

Bullying and Violence Prevention in Schools

Administrators Management Meeting

September 21, 2005

Dr. George Batsche
Director, Student Support Services Project
University of South Florida

Daniel Geer
Director-Safe and Drug Free Schools Project
Marion County School District

1

Advanced Organizers

- Bullying is about climate
- Identification of *victims*
- Victims likely perpetrators
- Significant gender differences
- Key factors include staff education, supervision, and student involvement
- Student beliefs worrisome
- Adults perpetrate myths

2

How Big Is the Problem?

- Nansel (2001), 15,686 students grades 6-10 United States
 - 30% of students involved
 - 13% bully
 - 11% victim
 - 6% both
- Solberg & Olweus (2003) 5,171 students grades 5-9 Norway
 - 6.5% bully
 - 10.1% victim
 - 1.6% both

3

Crime & violence in Schools

- Olweus, Norwegian researcher estimates
 - 5 million EI/JHS students engaged in or victims of violence in schools
 - 282,000 students physically attacked in US secondary schools monthly
 - 125,000 secondary school teachers (12%) are threatened monthly; 5,200 attacked
 - Burglaries occur 5X more often in schools
 - 8% of Jr/Sr students miss 1 day of school per month because of fear

4

Definitions

Aggressive behavior

- Behavior that is often less extreme and more normative and is not necessarily limited to physical harm. (Reactive/Instrumental)

Violent behavior

- Serious and extreme behavior that is intended to cause physical harm to another person.

5

Bullying

- Repeated Harming of Others
- Use of Words or Physical Aggression
- On School Grounds or to/from School
- Unfair Advantage
- Individual or Group
- KEYS: REPEATED, HARM, UNFAIR

6

How Often Must Bullying Occur to be Considered a Bully or Victim?

- 2 to 3 times/month is lower bound cutoff
- Negative effects are related to frequency and intensity of the bullying

7

Jackie came home with a ripped shirt, a bruised cheek, and scrapes on her arms. Her Mom was both scared and furious at the same time. She sent her daughter off to a safe school and this is not what she expected to come home from such a place. Jackie explains that a bigger kid she hardly knew punched her, 'for no reason, Mom. I bumped into her on the playground and she said I did it on purpose. Then she hit me, threw me down, and stood over me.'

8

Many days Jerry and his friends pass Darrel on the way to school. Jerry's group always humiliates Darrel, alternately ignoring him and commenting on how he has no friends. Darrel walks ahead, knowing they are right and fighting back his tears.

9

Development of District Policy

- Distinguish bullying from fighting
 - 4 Factors
 - Harm
 - Repeated
 - Power Imbalance
 - School Related
- Include frequency of occurrence
 - 2-3 X Month
 - Bully or Victim

10

Roles Involved in Bullying

- Bullies
- Victims
- Bully/Victims
- Bystanders
- Noninvolved

11

Forms of Bullying

- Direct
 - Verbal/Physical Aggression
 - Males more likely to use this type
 - Proactive--goal directed, higher peer status
 - Reactive--less effective, no status change
- Indirect
 - Relational
 - Using personal relationship to harm someone
 - Reputational
 - Attempt to harm someone's social status

12

Victims

- **Two types**
 - “Passive victims” - anxious, insecure, appear to do nothing to invite attacks and fail to defend themselves
 - “Provocative victims” - hot-tempered, restless, create tension by irritating and teasing others and fight back or attempt to when attacked
 - “Bully/Victims”- bullies sometimes, victims sometimes—most negative form

13

Victims

- View school as unhappy setting
- Avoid places at school, school events
- Will avoid relentless bullying by skipping school, feigning illness
- Drop in grades
- Increase use of weapons for self protection
- Extreme cases result in suicide

14

Myths About Bullying

- “Boys will be boys.”
- Only physical aggression is a concern
- Eliminating bullies is solution
- Bullies have low self-esteem
- Bullies represent greatest threat
- Bullies and violent students come from dysfunctional homes and “bad” neighborhoods

15

Factors that Contribute to Bullying

- **Student**
 - Attributing hostile intent
 - Few social solutions
 - Poor impulse control
 - Lack empathy
 - Think aggression works
- **Peer**
 - Reinforcer of the bully
 - Assistant to the bully
 - Defender of the victim
 - Outsider /bystander

16

Factors that Contribute to Bullying

- **Family**
 - Low levels of supervision
 - Presence of physical violence
 - Inconsistent/harsh discipline
 - Bullying by siblings
 - Parents value aggression
 - Victims-overcontrolling parents
- **Classroom/School Environment**
 - Classroom/school rules messages discouraging bullying
 - Included in circle of friends is a buffer
 - Isolated socially or physically is a risk factor
 - High levels of adult supervision
 - High expectations for appropriate social behavior
 - Lower levels of exclusion practices (e.g., suspension/expulsion)
 - Collaborative rather than competitive learning

17

Factors that Contribute to Bullying

- **Teacher/Adult**
 - Knowledge of what bullying is and is not
 - Skills to intervene when they see it
 - Adequate supervision
 - Adult respect for students

18

Effects of Bullying

- Related to frequency and intensity of bullying
- Poorer social adjustment for bullies, victims, and bully/victims
- Lower academic achievement
- Loss of friends and loneliness for victims
- Attendance problems for victims
- Loss of trust in school climate/support
- Bystanders
 - Lose confidence in ability to intervene
 - Lose self-respect
 - Become desensitized over time

19

Interventions

- Three tiered
- Tier I
 - Policies/Practices School Wide
 - Building-level assessment
 - Building-wide initiatives re: awareness and prevention
 - Data monitoring system
 - Student/staff awareness training
- Tier II
 - Bully Prevention Program
 - Increased supervision
 - Peer monitoring/support programs
- Tier III
 - Individual/Group targeted interventions
 - Social Skills/Anger Control Training
 - Individual behavior plans

20

How many youths are serious violent offenders or victims?

National self-report results indicate:

- The age of highest risk for the initiation of serious violent behavior is 15-16.
- The risk of initiating violence after age 20 is very low.
- If persons have not initiated serious violent behavior by 20, it is unlikely that they will ever become serious violent offenders.

21

- The highest rates of participation in serious violence are at ages 16-17. (20-25% of males and 4-10% of females report one or more serious violent acts.) After age 17, participation rates drop dramatically.
- Approximately 80% of those who were violent during their adolescent years will terminate their violence by age 21.

22

Characteristics of Safe Schools

From *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide for Safe Schools*

- Focus on academic achievement
- Involve families in meaningful ways
- Develop links to the community
- Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff
- Discuss safety issues openly
- Treat students with equal respect

23

More Characteristics

- Create ways for students to share concerns
- Help students feel safe expressing their feelings
- Have a system for referring students suspected of abuse/neglect
- Offer extended day programs
- Use problem-solving model

24

Early Warning Signs

From *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide for Safe Schools*

- Social withdrawal
- Excessive feelings of isolation and rejection
- Victim of violence
- Feelings of being picked on and persecuted
- Low school interest and poor academic performance

25

Other Warning Signs

- Expression of violence in writing/drawings/speech
- Uncontrolled anger
- Patterns of impulsive and chronic bullying behaviors
- History of discipline problems
- Intolerance of differences/prejudicial attitudes

26

And More Warning Signs

- Drug and alcohol use/abuse
- Affiliation with gangs
- Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms
- Serious threats of violence

27

School Factors

- School-wide discipline plan
- Active, involved principal
- Pro-social training curriculum
- “Zones” and levels of supervision
- Intervention alternatives
- School-home partnerships
- Academic engaged time
- Expectations for success for all students

28
