Using Research And Teamwork to Bully-proof Your School

Research Based Bully-proofing Strategies
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What Is Bullying?
- Intentional aggression that may be physical, verbal, or emotional.
- Usually committed over an extended period of time - but once is enough!
- Characterized by a real or perceived imbalance of power.
- Compounded by technology (cell phone, internet, computers, blogs, texting, Facebook, Yik Yak, etc.).

What Teachers Must Know
- The most important characteristic of bullies is that they know how to use power.
- They often know how to manipulate others... you included.
- They may be popular with students and do well in school.
- Undefined public spaces at school tend to be "unowned" and are more prone to bullying.

Students can tell you where these unowned places are!

Bullying Behavior
- Physical - hitting, kicking, pinching, choking
- Verbal - threatening, teasing, name calling
- Emotional - ostracizing, rumors, exclusionary behavior.
- Sexual - touching, teasing, threatening - Sexting
  Cyber bullies - Facebook, text messaging, etc...

Bullying and Safety I
An ABC News poll of 500 high school students from across the nation found that when students identify a potentially violent classmate, it is generally a boy and one who has been bullied, rather than a bully.

Bullying and Safety II
- Of the 37 school shootings since 1974, two-thirds of them were directly linked to bullying in some form.

What Hinders Our Efforts?
A. Educators may not understand when the behavior crosses the line into bullying.
B. Educators have too much on their plate as it is
C. Concern that addressing bullying at the school level gives the impression that it is a "problem in our school."
D. Educators have little training in identifying bullying and dealing with it.
E. Parents have even less training on how to bully-proof their kids.
F. What hinders YOUR efforts?
How Prevalent is Bullying?

- Huttunen found that 87% of all students have been involved as a bully, victim, or witness (1996).
- 85% of bullying occurs within the context of peer group interactions (Atlas, 1998).
- 31% of middle school students reported being bullied at least three times a year (Haynie, 2001).

Why Bother?

In the past 30 days in your school:
- What percent was "picked-on"
- What percent considered suicide because of bullying?
- What percent does not feel safe?
- What percent looked to gangs for protection from bullies?
Why Focus On Bully-Proofing?
Troubling Answers from Research

1. Increased acts of school violence are linked to bullying (Sullivan, 2004).

2. A class and school with a bullying culture will make significantly less academic progress than a comparable bully-free group (Cleary, 2001).

3. Increased exposure to violence in the media through video games, music videos, television and movies has influenced bullying behavior (Sullivan, 2004).

4. Addressing bullying actually increases student achievement by reducing fear in students (Feinstein, 2004).

5. Bullying causes the portion of the brain known as the amygdala to close the gateway to the brain and impede learning. There is a strong correlation between a student’s self-concept and academic achievement (Feinstein, 2004).

6. Pepler (1998) found that peers were present for 85% of bullying episodes, yet intervened in only 10% of bullying incidents. Adults intervened in 4% of bullying incidents.

7. Pepler’s work also revealed that two-thirds of those students believe that schools respond poorly, infrequently, or ineffectively.

8. Bullies are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as drinking, drug use, and smoking (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2001).

9. Girls report that emotional bullying is as damaging psychologically as physical bullying (Galen, 1997).

10. Students are less likely to intervene in bullying situations in schools that tolerate bullying (Jeffrey, 2001).

11. One study found that out of all the students who had witnessed bullying, only 21% of them reported it because they thought it could not be stopped (Adair, 2000).

12. Bullying impacts the social dynamic in the school in a negative way. In one study, peers showed respect to the bully during 74% of the bullying episodes, and showed respect to the victim in only 23% of the episodes (Pepler, 1997).

13. In an extensive study of middle and high school students who identified the three worst things to ever happen to them in their life, the death of a parent was first followed by bullying (Lind, 1996).

14. Strong links exist between school bullying and future domestic abuse (Cullingford, 1997).

15. A 2001 survey by the Center for The Prevention of School Violence found that 39% of parents feared for their child’s safety at school.
Bully-Proofing Staff Survey

Which of these statements do you agree with?

1. Bullying is a part of growing up.  
   Yes ___  No ___

2. Bullying is only harmless fun.  
   Yes ___  No ___

3. Bullying is often the fault of the person bullied.  
   Yes ___  No ___

4. There is more bullying than there used to be.  
   Yes ___  No ___

5. Children can usually sort out bullying for themselves.  
   Yes ___  No ___

6. Victims eventually toughen up.  
   Yes ___  No ___

7. Adults getting involved make it worse.  
   Yes ___  No ___

8. Bullying is inevitable.  
   Yes ___  No ___

9. Bullying is mainly physical.  
   Yes ___  No ___

10. Children need to learn to fight their own battles.  
    Yes ___  No ___

11. Bullying is a problem at my school.  
    Yes ___  No ___

12. Bullying is a problem in my class.  
    Yes ___  No ___

13. Our staff is comfortable dealing with bullying.  
    Yes ___  No ___

14. Our parents are well equipped to teach their kids bully-proofing skills.  
    Yes ___  No ___

15. I know the school policy and consequences for students who bully other students.  
    Yes ___  No ___

16. We have a concerted school-wide commitment to rid bullying from our campus.  
    Yes ___  No ___

17. Can you remember a time that you can still remember when you were the victim of a bully or witnessed bullying?
XYZ Student School Bullying Survey

Teacher: ___________________________ Grade: _____________ Date: _____________

This survey is an anonymous survey to be used in school improvement planning.
Directions for questions 1-5. Circle the answer that best describes how you feel most of the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I think that my school is safe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel safe in my classroom.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel safe in the hallway.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel safe in the cafeteria.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel safe in the gym/playground.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel safe in the locker room</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1-2 times/month</th>
<th>1-2 times/week</th>
<th>Everyday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. I see bullying in school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I see bullying in my classroom.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I see bullying in the gym.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I see bullying in the locker room.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I see bullying in the cafeteria.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I see bullying in the hallway.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I see bullying on the bus.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I see bullying at the bus stop.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. How do adults react to bullying in our school?
   a. They do not see it.
   b. They see it but do nothing.
   c. They stop the bullying and punish the bully.
   d. They stop the bullying and try to talk out a solution.
   e. They stop the bullying but then walk away.
   f. Other: ____________________________

16. How does it make you feel when you see bullying?
Bully-proofing Our Classrooms
Educat ing Our Educators

I. Re-educate yourself on who the bully targets are.
   A. Girls who are most at-risk are girls who are new to the school, are unassertive, or had few friends (Owens, 2000).
   B. In general, children who have little or no support from others are vulnerable (Peterson, 1999).
   C. Three gender types particularly at risk of being bullied are exceptionally attractive girls, exceptionally unattractive girls, and boys who appear to be “gay” (Shakeshaft, 1995).
   D. Targets often have some physical characteristic that makes them stand out such as being overweight, being shorter than their peers, or having a speech impediment.
   E. Bully targets may also be new to the school.

II. Decide that you will make a difference.
   A. Identify student(s) that may be bully targets early in the year or as they enroll in school.
   B. Monitor their behavior, grades, and interaction with peer groups.
   C. Monitor the reaction of their classmates when the target asks questions, enters the room, or tries to participate in group activities.
   D. Get counselors involved if you suspect bullying.
   E. If you counsel a child regarding bullying, the AMA suggests the following questions to help you assess if a child is being bullied:
      1. Have you ever been teased at school?
      2. Do you know of other children who have been teased?
      3. Have you ever reported being teased? What happened?
      4. What kind of things do children tease you about?
      5. Do you have nicknames at school?
      6. Do you sit with other students at lunch, PE, or on the playground?
   F. Plan a teachable moment to educate your students on:
1. What are bullying behaviors
2. Why they are not acceptable
3. What the school rules/consequences are for bullying
4. How to report bullying

G. Rehearse strategies with students on how to help a friend who is bullied. These may include:
   - Have the guts not to participate in laughing or participating with the bully.
   - Help remove the target from the situation. Invite him/her to go somewhere else with you.
   - Help the victim report the bullying behavior. Having a friend present to lend support can make a big difference.
   - Report the bullying yourself. Reporting is not snitching when your goal is to help a friend get away from trouble.

H. Have a school mailbox – **not a bully box** – BIG difference

I. Have a discipline rubric to use school-wide when bullying takes place

J. Take prompt action when you see bullying take place. The faster the report can be dealt with the more you can lessen the impact on the victim.

K. Remember why victims don’t report bullying
   1. They fear retaliation
   2. They think it will make the situation worse
   3. They do not believe adults can or will help
   4. Telling on peers is “snitching”
   5. They think it will just “go away.”

L. Snitching – Saying something to get someone in trouble
   Reporting – Saying something to keep someone out of trouble

*It will take the consistent, deliberate effort of every staff member to rid this from our campus. Make it a personal commitment to be the strongest link in the bully-proofing chain!*
Research Based Strategies to Deal With The Bully and the Victim

A. Be careful not to draw too much attention to the bully behavior in front of other students. This may further embarrass the victim and further enhance the perception of power by the bully.

B. Isolate the bully and conference with the bully alone.

C. Remember: Immediately after an aggressive act is often the worst time to engage in moral reasoning. Since the student does not yet know their consequence they are less likely to interact in genuine reflection and discussion. You are more likely to hear attempts at the “right answer” that show they do not need consequences.

D. Assign the consequence for the bullying behavior – then provide the counseling using the strategies provided.

E. Follow-up with the victim to restore support and security.

F. Follow-up with the victim days later to assess any further bullying behavior.

G. Bullies often have little sympathy for their victims. Any attempt to conference with the victim and the bully together may further elevate their sense of power in their eyes and the victim’s eyes.
Counseling the Bully and the Target
Adapted from Schools Where Everyone Belongs, by Stan Davis.

A. Stages of behavior acceptance by the bully during a conference:
1. Denial – “I didn’t do anything.”
2. Externalizing – “Someone pushed me and I hit her.”
3. Minimizing – “I only barely hit her on accident.”
4. Accepting consequences – “I did hurt someone.”
Track these stages as you counsel a bully.

B. Conferencing with the witnesses
Gathering witness statements may become necessary as most bullies deny their misbehavior. Remember, the bully’s power comes from getting away with the behavior repeatedly. In conferencing with witnesses, it is important to:

**IMPERATIVE – Do not place witnesses in view of the bully or other witnesses for several reasons. This is a common mistake.**

1. These witnesses may be friends with the bully or threatened by the bully.
2. Isolating them prevents the opportunity to organize their stories.
3. Isolate witnesses so they do not know who to text message.

Remind the witness that you need the facts and will keep the information confidential. “As it is I do not think you are in trouble. If you lie at this point then you will be in more trouble than the bully.”

C. Tips For Counseling the bully.

**Tip 1** – Just after an aggressive act is often the wrong time to engage in moral reasoning. Since the student does not yet know their consequence they are less likely to interact in genuine reflection and discussion. You are more likely to hear attempts at the “right answer” that show they do not need consequences.

**Tip 2** – Use the rubric and let the student know the consequence of their action before you try to begin counseling the student. He/she is much more likely to talk honestly.

**Tip 3** – If the student denies the behavior inform him/her that you will discuss the incident with any potential witnesses, review “surveillance camera video,” and then punish for the behavior and for telling a lie. “Right now, you are only in trouble for ___.”

**Tip 4** – Leading questions may help you get to the truth. “What made you mad enough at her to tell everyone to make fun of her.”

**Tip 5** – If the bully focuses on what the victim did redirect him/her to his/her behavior. “I want to hear about what she did later. Right now we are talking about what you did.”

**Tip 6** – At this point refer to the discipline rubric and have the student tell you what the consequence is. This will help prevent the loss of connection to the adult and see the consequence as a direct result of his/her actions.