

The Mean Kid:
An Overview of Bully/Victim Problems and Research-based Solutions for Schools
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Most adults, no matter what their educational background, can remember the school bully. Nearly everyone who has attended school has run into that mean kid and his mean friends at one time or another. Perhaps that kid beat up other kids a little or called them names and embarrassed them in front of their friends and classmates. Another took their lunch money or broke their new lunch box just to be mean. Students grow up and leave school and so did that mean kid, but in a sense that mean kid has never grown up and left school—the mean kid is still there, still the same age, still bullying the kids at school. This paper reviews the characteristics and prevalence of the bully/victim problem in schools in order to present a clearer picture of the topography of this problem. The paper discusses solutions for school personnel and provides information about interventions found effective in dealing with bullying.

Definition and Types of Bullying

There are many definitions attempting to describe the subset of antisocial behaviors associated with bullying and harassment. Olweus (1996) defines bullying as the recurring exposure, over time, to negative actions by one or more others. Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey (1996) define bullying as a form of aggressive behavior that involves coercion, intimidation, and threats to one's safety or well being. These interactions include physical and/or verbal assaults, offensive, and/or threatening gestures and faces, and exclusion from groups and friends. Snell, Mackenzie, and Frey (2001) identify three critical features common to most definitions of bullying: (a) a perceived power imbalance between perpetrator and victim involving factors such as physical size, age, peer or social support, and status, (b) an intent to harm, and (c) a repeated, often chronic, activity involving a specific targeted person.

Olweus identifies three main types of bullying (1993, 1994): direct bullying, consisting of overt, relatively open attacks on the intended victim, indirect bullying, consisting of covert

actions intended to socially isolate or exclude the victim from groups and friends, and passive bullying, which refers to the followers (henchmen) lending peer support for a leader involved in bullying. Direct bullying has been most often associated with boys and indirect bullying has been most often associated with girls, although these types of bullying are not exclusive to either gender (Olweus, 1996; Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey, 1995). Indeed, recent events have seen girl shooters in schools, and boys report experiencing “social” or indirect types of bullying, harassment, and intimidations with increasing frequency (Smith and Sprague, 2002, 2001; Smith et al., 2000). Overt actions are typically those in which the victim, or target student, knows or is directly confronted by the perpetrator, the antisocial interaction is open and not hidden from the victim or other students, and the actions have a direct and relatively immediate negative impact on the target student. Covert bullying, harassment, or intimidation consists of secretive or disguised behaviors in which the perpetrator expects not to be known or identified and the actions are designed to be harmful, typically having a delayed impact on the victim.

Prevalence in Schools

Olweus, (1994, 1996) in European studies conducted in concert with the development and implementation of his anti-bullying program (the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, found that 7-9% of children surveyed in grades 1-9 had bullied other students with regularity and about 5% of students surveyed were involved in serious bullying problems at least once a week.

Students as victims accounted for 9% of the students surveyed, and 17% of these victims reported acting as both bully and victim (Olweus, 1994). Olweus estimates that the actual figures may be somewhat higher, as under-reporting of behavior of this nature is likely. In the United States the incidence data reflect a higher level of involvement in bully/victim behavior. Recent surveys of elementary students (grades 3-5) indicate that 93% had witnessed a peer or group of peers exhibiting bullying, harassing, or intimidating behaviors in interactions with another student and that approximately 81% had been present when a peer or group of peers had physically assaulted another student while at school (Smith and Sugai, 1997; Smith, Sprague, Myers, and Anderson, 2000). Students were asked about their experiences during the past three months.

Hazler, Hoover, and Oliver (1993) found that up to 75% of students surveyed reported victimization, and as many as 14% of all students surveyed suffered severe trauma as a result of the abuse. Olweus (1996) reported victim percentages at 9% overall, with students in the lower

grades (1-4) experiencing victimization at a higher rate than those in higher grades. Smith, Sprague, Myers, and Anderson (2000), found that 81% of Oregon students grades 3-5 reported being bullied, harassed or otherwise victimized at school within the preceding two months.

These statistics may best be viewed in light of findings from the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS): In this national survey of students grades 9-12, 14.2% reported having been in a physical fight on school property, and 7.7% reported that they had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property two or more times during the preceding 12 months. In addition, 5.2% of respondents reported having missed two or more days of school during the preceding 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or when traveling to or from school.

The connection between bullying and violence is becoming well established. Nansel, et al. (2003) found that students involved in bullying, either as perpetrator or victim, were significantly more likely to be involved in violent and violence related behavior (weapon carrying at school or in the community, frequent fighting, and fight and violence related injuries). Although higher for boys and perpetrators than girls and victims, the research clearly indicates that involvement in bully/victim interactions is a red flag for the likelihood of more serious violent behaviors. According to Nansel et al. there exists a robust and consistent relationship between bullying and involvement in violent behavior.

Characteristics of Bullies and Victims

Bullies are likely to be physically stronger than their average peers, average to just below average in popularity, surrounded by a core group of one or two henchmen (passive bullies), and older than their victims (Olweus, 1993, 1996). In contrast, victims are likely to be younger, physically weaker, cautious, shy and quiet, and less popular than either bullies or average students. Walker et al., (1995) describe bullies as externalizers who exhibit a much higher than normal rate of negative social behavior toward their peers. These students are often labeled as antisocial and tend to associate with other antisocial peers to gang up on individual peers. Those students who are likely to be targeted as victims may be referred to as internalizers (Walker et al., 1995) who initiate very low levels of negative social behavior with their peers but spend large amounts of time alone compared to more routinely normal, socially adaptable students (Walker et al., 1995). Victim behavior ranges from passive/submissive to provocative (Olweus, 1996). Students who establish a pattern of passive/submissive responding to bullying and harassment may be victimized frequently and by a significant number of peers as opportunity

arises. Victims often lack social skills to prevent themselves from being a risk-free target for bullying and harassment. Provocative behavior is often seen as inviting peer bullying and harassment. Provocative students may be targeted for victimization by engaging in obnoxious, irritating, or other annoying behavior. In addition, many students who are victimized at some point become involved in a bully/victim cycle of behavior. The student engages in behavior commonly associated with bully and victim in various peer interactions (Olweus, 1991, 1993, 1996; Walker et al., 1995; Tobin and Irvin, 1996; Patterson, Reid, and Dishion, 1992; Colvin, Sprague, Good, and Lee, 1997; Snell et al., 2001).

Common bully/victim behavior: What does it look like?

Direct bullying behavior is usually associated with males, while indirect bullying behavior is associated with females (Olweus, 1996; Walker et al., 1995). In general, male bullies seem to have a more positive attitude toward violence, are impulsive, often display a strong need to dominate others, seem to express or be capable of little empathy for others, and often display aggressive reactive patterns. They may use a perceived advantage in physical strength and/or peer supports to menace, intimidate, and abuse their intended victims (Olweus, 1996; Walker et al., 1995). Female bullies tend to use covert, nonphysical methods of harassment to abuse their victims. Female bullies may display a strong need to socially dominate others and be the center of attention of a core group of peers, have or express little empathy toward others, and exhibit aggressive social reactive patterns (Olweus, 1996; Walker et al., 1995). Neither overt nor covert bullying and harassment is endemic to one gender. Girls are as capable as boys of exhibiting overt bullying and harassment behavior, and boys can exhibit covert bullying and harassment behavior. Olweus (1994, 1996), Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler, (1994), and Walker et al., (1995) indicate that mean-spirited teasing is the most common early manifestation of bullying and often leads to more extreme and physical victim abuse in higher grades. This behavior is commonly practiced by both male and female perpetrators.

Victims, both male and female, tend to have characteristics that set them apart from the average or normal student. Passive/submissive victims act more insecure, anxious, cautious, and sensitive than do students in general (Olweus, 1996). When attacked by other students they react by crying and withdrawing. Perpetual victims are prone to low self-esteem manifested in high failure rates, negative outlooks of themselves and their environment, and self-reports of feeling stupid, ashamed, and unattractive. In other words, this type of victim is characterized by “a

submissive reaction pattern combined (in the case of boys) with physical weakness” (Olweus, 1996, p. 18). Provocative victims, on the other hand, are characterized by a combination of both aggressive and anxious reaction patterns (Olweus, 1996). These students are often tense and irritating to others, are often labeled hyperactive, and have problems with concentration (Olweus, 1996).

The problems presented by bully/submissive victim interactions can differ greatly from the problems presented by bully/provocative victim interactions. Based on previous experience the perpetrator perceives interactions with the submissive victim to be easy and risk-free. The victim has an historic inability or unwillingness to deflect the problem or resist or defend him/herself. The submissive victim presents few or no social skills of active or passive resistance to bullying or harassment by others. When confronted with this anti-social bullying and harassing behavior, the submissive victim may perceive the interaction as a normal social relationship, or he/she may be under significant threat or duress.

In bully/provocative victim interactions, the presenting behavior can vary widely. The typical provocative victim can be characterized as a child who displays a range of irritating, abnormal personal and social attributes such as poor hygiene, unusual clothing, variant or deviant humor, poor interpersonal skills, or difficulty in making and maintaining peer relationships and friendships. In fact, the student characterized as provocative is often the student even adults have difficulty relating to or liking. Some of these children are outgoing, assertive, academically typical, and come from relatively average, stable home environments. Others are identified by educators as needy, annoying, over dependent, and/or socially maladjusted. These students’ difficulties range from environmental vulnerabilities like poverty and dysfunctional homes to social, emotional, and mental health problems that often impede development of satisfying interpersonal relationships.

Both submissive and provocative victims may exhibit inappropriate or nonviable behavior that serves as invitations for perpetrators to bully and harass. Victims may run away or cry, or they may do nothing, all of which invite continued victimization. Both submissive and provocative victims may “put off” school staff and other adults, including their parents. They may regularly complain, tattle, lie, exhibit disagreeable physical traits due to medical or social problems, or simply behave strangely. Undesirable physical and social traits not only reduce the

likelihood of peer acceptance but also decrease the likelihood school staff or other adults will attend to or intervene in victims' problems.

Solutions for School Personnel

Districts, schools, teachers and school staff members face a complex challenge in dealing with and effectively intervening in student-to-student bullying and harassment. The covert nature of this behavior makes it difficult to observe and document. The limited ability to observe and analyze these interactions makes the design and implementation of effective interventions difficult. Second, social constraints and considerations make identification and intervention difficult on many levels. For instance, many students are reluctant to speak out or seek adult help in bullying situations. Likewise, teachers and other adults may be unwilling or unable to initiate and pursue actions necessary to intervene. School personnel may find parents defensive and reluctant or unwilling to address either the student's bullying behavior or victimization. Parents may find school personnel subject to similar limitations. Additionally, the current sociopolitical climate places a considerable stigma on youth involved in harassment of any kind. The determination in our society to view harassment (including behavior associated with bullying) as a criminal or civil offense, with the attendant legal ramifications, attaches substantial accountability to the actions taken by those in stewardship of students. The district, school, or individual staff member may incur substantial criminal and financial risk if found negligent in cases involving harassment of any type. Interventions can be complex and costly, depending on the nature and severity of the problem.

Addressing the perpetrator's behavior is only half the task. Victim intervention must be part of any effective and lasting solution. In fact, effective intervention in a bullying/harassment dynamic must address the needs of a variety of individuals: the victim, the perpetrator, all parents, school staff, and any other person negatively affected by the problem behavior. Cost of intervention cannot be ignored. A comprehensive and effective intervention, initiated in response to ongoing or pervasive bullying and harassment may stress school, district, and even community funds.

Reactionary interventions are potentially the most costly and hardest to implement. These typically focus on one individual (the perpetrator) and are socially stigmatizing. Proactive interventions aimed at prevention through education (social skills training) and positive behavior interventions and supports are typically less expensive to implement. These programs address a

wide range of behavior by teaching and rewarding appropriate behavior and intervening in inappropriate behavior. The programs should include imbedded maintenance and monitoring features. Proactive programs are focused on all students and are based on reinforcement and recognition of positive, expected behavior.

A consensus of research (Wolery, Bailey, and Sugai, 1988; Olweus, 1991, 1994, 1996; Walker et al., 1995; Snell, Mackenzie, and Frey, 2001) suggests that interventions aimed at bully/victim behavior be cooperative efforts involving all concerned parties in every environment at every level (e.g., instructional presentations, school-wide, specific environment, intensive individual, and community wrap-around services). Professional interventions and supports at the family level, however, are difficult to implement consistently and usually can only be provided upon the request of the parent(s) or guardian(s).

In terms of family involvement, Walker et al., (1995) and Olweus (1994, 1996) suggest that power-assertive methods of child rearing (e.g., physical punishment, violent emotional outbursts, and permissiveness in cases of aggressive behavior by the child, as well as a negative attitude by the caregiver(s) and a lack of warmth and involvement) are important factors in development of aggressive behavior in males who bully. Opportunities for school personnel to intervene and disrupt development of bullying and victim behavior at the family level are often limited. Schools may deliver informative material or initiate more extreme actions ranging from suspension and expulsion to legal remedies. For practitioners, the school environment provides the only setting for consistent implementation of interventions targeting bully/victim behavior. Olweus (1996) supports the creation of a warm, positive school environment as a primary step in intervening in the bully/victim cycle.

There is some indication that consistent universal training (e.g., all students and staff) in appropriate responses to bully/victim situations can help eliminate a great deal of this problem behavior (Grossman et al., 1997). Whole school interventions target early problem behavior such as teasing before they accelerate and lead to more extreme behavior such as bullying and harassment. There is also indication that physical training (self-defense) can help perpetual victims eliminate feelings of powerlessness in confrontational situations with bullies. In some cases school-wide programs that include this training might be considered as part of a preventive intervention aimed at bully/victim behavior. Finally, schools must develop and consistently

apply rules against bullying and hold regular class meetings to review the rules (Olweus, 1996; Walker et al., 1995).

Overall, schools seeking to mitigate or eliminate bullying and harassment problems should follow a series of steps designed to introduce, teach, and administer a system-wide intervention program that is ongoing, supported at district and administrative levels, research based, financially practical, and acceptable to the various stakeholders involved. These steps should include:

- Assess extent of the problem
- Select an appropriate school-wide response
- Solicit family support
- Train all staff, students, and families
- Active supervision of students in common areas
- Respond to chronic bullies of increasing supports, sanctions, and treatments
- Assist chronic victims to be more assertive, gain friendship skills, and avoid dangerous situations
- Record all instances of bullying behavior

Clinical research (Sprague, Horner, Sugai, and Walker, 1999) has suggested that universal, proactive school-wide behavior support programs, in conjunction with selected setting and behavior-specific supports for at-risk students can be effective with all but 5-10% of the students in any particular school. These students usually have behavior disorders and are moderately to extremely antisocial. Their inappropriate behavior is resistant to treatment because of complex and/or uncontrollable developmental, environmental and physiological variables outside the school setting. This small group of students needs individually designed interventions to change problem behavior and support them in the school setting. Chronic bullies typically fall into this 5-10% of students.

Likewise, chronic victim students have problem behavior highly resistant to change through school-wide behavior support programs and need individually designed treatments. Any consultant or teacher helping students with chronic and persistent problems needs a large repertoire of intervention strategies, the ability to implement them, and the patience to deal with a long, slow process of change.

Interventions and Supports

This section outlines programs known to be effective in addressing bullying and harassment problems. Interventions include (a) environmental manipulations, (b) The Olweus Bullying Intervention Program, (c) Effective Behavior Support (EBS) Intervention Model, (d) Active Supervision, (e) Second Step Violence Prevention Program, (f) Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program, and (g) Bully-Proofing Your School: A Comprehensive Approach for Elementary Schools.

Environmental manipulations

The number of students reporting victimization drops off over time as students advance through grade levels (Olweus, 1994). Two main reasons are posited:

- As students grow older, they develop prosocial and antibullying strategies and become less vulnerable to intimidating and other antisocial behavior associated with bullying and harassment.
- As students progress through grade levels, perceived imbalance of power (a characteristic of bullying) between perpetrator and victim may be reduced by one of the following factors including:
 - (a) fewer older students and fewer chances for interactions in which age and social standing are factors, and
 - (b) fewer physical differences within and between grade-level peers because of variable growth patterns.

Interventions that consider these tendencies might consist of environmental manipulations, such as isolating younger and older peers by grade level as much as possible, specifically targeting recess, lunch, and other relatively unstructured or lightly supervised, high activity periods. Interventions are implemented by scheduling grade-level recess and transition periods at staggered intervals and by maintaining separate, physically isolated lunch, play, and free-time areas for each grade level.

The Olweus Bullying Intervention Program

The Olweus school-based bullying intervention program is founded on a process that creates school environments characterized by warmth, positive social interest, adult involvement, firm limits, clearly defined acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and consistent noncoercive, noncorporal consequences for bullying and harassment behavior. Implementation of the Olweus program necessitates the following critical actions by schools:

- Staff takes responsibility to reduce or eliminate bullying behavior (rather than the students or their parents)
- Develop and promote of clear moral and ethical positions against bullying
- Develop long- and short-term goals that target the entire school population through both individual and systems-oriented intervention strategies
- Establish the program as a consistent and stable component of the school environment
- Promote and maintain a positive school climate that encompasses all student behavior
- Facilitate parental involvement in the program

As a prerequisite, the staff and parents must be aware of their school's bully problem and commit to reducing or eliminating the problem. Awareness is established through collection and analysis of data (questionnaires and surveys). Schools secure committed involvement by sharing data and gaining agreement of all parties to work toward solutions. The Olweus program implements intervention procedures at three levels: (a) school-wide measures, (b) class-level measures, and (c) individual student measures.

School-level measures are characterized by interventions that influence the entire student body. These school-wide interventions (Sugai & Horner, 1994; Sprague, Walker, Golly, White, Myers, and Shannon, 2001) are designed to reduce or eliminate bullying through prevention, improving school climate and culture, and instructional programs. The school-level measures include:

- Assessment of the problem through surveys and questionnaires
 - School conferences on bully/victim issues that include staff, students, and parents
 - Increased adult supervision in unstructured, high-census common areas (e.g., playgrounds, cafeterias)
 - Improvement in common area infrastructures (i.e., more attractive playground equipment)
 - Problem solving with staff, students, and parents
 - A school-based pro-social school improvement team dedicated to school culture
- Class-level measures include establishing behavioral expectations, rules, and positive and negative consequences in addition to instructional programs and activities. These measures include:
- Creation of class rules against bullying
 - Positive reinforcement (praise) for appropriate behavior

- Negative consequences for inappropriate behavior
- Instructional activities including role playing and cooperative learning
- Regularly scheduled class meetings about bullying
- Meetings with teacher, students, and parents

Individual measures refer to levels of intervention intended to change the behavior of individual students. Individual interventions target both the bully and the victim, and less often, those peers collaterally involved in bully/victim interactions. Recommended individual intervention activities include:

- Immediate and ongoing one-on-one talks (processing) of a serious nature with both bully(s) and victim(s)
- Separate ongoing serious talks (processing) with the participating students and their parents
- Joint talks between the bully and his/her parents and the victim and his/her parents (includes the school psychologist and/or counselor)
- Provision of social and behavioral support resources for parents of participants
- Discussion groups for parents of perpetrators
- Change in student placement (e.g., classroom, school)

The Olweus program has demonstrated success across a wide range of schools and diverse populations in several countries. Reductions of bully/victim problems by 50 percent or more have been replicated numerous times in a variety of school settings. Outcomes include collateral effects such as reduction in general antisocial behavior (e.g., vandalism, fighting, theft, substance abuse, truancy), improvement in social climate and school culture, reduction of target behaviors in nonschool community settings, and an increase in student attachment to school.

Effective Behavior Support (EBS) Intervention Model

Effective Behavior Support (EBS) is a proactive prevention model focused on supporting the behavior of all students in all grades. EBS programs are designed to increase the capacity of schools to develop, institute, and sustain comprehensive behavior support systems at the school-wide, classroom, nonclassroom, and individual student levels.

EBS programs incorporate research-validated development and support activities in several critical areas:

- (a) ongoing administrative support of a school-based EBS team

- (b) dissemination of clear school-wide behavioral expectations
- (c) teaching of clear, school-wide rules based on the school's behavioral expectations
- (d) ongoing teaching of appropriate prosocial skills
- (e) systematic prompting for appropriate behavior
- (f) consistent use of school-wide rewards for appropriate, expected behavior
- (g) consistent use of school-wide consequences for inappropriate, problem behavior
- (h) ongoing monitoring and record keeping of student behavior, and
- (i) increased behavioral supports for at-risk and high-risk students

Research on EBS model programs has reported decreases in student problem behavior (as measured by office referrals) of an average of 42% (Sugai & Horner, 1994; Sprague et al., 2001; Taylor-Green et al., 1999) in the first year of implementation.

Active Supervision

Active supervision (Colvin, Sugai, Good, and Lee, 1997; Lewis, Colvin and Sugai, 1999) is based on the following principles:

- Proactive, positive behavior supports
- Nonhostile, nonphysical consequences consistently applied
- Monitoring and surveillance of activities inside and outside school
- Adults as responsible authorities in response to bullying and harassment
- Team-based approach

What is active supervision? Active supervision is a term applied to a multi-element method of student behavior support and management (Smith and Sprague, 2001). Active supervision methods work well in (a) large area, (b) high census (lots of students), (c) lightly staffed (one or two adults for every 80 students), and (d) unstructured (child-directed activities) areas such as playgrounds, cafeterias, and hallways. Active supervision techniques also work well in classrooms and in other group activities.

How does active supervision work? Active supervision works by supporting appropriate student behavior, giving supervisors increased opportunity for a high rate of positive contact with students, giving supervisors increased opportunity for correcting inappropriate student behavior, and providing supervisors clear and effective methods of reinforcing appropriate behavior and consequenceing inappropriate behavior.

Research has shown that high rates of positive contact with individuals or groups of students significantly reduces student problem behavior for up to 90% of all students. Research also demonstrates that immediate, consistent, and contingent delivery of both reinforcement for appropriate behavior, and consequences for inappropriate behavior is highly effective in reducing student problem behavior. Randy Sprick, a leading behavioral research consultant, suggests adults maintain a ratio of up to 30 to 1 of positive contacts to corrective or aversive contacts with students. Rates of 5 to 1 are more realistic and have been shown to be effective in reducing student problem behavior.

Elements of active supervision

Active supervision has two primarily physical features: (1) effective movement and (2) scanning.

(1) Effective movement:

- Is constant
- Is randomized
- Targets problem areas, activities, groups, and individuals
- Is in close proximity to problem areas, activities, groups, and individuals

Instituting effective movement techniques requires (a) high, constant rates of movement in the area to be supervised, (b) randomized, unpredictable patterns of movement, (c) movement that brings the supervisor into close proximity with known problem areas, activities, groups, or individuals.

Examples of constant movement are:

- (a) Supervisor moves an average of 30 feet per minute while supervising playground activities.
- (b) Supervisor has six different activity areas during recess and makes close proximity contact with each two times during a 15-minute recess.

An example of randomized movement is:

- (a) Supervisor varies the order of contact in #b above. The first route might be areas a, b, c, d, e, and f, and the next route might be c, e, a, f, d, and then b.

Examples of targeting known problem areas, activities, groups, and individuals:

- (a) Supervisor knows (from past experience and data) there is typically a great deal of arguing during recess at the fifth grade tetherball game. The supervisor begins each recess at the tetherball area, greets students as they come out, and restates rules and expected behavior.

(b) Supervisor knows (from past experience and data) that a loose group of 4-6 students, usually centered upon the same three boys, gets into trouble with peers and supervisors almost every recess. The supervisor makes several randomly spaced close-proximity contacts with this group during each recess.

(2) Scanning:

- Targets both appropriate and inappropriate behavior
- Targets known problem areas, activities, groups, and individuals
- Uses both visual and aural cues
- Extends ability to supervise large areas
- Increases opportunities for positive contact

Effective scanning techniques include: (a) constant shifting of visual and aural attention to cover all areas under supervision, (b) visual methods that target both appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and (c) listening for words or sounds associated with appropriate and inappropriate target behaviors.

Active supervision uses two important behavioral elements to establish and maintain appropriate, expected student behavior: (a) positive contact and (b) positive reinforcement. Positive contact consists of interacting with students in a friendly, helpful, open manner, and maintaining a proactive approach that frequently reinforces expected, appropriate student behavior and also initiates noncontingent positive adult attention.

A substantial body of evidence points to “adult attention” as the single most effective reinforcement tool available to staff. Positive contact begins with a friendly, helpful, and open demeanor when supervising or interacting with students. Just as staff expect students to present a generally pleasant and prosocial attitude at school, students expect the staff to present a friendly demeanor while promoting a safe and welcoming school environment. Positive contact should be proactive in nature, as supervisors continually engage students positively, both in groups and individually. Positive contact should be initiated with all students based solely on the absence of inappropriate behavior. The delivery of positives by a supervisor should be noncontingent, in that students are reinforced with positive adult attention just for being themselves, as long as they are not behaving inappropriately immediately before the supervisor provides positive attention. The students don’t need to do anything special—just do nothing wrong!

Positive contact should be delivered at high rates. An effective supervisor may engage in 40-50 positive contacts in a 15-minute recess. Efficient and effective positive contacts should be short (5-10 seconds in duration), involve groups over individuals (so that more students are affected), and be nonspecific in content (e.g., “Hi kids! It’s good to see you!” rather than “Hey there Jim, nice job playing basketball—and good job passing to Biff”). Individual positive contacts are effective and appropriate, but small- to large-group contacts allow the supervisor to cover more ground, have direct positive contact with more students, and still positively engage students personally. One way of making a group positive contact take on a personal meaning for individuals is to establish brief but significant eye-contact with as many individuals as possible while initiating general positive comments with the group.

The second behavioral tool necessary for effective active supervision is positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement refers to the delivery of a reinforcer to groups or individuals contingent on their engaging in appropriate and expected behavior. A reinforcer may be a tangible like a Gummi Bear or a Pokemon card. A reinforcer may also be an intangible like positive peer or adult attention (e.g., a round of applause for a job well done, reading a student’s name over the intercom for a special behavior or accomplishment).

Reinforcement must be contingent, and the adult must be certain the behavior he or she is rewarding is an appropriate, expected behavior and not an inappropriate one. The reinforcement should also be specific and the adult should tell the student the exact behavior for which he or she is being rewarded. Lastly, the reinforcement should be immediate so that the student pairs the delivery of the reward with the behavior being rewarded. Immediate delivery of reinforcers also decreases the chance that an intervening inappropriate behavior will be accidentally reinforced (see contingency of reinforcement above).

Curriculum-based Interventions

Second Step Violence Prevention Program

The Second Step curriculum, developed by the Committee for Children in Seattle, is one of the best approaches available for creating a positive peer culture of caring and civility (Grossman et al., 1997) as well as teaching specific strategies to control and manage anger and resolve conflicts without resorting to coercion or violence. Second Step was recently rated as the most effective program available for creating safe and positive schools by an expert panel of the Safe and Drug Free Schools Division of the U.S. Department of Education.

Second Step is a promising, multicomponent curriculum of systematic instruction in interpersonal skills such as empathy, anger management, and conflict resolution. The program can be used in both traditional and alternative educational settings. Grossman et al., (1997) used six matched pairs of urban and suburban elementary schools randomly assigned to intervention or comparison conditions (see also Green et al., (1999) for further explanation of the study in response to a critical letter to the editor). Students in the intervention group were taught the Second Step curriculum 2-3 times per week over a 12-week period. Using a structured protocol, observers blind to the purpose of the study found that in unstructured settings at school (e.g., playground and cafeteria), students in the intervention group decreased physically aggressive behavior and increased neutral and prosocial behavior ($p < .05$). A three-year longitudinal study is currently underway, and a number of pilot studies are highly encouraging (Center for the Study & Prevention of Violence, 1996a, 1996b; Sylvester & Frey, 1994).

Steps to Respect

The Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Curriculum is founded on research-based activities that foster academic skills, build social-emotional competence, and teach positive social values. The curriculum integrates academic skills such as oral and written expression, analytic reasoning, vocabulary enrichment, literary analysis, and reading comprehension with core social-emotional competencies like self-management, perspective taking and empathy, communication skills, risk assessment, conflict resolution, and friendship building. In addition to the student curricular elements, Steps to Respect has whole-staff and parent components designed to augment and support the instructional units.

Student Components

(1) Skill Units:

- Gain understanding and learn appropriate responses to bullying and related behavior
- Gain understanding and learn appropriate responses to racism, sexual prejudice and sexual harassment

(2) Literature Units

- Two literature units per level
- Language arts objectives are tied to social-emotional objectives
- Activities are tied to various content areas (e.g., geography, history, art)

Teacher and Staff Components

- (1) Train all staff (e.g., volunteers, bus and cafeteria personnel, office staff) to receive and effectively respond to student reports of bullying and harassment,
- (2) Train all staff to use specific skills to respond to reports of bullying and harassment
- (3) Train all staff to use specific skills to coach both perpetrators and victims involved in bullying incidents
- (4) Train all staff to use common language and tie activities to the curriculum

Administrator Component

- (1) Plays leadership role in implementation
- (2) Secures buy-in from staff and parents
- (3) Develops school antibullying policy and disciplinary and reporting activities
- (4) Provides staff training
- (5) Provides parent information and supports
- (6) Monitors the program

Parent/Family Components

- (1) Inform of program, expectations and consequences
- (2) Invite to participate in ongoing discussion and program activities
- (3) Receive informational overview of program content and strategies
- (4) Use home-based handouts for each skill unit

Steps to Respect is used over three or four years, with Part 1 designed for third and fourth grade students, Part 2 for fourth and fifth grade students, and Part 3 for fifth and sixth grade students. The program, curriculum, and activities are designed for school-wide implementation, with the teaching staff providing instruction and the entire staff supporting the behavioral intervention by taking reports and acting as coaches. Recent research indicates that programs similar to Steps to Respect in form and content (e.g., Second Step Violence Prevention Program) can be very effective in reducing the incidence and severity of many behavior problems when used in conjunction with a school-wide, positive behavior support program such as EBS. Although no current research indicates the positive results for the Steps to Respect curriculum, positive outcomes might be expected because of the similarity of the program and identical research-based source material.

Bully-Proofing Your School

Bully-Proofing Your School (Garrity, et al., 1998) provides a comprehensive summary of the problem of bullying along with intervention guidelines, the basis for a school-wide program, staff training, student instruction, victim support components, perpetrator support curriculum, a parent/family component, and a resource guide with reproducible presentation and teaching materials. The program is designed to be easy to teach and implement and the curriculum is flexible, to be completed in two to three months. The program revolves around the enlistment of a school staff member (e.g., administrator, counselor, teacher, social worker) to act as facilitator. The facilitator takes initiative in organizing and implementing the five main program components: staff training, student instruction, victim support, intervening with perpetrators, and collaboration with parents and families. While the authors of Bully-Proofing Your School emphasize the program is most effective when implemented comprehensively, they also stress that the program can be implemented as resources (in terms of time, money, and effort) are available. The intended outcomes include an increase in school attachment by students, student and staff perceptions of school safety, positive school culture and climate, and student skills relating to positive character development and personal and community responsibility.

Summary of Oregon State Legislature House Bill 3403

House Bill 3404 was ordered by the Oregon State House of Representatives on May 14, 2001 and was sponsored by Representative Devlin and Representatives Hass, Morrisette, Nelson, and Nolan. The bill requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop model policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying on school grounds, at school activities, on school transportation or at school bus stops. It also requires each school district to adopt policy against harassment, intimidation, or bullying. The following highlights parts of the bill relating to bullying and harassment and student safety in schools.

Section 1

- A safe and civil environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards.
- Harassment, intimidation, or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behavior, is conduct that disrupts a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment.

- Students learn by example. The legislature commends school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying.

Section 2

- As used in sections 1 to 7 of this 2001 Act, “harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any written, verbal or physical act taking place on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation or at any official school bus stop that a reasonable person under the circumstances should know will have the effect of:
 - (1) Physically harming a student or damaging a student’s property,
 - (2) Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to the student’s property, or
 - (3) Insulting or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school’s educational mission or the education of any student.

Section 3

- Each school district shall adopt a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying. School districts are encouraged to develop the policy after consultation with parents and guardians, school employees, volunteers, students, administrators and community representatives.
- School districts are encouraged to include in the policy:
 1. A statement prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying
 2. A definition of harassment, intimidation or bullying
 3. A description of the type of behavior expected from each student
 4. A statement of the consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who commits an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying
 5. A procedure for reporting an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying, including a provision that permits a person to report an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying anonymously. Nothing in this paragraph may be construed to permit formal disciplinary action solely on the basis of an anonymous report

6. A procedure for prompt investigation of a report of an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying
7. A statement of the manner in which a school district will respond after an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying is reported, investigated and confirmed
8. A statement of the consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have committed an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying
9. A statement prohibiting reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying and stating the consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in such reprisal or retaliation
10. A statement of the consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have falsely accused another of having committed an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying as a means of reprisal or retaliation or as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying
11. A statement of how the policy is to be publicized within the district, including a notice that the policy applies to behavior at school-sponsored activities

Section 4

Each school district shall adopt a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying and transmit a copy of the policy to the Superintendent of Public Instruction by January 1, 2004.

Section 5

- (1) A school employee, student or volunteer may not engage in reprisal or retaliation against a victim of, witness to, or person with reliable information about an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying.
- (2) A school employee, student or volunteer who witnesses or has reliable information that a student has been subjected to an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying is encouraged to report the act to the appropriate school official designated by the school district's policy.
- (3) A school employee who promptly reports an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying to the appropriate school official in compliance with the procedures set forth in the school district's policy is immune from a cause of action for damages arising from any failure to remedy the reported act.

Section 6

School districts are encouraged to form harassment, intimidation or bullying prevention task forces, programs, and other initiatives involving school employees, students, administrators, volunteers, parents, guardians, law enforcement and community representatives.

Section 7

Sections 1 to 7 of this 2001 Act may not be interpreted to prevent a victim of harassment, intimidation, or bullying from seeking redress under any other available law, whether civil or criminal. Sections 1 to 7 of this 2001 Act do not create any statutory cause of action.

This Act legally defines bullying, intimidation and harassment and mandates that every Oregon school district develop and implement anti-bullying, intimidation, and harassment policies. Rules and guidelines for developing district policies are delineated. The Act also calls for districts to develop and implement specific guarantees, actions, and consequences in response to incidents of bullying and harassment. Other states have developed or are in the process of developing legislation similar in scope and nature to the Oregon bill. The state of Washington passed an antibullying bill in 2000.

Discussion

Although bullying and harassment currently receive a great deal of attention, this behavior has been a problem in schools and communities with both school-aged children and adults for as far back in time as we can determine. We as teachers, administrators, school staff, parents, or community members should recognize that the antisocial characteristics commonly associated with bullying and harassment are part of a wide-spread pandemic of violent and protoviolent behavior. Research has shown that 60% of boys identified as bullies as early as second grade were found guilty of a felony by age 24 (Olweus, 1991).

Outcomes for both boys and girls who engage in behavior commonly associated with bullying and harassment are dismal. Aggressive behavior has been found to rarely change over time. Both males and females engaging in antisocial conduct are likely to continue the cycle of violence and abuse inherent in bullying and harassment by exposing their children to this behavior. The children in turn expose their children to violence, and so the cycle continues through generations of families. The ability and resources to intervene effectively is a necessity in efforts to reduce or eliminate bullying and harassment from school environments.

At this time, there is a need for research and development in the area of bullying- and harassment-prevention technologies. Teachers, school staff, and parents have a great deal of interest, as well as a high stake in and legal responsibility for, the alleviation of the negative effects of bullying and harassment in today's schools. The scope of the problem is staggering. Recent unpublished surveys by the authors indicate that up to 96% of elementary students witness multiple instances of violent and threatening behavior during the course of the school year. Some students report that rude, hurtful, violent, and/or threatening actions are witnessed by the majority of students in the average school on a daily basis. The negative impact of this constant influence should not be discounted. The links between the exposure to and practice of inappropriate, antisocial, and violent behavior are well established (Sprague, Walker, 2000; Colvin, Tobin, Beard, Hagen and Sprague, 1998). Therefore the need for effective research-based interventions is equally apparent, for educational professionals as well as parents and community members.

Checklists, Lists of Resources, OCR Policy Guidelines, Etc.

Recommended Programs for Preventing Violence and Bullying-Harassment

- Second Step Violence Prevention Program. Available from the Committee for Children, Seattle, WA, 1-800-634-4449, <http://www.cfchildren.org>
- Steps to Respect Anti-bullying program. Available from the Committee for Children, Seattle, WA, 1-800-634-4449, <http://www.cfchildren.org>
- Bully-Proofing Your School. Available from Sopris West, Inc., P.O. Box 1890, Longmont, CO 80502-1809; 1-800-547-6747
- The Bully Free Classroom. Over 100 tips and strategies for teachers by Allan L. Beane. Available from Free Spirit Publishing, <http://www.freespirit.com>
- Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior University of Oregon, Eugene. Community-based intervention and prevention, program resources, technical assistance and training, and research-based interventions. <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~ivdb/>
- Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence. Blueprint programs and violence prevention resources and contact information. <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/>
- The Maine Project Against Bullying. <http://lincoln.midcoast.com/~wps/against/bullying.html>

- Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime. A guide for schools and districts on developing antiharassment and hate crime policy, responding to incidents, establishing complaint and grievance procedures, fostering diversity, and addressing hate crimes and conflicts in school and community. Includes checklists and surveys. Available from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and the National Association of Attorneys General, Washington, D.C.

Recommended IVDB Programs for Making Schools Safer, Effective and Positive Effective Behavioral Support (EBS).

Contact George Sugai at (541) 346-1642 or Rob Horner at (541) 346-2460.

Building Effective Schools Together (BEST). Contact Jeff Sprague at (541) 346-3592.

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