Bullying and School Safety: Fears vs Facts
Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.

When was the last time someone bullied you?

Case example: How schools might permit and even promote bullying
- School newspaper
- Rest room monitoring
- Hallway teasing
- Classroom mischief
- Uneven enforcement
- Marching band initiation
- Gym class humiliation
- Group rivalry

Why is snitching so reviled?

Snitch: blabbermouth, canary, fink, narc, rat, sneak, squealer, stoolie, stoolpigeon, tattletale, etc.

Snitching: informing on someone for personal gain
Seeking help: attempting to stop someone from being hurt

Teach students to distinguish snitching from seeking help

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FBI Recommendations on School Violence

"Although the risk of an actual shooting incident at any one school is very low, threats of violence are potentially a problem at any school. Once a threat is made, having a fair, rational, and standardized method of evaluating and responding to threats is critically important.”

(FBI report p 1)

Secret Service/DOE Recommendations:
- Create a planning team to develop a threat assessment program.
- Identify roles for school personnel.
- Clarify role of law enforcement.
- Conduct threat assessments of students who make threats of violence.

The Expansion of Zero Tolerance

From No Guns to
- No Toy Guns
- No Nail clippers
- No Plastic utensils
- No Finger-pointing
- No Jokes
- No Drawings
- No Rubber band shooting

No Accidental violations

Nervous Officials No Longer Ignoring Threats by Students Around the Country, Children Are Being Arrested

- 4 Kindergarten students suspended for playing cops and robbers during recess.
- New Jersey district zero tolerance policy resulted in 50 suspensions in 6 weeks, mostly in kindergarten and 3rd grade for verbal threats.
- 8 yr old suspended for pointing a chicken finger at a teacher, saying pow-pow
- 10 yr old expelled for a 1" GI Joe toy gun
- 14 yr old convicted of felony for e-mail threat
- 17 yr old arrested & expelled for shooting a paper clip with a rubber band

Zero tolerance is not effective.
Suspension associated with poorer outcomes for students.
School violence is not increasing.

Juvenile violence is not increasing

Why the decline in juvenile violence?

- Increased law enforcement efforts including community policing and efforts to reduce crack dealing and juvenile access to guns
- Increased mental health efforts, including school-based and after-school programs to supervise, mentor, resolve conflicts in youth

Numerous Effective Programs

- Anger management
- Bullying prevention
- Conflict resolution
- Family therapy
- Parenting skills
- Problem-solving
- Social competence
- Substance abuse resistance
- Etc.

Reviewed 221 studies of diverse school-based violence prevention programs
Average effect size = .25 for demonstration programs, which would reduce fighting 50% in a typical school
What is bullying?

Bullying is the *repeated* use of one’s strength or status for the purpose of intimidating or injuring another person.

A conflict between equals is *not* bullying.

Forms of Bullying

- **Physical**
  - hitting, shoving, grabbing
- **Verbal**
  - teasing, name-calling
- **Social**
  - spreading rumors, shunning or excluding
- **Sexual**
  - inappropriate comments and touching
- **Cyber-bullying**
  - use of internet

Cyber Bullying

Use of communications technology to threaten, humiliate or insult others

- Email
- Cell phones
- Internet chat
- Websites
- Videos

Why is cyber bullying so harmful?

- Lack of social norms
- Anonymity and distance facilitates disinhibition
- Lack of context and tone breeds misunderstanding
- Multiple parties can be easily involved
- Conflicts can easily escalate

Common Myths about Bullying

- Bullying is a normal part of growing up.
- Bullying toughens kids up for a harsh world.
- Bullying is a passing phase.
- Stand up to a bully and he will stop.

Bullying can be prevented

1. Staff training on bullying.
2. Student and parent education about bullying and school policy.
3. Classroom instruction on bullying.
4. Identify victims and intervene.
5. Pre-post surveys to measure impact.
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Elementary School Survey  
23 schools, grades 3-5  
3,101 students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>1st Grade</th>
<th>2nd Grade</th>
<th>3rd Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once or Twice</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more times per week</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victims of Bullying

Have you been bullied at school in the past month?

Where Does Bullying Occur?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>1st Grade</th>
<th>2nd Grade</th>
<th>3rd Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallways</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrooms</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus/Bus stop</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;After school&quot; program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Middle School Survey  
7 schools, grades 6-8  
3,265 students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th>7th Grade</th>
<th>8th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once or Twice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more times per week</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victims of Bullying

Have you been bullied at least 1 time per week in the past month?

Seeking Help for Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Type</th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
<th>10th Grade</th>
<th>11th Grade</th>
<th>12th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Told no one</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told a friend</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told your parents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told your teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High School Survey  
Fall 2009  
6 schools, grades 9-12  
3,186 students

Peer Nominations – An Alternative to Self-Report

- Student self-report is vulnerable to exaggeration, misunderstanding, and denial.
- Peer nominations are also vulnerable, but more reliable.
- Peer nominations allow you to identify potential victims.

Who is being bullied?  
Help us stop bullying at this school.

Bullying is defined as the use of one’s strength or popularity to injure, threaten, or embarrass another person. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social. Physical bullying is when a student hits, kicks, grabs, or shoves you on purpose. Verbal bullying is when a student teases you in a hurtful way. Social bullying is when a student tries to keep others from being your friend or from letting you join in what they are doing. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength argue or fight.

Based on this definition of bullying, write the names of any students who are the victims of bullying. You may write the name of any student at your school whom you know has been bullied at school during the past month.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

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What can parents do about bullying?
1. Find out if your child is involved.
2. Talk with your child about bullying.
3. Work with the school to prevent bullying.

What do I look for?
- Don’t just look, ask.
- Don’t nag, but be persistent, friendly, and concerned.
- Talk about your own experiences with bullying or those of someone else.
- Explain what bullying is and why you are concerned about it.
- Ask about bullying involving other kids. Share information with other parents.

Reasons to ask about bullying
- Unhappiness adjusting to a new school or new grade. Lack of friends.
- New contact with older students (e.g., joining a new club or athletic team)
- Avoidance behavior (not using the rest room at school, avoiding the bus stop or refusing to ride on the bus).
- Unexplained bruises, loss of personal property, damage to clothing, books, or belongings.
- Unexplained moodiness. (There are no specific signs or symptoms of bullying.)

What do I do when it is happening to my child?
Appreciate and acknowledge your child’s perspective.
- It feels humiliating to be bullied.
- It feels humiliating that you know.
- It feels humiliating that you get involved.
- It could get worse.

What do I do when it is happening to my child?
Don’t make it worse for your child.
- Don’t tell your child to fight back.
- Don’t alienate the school staff with your outrage.
- Be a role model of how adults solve problems.
What do I do when it is happening to my child?

- Find out the facts.
- Contact the principal.
- Try school-based options (Discipline, monitoring, mediation, behavior plans, etc.)
- Make sure it stops.

Monitor and improve the school climate

If I tell a teacher about bullying, that teacher will help.

There is an adult at this school I can talk to if I have a problem.

Bullying Assessment Flow Chart

Step 1: Interview the students

Interview all students involved in the incident.

What happened between you two? How did it start? Did you try to stop it? Is there anything you did that might have contributed to this happening?

When is bullying a crime?

- Assault
- Larceny
- Battery
- Robbery
- Extortion
- Thefts
- False Imprisonment
- Sexual Harassment
- Stalking
- Hazing
- Threats
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Bullying Assessment Flow Chart
Step 3: Was it bullying?

Bullying Assessment Flow Chart
Step 4: Respond to bullying

What every student should know

What bullying is and why it is wrong.

Snitching and seeking help are not the same thing.

What every student should know

Social bullying is not acceptable.

What every student should know

Threats are taken seriously.
- Disruptive and frightening
- School discipline
- Criminal charges

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What every student should know

There is at least one teacher who cares and is willing to listen.