

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Missouri Center for Safe Schools

Bullying is not a recent problem. Bullying has been in schools for a very long time. However, it has only been in the past couple of decades much attention has been given to the issue of bullying. For instance, it has been estimated that 160,000 students miss school every day or 28 million missed days per year, due to fear of attack or intimidation by a bully (Fried & Fried, 1996). Or, every seven minutes bullying happens on elementary school playgrounds (Pepler, 1995).

What is Bullying? Professor Dan Olweus, defines bullying as, “A student is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students.” Bullying involves an imbalance in power.

What does the research show us about bullying?

- Eron and Huesman (1987) found in their study that 60 percent of the boys identified as bullies at age 8 had a one in four chance of having a criminal record by age 30. (normal is 1 in 20)
- Bullying is likely to interfere not only with children’s academic development, but also their social and personal development. (Craig and Peplar, 1996)

What are the kinds of bullying? There is direct and indirect bullying.

Direct bullying includes:

- Physical (hitting, shoving, spitting, etc.)
- Verbal (teasing, taunting, threatening , etc.)
- Emotional (degrading, racial comments)
- Sexual (sexual comments, obscene gestures)

Indirect bullying can be:

- Physical (getting another person to assault someone)
- Verbal (spreading rumors)
- Emotional (deliberate exclusion from a group or activity)
- Cyber-bullying

What are the short-term and lasting effects of Bullying?

Short-term effect:

- Illness
- Absenteeism
- Depression & anxiety
- Thoughts of suicide

Lasting effect:

- Lower self-esteem
- Higher rates of depression
- Higher rates of Post Traumatic Stress

What are the characteristics of Bullied Children? There are two categories of bullied children.

The passive victim/target represents 85 percent of all victims. They generally are:

- Quiet, sensitive, and cautiously interacts with peers
- Appears more physically and emotionally weak
- Insecure, with little confidence
- Finds it easier to associate with adults than with peers

Some provocative victim/target characteristics:

- Quick-tempered and prone to fight
- Anxious and insecure
- Personal qualities seem to invite others picking on them.
- Irritating behavior and repeatedly provoke others.

What are the characteristics of children who Bully?

- Strong desire for power and control over others
- Often part of a conduct-disordered behavior pattern
- Difficulty conforming to rules
- Physical strength above average for age
- Good at talking themselves out of situations

What are the effects on Bystanders?

- Fearful
- Powerless to change the situation
- Guilty for not acting
- Over time reduced empathy for victims/targets

What works?

- A consistent effort of prevention and intervention
- Build positive connections between staff and students
- Create a “belonging-centered” culture/school climate for all students and staff
- Teach students a problem solving process
- Clearly define rules for bullying, consequences
- Take student reports seriously and respond appropriately

Choosing a Bullying Prevention Program?

- Ensure the program is research based.
- Engage in participatory planning, involve staff in the selection process
- Conduct needs assessment.
- Review policies and procedures
- Integrate with student achievement and school climate.
- Include prevention and intervention.
- Conduct professional development
- Provide parent education
- Evaluate program periodically for effectiveness