

## DID YOU KNOW?

- ✓ Students reported that teachers and other adults frequently do not intervene in bullying situations — they uniformly expressed the desire for teachers to intervene rather than ignore bullying.
- ✓ Bullying most often occurs at schools where there is minimal or no adult supervision (e.g., playground, hallways, bathrooms).
- ✓ Most bullying goes unreported.
- ✓ Most bullying is verbal.
- ✓ Bullying affects 5 million school children in the U.S.
- ✓ At least 160,000 children stay home daily to avoid bullies.
- ✓ Bullying begins in preschool, peaks in middle school, diminishes but does not disappear in high school.
- ✓ Bullies identified by age eight are six times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age twenty-four and five times more likely than non-bullies to end up with serious criminal records by the age of thirty.
- ✓ Both boys and girls bully, usually same sex classmates, with boys initiating most of the bullying.
- ✓ Bullying can have devastating long-term effects for victims, bullies and witnesses.

## BULLYING: EVERYONE'S PROBLEM

Every day, many children in the United States are victims of or witnesses to bullying in and around school. However, the aftermath of recent school shootings has left many students, parents, teachers and administrators searching for effective strategies to make schools safer. As a result, new attention is focused on childhood bullying, which for so long has been considered a rite of passage for school children everywhere.

### What is known about bullying

Most common among young children, with early onset in preschool, bullying affects about one in seven children who are either the bully or the victim of bullying (Olweus, 1993). The *Maine Project Against Bullying* refers to bullying as “one of the most underrated and enduring problems in schools today and a reality in the lives of all children, whether they are the bullies, victims or witnesses.” Resembling other forms of harassment, bullies exert power and control through physical, emotional, and verbal abuse that is intentional and hurtful to others. Bullying can include behaviors such as hitting, stealing, taunting, teasing and social isolation by one or more students against another. In most instances, school bullying occurs in places where there is little or no supervision.

Bullying has devastating effects on the victims, the witnesses and the perpetrators. It can inhibit a child's academic, social and personal development, thereby increasing the odds for lower self-esteem, depression, school dropout and even suicide. A study conducted by the National Education Association (NEA) found that 160,000 children stay home from school each day because of fear of intimidation by bullies. Likewise, several national and international studies indicate that up to 60 percent of bullies will have a criminal record by age 24 (Eron, L., 1987, Olweus, 1993).

### **What students, schools and others can do about bullying?**

Bullying can occur in every social setting, but is preventable once students, parents, schools and communities understand that it is a serious problem and take action. Research indicates that when asked about bullying in schools, students expressed a desire for teachers and others to intervene rather than ignore it (Stein, Nan and Gropper, Nancy). For administrators, this means implementing school-wide measures that involve anti-bullying policies; encouraging teachers and students to intervene in bullying situations; and, making support and counseling available to all students.

Stan Davis, of *The Bullying Project*, suggests that schools adopt clear and effective anti-bullying policies that aim to change the culture of a school rather than just providing counseling to bullies. In addition, every student, teacher and administrator must understand what bullying is, its consequences, and why it is unacceptable. Davis also suggest that administrators encourage teachers to integrate discussions about bullying into classroom teaching, and encourage all students, including those who are neither victims nor bullies, to take action against bullying.

#### ***Anti-bullying strategies to consider when developing a school policy:***

- ❖ Assess the nature of bullying at your school.
- ❖ Develop school/class Codes of Conduct on bullying that include the rights and responsibilities of everyone within the school community.
- ❖ Be consistent in enforcing school policy against bullying.
- ❖ Encourage students who are being bullied or have witnessed bullying to tell someone.
- ❖ Increase adult supervision in places where most bullying occurs.
- ❖ Integrate class meetings about bullying into the teaching curriculum.
- ❖ Reward students for supportive behaviors.
- ❖ Keep accurate and detailed records of all reported bullying incidents.

Both parents and schools must intervene when there is evidence of bullying. Ignoring the problem is likely to make the victims and the witnesses feel vulnerable and alienated. Whereas doing nothing conveys to young children, especially those in preschool, that it is okay to disrespect others. The victims and witnesses must be reassured that someone in authority is listening without being judgmental. Therefore, schools can support the victims by providing therapy through role-play and drama that will allow for the expression of feelings.

As parents and teachers, we need to teach children as early as prekindergarten about empathy, problem-solving and anger management. One excellent resource for techniques on how to intervene with young children is the book, *“You Can’t Say You Can’t Play,”* by Vivian Gussin Paley. Ms. Paley established the rule within her own kindergarten class that “you can’t say you can’t play” and uses her book to inform readers of her interviews with children and their thoughts and ideas about this rule. She combines these interviews with her theories about pain and rejection to create a book that can teach children, parents and teachers about tolerance and compassion.

***Recommendations for responding to bullying situations:***

- ❖ Respond immediately: stop the bullying as soon as you become aware.
- ❖ Talk to victims and bullies separately — victims may feel intimidated when in the presence of the bully.
- ❖ Inform bullies of the sanctions that will be imposed for not complying with school policies.
- ❖ Inform the parents of the victim and the bully as soon as possible.
- ❖ Reassure victims that every possible measure will be taken to prevent reoccurrence.

Bullying is a serious problem for all students, parents, administrators and communities. It is something that many children will experience, but it does not have to be an inevitable part of growing up. With effective intervention policies that involve the entire community, we can make schools safer for all children by putting an end to bullying.

## **BULLYING RESOURCES**

### **Intervention Models**

- **Bully Proofing Your School**, for elementary schools, is a promising comprehensive approach. *Contact: Carla Garrity, The Bully Project, 5290 East Yale Circle, Suite 207, Denver, CO 80222, 303-649-8496, Fax: 303-756-6059.*
- **The Bullying Prevention Project**, for elementary and middle schools. *Contact: Susan P. Limber, Project Director, Bullying Prevention Project, Institute for Families in Society, University of South Carolina, Carolina Plaza, Columbia, SC 29208, 803-737-3186, Fax: 803-737-3193.*
- **The Bullying Project** - Stan Davis, Maine - A comprehensive multimodal intervention that has dramatically reduced bullying in schools K-8. [www.cary-memorial.lib.me.us/bullyweb/](http://www.cary-memorial.lib.me.us/bullyweb/)

- **Transition Intervention Program (TIP)**, for grades 1-6. *Contact: Sheral Schowe, Transition Intervention Program, 11454 High Mountain Drive, Sandy, UT 84092, 801-964-7695.*

### **Survival Guides, Current Research and Books**

- **Bullying - A Survival Guide** - Bullying, a survival guide contains guidelines for dealing with all aspects of bullying from school to work. BBC Education - England. [www.bbc.co.uk/education/bully/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/bully/)
- **Bullyproof.** A Teacher's Guide for use with Fourth and Fifth Grade Students by Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom (1996). A joint publication of the Wellesley College Center for Women, Educational Equity Concepts, and the NEA Professional Library.
- **Committee for Children Leaders in Prevention Education.** Provide links to bullying resources. [www.cfchildren.org/bully.html](http://www.cfchildren.org/bully.html)
- **Maine project against bullying.** This describes a project being developed in Maine, to address bullying in schools. It contains a list of resources for teachers. <http://lincoln.midcoast.com/%7ewps/against/bullying.html>
- **Quit It! A Teachers Guide on Teasing and Bullying** - for use with Students in Grades K-3 by Merle Froschl, Barbara Sprung and Nancy Mullin-Rindler with Nan Stein and Nancy Gropper (1998). A joint publication of the Wellesley College Center for Women, Educational Equity Concepts, and the NEA Professional Library.
- **You Can't Say You Can't Play.** Vivian Gussin Paley. Harvard University Press (1993).