Bullying: An Overview, including Guidance for Prevention & Improving School Climate

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Why are we addressing Bullying?

- To Protect and keep students Safe; *Feeling Safe at School* is directly correlated with *Increased Academic Achievement*.
- Safe & Drug-Free Schools (Title IV)funding the past decade is gone;
- Current budget cuts and loss/lack of resources impacts capacity to deal with bullying problem.
- Dramatic increase in Cyber-bullying.
- ODE receives a barrage of phone calls regularly from parents seeking assistance for their children getting bullied.
- Bullying problem - National Attention at present, an indicator of the prevalence and ubiquitous nature of it.

What is Bullying?

- Bullying is *ongoing, repeated physical, emotional or verbal aggression by one or more people against another or others*.
- *Implied or obvious Imbalance of Power*.
- Widespread; commonly found where children gather.
- *Detrimental effects* on all involved, including the bully.
- *Deliberate desire* by one or more people to hurt, threaten or frighten someone with words, behavior or actions.
- Varies in its severity; includes *threatening, teasing, name calling, excluding, preventing others from going where they want to or doing what they want to, pushing or hitting, and all forms of physical abuse*. 
ORS 339.356 & 359

- School districts 'shall' [v. are encouraged to] develop policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying, and cyber-bullying ORS 356(1);
  - Provide a statement of consequences & appropriate remedial action for person committing acts ORS 339.356(2)(f).
- Requires school employee to report acts ORS 339.536(1)(B).
- Identify remedial action that may be imposed for failure to report ORS 339.356(1)(C).
- Allows student or volunteer [v. a person] to report acts voluntarily & anonymously (i)(D) to identified school official ORS 339.356(i)(A).
- School Districts 'must' [v. are encouraged to] incorporate into existing training programs for students & school employees the prevention of and appropriate response to acts....ORS 339.359(2, a).
- Each district school board shall adopt written policies ...prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying, and cyber-bullying... OAR 581-22-1140(1)(2).

Ubiquitous Problem

“Bullying is a public health issue, a mental health issue and a physical health issue”

~Walter Roberts, an anti-bullying expert from Minnesota State University
Harassment is distinguishable from more general forms of bullying in that it must be motivated by characteristics of the targeted victim.

Harassment – Targeted Characteristics

Harassment violates federal civil rights laws, per

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex; and
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability.
Oregon Administrative Rule addressing Harassment

- OAR 581-021-0045: Prohibits any act “that unreasonably differentiates treatment, intended or unintended, or any act that is fair in form but discriminatory in operation, either of which is based on age, disability, national origin, race, color, marital status, religion, sex or sexual orientation.”

  - The OAR extends the definition of discrimination or harassment of a protected class to include religion and sexual orientation.

Sexual Harassment

- ORS 342.704: Prohibits sexual harassment, requires policy and posting of policy. Sexual harassment of students includes:
  - A demand for sexual favors in exchange for benefits;
  - Unwelcome conduct by staff or students, of a sexual nature, that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a student’s educational performance or that creates an intimidating, offensive or hostile educational environment.

  - Requires reporting..., requires complaint investigation, notification of student and parents that initiated complaint after investigation, requires posting of policy for 6th through 12th grades, indicates a ‘no retaliation’ clause...”
School’s responsibilities

- Harassment “creates a hostile learning environment when the conduct [significantly disrupts the educational environment] & is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to interfere with or limit a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school.”

- If Bullying is occurring and associated with a protected class, than it is “Harassment” and the law is being violated.

- Currently no legislation at the federal level that prohibits bullying in schools, other than schools needing to have policies regarding bullying in 46 states at present. 13 states give schools the right to intervene with bullying occurring off campus.


Be aware of the potential Harassment claims

- Students with Special Education Needs are bullied (“harassed”) up to 3 – 4 times more, according to some studies, as opposed to their general education peers.

- 86% of LGBT students nationwide reported getting bullied (“harassed”).

  (Note: Schools might consider creating policies regarding “bullying” and “harassment.” The law puts them together, although they can be separate issues.)
Prevalence

- Rate of Bullying grades 6–12 decreased as grade level increased, from 39.4% in grade 6 to 20.4% in grade 12.

- Girls more steady MS – HS; Boys decrease thr/ HS.

- Bullying peaks end of middle school, beginning of high school (7th to 10th grades).

- ‘Social exclusion’

- 2 of 3 students bullied 1 or 2 times/year; 1 in 5 bullied 1-2 times/month; 1 in 10 bullied daily.
According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009

From the National Crime Victimization Survey, School Crime Supplement:

- 28% of students reported they were bullied
  (26.6% of males and 29.5% of females)

- 6% of students reported that they were cyber-bullied (but some more recent studies revealed that this rate has tripled in the past two years).

Who are the players?

1. **Perpetrator** (‘Bully’; person hurting)
2. **Victim** (targeted student, person getting hurt)
3. **Bystander** - does not directly participate necessarily, but reinforces the bully either actively (i.e. - laughing,...) or passively (not intervening).
4. **Non-participant** - does not participate, may not be present or only nearby.
Bullying Behavior included

- 18.8% were made fun of, called names, or insulted in a hurtful way
- 16.5% were the subject of rumors
- 9% were pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit upon
- 5.7% were threatened with harm
- 4.7% were purposely excluded from activities
- 3.6% had someone make them do something they did not want to do
- 3.3% had their property purposely destroyed

Relational Aggression includes:

- Making Fun of someone
- Calling someone names
- Insulting others in a Hurtful way
- Making someone the subject of Rumors
- Purposely Excluding others from activities
- Gossiping about others
- Manipulating others
- Socially Isolating others
Where is Bullying Occurring?

- 47.2% reported being bullied in a hallway or stairwell
- 33.6% reported being bullied in a classroom.
- Other areas: on school grounds, playground, lunchroom, gymnasium, school bus, walking to and from school, cyber-space.

Cyber-Bullying included

- Studies from 2010 revealed approximately 20% of students, ages 11-18, indicated they were the victims of cyber-bullying;
- 10% of the students reported having been both a victim and offender.

(Hinduja and Patchin, Cyber-bullying Research Center, 2010)
Teen Internet Behavior Study

Study's findings:

- 1 in 4 teens cyber-bullied,
- 2 in 3 witnessed cyber-bullying,
- 1 in 10 parents aware of their teens being targeted,
- 22% of teens admitted using their cell phones or computers to cheat on a test,
- 5% parents think their kids would cheat using phones,
- 29% parents feel overwhelmed by the complexity of Internet & don't remain involved in kids' Internet use,
- 3 in 4 parents think having just 1 conversation with their kids about Internet safety is enough.

• McAfee Security, 2012

Cyber-Bullied

- A higher percentage of students who were cyber-bullied anywhere skipped school – 4% versus 0.4% - who were not cyber-bullied.

- Relational Aggression is becoming more prominent both through cyber-bullying and traditional bullying methods.
### Boundaries of the School?

- “A school is responsible for addressing harassment incidents about which it knows or reasonably should have known.“

  - *Statement made by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in response to cyber-bullying, bullying and harassment occurring off school campuses, and creates a hostile environment at school and/or results in “substantial disruption of the learning environment.”*

### Issues associated with getting Bullied

- **15.1% reported getting into a physical fight** at school vs. 2.2% who’ve not been bullied.
- **4.1% reported carrying a weapon to school** versus 2.1% of students who were not bullied.
- **10.8% feared someone would attack or harm them** at school or on the way to or from school vs. 1.7% of those not bullied.
- **10.7% avoided a specific place** at school versus 1.4% who were not bullied.
Who Knows?

- 36.3% reported that a teacher or some other adult at school was notified of the bullying.

- For students who were cyber-bullied, 31.5% reported to a teacher or some other adult at school.

Why students don’t report?:

- Research reveals *Perception of students is most adults will not help or do anything about it.*

- *Afraid* the adults will get angry with them.

- *Fear* of retaliation; or reputation as “being a rat.”

- Don’t want to lose power; *Feel ashamed, powerless.*

- *Do not recognize* the subtle bullying.

[Hirschstein, 2007, reprinted Education.com]
‘Person getting Hurt’

- Looks (personal appearance); are different (outside the norm) in some way - variable/s associated with victimization.
  - more associated with intolerance versus “victim profile”

- [There is research available specifying certain profiles of victims, bullies, etc., which you could explore if you wish].

- **Word of caution:** Profiling and Targeting can actually promote intolerance

- Avoid the use of “Deficit Language”

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**Questions**
Bullying Prevention

- School & home characterized as “warm” but one that sets firm limits for unacceptable behavior.
- When violations occur, non-hostile, non-physical sanctions are consistently applied.
- Careful monitoring of student activities.
- *Adults act as the responsible authority during all adult-child interactions, especially when bullying occurs.
- Effective Communication Skills need to be taught, modeled and promoted.

*Adults must Intervene, Disallow Bullying

If Bullying is ignored:

- Targeted student is devalued as someone who does not deserve the protection of the adult.
- Aggressor is given tacit approval by the unresponsive adult and thereby empowered; (bystander students need to be taught how to communicate too).
- Bystanders or witnesses to the event believe school is unsafe; adults allow aggression; don’t assist students, won’t be supported.
- Non-Participants feel unsafe with reports of non-intervention.
Prevention with all Players

1. **Perpetrator** - discourage; allocate appropriate sanctions; teach them to re-channel controlling and power seeking behavior into social acceptable ways. Teach “replacement behaviors.”

2. **Student Hurt** – teach strategies to appropriately avoid/escape situations that involve bullying; place in activities in which they have skills and strengths to succeed, to boost confidence and to empower them. Teach the student verbal and nonverbal communication skills to effectively defuse bully and harmonize the situation.

3. **By-standers** – make them aware of their supporting role and discourage them from acting in support. Teach effective communication skills.

4. **Non-participants** – teach them to discourage bullying and to get involved in prevention efforts.

[*Assess the level of safety each player feels and intervene appropriately.*]

What positive and healthy programs and/or systems are available at your school and district?
School Climate and Culture

- **School Climate** – *attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms* - will be represented by the school environment, school personnel interactions with others, instructional practices, which, in turn, will determine *behavior* of staff/students and the **School Culture**.

- Adult attitudes, beliefs, values, norms determines the School’s Climate, which in turn, dictates the behavior and School Culture. Behavior modeled, cues given create ‘**perception**’ of how things are.

- The above needs to be considered and assessed to determine impact of school climate on problem behavior, school culture and bullying.

Supporting School Climate and Culture

- **Positive School Climate** = an increase in test scores and graduation rates, improved relationships, reduced stress and less problem behavior…. (Osher, 2011)
  
  (Positive School Climate = Positive Behavior and School Culture)

- **SWPBIS** –providing the framework for teaching expectations, beliefs, and what’s valued at your school (school climate), resulting in increased learning and development, better social-emotional success, and outcomes.

- **SEL curricula/programs**: reinforcing attitudes, values, beliefs & expectations, to improve climate & culture.
**Promoting School Climate**

- **Keys to School Climate** = 
  - Engagement – Safety – Environment

**Engagement – Safety – Environment**

- **Engagement:**
  - **Relationships:** the quality and promotion of positive relationships amongst school staff and students, staff and parents, students and students, staff and staff.
  - **Respect:** treating each other with respect, support for each other that is modeled and the norm/culture.
  - **Participation:** positive and active involvement between the parents and the schools, the community and the schools.
Engagement – **Safety** – Environment

**Safety:**
- **Emotional:** Students’ perceptions of how safe they are and feel at their school.
- **Physical:** Students are safe or not; are they subjected to physical assault, hitting and physical abuse or not? Do students feel safe?
- **Substance Abuse:** The *perception and/or actual* prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse amongst the students. *(OHT)*

**Environment:**
- **Physical:** Appearance of the environment; What is on the walls? - i.e. student work, pro-social messages; are staff inviting, positive, healthy?; is the environment & classrooms conducive to learning and promoting interpersonal relationships?
- **Academic:** Challenging Curricula or not, incorporating the 3 R’s - *Rigor, Relevance* and fosters trusting *Relationships*.
- **Wellness:** “the feel”, general Atmosphere or Attitude of the building. [School climate to School culture]
- **Discipline:** School-Wide Positive Discipline system in place or not?
School Climate is impacted by the following:

- Students feel and are **Safe**
- Students feel and are **Supported**
- Students feel and are **Challenged Academically**
- Students feel and are **Socially Capable**

*(Note: Research shows that students are more so *successful academically* when they *feel safe* as opposed to just getting challenged academically. – Osher, 2011)*

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**School Climate**

*dictates School Culture*

- *School climate* - created by the attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms underlying instructional practices and school operations.

- *School climate* - driven by how well & how fairly adults in a school create, implement, model and enforce these attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms.
**School Culture**

- **School culture** - the behavior, “the way we do that here”, or “the way we don't do that here”;
  - Behavior underlies the core values, beliefs, attitudes, routines and procedures of the individuals in a school community.

- **School culture** - the product of school climate.

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**Thus....what have we learned?**

- **Climate** is produced by the attitudes and beliefs of the adults, which sets the "tone or feel" of the school.

- **Culture** is how students and staff behave in the context of the climate, which is created by the adults.

- A “positive school culture” and a “negative school culture” yield different academic & social-emotional results, despite the stated rules, values, expectations and norms.
  
  (Adults must "practice [and model] what they preach")

- **Relationships** & the quality of them are at the heart of school culture.

- **Perception** of values, culture, and expected behavior impacts student behavior.
• Implement a School-Wide Positive Discipline framework, such as SWPBIS; it needs to be implemented with Integrity/Fidelity.

• Adults must be genuine, positive, and “practice what they preach.”

• Use supportive evidence-based instructional modalities, both academic and social-emotional learning (SEL) programs.

• SEL curricula at the Green level; part of your school’s schedule/program.

• Know your school’s culture; promote a positive school climate.

• Focus on creating a healthy, positive and safe climate, which in turn, will positively impact achievement & behavior at your school.

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What Adults can do?

(US Department of Education, 1998)

• Provide students with opportunities to talk about bullying.

• Involve students in establishing classroom rules against bullying.

• Provide classroom activities and discussion around the harmful effects of bullying, and provide healthy, positive activities as well in which students are involved.

• Develop a plan to ensure students know what to do if they observe bullying.

• Teach cooperation/compromise - social skills.

• Take immediate action when bullying observed/reported.

• Confront bullies in private.
What Adults can do? (continued)  
(US Department of Education, 1998)

- Notify parents of both the bully and victim – seek to resolve the conflict at school.
- Refer both bully and victim to a counselor if appropriate, [for separate intervention.]
- Provide protection for victims (e.g. - buddy system).
- Listen to parents who report or express concerns about bullying and investigate immediately.
- Avoid attempts to mediate in bullying situations – *power imbalance in the bully dynamic prevents mediation from being successful.*

What else can Adults/School Staff do?

- Teach them how to handle bullying situations and advocate for themselves and others; [teach effective communication skills, being assertive vs. aggressive; harmonize vs. antagonize].
- Effective adult follow-through is critical; ”walking the talk” of bullying prevention. What’s the Perception we’re creating?
- Intervening, making plans for behavior change, and continuing to check in on an individual basis with the students involved is best. [*Caution: it is not advisable to have the bully and victim in the same room for a talk.*]
What else Adults can do? (continued)

- Invite the children/students to report; *Provide tools* to help them evaluate when and how to report. Reporting anonymously [software, online reporting]

- **Teach** the difference and distinguish between reporting *(telling to keep someone safe)* and tattling *(telling to get someone in trouble)*;

- **Responsible decision-making** can empower everyone in schools to help prevent inequity and suffering.

- *Addressing the power imbalances* that put all students equally at risk.

- **Careful how you ‘label’** kids; “Words carry a ‘spirit’ with them”

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**Effective Communication is Critical**
**Effective Communication puts us all on the same page**

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**Whole School Approach - Restorative**

- **Re affirming** relationships through developing social and emotional skills.
- **Repairing** relationships through facilitated and supported dialogue.
- **Re building** relationships through intensive facilitated dialogue that includes a broad social network.

- [http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/SafeSch/BullyCyberBullyPrev/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/SafeSch/BullyCyberBullyPrev/index.html)
What else can Schools do?

- When parents call about a bullying concern, Listen.
- Meet with parents, develop an Action Plan to address.
- Ensure that every student is intentionally connected to at least one trusted adult. (Relationships)
- *Develop Comprehensive Strategies that encompass the school, the family, and the community in bullying prevention and elimination of violence.
- Assess & Focus on creating a Positive School Climate;
- Don’t label kids (Deficit language creates negative expectation)

What can Schools Do? (continued)

- Train staff members to deal effectively with bullying, including learning clear protocols for reporting bullying behavior, preventing and responding to it, and how/when to refer students for assistance.
- Educate and empower students; reinforce positive, respectful and healthy behavior.
- Establish a positive, supportive school culture in which bullying and/or harassment of any type is unacceptable.
- Policies and procedures, which are required to handle bullying, should contain positive affirmations of respect, caring, and inclusion of all students.
What can Schools do? (continued)

- *Enlist, Engage and Empower* the students to assist with prevention efforts, and make it *the norm* that bullying is not acceptable behavior;

- *Enlist and Engage parents* in the dialogue to stop bullying, and *Empower them* in helping to create a positive, safe and healthy community/school.

- *Involve students and parents in policy making* and the promotion of a positive school/community environment.

What else?: Schools and Communities

- *Survey* your students, find out percentages of students not being bullied and put the positive in the forefront.

- Promote a *positive, healthy and safe* environment by *advertising* via modeling expected behavior, posters, assemblies, commercials, and other social media methods, and by teaching effective communication skills.

- *Provide increased supervision* for *areas of concern*, focusing on *improving relationships* between adults, parents, school staff, community personnel and students.

- Develop, implement and sustain a *school-wide positive discipline approach* (ie. – Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports [PBIS]), or have rules/expectations *simply stated, clear and specific.*
What else?: Schools and Communities [continued]

- **Networking** between the schools and the community partners to implement a campaign to promote positive, healthy and safe schools and community environments.

- Have evidence-based **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs** as part of the school curriculum and prevention efforts. Apprise parents and the community of what’s getting taught.

- Mentoring – peer and community members

- Identify and implement bullying prevention programs
  - Promote pro-social behavior, effective communication skills;
  - Empower and develop students, not punish or alienate them.

What to do?:
Schools & Community Agencies

- **Teach and Post simple, clear and a few rules or expectations** that are positively written and modeled.

- **Teach Tolerance and Respect** for others; encourage diversity and acceptance of individual differences.

- **Celebrate what is good** in the community and school; acknowledge positive behaviors.
Schools – What to do? [continued]

- “Catch your students being good”; acknowledge and reinforce that behavior.

- Establish **Clear Guidelines, Set Consequences** for inappropriate behavior counter to expectations;

- **Discipline** for inappropriate behavior administered quickly and in a “business-like/by the book” manner; avoid over-emphasizing or dwelling on it.
  
  [Avoid the “Charlie Brown” syndrome – “Blah, Blah, Blah, Blah”]

Focus early on, a School-Community Partnership

- **Promote Healthy Social Relationships** – **start young** in the primary grades.

- Prevention, **Teaching Tolerance, acceptance of Diversity** and **social skills** development.
  - could be positively and significantly impactful **PreK-5**.

- **Identify** children with “poor” **beliefs in regards to social relationships** & provide interventions.

- **Identify mental health concerns** & provide appropriate interventions.
*Adopt a Positive School Discipline Program (i.e. SWPBIS) that includes:

1. Identifying and teaching **Replacement behaviors** for noted types of bullying behavior.
   - *behaviors should be Function-Based, and Linked to school-wide/class-wide set of expectations.*

2. Develop **Lesson plans/Teaching strategies** [scheduled, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula]

3. Provide **Supervision/Monitoring of high risk locations**
   - Current supervision/ needed resources
   - Training & support

4. Coach and teach **Strategies** for targeted person getting hurt

*Adopt a Positive School Discipline Program (i.e. PBIS) that includes:

5. Coach and teach **Strategies** for Bystanders & Non-participants (School-wide). Teach them to be ‘Up Standers’ or ‘Side Standers’

6. Coach and teach **Strategies** for bullying & apply **Consequences** as needed.

7. Provide **Environmental supports; model expected behavior, tolerance…..**
**Resources/References**

- Tim Lewis, Ph.D., University of Missouri, Webinar – "Addressing Bullying Behavior through SW-PBIS", hosted by the Council for Exceptional Children, October 2011
- [http://safeschoolsforall.com/schoolclimate.html](http://safeschoolsforall.com/schoolclimate.html)
- [http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/SafeSch/BullyCyberBullyPrev/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/SafeSch/BullyCyberBullyPrev/index.html)
- [http://www.cyberbullying.us/](http://www.cyberbullying.us/) (Cyber-bullying Research Center)
- "Bullying and Youth Suicide: Breaking the Connection", Richard Lieberman and Katherine C. Cowan, *Principal Leadership*, October 2011
- [https://bullies2buddies.com/School-and-District-Staff-Training/](https://bullies2buddies.com/School-and-District-Staff-Training/)
- [http://www.edutopia.org/blog/stop-bullying-create-upstanders-becki-cohn-vargas#.T3sZq8Cemvg.email](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/stop-bullying-create-upstanders-becki-cohn-vargas#.T3sZq8Cemvg.email)
Q & A’s

Stop Bullying