



Building Bullying Awareness in 2008

Volume 1, Issue 1

August, 2008

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National Awareness

As educators embark on a new school year, many students in the United States will be “robbed of their opportunity to learn because they are bullied and victimized daily” (NEA; 2008).

More than school supplies is often tucked within the seams of backpacks, as students bring problems from home into the schools. Unfortunately, feelings stemming from outlying factors can lead to bullying behavior or allow a student to become a bully’s target.

The National Education Agency has earmarked **October 5-11** as Bullying Prevention Week. The

National Bullying Awareness Campaign has been designed with the clear intention of reducing, and eventually eradicating bullying from our public schools (NEA; 2008).

The National Association of School Psychologists claims that “bullying is a significant problem that affects many children and deserves the attention of both educators and parents” (NASP; 2008). The NASP recommends strict anti-bullying policies and providing school-wide bullying prevention programs. The NEA echoes this determination asking for the active involvement of educators, par-



ents, as well as the community.

Mastery of skills can occur when students feel secure. An intimidating environment does the opposite, creating a climate of fear. Schools should be a safe place “for teaching and learning and be free of crime and violence” (NEA; 2008).

How does bullying affect educators?

As educators, we go out of our way to reach students. We attend workshops, conferences, and brainstorm with colleagues.

Unfortunately, if a bully is active, he or she may overshadow your efforts. The Education World’s Administrator’s Center promotes prevention,

noting that it has “become the name of the game” (Education World; 2008).

J. David Hawkins, noted education researcher at the University of Washington, recommends a focus on school culture (Education World; 2008). Lee Sherman, editor of the Northwest Education

magazine, stresses that although less visible, emotional and psychological threats can be just as harmful as physical (Education World; 2008). Educators must provide a trustworthy, respectful learning environment for students

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Special points of interest:

- ♦ *Backpacks may carry more than school supplies.*
- ♦ *Bullying & Educators*
- ♦ *Truth or Myth?*
- ♦ *Workplace pressure.*
- ♦ *A positive focus!*
- ♦ *A not-to-be-missed New York Times best seller.*

Create a Class Constitution!

Why do we need rules? It's simple. Everyone deserves to learn in a safe environment. When respect for others becomes an expectation, students realize the importance of treating others the way they would like to be treated. True learning can only begin when there is an absence of intimidating or antagonizing behaviors

Ask the class to brainstorm rules of acceptance for the classroom, for the school,



**Expect Success -
Nothing less will do!**

and for the community. How should we treat people in everything we do?

*Choose to say nice things about others.

*Listen to others so you better understand their thoughts and feelings.

*Include everyone; if someone's left out, invite him or her to join in.

*Show respect by accepting others for who they are.

*Welcome new students.

*Use words to express feelings.

*Look out for one another and help when needed.

*Be positive...smile!

Placing the focus on "what to do" provides students with expectations and models genuine care and concern.

Our School is Bully-Free!

As our company has attended conferences over the years, we sometimes hear "we don't have a problem with bullies" or "we don't have bullies in our schools."

The National Association of School Psychologists warns that it is "unlikely that any school is completely free from all bullying behavior" (NASP; 2008). In fact, a group of educators and psychologists, after speaking with other researches, de-

Is this Truth or Myth?

termined that at least 25% of all children "will be affected by bullying at some point" during their educational years (NASP; 2008). This group of individuals also noted that due to fear of bullying, this same 25% would have lower percentages of school attendance.

Some believe bullying may be ignored because of the common misconception that "it's part of growing up." Others may not recognize "bullying behaviors" for what they are. The NASP is encouraging all schools to define bullying behavior and implementation of school-wide prevention plans and policies (NASP; 2008).

Escape the Teaching Pressure!

All teachers know their profession is demanding. Beginning on the first day of school, teaching specific skills and strategies is expected from districts across the state.

How can educators effectively address bullying, while meeting all other requirements? Clearly outline classroom

expectations. The most significant expectation is "every student will learn in a respectful environment."

Discuss bullying at length—what it looks like, what it feels like, and what students should do if they are bullied or witness a bullying incident. Ask students to write down



Education = Pressure

actions they find threatening, while engaging in Language Arts activities.

When boundaries are defined, discipline matters become a secondary concern. Students will be free to learn because of the secure environment you've established; they'll *want* to be in your classroom.

Promoting Prevention

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center has found that bullying is most likely to occur on campuses where minimal supervision exists. Empty hallways and restrooms create the opportunity for bullying.

An indifferent attitude towards bullying by teachers and students allows it to exist. Tolerance of this destructive behavior is often explained as “it’s



Over 5.7 million youth are estimated to be involved in bullying.

(NYVPRC; 2008)

part of growing up” or “that’s just kids.”

Bullying is much more likely to take place where the rules for bullying behavior are inconsistent or non-existent. “While approaches that simply crack down on individual bullies are seldom effective, when there is a school-wide commitment to end bullying, it can be reduced by up to 50% (NYVPRC; 2008)

Research has demonstrated that school-wide participation is a must when seeking to change a negative school or classroom environment. We must raise awareness, increase supervision and involvement, establish clear rules, and provide support for students.

To discover more bullying facts and statistics, visit www.safeyouth.org.

Nineteen Minutes

What does it mean to be different in our society? If you have not read the novel *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult (Picoult; 2008), I challenge you to read the story of 17-year-old high school student Peter Houghton, who has endured verbal and physical abuse at the hands of his classmates for years.

The main character, Peter, has a best friend who succumbs to peer pressure and becomes a bystander

to her popular crowd’s harassment. Peter feels misunderstood and alone.

When Peter finally feels there’s no other choice but violence to end the bullying nightmare, the residents of Sterling will be left with questions and choices of their own. Though fictional, *Nineteen Minutes* is a riveting, thought-provoking look at fitting in and being bullied.

“Picoult paints a troubling portrait of families and kids, especially the bullies and the bullied...(the book’s) ordinariness gives it surprising power. This could be your community, your neighbor, your family.”
-USA Today

Reward Positive Acts

Humans are more alike than different. However, even minor “differences” are often met with disapproval. A tendency to be shy may be viewed as weakness. Popularity may be regarded with jealousy. How can we unite an array of personalities and learning styles? How can we create a classroom of harmony with fewer discipline issues?

Facilitate discussions of acceptance

and understanding. Read books containing characters who overcome adversity. Ask students to work in cooperative groups. Celebrate success along the way, noting how each team member contributed to the result. Recognize, and compliment thoughtful, friendly gestures.



Our universal need is acceptance. When positive behaviors and actions are affirmed, students will begin to thrive in a climate of cooperation and mutual respect.

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Promoting social & emotional fitness for kids.

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Resources:

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August Q&A

How do I explain the difference between teasing and bullying to students?

Occasionally we say things, or call someone names, some times out of anger or even playfulness. We may feel bad later and apologize. The person may have asked that we not call them the name again. This is an infrequent event.

Teasing is centered around fun and should not be cruel or hateful. Teasing shouldn't hurt someone's feelings. We often give friends nicknames or tease them about something they have done.



Bullying is done with the intention of hurting another. Name-calling and teasing **continue** even when asked to stop. Bullying does not happen once — a bully will repeatedly antagonize another because it gives him or her a sense of power and control.

Students are often quiet when they are bullied or when witnessing bullying. How can I encourage students to come forward?

Unfortunately, what the bully counts on often happens - students remain silent.

Every individual in a school has the right to live without fear and to be treated with respect. No one has the right to threaten or mistreat another. When someone is making you feel afraid, lonely, or insignificant, it is important to tell an adult (teacher, counselor, parent).

A bully depends on others to be frightened or ashamed. Fear or shame frequently creates the silence that enables a bully to operate. Speak up and stop the bully!

If you have a question concerning bullies or bullying, please email **daphne@trevorromain.com**. Your name and email address will remain confidential.