BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM DESIGN, STRATEGIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
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Abstract

Many schools throughout the United States are battling with the issue of bullying and are looking into different approaches to bullying prevention. Numerous successful approaches/programs to bullying prevention have been developed, several of which will be discussed and analyzed in this paper with the intent of creating programs to prevent or eliminate bullying at the elementary level. This paper concludes with specific recommendations for components that are integral to forming a bullying prevention program that will lead to success and safety in a school institution.
Chapter I: Introduction

Over the past several years, school districts have become more aware about the issue of bullying. Bullying has always been a major problem resulting in negative effects on school climate where students have to try to learn in fear. Through my experiences in teaching, I have found that bullying begins in elementary school and only gets worse and more violent during middle school and high school. Every school system or institution should be required to provide a safe learning environment for all students. In order to do this, schools should try using a “team” approach to solving this problem. Students, teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents should work in collaboration to create a secure learning climate. This process of change within the school system should start with an intervention model that is school-wide. This chapter will look at the prevalence of how bullying affects a schools climate and identifying key terms that will be discussed throughout the paper.

Background

Bullying exists in almost every school throughout the world. Bullying seems to originate in the primary schools, where bullying is the most prevalent. Bullying tends to decrease in secondary school settings (Olweus, 1993). In 2007, about 32% of students reported having been bullied at school during the school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Most educators are often unaware of the magnitude of bullying problems in their schools. Bullies, their victims, and those who are both bullies and victims have significantly increased risk for depressive symptoms and suicidal
ideation (Fonagy, Twemlow, Vernberg, Sacco, & Little, 2005; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999).

During the past few years, research on the problem of bullying in schools has changed the way people view the issue and steps to eliminate bullying. Current research has suggested that bullying has three major participants: the bully, the bully victim, and the bystander(s) or observer(s). The bystanders have a major influence on whether the bullying situation occurs and persists or stops and is inhibited (Olweus, 2003). These observers could be other students, support staff, and teachers within a school. Therefore, we need to equip all school participants with knowledge of the bullying process in order to develop and implement an intervention model that would be successful in any school setting.

**Statement of the Problem**

School bullying is a widespread problem in the United States (Cohn & Canter, 2003; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). Children's experiences in schools are fundamental to their successful transition into adulthood. Bullying encompasses a spectrum of aggressive behaviors ranging from acts of physical violence to far more subtle, yet equally destructive, patterns of verbal or relational cruelty. Bullying is a common thread linking a school's most troubling issues, including suicide, substance abuse, increased absenteeism, and academic failure (Cohn & Canter, 2003; Feinberg, 2003; Nansel et al. 2001).

For a school-wide bullying prevention plan to be successful in creating a safe, positive learning environment for all students, responsibility should fall on the shoulders of the educators and support staff. These individuals work hand-in-hand with students on
a daily basis. Educators have the power to create a learning environment where children feel comfortable and confident in their surroundings. A positive learning environment should lead to the optimal situation for children to be successful both academically and socially.

**Research Question**

What are the characteristics of an effective bullying prevention program in an elementary school/classroom?

**Definition of Terms**

Throughout this paper, several key terms will be used. Defining the following terms is important for the audience to have the proper understanding and knowledge of the topic being discussed.

**Terms.**

*Bullying.* "A situation where one person is exposed, repeatedly, to negative or adverse actions by one or more other individuals" (Olweus, 1993, p. 437).

*Bully.* The individual who commits the act of bullying (Olweus, 1993).

*Bystander or Observer.* The individual who watches bullying happen or hear about it (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004).

*Victim.* The individual who receives the negative or adverse actions in the act of bullying (Boulton & Underwood, 1992).

*School Participants.* All the individuals that comprise a school system, such as but not limited to students, teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents (StopBullying.gov, 2011).
Chapter II: Review of Literature

This chapter will provide information regarding what bullying is, how it is categorized, and characteristics of the three participants involved in a bullying situation (the bully, the victim, and the bystander). In addition, chapter two will include literature focused on the negative effects bullying has on its victims and the bully. My review will also strive to show the different approaches used in creating an effective bullying prevention program in certain school districts. Furthermore, literature from chapter two will present valuable information on how a school-wide approach (involving all school participants) to bullying prevention is critical.

Three Characteristics of Bullying

Most researchers agree that bullying has negative effects on the school climate and student population in any educational institution. However, the idea of what bullying actually is and the criteria used to define it, have been debated by many experts in the field. According to Olweus (2003), who some consider the father of bullying research, defined bullying as when a student “is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 12). Olweus (2003) described negative actions as aggressive behavior in the form of “physical contact, with words, or in more indirect ways, such as making mean faces or gestures, spreading rumors, or intentionally excluding someone from a group” (p. 12). Bullying not only consists of negative actions performed by one or more students to another student, it also involves an imbalance of power. The victim, usually, does not provoke the aggressive behavior or threaten it in anyway. They do little to resist the “attack” of a bully (Olweus, 2003).
Bully

Bullies can be found throughout our society. They come in all sizes, ages, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. In a bullying situation, the bully is the participant that exhibits negative or adverse actions toward one or more individuals. In 2001, Espelage, Bosworth, and Simon studied approximately 500 middle school students from grades 6th, 7th, and 8th. Using a survey that included demographic questions, self-report, and peer-report measures of bullying and victimization, they were studying the stability and change of bullying over a four-month time period. There was a significant increase in bullying behavior from Time 1 to Time 2 for 6th grade students; no significant change in bullying was found among 7th or 8th graders. Higher levels of impulsivity, anger, and depression were also associated with greater levels of bullying over time. Espelage et al. speculated that the sixth-graders were assimilating into the middle school, where bullying behavior was part of the school culture. This speculation is supported by the theory that bullying is a learned behavior, and that as they enter middle school, sixth-graders have not yet learned how to interact positively in the social culture of the school. Many sixth-graders who wish to "fit in" may adopt the behaviors--including teasing--of those students who have been in the school longer and who have more power to dictate the social norm. Bullies seemed to be characterized as being popular and attracting many followers. They were considered confident with superb social skills, which could be used to easily manipulate their peers and adults. With such good social skills and the ability to attract positive feedback from peers through their negative behaviors, it’s easy to see how bullying can become a self-reinforcing act for the bully (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2001).
These findings are supported through research conducted by Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster (2003) on a group of almost 2,000 6th grade students. The participants from this study were collected from a community sample of 11 urban schools in Los Angeles. Results were measured by peer reports of who bullies and who is victimized, self-reports of psychological distress, and peer and teacher reports of a range of adjustment problems. Most importantly, the study relied on classmates to report which students were involved in bullying, because they had ample opportunities to observe peers' behavior in situations where bullying was most likely to take place. Students provided confidential reports on which classmates bully others and which are victims of bullying. Again, results showed that despite having increased conduct problems in school, bullies were psychologically stronger and had a higher social status than their victims. Even teachers’ ratings indicated that the bullies were the most popular group in school (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003). This would lead one to believe that the idea of bully, and the behaviors associated with it, will only continue due to peer-reinforcement.

**Victim**

The second participant in a bullying conflict is the victim. At times, so much attention (good or bad) is given to the bully. The victim or target in a bullying situation can be over-looked or missed by parents and other adults. Part of this could be due to the nature and make-up of the victims in these conflicts. Many of the traits exhibited by bullies are exactly opposite of those characteristics of targets.

There isn’t one trait an individual possesses that guarantees he or she will become a victim of bullying. Olweus (1993) described the target of a bullying situation as follows:
The typical victims are more anxious and insecure than students in general. Further, they are often cautious, sensitive, and quiet. When attacked by other students, they commonly react by crying (at least in the lower grades) and withdrawal. Also, victims suffer from low self-esteem, and they have a negative view of themselves and their situation. They often look upon themselves as failures and feel stupid, ashamed, and unattractive (p. 32).

Many of these victims seem to be loners or students who are abandoned in some way, shape, or form at school. Most are not aggressive in nature and shy away from violence. Victims seem to have trouble asserting themselves in groups, and therefore, may lend themselves to becoming targets of bullies (Olweus, 1993).

A group of researchers were interested in studying childhood personality traits and participant roles in bullying situations. Tani, Greenman, Schneider, and Fregosoin (2003) conducted their study using approximately 200 3rd and 4th grade students from two public elementary schools in Central Italy. Even though there may be some cultural differences compared to the United States, bullying is still the same in Italy. All students were asked similar questions about the personality traits and roles of bullying participants. The researchers used a 21-item Participant Role Scale to identify the roles played by the participants during incidents of bullying. The results showed that victims of bullying situations are perceived to have poor social skills and tend to be more emotionally unstable than other participants. Another characteristic of targets in this study was that they are loners due to their poor social skills and lack of friendliness toward their peers (Tani et al., 2003).
**Bystander**

The third and final participant in a bullying incident is the bystander. Bystanders observe the bullying situation up close or from afar. Bystanders usually watch bullying in silence or occasionally laugh due to nervousness (Doll, Song, & Siemers, 2004; Pellegrini & Long, 2004). Many observers fear that if they do communicate with the victim, they too may fall prey to harassment and/or abuse from the bully (Davis, 2005).

Bystanders play an important role in most bullying situations. The observing peer or peers can not only reinforce the problem, intentionally or unintentionally with their presence during an incident, but can also become a bully themselves. Research has shown that individuals, young and old, may act more aggressively after observing an aggressive act modeled by another individual or group (Cunningham, 2007; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). This is even more evident when the model appears to be rewarded through his or her “victory” over the target (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Rigby and Johnson conducted an international study to find out what children think when they witness bullying. The researchers made a video of cartoons showing different kinds of bullying, both physical and verbal, with bystanders present. The video was shown to upper elementary and middle school children in South Australia. Most of the children were split when asked what they would personally do as a bystander in each situation. There were those that believed they would help the victim in some way and those who would ignore him. Surprisingly, some children and adults approve of bullying. Some found the violence or possibility of violence attractive (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Rigby and Johnson suggested that parents and teachers have little influence on the actions of their children. The most effective influence on children's bystander behavior is what
they think their friends expect of them. This may be true in most cases; however, teachers and parents should continue to teach indirectly so that children can be encouraged to object to bullying when a parent or teacher is not around. In addition, bystanders who are more easily influenced by bullies tend to be the “followers” with no defined status among their social group. They would like to find a way to assert themselves and gain popularity among their peers (Olweus, 1993).

Another factor that affects how observers will relate or react to a bullying incident is their definition of what bullying is. Many times peers are not properly educated on what is and is not considered bullying. Mishna (2004) administered a survey to sixty-one students in grades four and five in four public schools to identify students who reported being victims of bullying. A prevailing pattern emerged about how difficult it was for students to identify what was and was not a bullying incident. Not only did the children lack a firm understanding of bullying, but to make matters worse, they were adamant that communicating this kind of incident to an adult would not help (Mishna, 2004).

Quite often the idea that bystanders of bullying incidents are only students, not educators, is considered true. But if we forget to include teachers and other adults who work in our schools as observers, the problem of bullying will most certainly continue. Just like children, teachers may have difficulty recognizing a case of bullying from something that is not. Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, and Wiener (2005) highlighted this problem in their study of teachers’ understanding of bullying. The study included nine boys and nine girls in grades four and five who identified being frequently bullied. Each child's teacher was also selected to be a part of the interview to gain an understanding of how teachers understood bullying in general and specifically, with the respect to the self-
identified students (Marriam, 2002). Furthermore, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with 13 teachers with respect to 17 children (10 teachers had one child in their class, two teachers had two children, and one had three). Most teachers surveyed had trouble recognizing victims in their own classrooms and how to intervene when a true situation of bullying occurred. With all the pressures teachers and faculty members are under to properly educate each child in their classrooms, reporting student misbehavior can be an added source of unwanted stress and anxiety. This kind of attitude can foster misbehavior and bullying in a school setting (Mishna et al., 2005).

The idea of bullying can be complex and hard to distinguish for many people. It takes on many different shapes and forms in our schools every day. Understanding the major components of bullying, as well as all of the participants involved, is the first essential step in properly identifying and preventing it throughout a school system.

**School-Wide Approach to Bullying Prevention**

The effects of a school-wide approach to bullying prevention are abundant in research all over the world. In the mid-1980s, Olweus conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of a bullying prevention program he developed. One of the major components of his program was to have awareness and involvement of all school participants, which included 25,000 students (aged 11-14) from 42 different schools in Norway. Data were collected using a questionnaire developed in connection with the nationwide campaign against bullying. The inventory provided the students with the definition of bullying, certain time periods bullying took place, several different answer choices such as, "about once a week," and "several times a day," and included questions about the attitudes and reactions of peers, teachers, and parents. The program showed a
marked reduction in bullying behavior by more than 50%. Other anti-social behaviors, such as truancy, fighting, vandalism, and drunkenness were reduced (Olweus, 1991).

Furthermore, signs of improvement regarding various aspects of the social climate of the schools were found “Improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude to schoolwork and the school” (Olweus, 2005, p. 395).

Again, in early 2000, Olweus conducted a longitudinal study on the effects of the New National Initiative Project for the Norwegian government. This project offered Olweus’s bullying prevention program to all comprehensive schools in Norway which included 21,000 students, in grades 4 – 7. The schools were not randomized by conditions but had approximately the same levels of bully/victim problems at the start of the study. Samples were taken from each school at three different time periods: the autumn of 2001, the spring of 2002, and the autumn of 2002. Results proved to be quite similar to those found in Olweus’s previous study. Statistics showed that the level of bully behavior in the participating schools was reduced. The number of students being bullied dropped between 32% and 34%, and the number of students bullying their peers dropped between 37% and 49% (Olweus, 2005). I should note that it was a very turbulent year for teachers in Norway when this program was implemented because of the introduction of a new National Curriculum that made heavy demands on their time and emotional resources. This is likely to have reduced the quality of implementation of the program in this study.

The Dare to Care Program is another bullying prevention program designed to reduce bullying behaviors and create safe and secure learning environments. The Dare to Care Program was tested in four Calgary elementary schools. The schools were selected
from the same geographic community to match general student characteristics such as socio-economic status and ethnicity across schools (Beran, Tutty, & Steinrath, 2004). The sample comprised 197 students in grades 4-6 to ensure that they could read and understand the measures. Teachers within the schools administered the questionnaires, reading from a script that explained to students that the purpose of the study was to understand children's perceptions of bullying. The Colorado School Climate Survey was designed to measure several aspects of the school environment (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, and Short-Camilli, 2000). For this study, four subscales were used: bullying experienced, bullying witnessed, students' responses to witnessing bullying as well as students' perceptions of the school climate. Students rated the frequency that they were bullied on a 5-point Likert-type scale from ‘never’ to ‘five or more times per week’. The program was tested for a three-month period and a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on each dependent variable (bullying experienced, bullying witnessed, helping strategies, and victim attitudes) with school as the independent variable to determine differences between schools on baseline measures. The analysis was used to make sure the two schools were similar at pretest. Because the schools were not equivalent at pretest, the researchers used paired sampled t-test procedures separately with the data for each school to assess pre/post test differences on the outcome measures (Beran et al. 2004). The results showed a significant decrease in bullying occurrences in the pilot schools compared to the schools that had no program in place.

A middle school in rural Eastern United States was selected for a case study to determine the importance of a school-wide approach to bullying prevention and the role that school culture plays in effectively implementing bullying prevention programs
(Coyle, 2008). The school consisted of 1,050 students and 65 faculty members. Data were collected from open-ended, semi-structured interviews along with informal observations and analysis of school documents with random students and faculty members. One of the most critical factors needed to implement a bullying prevention program was collaboration and connection between all school participants. Many of the individuals who were interviewed mentioned that their environment of communication and participation with all school members created a climate where children felt safe and ready learn. The individuals who were interviewed felt that this type of school collaboration helped to reduce bullying behavior in their school (Coyle, 2008). The findings from this study suggest that schools should consider closely examining the characteristics of its culture when deciding to implement a bullying prevention program. However, there is still little research available focusing on the elements of school culture that promotes the successful implementation of a bullying prevention program.

Another approach called The Bully Busters program is a group-based, teacher-targeted bullying reduction program that has been developed to help meet the educational, cultural, and fiscal needs of the school systems in the United States (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). The Bully Busters program model states that aggression and bullying are behaviors borne of social skills deficits and that the most effective means of reducing aggression and bullying behaviors in the school is through increasing the awareness, knowledge, and efficacy of teachers (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). Whitted and Dupper (2005) studied several decades of bullying prevention research and indicated that the most successful primary interventions address the following: (1) the interventions are designed to positively impact school climate, (2) the
interventions are designed to positively impact the teachers' ability to intervene in bully victim dyads (also known as teacher efficacy), and (3) the interventions are designed to positively impact the bullies and victims themselves. Thus, the best practices for preventing or reducing bullying behaviors in schools involve a multilevel and comprehensive approach that impacts the school and classroom climate, the teachers, and the students (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Garrity et al., 2000). Teachers need to know how they deal with school-based aggression and bullying. The Bully Busters program was piloted at a public elementary school in Athens, Georgia. This program is implemented in the form of a staff development workshop, held over the course of three weeks for two hours per meeting. Teachers share what they learned in their workshop with the students by using this knowledge in class activities. In this study with elementary-aged children, the students reported a 40% reduction in their aggressive behaviors and a 19% reduction in their victimization experiences over the course of the school-year. The program was replicated at a public middle school in Athens, Georgia, and was also found to be effective. In this study the authors reported a significant increase in teachers' knowledge of specific skills for reducing bullying and aggression, a significant increase in their sense of efficacy for managing bullying and aggression problems, and a significant reduction in office referrals for behavioral problems (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). The Bully Busters program is an effective skills-based bullying prevention program that targets teacher awareness and proactive interventions.

The Lincoln Public School District in Nebraska developed a TeamMates program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. This program targets students in grades four through eight at five middle schools and their respective feeder elementary schools.
These schools have higher poverty, mobility, and minority rates than the district averages. The TeamMates program currently serves over 600 students, many from low-income neighborhoods, who have experienced a number of school and behavioral problems, including bullying and victimization. The goal of the three-year grant-funded project was to serve over 150 students who have been involved in at least one bullying incident. There is a TeamMates facilitator, who is responsible for implementing mentoring activities and supporting youth and volunteers, at each school site. The TeamMates program has two main goals: The first is the creation of positive mentoring relationships that will improve academic achievement, school attendance, social behaviors, and postsecondary planning in participating youth. The second goal is an increase in mentor retention rates so that they can form the lasting, long-term relationships research indicates lead to positive outcomes for mentored youth (Garringer, 2008). A 2007 Gallup research project found that almost 44% of participating students improved their grades, 72% reduced their number of disciplinary referrals, and 86% improved their school attendance (Garringer, 2008).

**Summary**

An effective bullying prevention program which can lead to a positive school climate is best created by adults who are supportive of students, a staff who are positive role models, consistent and firm rules, and a well-defined plan to address bullying behaviors (Yoon, Barton, & Taiariol, 2004). This type of program should not need any additional funding to be effective. Bullying prevention has proved to be a complex process, which presents many challenges for educational institutions. Research has shown that the most important aspect of any bullying prevention program is gaining
commitment and dedication from all school participants. Because bullying involves almost every individual in the school setting (directly or indirectly), an effective bullying prevention program must have positive collaboration between all administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff, students, parents, and community members. Through the steady commitment of all involved, and with the use of proper resources and tools, the idea of a “bully-free” school seems within our reach.
Chapter III: Results and Analysis Relative to the Problem

This chapter will provide a synthesis of the studies that I have reviewed in chapter II. It is my goal to take a number of studies from each subtopic and synthesize them so that I can answer my research question.

Three Characteristics of Bullying

Research has shown that bullies seem to be characterized as being popular and attracting many followers (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Thunfors & Cornell, 2008; Ziegler & Rosenstein-Manner, 1991). Bullies are considered confident with superb social skills, which could be used to easily manipulate their peers and adults. With good social skills and the ability to attract positive feedback from peers through their negative behaviors, it’s easy to see how bullying can become a self-reinforcing act for the bully (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2001). Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster (2003) found that bullies were psychologically stronger and had a higher social status than the victims.

Bullying is not something that children can solve themselves. In many cases, bullying is a power struggle that is difficult to change without the help of an adult. Victims in a bullying situation are perceived to have poor social skills and tend to be more emotionally unstable than other participants (Tani et al., 2003). Passive victims represent roughly 80-85% of all victims (Olweus, 2003). It is worth noting that some of the characteristics of passive victims may be seen as contributing factors as well as consequences of victimization (Limber, 2002). For example, if a child feels and acts insecure, his behavior may signal to others that he or she is an easy victim for bullying. However, a child who is bullied regularly also is likely to experience insecurity because of the bullying behavior. I have witnessed this act of cruelty in various elementary
buildings. Victims tend to be weaker and less confident than their peers, which lead to increased bullying. It is clear that bullying has a dramatic effect on both victims and bullies. Both groups suffer from some of the same emotional and psychological problems that can develop as a result of bullying (Espelage, Mebane, & Adams, 2004; Nansel et al, 2001; National Education Association, 2003). With victims and bullies at such a high risk for adverse consequences, it is imperative that school systems make bullying prevention a top priority.

Extensive research has shown how important the bystander's role is in eliminating bullying from happening (Davis, 2005; Olweus, 2003; Pellegrini & Long, 2004; Rodkin, 2004). However, many children lack a firm understanding of what bullying is, and to make matters worse, many bystanders are adamant that communicating this kind of incident to an adult would not help (Mishna, 2004). Many teachers also have trouble recognizing victims in their own classrooms and how to intervene when a true situation of bullying occurs. With all the pressures teachers and faculty members are under to properly educate each child in their classrooms, reporting student misbehavior can be an added source of unwanted stress and anxiety. This kind of attitude can foster misbehavior and bullying in a school setting (Mishna et al., 2005). These findings help me understand how important it is to have a bullying prevention program in which all school participants are actively involved and have consistent expectations.
School-Wide Approach to Bullying Prevention

Researchers have identified several key factors influencing an effective bullying prevention program for school districts. All school participants need to be united in this cause in order to create change and eliminate bullying altogether. One study suggested that one of the most critical factors needed to implement a bullying prevention program was collaboration and connection between all school participants (Coyle, 2008). Many of the individuals who were interviewed mentioned that their environment of communication and participation with all school members created a climate where children felt safe and ready to learn and that this type of school collaboration helped to reduce bullying behavior in their school (Coyle, 2008).

It is helpful to note that if one school participant is not on board with the bullying prevention program, than there is a good chance that the school will face a difficult challenge in meeting the goals for the program. Bullying prevention programs are more successful if the entire school community is engaged, committed, and involved (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001). In one study, between 40% and 60% of students in elementary and secondary schools reported that their teachers tried to make an attempt at putting a stop to a bullying situation “once in a while” or “almost never” (Olweus, 1993). In this situation, bullying became a major issue because teachers were not fully aware of what bullying looked like or even how to stop it from occurring. Therefore, it is vital to equip all school participants with a good knowledge of the makeup of a bullying situation in order to develop and implement an intervention model that will be successful in any school setting.
A few factors that may affect the full implementation and evaluation of a bullying prevention program would include: a lack of assistance from teachers and support staff, insufficient funding for appropriate training and materials for school participants, and not enough time in the school calendar for continuous learning/reinforcement for school participants. Also, the support of parents and guardians will play a major factor in whether or not a bullying prevention program is a success. If the knowledge and skills learned in school from this program are not fostered properly at home for students, there will be no foundation built for further growth and development as a life-long learner in our society.

Creating an effective bullying prevention program at the elementary level falls on the shoulders of the educators and support staff. These individuals work hand-in-hand with students on a daily basis. They have the power to create a learning environment where children feel comfortable and confident in their surroundings. This will lead to the optimal situation for children to be successful both academically and socially.

Summary

Although bullying and related behaviors have been around for many years, it has only been recently that this phenomenon has gained world-wide exposure and attention. Research has shown over and over again the kind of impact bullying has on a school system and its participants. The overall school climate is negatively affected in institutions where bullying is prevalent. This leads to anxiety and fear among school members, resulting in a learning environment that is detrimental to academic success and social development. Although bullying presents immediate consequences, it can also have long-lasting, severe effects on the individuals involved.
The positive side of all the new bullying research is that there are effective solutions to the problem. Schools and communities are beginning to dedicate themselves to one goal: creating “bully-free” institutions. Administrators and other school faculty are starting to learn what bullying is and how to actively prevent it. With the proper education and awareness, students are discovering that they too can be a positive solution to bullying behavior in their schools. Parents and other community members can carry on the bullying prevention program through active involvement with their school systems. The current trend of research has more and more resources becoming available to schools to help them combat the problem of bullying.
Chapter IV: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendation

Most people agree that bullying is a complex problem which affects almost every school. Bullying has shown to take on various forms in different schools, which in turn leads to a variety of negative issues administrators must deal with. Therefore, it is evident that a comprehensive, systematic approach to bullying prevention should be taken. The U.S. Department of Education (1998) suggested some general guidelines to follow when setting up a bullying prevention program.

A comprehensive approach…shows the most promise in helping to create a safe school environment that will help children grow academically and socially. Before implementing any efforts to address bullying or other violence at school, school administrators should keep in mind that:

• Ideally, efforts should begin early – as children transition into kindergarten – and continue throughout a child’s formal education;
• Effective programs require strong leadership and on-going commitment on the part of school personnel;
• On-going staff development and training are important to sustain programs;
• Programs should be culturally sensitive to student diversity issues and developmentally appropriate; and
• Parental and community involvement in the planning and execution of such programs is critical (p. 5).
A school that is committed to stopping bullying and all the behaviors associated with bullying, need to take each case seriously. This is another reason why it is very important to take a school-wide approach to bullying prevention. All school participants should be on board with the program in order to control or end bullying behaviors. The school-wide approach should address three things: 1. Educating all school participants (students, teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents) on what bullying or harassing behavior is and isn’t. 2. Changing the behavior and actions of bullies. 3. Empowering the victims of bullies to stand up for themselves (Horne, Orpinas, Newman-Carlson, & Bartolomucci, 2004). If all school participants actively engage themselves into this type of intervention, a safe learning environment has a chance to become reality for any and all school systems that are willing to take on the challenge of this growing problem.

When an individual school or school district feels it has a problem with bullying and other negative behaviors, one of the first steps taken must be to organize a committee to oversee all aspects of bullying prevention. It is helpful to find individuals with a strong passion and enthusiasm for creating a positive social climate in the school. The bully prevention committee should consist of school participants, such as administrators, teachers, counselors, non-teaching staff, parents, and other community members. The goal of this committee would be to examine/adjust school guidelines for behavior, educate/train staff members, and continuously monitor the effectiveness of the bullying prevention program for possible changes in the future (Davis, 2005).

After forming a committee to organize and monitor bullying prevention in the school, the next step is to administer a school-wide needs assessment. A survey would be
administered to students to assess the nature and extent of bullying behavior and general attitudes toward bullying. Ideally, this survey would be given to students at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. By doing this, not only does the bullying prevention committee obtain some valuable knowledge of the various dimensions of the problem in their school, they can also use the information to effectively evaluate their bullying prevention program. Even if the amount of bullying occurring in the educational institution is shown to be relatively low through the needs assessment, complete elimination of bullying behaviors should be the ultimate goal or focus for every school (Olweus, 1993). There are too many negative consequences that can result from allowing any type of bullying to occur where children learn.

Another very important component to an effective bullying prevention program would be gaining overall staff support through education and proper training. It is vital that a school system has support from its staff members before any more planning takes place by the bullying prevention committee. The staff should be given an overview of what the program consists of and their part in it. When faculty members agree to the program presented, effective training must occur for the project to have a chance to be successful. Proper training should consist of, but is not limited to: discussions about guidelines for student behavior, common terminology regarding bullying, signs/symptoms to look for with bullying, and proper procedures for handling a bullying situation when it occurs (Bitney, 1996). Additional training may be needed for staff members as the school year goes on depending on the effectiveness of the program.

In addition to gaining commitment from all school staff members and providing them with appropriate training, the bullying prevention committee should gain
acceptance and support from parents and other community members if possible. A close relationship between a school system and its parents is clearly desirable if bullying problems are to be successfully eliminated (Olweus, 1993). This can be accomplished in many different ways. Usually, parents and other community members are notified about a PTA meeting (ideally taking place at the beginning of the school year) where the topic of bullying prevention will be the focus. The bullying prevention program is laid out for parents and other community members so they are aware of the stance the school is taking on this issue. At the end of this meeting it is the hope of the school to gain support from parents on implementing the actual program at school. Parents and other citizens of the surrounding community should be given opportunities to be active members in the bullying prevention program throughout the school year.

Another key component of a successful bullying prevention program is organizing an assembly with all school participants, to introduce the program. This event would serve as the “kick-off” to the program for the whole school and surrounding community. The purpose of this assembly is to give students a general idea about what the bullying prevention program is and to gain support/excitement from the student body about their participation in the program. The assembly could include things like guest speakers, banners, posters, fliers, stickers, t-shirts, and technology devices (slideshow presentation or videos). If the school has a band, they could play the school fight song at the event as well (Bitney, 1996). After this assembly takes place, other school events could be planned to keep school participants excited and informed of what is happening with the bullying prevention program. It is essential to keep all members of the program committed to the cause throughout the school year.
Once students, staff, and other school participants have been introduced to the bullying prevention program through a school-wide assembly, it is critical that teachers have some materials and resources to “bully-proof” their classrooms and school. To ensure success of the program, teachers must spend some time teaching lessons, facilitating classroom discussions/meetings, and role-playing situations regarding bullying behavior throughout the school year. These activities will provide students and teachers time to gain a better understanding of what bullying is and practice on how to safely eliminate a negative situation. In addition to these activities, school counselors and/or other members of the bullying prevention committee could set up small support groups designed to help victims of bullying. It is important that victims of bullying feel comfortable receiving help and gain vital skills to aid them in preventing further acts of harassment (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2004).

Finally, in order to ensure that a bullying prevention program continues to be successful in a school, an evaluation tool or system must be created to monitor the effectiveness of the program. This could simply consist of having students filling out the needs assessment periodically throughout the school year. Adult school participants could fill out a similar survey on how they feel the bullying prevention program is working in their school system. Another idea for measuring the success of a bullying prevention program would be to compare and analyze the number of incidence reports your school has of bullying and other negative behaviors. It is important to note that when using this method of evaluation, you should expect a brief increase in reports of bullying right after initiating the program. An increase in bullying is a common occurrence among successful, behavior modification programs (Bitney, 1996).
Areas for Further Research

In order to effectively determine the overall success of this bullying prevention program, it will be important to give a needs assessment or survey to all school participants throughout the school year. Much of the scheduling for evaluation will be based upon when the program is implemented. For example, based on the scheduled timeline for implementation stated above, an assessment could be administered three times (beginning, middle and end) of the school year.

The data collected from each of the surveys along with observations will be analyzed by the bullying prevention committee to see how they compare with one another. In order for the program to be considered a success, data must show an initial drop in bullying behavior within the school environment. After the first school year of implementation, the bullying prevention committee will need to meet to determine new criteria for verifying the success of the bullying prevention program. It is recommended that the committee base their decisions on what their school system develops for its code of conduct policies for the following school year.

When students arrive in September, the needs assessment should be passed out to all students and staff members to complete. This survey may be given a month later, such as October, depending on other school factors (MEAP testing schedule, new student/classroom orientation). The data collected from the needs assessment will be analyzed by the bullying prevention committee. Based on the results gathered from the two needs assessments, the bullying prevention committee would discuss options for implementation of the program for the following school year. A meeting for all school
faculty would be held in August to report findings and give recommendations for future use of the bullying prevention program.

**Summary**

With so much research already conducted, and much more to follow in the immediate future, the impact of bullying is massive and widespread throughout the world. Many researchers, lead by the work of Dan Olweus, have painted a disturbing picture of what constitutes a bullying event from other negative social interactions children go through at school. Olweus described bullying as a situation where an individual is exposed to negative actions by one or more persons, repeatedly, over a period of time. The bully has a feeling of power and control over his/her victim(s). They are usually characterized as being impulsive, aggressive, and easily frustrated. Bullies show little signs of empathy or compassion for their victims. Surprising to most, bullies tend to be confident and are viewed as being popular by a majority of their peers. On the other hand, victims are commonly characterized as being shy, quiet individuals who keep to themselves. They usually have a low self-esteem and a negative outlook on their situation in life. Most peers see targets as unpopular or socially unacceptable. Bystanders are the third participant in a bullying conflict. They make up 85% of the total student body in a school. These students tend to observe bullying situations silently, from a distance. Most bystanders refrain from getting involved in a bullying situation. They do not feel it is their responsibility to do so.

Well-documented research has revealed the wide range of devastating effects bullying has on the victim(s) and the bully itself. Victims tend to be consumed with high levels of worry and nervousness. They are usually self-conscious and have a greater sense
of fear at school. These targets have difficulty making friends and interacting in social situations. In some cases, these students show less academic achievement than their peers. As victims get older, they are at a higher risk for health issues, such as depression and anxiety. Even more shocking is the fact that these individuals tend to be at a significantly higher risk for suicide than their classmates. Although victims of bullying situations show many adverse consequences, bullies are affected negatively as well. Their aggressive behavior puts them at a very high risk for future criminal activity. Bullies commonly suffer from alcohol and substance abuse. As they get older, bullies will present some of the same health concerns as their victims, such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies.

Bullying prevention has proved to be a complex process, which presents many challenges for educational institutions. Current research has shown that the most important aspect of any bullying prevention program is gaining commitment and dedication from all school participants. Due to the fact that bullying involves almost every individual in the school setting (directly or indirectly), an effective bullying prevention program must have positive collaboration between all administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff, students, parents, and community members. Once a school system has support from all of its members, a committee is formed to organize and monitor the bullying prevention program. The committee will administer a needs assessment to assess the severity of the bullying problem. Once a needs assessment is performed, the committee must educate and train the school staff. After school faculty are trained, it is important to gain support from parents and community members through a meeting. A “kick-off” assembly and other school-wide events should be used to obtain
passion and acceptance from students. Teachers and other faculty members will be prepared with proper resources to further educate and train students in the skills needed to eliminate bullying from their school. Lastly, it will be necessary for the school system to develop an evaluation process or tool to monitor the success of the bullying prevention program over time.

Conclusion

The goal of every educational institution should be to provide all of its students the opportunity to learn in a safe environment. This cannot happen in most schools throughout the world. Every student is affected by bullying in some way, shape, or form. The teachers and other faculty members must deal with escalating threats of negative behavior from students, while feeling enormous amounts of pressure to make sure their students meet all of the new state and federal standards for educational achievement. All of this creates a school climate non-conducive to learning and academic success.

Without awareness, education, and proper training for all school participants, the bullying epidemic will continue to grow throughout America and the rest of the world. We owe it to our children, as well as future generations, to put an end to this preventable dilemma. It is up to us, the administrators, teachers, non-teaching faculty, parents, and community members to take action and establish a united front against bullying in our schools. Through the steady commitment of all involved, and with the use of proper resources and tools, the idea of a “bully-free” school seems within our reach.
References


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