
Preface

The Issue of Bullying and School Safety

Increasingly, school administrators and faculty are faced with the new responsibility of creating safer schools, in addition to their traditional mission of developing academic goals and helping children reach them. Pervasive bullying in schoolyards, classrooms, and hallways interferes with perceived school safety and directly impacts student learning outcomes.

Recent studies have indicated that children today are often afraid to attend school. DeVoe and Kaffenberger (2005) reported that bullied students were more likely than nonbullied students to skip school because they thought someone might attack or harm them. Once in school, researchers cite that victims often have difficulty concentrating on schoolwork and therefore are often at risk for poor performance and ultimately school truancy or dropout. DeVoe and Kaffenberger reported that bullied students were most likely to report receiving Ds and Fs than their nonbullied counterparts. In this same study, about 4 percent of students between 12 and 18 years old carried a weapon to school for protection.

In addition, a potential relationship exists between bullying and violence in school. Research suggests that being victimized by bullying may be an antecedent to aggressive behavior (Nansel, Overpeck, et al., 2001). In 2001, the Secret Service released its comprehensive report on youth violence in schools, exposing the possibility that violent youth involved in school shootings (for example, Littleton, Colorado, and Pearl, Mississippi) share a common thread: being victims of bullying in school (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002).

School leaders and classroom teachers have multiple reasons for addressing bullying behaviors in school. Although the threat of violence and desire for academic success are significant reasons for anti-bullying efforts, teachers and school administrators should feel compelled to

intervene in bullying episodes, as it is their duty and obligation to build inclusive classroom environments for all students.

ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMMING WITHIN A SAFE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Anti-bullying programming, like other conflict resolution education, emphasizes developing students' social skills and their ability to collaborate during conflict situations. Researchers have found that developing children's social skills has a positive impact on academic achievement, particularly with at-risk children (Johnson & Johnson, 1995b). Hence, support for social skills programming in the school is key to further developing children's cognitive capabilities in the classroom.

Education programming targeting anti-bullying has been successful in isolation in countries such as Great Britain. However, much of the work has focused on reducing bullying behaviors and not on developing the social skills of victims or changing the behavior of witnesses. Anti-bullying programming has often been viewed as a separate social skills training program rather than a piece of building safer schools. Anti-bullying programming is an integral component for building safer schools. As such, it should always be combined and consistent with other whole school approaches such as character education, specific conflict resolution programs (for example, peer mediation), and diversity education programming. The whole school approach to programming and policy will afford the school and its students the opportunity to drive organizational change so that students feel safer in the hallways and classrooms of their schools.

Bullying is not a new phenomenon or specific to the United States. The vision of the big, strong, and popular bully overpowering the weak, scrawny, and unpopular child has long been part of mainstream American culture. As adults, we vividly recall the bully-victim relationships of our childhood classrooms and neighborhoods. Europe and Scandinavia clearly identify bullying behavior as problematic for both youth and adults and have developed prevention, intervention, and public policy to ensure that bullying does not result in tragic acts of violence. Great Britain and Norway have included bully prevention in their interpretation of dictates of the United Nations Rights of the Child, which ensures the safety and welfare of all children. They consider the prevention of bullying behaviors an important component in building safer school communities.

We in the United States should join other countries in viewing bully prevention as a necessary component of safe school planning. Many schools already participate in crisis response planning and conflict resolution education. They should now consider including social skills training programs, staff development programs, and school policies on bullying behaviors to create the safest learning environment for all students.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This book is intended to provide school leaders and K–12 classroom teachers with practical strategies and information to develop, implement, and evaluate bully prevention and intervention programs. It provides a foundation for understanding the bully-victim relationship, outlines potential origins of these behaviors, and provides applications and mechanisms for building schoolwide and classroom anti-bullying programs.

Chapter 1, *The Bully, Victim, and Witness Relationship Defined*, outlines these relationships and explains how conflict and aggression play a role in bullying. Trends among bullies and victims, and the long-term effects of these relationships, are discussed to emphasize the importance of prevention and intervention in classroom and school settings.

Chapter 2, *Origins of Bully-Victim-Witness Behavior*, describes potential sources of bullying and victim behavior. These include family, school, classroom, and individual characteristics. Understanding the complexity and origin of bullying relationship behaviors will assist school leaders and teachers in both better assessing the needs of affected youth and determining appropriate prevention and intervention techniques.

Chapter 3, *Implementing the Schoolwide Anti-Bullying Program*, discusses steps to implementing anti-bullying programs schoolwide. This chapter establishes the need for reviewing and/or creating policies and procedures for anti-bullying programs. It also discusses assembling an anti-bullying committee and providing a time line for implementation. The chapter provides examples of effective policies, staff development, and parent involvement techniques.

Chapter 4, *Strategies for Managing and Preventing Bullying Behavior in the Classroom*, outlines different techniques for the management and prevention of classroom-based bullying. The chapter describes classroom curricula and programs implemented through the process and infusion approaches. In addition to student education initiatives, this chapter explains methods teachers can use to assess their relationships with students, the classroom environment, and classroom policies that may be affecting bullying behavior among students.

Chapter 5, *Strategies for Intervention*, details methods for handling observed and reported bullying behaviors. The chapter covers conferencing and interviewing strategies as well as procedures for reaching out and involving parents of bullies and victims in the intervention strategy.

Chapter 6, *Evaluating Anti-Bullying Initiatives*, describes methods for identifying the effectiveness of classroom and schoolwide anti-bullying efforts. This chapter outlines differences in process, outcome, and impact evaluation processes and provides examples of measures that may be useful in identifying success at the individual, classroom, and school level.

Finally, Chapter 7, *Legislation Regarding Bullying Behavior*, covers legal implications of bullying behaviors in schools and describes statewide legislative trends.

MODIFICATIONS TO THE SECOND EDITION

The second edition of *Bullying Prevention: Tips and Strategies for School Leaders and Classroom Teachers* contains a number of modifications that will better assist school leaders and teachers with planning, implementing, and evaluating anti-bullying efforts in their schools and classrooms. Case studies and scenarios have been added throughout the book to provide real-life examples of terms and concepts presented. Updated research on issues such as relational and cyber bullying are included, along with a discussion of bullying and the special needs population. Readers are presented with additional information for teaching assertiveness and problem solving and how to infuse these concepts into the classroom setting. Finally, program evaluation has been modified for the busy school member who intends to measure the success of their programming.