Bullying, Obesity and School Performance

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Co-Author and Screenwriter for

“*This book and movie will save lives*” ~ Dr. John Barge, GA School Superintendent
A Real Story of Obesity
Kids spend too much time judging people by their looks. I don’t know if it will ever change, but maybe Jimmy’s story will help at least one kid catch a break.

Doug Hennig
Obesity will soon be #1 cause of preventable death in US
~ U.S. Surgeon General

160,000 kids per day do not attend school for fear of being bullied
~ U.S. Dept of Justice

The child who is overweight is the most likely to be bullied
~ Journal of Pediatrics

“This generation of children could be the first in the history of the United States to live less healthful and shorter lives than their parents.”
~ Dr. David S. Ludwig, director of the obesity program at Children's Hospital Boston, and one of the authors of the report.
**Obesity in the U.S.**

- 324,000 people die each year from illnesses directly caused or worsened by obesity
- In 2010, 64% of adults were overweight, >30% were obese
- By 2030, >50% adults will be obese
- 25% of children ages 5 to 10 have high cholesterol, high blood pressure.
- Diabetes-related complications of amputations, blindness, kidney failure will drastically increase in people in their 30s and 40s.
- Healthcare costs for a diabetic person is > $10,000 more per year than non-diabetic
- 75% of parents of obese children don’t think they’re obese
- Redefine Happy!

CDC and Children’s Healthcare of ATL
“There’s not going to be a new playground. We are intent on raising test scores. You can’t do that hanging from monkey bars.”
Benjamin Canada, ATL Super. of Schools, 1998

PE is Not recess

*Recess allows self-direction, cooperation, sharing, and conflict resolution (Social Skills)*

States mandate unstructured break time for employees. Why?

States do not mandate recess for 5 to 10 yr old kids; they are required to quietly sit still for hours for the sake of a test

UN Convention on Rights of a Child recognizes the right of a child to, and value in...play ::: All countries but two have adopted this provision.

In this new school world, are we not reinforcing behaviors that lead to obesity and bullying?
Media Time

• 8 to 18-year-olds spend between 8 hrs. 36 mins and 13 hrs. 13 mins per day on electronic devices

• Minority youth:
  • Watch TV and videos one to two hours more a day;
  • Listen to music about an hour more a day;
  • Use computers about 1½ hours more a day;
  • Play video games 30 to 40 minutes longer a day.

• 47% of 8 to 18-year-olds : multi-task with another type of media

• For all groups, number of computer minutes spent on School Work?

• The internet has enabled a new set of bullies

UVA
What Can *Everyone* Do?

- **One less soda per day for a year = 11 lbs**
- Take the stairs, walk around block (10 min.)
- Read labels, cut back on sugar (47 lbs/yr)
- Don’t eat before bed
- Develop a routine for yourself, your kids
- Eat, Cook healthier [Cookinglight.com](http://Cookinglight.com) (adults)
- [Strong4life.com](http://Strong4life.com)
- [PBS.org/kids](http://PBS.org/kids) (Greasy World, Fast Food Freddy)
- Dr. Oz
- **Model behavior you want kids to exhibit**
- EAT BETTER, EXERCISE MORE
- **5-2-1-0** fruits & veggies, max hrs of TV time, hr of activity, sugar drinks
- HFCS vs Diabetes 2
“Children cannot get a quality education if they don’t first feel safe at school.”
Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education

#1 reason a student feels unsafe at school is because they are bullied or know that bullying occurs at their school

3 Million students miss school each month because they do not feel safe, welcome or supported

#1 target for bullying at school is the *overweight* student
Bullying linked to lower school achievement

- A study in VA (published in American Psychological Association by Dewey Cornell) showed that HS campuses with more reported bullying had lower passing rates (3-6% lower) on VA standardized tests.
- In many instances, the level of bullying mattered as much as poverty level.
- Schools with more bullying had higher dropout rates.
- Both victims and bullies score less than bystanders.
- Bullying and lower academic performance are indicative of a negative overall school climate.

- Schools and classrooms with a positive climate have fewer problems online, outside of school.
- A school and community that embraces the arts has a better school climate.
UCLA Study (2010)

• A high level of bullying is consistently associated with lower grades in Middle Schools
• Using a four-point scale, a one-point increase in bullying activity equaled a 1.5 GPA drop for MSs
• Bullied students participate less in class
• Nearly 3 in 4 students were bullied online during a 12 month study
• The bullied student learns to dislike school
• Help in academics reduces chances of being bullied
"The findings illustrate the complex relationships among children's weight, social and emotional well-being, academics and time," said Sara Gable, associate professor in the MU Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology

Obesity is associated with poorer academic performance beginning as early as kindergarten. Studies have variously found that obese students -- and especially girls -- tend to have lower test scores than their slimmer peers, are more likely to be held back a grade, and are less likely to go on to college.

The study followed 6,250 children from kindergarten through fifth grade and found that those who were obese throughout that period scored lower on math tests than non-obese children.
Another study (2012) produced a similar finding: Adolescents' *self-perception* of their weight -- i.e., whether or not they saw themselves as overweight -- was *more strongly associated with academic performance than BMI*, suggesting that *self-esteem* and other intangibles may have a big influence.

The study took another step in this direction by looking at the children's *social skills* and any outward signs of *anxiety, sadness, loneliness, or low self-esteem* (as observed by their teachers and parents).
25 State BD of EDs now use **School Climate** as a tool to judge principals, teachers and the school community

- One component of the student survey is degree of bullying in a school

- Scores will be posted in the media
What can you do?

- Football player/cheerleader mentors
- *Promote Social – Emotional Skills of Students and Adults*(Teachers, Parents, Community)
- Look for signs: grades dropping, attendance, illness, few friends
- Ask “Have you seen bullying? What did you do?”
- Broken Arm story-OWNERSHIP OF ISSUE
- Mix it Up day
- Discuss value in wrong answers – *Whack on the Side of the Head*
- Anti-bully pledge
- Respect agreement
- Anti-bully student committees
- Discuss legacy of school leaders
- Parent/Child book clubs, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT!
- IEPs for bullies
- *Help the bully*(home life, reward good behavior, attention)
- Role play activities to develop empathy, GROUP WORK
- Teach assertiveness in victim
- MODEL CORRECT BEHAVIOR (Be the change…)
- *Behaviors (bullying and eating) are LEARNED*—STAT ABOUT INTERVENTION
Arts in Schools

- Arts education helps foster a *positive culture and climate* in schools.
  - Disciplinary referrals decrease
- Effectiveness of instruction and teachers’ ability to meet the needs of all students increase.
  - Contributes to increasing teacher satisfaction
- Lowering teacher turnover rates, often challenges for low performing schools.
  - Builds *collaboration and communication skills*.
- Students learn to articulate their intentions, receive and offer constructive criticism, and listen actively to others’ ideas.
  - Allows students to experience what it feels like to be active members of a community and to work as a team to determine and achieve common goals.
Journaling Can Be Cathartic

The word cathartic has its origins in Latin and Greek and was originally used in medicine to mean purge, purify, or cleanse. In writing it can mean the same thing but also includes the idea of energize. As you read, recognize how the The Fat Boy Chronicles is written in first person using the journal format. Each day he records his thoughts, feelings, ideas, advice, and even some of his school assignments. Sometimes he writes “Please Don’t Read This Page,” and other times he writes, allowing his English teacher to read “his stories.” It may be an English assignment but Jimmy experiences a catharsis, because he dives in and gives 100% effort.

Task

Create your own journal using a composition or spiral notebook. Start by writing at least four days a week. Record the date and share whether your instructor should read the entry or not, similar to Jimmy’s entries. Record your own thoughts, feelings, ideas, and advice about anything. Set aside at least fifteen minutes to think, reflect, and write. Writing is a process; it’s okay if it’s hard at first. This is an excerpt of Jimmy’s first write:

**Tuesday, 8-15**

Hey, Mrs. Pope. I’m the diet-challenged kid who sits in the last seat by the door. I’m probably bigger now than I was this morning because your class is right after lunch and homeroom; I stay in the back so you don’t have to constantly hear, ‘We can’t see around Jimmy!’ Just trying to help out. Besides
Poetry and Prose

Jimmy uses poetry to express many of the things he understands and feels. Structured poetry can help get the juices flowing, while some people love to just dive in and create their own structure. Either way, poetry continues the catharsis of energizing us toward change.

Task

Complete either of the structured poems, I AM or I don’t understand..., or if you like, try both. Be prepared to read your poem in a small group.

Title - I AM...

First stanza:
I am... 2 special characteristics that you have
I wonder...something you are curious about
I hear...an imaginary sound
I see...an imaginary sight
I want...an actual desire
I am...repeat the first line

Second stanza:
I pretend...something you actually pretend to do

...
Getting to Know Yourself and Others

Sometimes all it takes is a little knowledge and civility to get to know and understand one another. Take some time to get to know someone you don’t normally spend time with; it might change the way you think about others.

Task

Pair up with someone you don’t normally spend time with. Together, develop twelve questions you will ask each other during an interview session. Discuss which questions could be answered without making yourselves feel uncomfortable but, at the same time, will help each of you get to know one another. Make sure questions are not Yes and No.

Example:
Q. What do you do after school?
Q. What is your family like?
Q1              ____________
Q2              ____________
Could it be that if we spend as much money and time on solving the bullying and obesity crises as we did on test-taking strategies, test scores would go up just as much?
Emmy-Award Winning
Documentary
from The Junior League of
Charlotte

write me for the link
“I have never seen a book have such a dramatic impact upon middle school students!”
Benjamin Ruby, Ed.D., Assistant Principal, Northeastern Middle School, York, PA

“As a middle school, we have looked at many programs to deal with bullying. I don’t believe that any of them could have been as powerful as the reading of The Fat Boy Chronicles.”
Rebecca Holthaus, Principal, Chagrin Falls Middle School
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Watch the movie trailer and read more at www.thefatboychronicles.com

Facebook: Become a fan of The Fat Boy Chronicles.

Curriculum Guide at www.sleepingbearbapress.com/educators