullying behavior decreased by 50 percent within two years of program implementation. Additionally, bullying intensity, the number of new bullying victims, fighting, truancy, and vandalism also decreased while student satisfaction with school increased (Olweus, 2001).

The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado at Boulder provides an excellent history and application of the principles of Dr. Olweus' program at: http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/ten_bully.htm and <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/chapt/BullyExec.htm>

In addition, the Olweus' Model has been adopted by the Kansas Bullying Prevention Program, <http://www.kbpp.org/aboutnew.asp>, and has been implemented in South Carolina by the Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life at Clemson University, <http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/ifnl/>

Avoid/Resolve/Manage (ARM) Program

A.R.M. stands for:

Avoid—being bullied through understanding its causes.

Resolve—being bullied by employing nonviolent alternatives or mental self-defense.

Manage—to safeguard against being bullied through physical self-defense.

The A.R.M. program teaches children to understand and avoid being bullied through the use of physical and mental skills. The A.R.M. program has been endorsed by the National

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PTA, Scouting Magazine (Boy and Girl Scouts of America), the National Education Association (NEA), Educators for Social Responsibility, and the International Association of Educators for World Peace (NGO - UNESCO, UNICEF). For additional information, see <http://www.atriumsoc.org/Bullying/bullying.html>

No Bullying Program

Initiated in 1996-1997, this Johnson Institute program encourages reporting of bullying by teaching students the difference between “tattling” and reporting bullying behavior. Educators are taught how to establish and implement immediate bullying intervention strategies. For additional information, see <http://www.teachingpeace.org/bully.html> and <http://www.electricpress.com/readittoc.jsp?Book=1562461192>

Bully-Proofing Your School

This elementary school-based program emphasizes creating a positive, pro-social school culture rather than focusing solely on individual victim/bully conflicts. The five key components of this prevention program include: appropriate intervention by all staff using conflict resolution strategies, a “caring majority” of students who know how to intervene, development of positive social and leadership skills for victims and bullies, a safe school climate, and extensive parental involvement. Strategies stress anger control and empathy. The primary focus is on shifting power away from bullies, not on punitive remedies. For additional information, see <http://www.sopriswest.com/>

The Bullying Prevention Project

Targeting elementary and middle schools, this program emphasizes bullying identification and intervention strategies for parents and teachers, classroom activities (such as role playing and creative writing) that generate discussions of bullying, and school wide anti-bullying activities that reinforce positive behavior and sanction bullying behavior. For additional information, contact:

Dr. Susan Limber, Project Director
Bullying Prevention Project
Institute for Families in Society - University of South Carolina
Carolina Plaza
Columbia, SC 29208
Phone: 803-737-3186
Fax: 803-737-3193

Second Step

This curriculum, developed by the Committee for Children, emphasizes positive social skills such as empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management for children in grades K-6. Initial evaluations indicated that second and third grade students engaged in more pro-social behavior and decreased physically aggressive behavior after participating in the program. Second Step was chosen as a Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools Expert Panel Exemplary Program in 2001. For additional information, see <http://www.cfchildren.org/violence.htm>

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Steps to Respect

Also developed by the Committee for Children, Steps to Respect is an elementary school-based social and emotional learning program designed to decrease bullying and help children build more respectful, caring peer relationships. Children are taught how to recognize, assertively refuse, and report bullying. Overview training, provided to all school officials, is a three-hour session that increases adult awareness of bullying and how to respond to children's reports of bullying. Curricula has been developed for two distinct grade levels, grades 3-5 and grades 4-6. Each set of curriculum is divided into three tiers, offering skill lessons in making friends, problem solving, emotion management, and responding to bullying. Literature lessons integrate program concepts and reinforce anti-bullying skills. For additional information, see <http://www.cfchildren.org/strabout.html>

Wellesley Center for Women, Project on Teasing and Bullying

Highlights of this program include the publication of two texts:

- ◆ Sjostrom, L. & Stein, N. (1996). *Bullyproof: A teacher's guide on teasing and bullying for use with fourth & fifth grade students*. Wellesley, MA: Center for Research on Women.

Bullyproof's eleven sequential lessons based on class discussions, role-playing, case studies, writing exercises, reading assignments, art activities, and nightly homework give students the opportunity to explore and determine distinctions between teasing and bullying/sexual harassment.

- ◆ Gaberman, E., Froschl, M., Sprung, B., & Mullin-Rindler, N. (1998). *Quit it! A teacher's guide on teasing and bullying for use with students in grades K-3*. Wellesley, MA: Center for Research on Women.

Quit it! contains ten lessons centered around three sequential themes. Each lesson is divided into activities focused on the developmental needs of students in grades K-3. Class discussions, role playing, creative drawing and writing activities, physical games and exercises, and connections to children's literature give students a vocabulary and conceptual framework that allows them to understand the ramifications of bullying and to communicate freely with adults.

The Kindness Campaign

Started in 1994 under the National Program for the Study and Prevention of Youth and Family Violence at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, the Kindness Campaign is an intervention program that focuses bully prevention efforts on positive values such as kindness, respect, peaceful problem resolution, acceptance of others, cheerfulness, compassion, forgiveness, friendliness, generosity, gentleness, helpfulness, honesty, self-control, thankfulness, and volunteerism. For additional information, see http://weinholds.org/kindness/issue8/homepage5_1.htm

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Kindness is Contagious Program

This program, implemented by the Stop Violence Coalition™ of Kansas City, uses cognitive-behavioral methods to decrease acts of peer abuse and school violence, increase acts of kindness, and foster appropriate interpersonal behaviors in grades K-12. Schools, parent groups, and youth agencies are provided with training, curricula, and other resources to help create safe school environments where students can concentrate on learning. For additional information, see <http://www.stop-violence.org/page.asp?pageID=1&NavID=5>

Maine Project Against Bullying (MPAB)

The goal of this project, funded by a Perkins grant through the Maine Department of Education, is to organize and present proven techniques, strategies, methodologies, and programs that support students, schools, and communities in addressing the problem of bullying and harassment in grades K-4. For additional information, see <http://lincoln.midcoast.com/%7ewps/against/bullying.html>

Method of Shared Concern

This intervention program, developed by Swedish psychologist Anatol Pikas, reduces bullying through role playing and small group discussions. Bullies and victims are brought together to resolve problems in a cooperative manner. For additional information, see <http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/concern.html>

School Community Forum

Developed by David Moore, the School Community Forum is a meeting of people within a school community (including family and friends) directly involved in a conflict, to promote deeper understanding of the conflict, to design remedial actions to the conflict, and to discuss preventative measures to avoid future conflicts. Parties to the conflict are given an opportunity to discuss the incident at length. Findings and remedial actions are recorded in a written agreement that becomes binding among all participants. For additional information, see <http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/moore.html>

Sheffield Anti-Bullying Project

This comprehensive program emphasized school-wide anti-bullying policies, curriculum exercises, environmental improvements, and individual work with bullies and victims in a variety of Sheffield, England schools. Participating schools reported a 17 percent decrease in the number of bullied children and a seven percent decrease in the number of identified bullies. The greatest results occurred in schools with extensive bullying assessments, playground improvements such as seated areas and inside quiet areas, participatory classroom activities, and school-wide anti-bullying policies (Eslea & Smith, 1998).

Take A Stand

This program for grades K-5 teaches children about the effects of bullying, how to stop it, and the importance of mutual acceptance and respect. For additional information, see <http://www.safechild.org/bullies.htm> - TAKE A STAND

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Assessment Tools

Sociometric Collection and Analysis (SCAN)

SCAN is a comprehensive software assessment tool developed specifically to help schools assess their social climates and measure the effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying programs by providing accurate information about the social and behavioral climate within classes, grades, and schools. Information enables schools to direct their intervention and prevention efforts more efficiently and effectively. SCAN has been tested and used successfully in the Wake County, North Carolina “Peer Connections” program funded through a Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant. For additional information, see <http://www.3cprogram.com/scan.html>

School Anti-Meanness Project Teasing and Bullying Survey (TABS)

TABS is designed to measure the magnitude of teasing and bullying in schools or communities and to measure the outcome of school anti-meanness and violence reduction programs. TABS can be used to:

- ◆ accumulate normative data on teasing and bullying,
- ◆ develop a hierarchical scale, containing positive and negative behaviors, to design and assess school violence reduction programs,
- ◆ assess the frequency and distress level of various kinds of teasing and bullying, and
- ◆ help quantify the effect of bullying on the school environment.

For additional information, see <http://www.mri.org/tabs.html>

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Internet Links to Anti-Bullying Organizations

<http://ericcass.uncg.edu/virtuallib/bullying/international.html> – provides Internet links to effective **international anti-bullying programs**.

<http://ericecece.org/pubs/reslist/bully00.html> – provides list of books, guides, videos, and Internet sources about bullying from the **Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouse** on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

<http://www.bullying.org/help.html> – comprehensive source of bullying articles, books, films, legislation/policies, resources, and research compiled by **Bullying.org**, an affiliate of the International Education and Resource Network of Canada.

<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/infohouse/violit/> – features Violence Literature Database compiled by the University of Colorado at Boulder, **Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV)**. The CSPV also provides model program blueprints—<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/chapt/BullyExec.htm> and bullying fact sheets—<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/infohouse/factsheets.html>

<http://www.ecsu.ctstateu.edu/depts/edu/textbooks/bullying.html> – **Eastern Connecticut State University** list of anti-bullying Internet resources for teachers, parents, and students.

<http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/intro.html> – web page of **Dr. Ken Rigby** offering Internet links to articles, resources, and other Internet sites.

http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/resources_bullying.html – lists general bullying references and Internet resources from **Indiana University's Safe and Responsive Schools** program.

<http://www.mri.org/tabsbiblio.html> – provides bibliography of school violence and bullying references from the **School Anti-Meanness Project** of the Mental Research Institute.

<http://www.ncpc.org/ncpc1.htm> – **The National Crime Prevention Council** provides general school violence information.

http://www.nobully.org.nz/guidelines_4schools.html – comprehensive anti-bullying information for schools provided by the **No Bully Organization**.

<http://www.nssc1.org/> – provides several bullying articles published by the **National School Safety Center**.

SVRC Briefing Paper: Bullying

<http://www.nyu.edu/education/metrocenter/initiative/modellist.html> – provides list of resources, especially safe and drug free schools model programs, from New York University's **Metro Center for Urban Education**.

<http://www.safechild.org/RecReadBullying.htm> – recommended bully prevention reading list from the **Safe Child Program**, Coalition for Children, Inc.

<http://www.safeschools.org/> – The **National Alliance for Safe Schools** provides general school violence information.

<http://www.safetyzone.org/> – Comprehensive source of safe school information from the **National Resource Center for Safe Schools**, a component of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

<http://www.wcwonline.org/bullying/index.html> – **Wellesley Centers for Women**, Project on Teasing and Bullying.

<http://www.weinholds.org/bullysurvey.htm> – School Bullying Survey and bullying research-(<http://www.weinholds.org/bullyingmain.htm>) compiled by Dr. Barry K. Weinhold of the **Colorado Institute for Conflict Resolution and Creative Leadership**.

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