

**Bullying is Everybody's Problem**

by

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ABSTRACT

Bullying and violence in the schools have become a prevalent issue in education today. With the recent school shootings, it is imperative that pre-emptive steps are taken in order to prevent these atrocities (Coloroso, 2002). Often times school shootings are a result of the shooter continuously being bullied and harassed by his/her peers. Because the victim feels there is no other way to handle the victimization they turn to violence. When bullying is addressed early, the chances that the violence will occur decrease. However, many times bullying is not addressed in schools because educators are not prepared to deal with harassment concerns (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Educators may not be able to recognize bullying because they are not trained to identify key bullying behaviors (Witted & Dupper, 2005). Because males and females tend to harass their peers in different ways, it is significant that educators know what to look for when preventing bullying in the school. In addition, it is vital that when an educator receives a threat from a student that the threat is taken seriously. In most cases

of school violence the perpetrator made threats, but were ignored. Bullying is everybody's problem and in order to make a school a safer place to learn, every school personnel has to do their part in preventing bullying and school violence. In order for a prevention program to be effective, a holistic approach must be used (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

The purpose of this literature review was to research the pervasiveness of school violent incidents as well as identify what educators can do to prevent school violence from occurring. In addition, this literature review includes review of exemplary programs that educators can implement in their schools to effectively educate students about bullying and harassment.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Research indicates that violence in the schools has become one of the prevalent issues in education. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (cited in Cole, Cornell, Dewey, & Sheras, 2006) attest, through a study, approximately 1.7 million children in grades 6 through 10 admitted bullying their classmates. Consequently, the victims who have endured school violence or bullying have experienced detrimental effects to their emotional, as well as social-well being (Brockenbrough, Cornell, & Loper, 2002). Experts in the field (Elias & Zins, 2003) stated, "Even more than their perpetrators, the targets of peer hostility face numerous mental health challenges, and they are particularly at risk for social and emotional adjustment problems" (p. 118). Bullying is a serious issue that is continually affecting the lives of children. Consequently, it is not only the children who are suffering from this epidemic, everyone is.

Unfortunately, bullying and violence in schools has been an ongoing issue for many years. However, often society is not aware of the impact and the significance school violence and bullying has on children until there is a horrific catastrophe. For example, on April 20, 1999, Eric Harris, 18 and Dylan Klebold, 17, turned their personal torment they endured in school, into the Columbine Massacre in Littleton, Colorado. Some say that these young men exhibited warning signs and displayed violent behaviors long before the Columbine murders occurred (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000). In addition, many admit that these two youth had told others about their plans to perpetrate these horrific crimes. According to Cappozzoli and McVey (2000), "It seems as if this situation might have been averted if students, teachers, and parents had understood the signs that

Harris and Klebold had exhibited” (p. 1). Furthermore, it was said that these young men were bullied and beleaguered throughout their school years. In another case in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, Andrew Wurst, an eighth grade student, walked into a middle school dance with a gun, and he killed one teacher and wounded two students as well as one other teacher (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000). Like the Columbine case, many claim that Wurst had told others about his plans to shoot up the school. However, many passed his threats off as a joke (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000). In another instance, a 15-year-old male in Cold Springs, Minnesota came to school with a gun and fired shots at his peers. Although the motivation for his crime is still unclear, some say that he was bullied because of the acne that covered his skin (Marcotty, 2003). In all of these cases the perpetrators were continually rejected and scrutinized by their peers. Another commonality to these violent acts was the disheartening fact that these violent instances could have been prevented.

Many school districts have responded appropriately to harassment and bullying in the schools by implementing bullying prevention programs into their school districts. For example, many schools have now adopted a “no tolerance to violence” policy. Tragic events have changed the way we deal with, and view, the impacts of school violence. School districts are now turning towards a more preventative approach instead of a reactive approach to school violence. However, because bullying in the schools is such a widespread concern, are schools taking the necessary precautions in combating school violence and bullying for the future? Due to the many models and implementations to combating bullying and school violence, there seems to be many approaches to select. However, finding approaches that are most effective will be the hardest task for educators when trying to prevent harassment in the schools. Therefore, it is up to educators to be

educated about bullying and school violence issues. In order to attempt to prevent victimization within the schools, educators must be able to recognize bullying.

Because there are many forms of bullying, it is often hard to identify. Each child may bully other children in different forms. Research indicates that gender plays a role in how and why children terrorize other children. According to Simmons (2002), "Our culture refuses girls access to open conflict, and it forces their aggression into nonphysical, indirect, and covert forms. Girls use backbiting, exclusion, rumors, name-calling, and manipulation to inflict psychological pain on targeted victims" (p. 3). While males tend to use physical aggression when exhibiting bullying behaviors, females tend to use communication and cliques to hurt others (Simmons, 2002). Nonetheless, all bullying can be hurtful and lead to violence or at-risk behavior. Being able to differentiate bullying is the first step in preventing it. Furthermore, one of the most serious effects of bullying in the schools is the influence that it will have on education.

According to Bauman and Del Rio (2006), "School bullying negatively impacts school climate, as fear, depression, and physical complaints affect students' attendance, concentration, and academic performance" (p. 219). When children are being harassed at school, they are more likely to be truant. They may walk through the halls of school avoiding eye contact and steer clear of any attention that could be given to them be it positive or negative (Bott, 2004). When children are not able to be themselves, ask questions, or create significant bonds with their peers, schools are not doing an adequate job in educating children. In addition, if the aggressor or the perpetrator of harassment is consumed with anger and belligerence, how much are they actually learning in the classroom? Needless to say, preventing harassment in the schools will not only influence

a child's social and emotional well being, but will also improve the quality of education they receive.

### *Statement of the Problem*

The purpose of this study is to document the incidences of bullying in the schools and the effective ways educators can prevent bullying and harassment in the schools. Because school violence and bullying continues to be a profound concern, it is necessary to determine which prevention programs are exemplary. Determining which programs are effective in the schools, and programs that are not, will help guide educators in the most effectual direction when dealing with bullying.

In addition, in order for educators to help in the reduction of bullying and harassment in the schools, they must be able to recognize harassment. Because males and females tend to bully in different ways, it is important that educators can recognize these differences. Review of literature on programs that intend to combat bullying and distinguishing gender differences in bullying will take place in the fall of 2006.

### *Research Questions*

There are four research questions this study will attempt to answer. They are:

1. How common is bullying in the schools?
2. Are there gender differences in the way children bully?
3. What can educators do when children are hurting other children?
4. What programs are exemplary in preventing bullying and harassment in the schools?

### *Definition of Terms*

There are terms that need to be defined for clarity of understanding. These terms are:

*Cliques*- a narrow exclusive circle or group of persons, especially: one held together by common interest, views, or purposes (Merriam-Webster Online, 2006).

*Harassment*- to create an unpleasant or hostile situation for especially by uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct (Merriam-Webster Online, 2006).

### *Assumptions and Limitations*

It is assumed that all bullying prevention programs that will be researched in this paper will have been implemented in the schools. A limitation of this study would be that some of the reviewed literature might not be applicable to children with disabilities.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### *Introduction*

This chapter will discuss the prevalence of bullying in the schools by revealing factual stories about school violence incidents that have occurred within the past ten years. In addition, this chapter will also include how gender plays a significant role in the way children bully and the different antecedents that may cause a specific gender to bully or harass other children. Furthermore, this chapter will contain what educators can do to make a difference when children are hurting other children and exemplary anti-bullying programs for schools to implement.

### *Cases of Violence in Schools*

Many blamed the music that they listened to, the video games they played, and the movies that they watched for the atrocities that they committed, but because Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold took their own lives after killing twelve students and two teachers, we will never know if these were the true motivations behind the Columbine massacre. What drove these children to commit such horrific acts? Many claim that Klebold and Harris were continually scrutinized and excluded by their peers. Klebold and Harris had been planning the attack on Columbine High School for approximately one year before they entered their high school with bombs and guns. During the year before the attacks, they had posted their murderous plan over their website on the Internet and made a tape for a video production class demonstrating how they would shoot all the athletes in the school (Cappozzoli and McVey, 2000). Needless to say, there were many warning signs of violent behaviors that these young men clearly demonstrated before the

massacre. According to Cappozzoli and McVey (2000), who also addressed the confusion and disbelief that people felt after the massacre stated,

The first question people have asked is, “Why did these two boys from middle-class homes perpetrate this atrocity?”

From reports in the news, they belonged to a gang called the “Trench Coat Mafia”. They espoused hate messages and felt picked on by other students, mainly athletes. ... according to a diary kept by one of the boys, they had been planning this rampage for a year (p. 1).

After the Columbine atrocity, the police department went into the homes of the perpetrators and found an abundant amount of letters, poems, and drawings that captured the pain of exclusion that Klebold and Harris had endured from their peers. According to Reid (2006), Harris stated in one of the letters found, “I hate you people for leaving me out of so many things. You had my phone number and I asked you and all, but no no, no, don’t let that weird looking Eric kid come along... I hate people and they better fucking fear me” (p. 1). In addition, Klebold wrote in his personal journal the pain of constant rejection he received from his female peers. Reid (2006) recites from Klebold’s journal, “I know that I am different, as I look for love I feel I can’t ever find it, ever” (p. 2). In addition to the declarations of pain found in these perpetrators journals, there was also a calendar found that listed steps they needed to complete in order to attack the high school. These steps included how to detonate the bomb all the way to when to point the gun at their heads (Reid, 2006). Although the true reasons that this horrific act occurred is

still not clear, it obvious that the social isolation and the consistent rejections they experienced from their peers may have been the singular motive.

Since the Columbine murders, there have been many other cases of school violence. For instance, Andrew Wurst, the previously mentioned eighth grader, whose nickname was Satan, had brought a gun to a school dance and killed a teacher and wounded two other students and another teacher (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000). Although Wurst's intentions about killing people were made known to his peers, these terrorizations were ignored and were interpreted as jokes. In Pearl, Massachusetts, on October 1, 1997, Luke Woodham, a 16-year-old sophomore at Pearl High School, entered the school with a .30-30 hunting rifle and open fired on students. As a result, Woodham killed two students and wounded seven others. Besides the murders he committed at school, he had stabbed his mother to death before he began his killing rampage on his peers (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000). In another example, in Moses Lake, Washington, Barr Loukaitis, a 14-year old, held his algebra class, including the teacher, hostage. Loukaitis killed the teacher, as well as two fifteen-year-old students in the class. It was said that the students at the school physically and verbally bullied him continuously (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000). As a consequence to this incessant victimization, Loukaitis would tell his friend about his aspirations to take the perpetrators lives. Once again these warning signs were not taken seriously, and this crime was devastatingly committed. The one thing that most of these violent incidents have in common is that there were warning signs. Aronson (2004) gave his reasoning for the violent incidents in the schools,

There is a poisonous social atmosphere prevalent at most high schools in this country, an atmosphere characterized by

exclusion, rejection, taunting, and humiliation. In high school there is an ironclad hierarchy of cliques with athletes, class officers, cheerleaders, and “preppies” at the top. At the bottom are kids who are too fat, too thin, too short, too tall, who wear the wrong clothes, or who simply do not fit in. (p. 355)

Until recently, school violence incidents have been committed to the students by students. However, on September 27th, 2006 in Bailey Colorado, a gunman Duane Morrison entered Platte Canyon High School keeping six girls hostage before killing one and then killing himself (retrieved October 28, 2006 from [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com)). Police investigators are currently analyzing the incident and evaluating their schools safety procedures. In another recent violent attack, a student from Weston High School located in Cazenovia Wisconsin came to school determined to threaten the teachers and principal. It was said that the shooter, Eric Hainstock received a disciplinary warning for bring tobacco into the school just days before the shooting (retrieved October 28, 2006 from [www.foxnews.com/story.com](http://www.foxnews.com/story.com)). It was also said that Hainstock was tired of being teased by his peers. According to the criminal complaint, (retrieved October 28, 2006 from [www.foxnews.com/story.com](http://www.foxnews.com/story.com)) on September 30<sup>th</sup> 2006, Hainstock forced open his family’s gun cabinet, took out a shotgun, and entered the Weston school. As the Principal John Klang went into the hallway to confront Hainstock, shot were fired. Although Klang was already injured, he fought Hainstock to the ground and grabbed the gun away. Principal John Klang was shot in the head, chest, and leg and did not survive this attack (retrieved October 28, 2006 from [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com)). In another string of violent attacks, on October 2nd 2006, in Pennsylvania an Amish schoolhouse was under seize. Charles Carl Roberts, a 32-year-old milkman, entered the schoolhouse gunning down

ten female students (Mackay, 2006). After shooting the female students as well as one teachers aid, Roberts then turned the gun on himself (retrieved October 28, 2006 from [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com)). These violent instances are gruesome atrocities that must be prevented. Even though two of these cases did not involve students committing violent acts, schools can still have influence on preventing these attacks.

It is unfortunate that everywhere we look now days, violence is present. Violence exists in the media, in music, as well as in entertainment. Although educators may not be able to control how, or why children are exposed to violent acts or behaviors outside of the school environment, educators still have a significant role in preventing bullying within the confines of a school. One of the first steps in preventing and intervening on school victimization is being able to recognize bullying behaviors. Although this chapter has given examples of how males have perpetrated school violence, females are not innocent in this bullying epidemic. Research indicates (Simmons, 2002) that both males and females are oppressors of victimization, however often times there are gender differences in the way students bully others.

### *Gender Differences*

According to Simmons (2002), “Within the hidden culture of aggression, girls fight with body language and relationships instead of fists and knives. In this world, friendship is a weapon, and the sting of a shout pales in comparison to a day of someone’s silence. There is no gesture more devastating than the back turning away” (p. 3). Girls tend to bully in nonphysical, indirect manners. However, these forms of bullying can be just as, or even more destructive than physical harassment, which males tend to use with more frequency. Furthermore, being harassed by others can create emotional and social problems throughout a

girl's life. As a result of rejection, girls tend to develop defensive expectations. Moretti, Odgers, and Jackson (2004) discussed a rejection sensitivity model (RS) that they conceptualized as a cognitive affective processing system in which females expect, perceive, and overreact to rejection,

Given our assumption that defensive expectations to rejection form the core of RS, we have posited that in children, defensive expectations of rejection develop due to messages of rejection communicated to them through potential behavior that is emotionally or physically abusive or neglectful. Such painful and distressing rejection then generates defensive expectations in new situations where rejection seems possible, with implication for long-term personal and interpersonal adjustment. Indeed, rejection, be it parents or peers, is linked to the formation and continuation of defensive expectation for rejection in adolescents and early adults (p. 11)

Although not as frequently as males, females also execute physical acts of aggression towards their peers. Males and females both can act out aggressively, however their antecedents, or what occurs before the aggression takes place, are often times diverse. In a study done by Moretti, Odgers, and Jackson (2004), they found that a female acts out in a physically aggressive manner when she fears she might be rejected. In addition, this study also found a stronger link to depression and aggression in women than depression and aggression in men. Females tend to act out aggressively when they feel they have no other option than to do so. In addition, girls tend to be violent when they feel that their self-control is dwindling (Moretti, Odgers, & Jackson, 2004). In order

to provide the best interventions for female bullying it is important to understand the gender differences between males and females and how these differences effect how harassment occurs. Consequently, female harassment may be extremely difficult for educators to detect. Not only may female harassment be difficult to determine, but also it is hard to attend to. "Taking the time to address rational discord is not always as easy as yelling at a boy to remove his peer from the trash can," states a specialist in the field (Simmons, 2002, p.10). However, by not intervening, educators are allowing these behaviors to continue, which may also result in a horrific act of school violence.

Research (Bott, 2004) agrees that educators are often times not prepared to deal with the bullying that is present in their classroom. Whether or not teachers are ill-prepared when dealing with harassment in the schools, or just protecting their own status, is a common debate (Bott, 2004). It may sound fictitious, but literature contends that even educators may fear a bully's wrath. Although educators may want to avoid becoming the bully's next victim, it is important that a safe zone is created for children who may be at the hands of a tormentor (Bott, 2004). It is an educator's responsibility to be aware of the harassment and not ignore the perpetrator's persecution, especially if only out of his or her own fear. Furthermore, educators have an additional responsibility to acquire knowledge about harassment interventions and how to create a safe environment in their schools.

### *What Educators Can Do*

One of the main goals for educators when dealing with bullying is confronting the problem. The easiest place to start combating bullying behaviors is within the classroom, but in order for the prevention program to be effective it must be implemented as a whole

system. Bott (2004) contended, “ The ideal bully prevention should exist on three levels: the classroom, the building, and the district” (p. 7). By uniting these systems, prevention programs for harassment in education have a greater chance of success than if these systems each worked only as a separate being. Stancato (2003) agrees that a broader-based school environment approach is most effective when combating violence in the schools. He believes that when an adolescent has a positive identity and feels as though they belong they will be less likely to commit violence acts (Stancato, 2006).

Furthermore, Stancato (2006) deems that “school wide conditions and practices that can act as powerful facilitators of positive identity for all adolescents include, the building of trust relationships among students and between teachers and students, the reduction in school size, and the implementation of small group learning activities” (p 20).

Building trusting relationships between students is a key component in the prevention of violence and bullying in the schools. Focusing on constructing positive relationships between students will increase a student’s sense of trust and self-identity (Stancato, 2006). When students trust others they will feel safe within the learning environment. Another attempt at providing a safe school environment is the reduction of school size. Stancato (2006) believes that children get lost in a huge cold atmosphere and states, “Feelings of being invisible and lost are tantamount to the pain that accompanies a lack of meaning and a sense of confusion in the adolescent’s search for identity and self-acceptance” (p 20). Smaller schools and smaller classrooms will allow more room for student participation and involvement (Stancato, 2006). Therefore, in a smaller school students are more likely to be heard by their peers resulting in a more enhancing supportive academic environment. Furthermore, the implementation of small group

learning activities within the classroom is another idea that educators can incorporate in order to prevent mistrust among students. Small group learning activities intend to enhance peer relationships while working toward a goal. When students feel as though they belong and that they are respected within a group, their self-esteem tends to increase. While the self-esteem increases the less likely they will act violent towards their peers (Stancato, 2006). In addition, a couple of ways a school system can intervene and prevent bullying behaviors is reporting threats and being consistent with discipline procedures (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000).

Discussed earlier in the chapter, the one commonality that most of the violent incidents shared was that there were previous threats to commit the act by the perpetrator. Because these threats were not taken seriously, or were not handled appropriately, these violent operations were carried out. According to Cappozzoli and McVey (2000), “ There should be rules that all students and parents are aware of that will allow any student or parents to report a threat of any kind to a teacher, administrator, or to a hotline. If students know they can report threats anonymously to a hot line, then they may be more likely to report” (p.31). In addition to reporting the threats, educators must know how to determine if threats are valid, as well as how to respond properly to these threats. According to Cappozzoli and McVey (2000), there must be three steps to practice when trying to determine if the threat is valid and how to handle the threat. First, when a student makes a threat, he/she should be eradicated from the school until educators can come up with other alternatives. Next, the parents should be notified about the threat. Unfortunately, at times, parents may not cooperate in trying to help their child, however it is important that school officials continue observation of the student. Lastly, the school

should be secured so the student who has made the threat is not allowed to come back in to the school. In addition to securing the school, the school also has a responsibility to protect the students or teachers who were threatened, as well as the individuals who have reported the threat (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000). It is important that all threats be taken seriously. If our past has taught us anything about violence in the schools, it is that we need to take action whenever a substantial threat is made. Bott (2004) believed that, "It is necessary to establish a system for reporting incidents of bullying/harassment and informing students about other school personnel they can turn to, besides the administrators" (p. 13) Determining the differences between a significant threat to an insubstantial threat can be difficult. If at all possible, educators must interview the person who is reporting the threat in order to determine the significance (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000). Besides reacting appropriately to threats, school districts should also have a clearly defined discipline code.

Implementing a "zero tolerance" policy is another way for schools to be effective in defeating violent behavior. The "zero tolerance" policy means that the school will not endure or put up with certain behaviors. Examples that may be incorporated into the "zero tolerance" policy may include: possessing a dangerous weapon, drinking alcohol, using or dealing illegal drugs, possessing a prescription drug that is not intended for the individual student, or fighting (Cappozzoli & McVey, 2000). When these incidents are seen at a school with a "zero tolerance" program, each student will receive the same discipline that is included in this policy. Some of these actions that warrant the "zero tolerance" discipline will result in expulsion or suspension of the student. In contrast, Coloroso (2002) disagrees with the effectiveness of incorporating a "zero-

tolerance” policy for school violence. Coloroso (2002) states, “The intent of these policies is laudable, but the singular procedure that many schools have implemented is inflexible, harsh, and lacking in common sense “(p 184). Some examples of the ineffectiveness of implementing a “zero tolerance” policy that Coloroso (2002) provided include, “A first grader suspended for three days for pointing a breaded chicken finger at a friend like a gun, an eleven-year-old arrested for having a plastic knife in her lunch box to cut chicken, and a ten year old who was expelled for “possession of a lethal weapon” after she voluntarily turned in a small knife she found in her lunch sack. The girl had picked up her mom’s lunch sack instead of her own”(p 184). Furthermore, when implementing zero-tolerance procedures for bullying behaviors there is not a singular cure-all procedure that should be implemented either (Coloroso, 2002). According to Coloroso (2002), “What is needed are procedures to support that policy that provide opportunities for administrators to exercise fairness, common sense, and sound discretion. All bullying should have some sanction. It doesn’t mean you apply the maximum sanction for every offense” (p 185). Whether a school district follows a “zero tolerance policy or a more situation-based policy when school personnel is in congruence with the policy, in order to fight the prevalence of bullying and harassment in the schools, the results will be more promising. Not only is it significant that school personnel work together, but also motivation for making a change is essential. Furthermore, the main factor in decreasing harassment and school violence within the schools is the attitude of the entire school community.

Unfortunately bullying exists beyond twelfth grade, and at times you will encounter bullies who are educators or co-workers. Trying to motivate these individuals

to help children from hurting other children may become one of the biggest obstacles when trying to decrease the amount of harassment that is going on in the school. Teachers are role models to their students, and when teachers exhibit bullying behaviors, students may replicate their actions (Bott, 2004). Reminding educators that they are influential role models to their peers, and educating teachers about how their actions do affect their students, will hopefully decrease an educator's unprofessional behavior.

Educator education and attending an awareness training workshop can help educators gain helpful resources, and may motivate the unmotivated to act on this problem (Bott, 2004). In addition, forming a committee composed of school personnel, which focuses merely on the harassment issue within the school may enrich the relationships that children have with other children. This anti-harassment committee can find effective resources for not only the bully, but also the victims of bullying, and establish consequences for bullying behaviors. In addition, this committee can also educate their peers about the effects of bullying and what they can do within their classrooms. Getting school personnel motivated, as well as educated, will assist in the prevention of bullying in the schools.

### *Exemplary Programs*

Due to the increase of violent attacks on students, a new program was implemented to teach students to fight back against intruders. In Fort Worth, Texas the Burleson school district was training students to fight back against a gunman's orders by throwing anything they can at the invader's head and body (retrieved October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006 from [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)). This training also includes teaching students to attack the intruder limbs in an attempt to try and get the intruder down to the ground. In addition, the

children were told that when a gunman enters their classroom to make as much noise as possible in hopes to alert help (retrieved October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006 from [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)).

However, many disagreed with this theory of protecting students from danger. According to the Topeka Capital-Journal (2006), “A suburban Forth Worth school district seems to be willing to gamble that the kid’s odds of survival would be better if they would swat an intruder with their textbooks, jab him with a pencil or whop him with their back packs”(p 1). Although this program intended to save lives, it was soon altered after the media recognition.

Soon after the media coverage of the fight back training that the Burleson school district was providing, the program was modified. The training no long included teaching the children to fight against their attacker. Instead children were taught to make every possible attempt to escape the invader (retrieved November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006 from [www.cbs11tv.com](http://www.cbs11tv.com)). This controversial program that aimed to try and protect children, may have in the long run have had an adverse effect on student’s lives. Furthermore, it is important that when we are looking into implementing violence prevention or intervention programs in our school districts, that they are programs that have been thought out and will not run the risk of putting our students in more danger.

In order for a bullying-prevention school-based program to be effective, the program must reach out to the school community as a whole. Whitted and Dupper (2005), contend that, “Strategies to prevent or minimize bullying in the schools must include school-level interventions designed to change the overall culture and climate of the school; classroom-level interventions targeting teachers and other adults in the school; and student-level interventions that target individual or small groups of victims and

bullies” (p 169). Programs that include these interventions and are designed to provide a comprehensive, effective curriculum for educators to implement in the schools include, The Bully-Proofing Your School Program, Bullying Prevention Program, and the Steps to Respect Program.

The Bully-Proofing Your School Program is a program which seeks to improve the climate and culture of the school. In doing so, this program provides education to the victims of bullying and the bystanders of bullying (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). This bully prevention program offers free materials to assist educators and parents in providing and promoting a safe school environment at the high school, middle school, and elementary school levels. Although this program does not have an available evaluation on the effectiveness, according to Whitted and Dupper (2005), “The U.S. Department of Education (1998) identified Bully-Proofing Your School as a model program” (p 175). The Bully-Proofing Your School Program believes that this program will be effective in the prevention of bullying and violence in the schools and the free materials can be found at [www.oakland.k12.mi.us](http://www.oakland.k12.mi.us) (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

The Bullying Prevention Program is another exemplary program that has proven to be effective. The goal of this multilevel comprehensive program is to reduce and prevent bullying issues that elementary and middle school aged students may endure. There are many components of this program because it attests to all of the levels of interventions. Whitted and Dupper (2005) attest,

School wide components of this program include a questionnaire to assess the nature and prevalence of bullying at each school, a school conference day to discuss bullying, plan interventions, and form a

coordinating committee. Classroom components include the establishment and enforcement of class rules against bullying and regular class meeting with students. Individual components include interventions with children identified as bullies and victims and discussions with parents of involved students (p 175).

The program has proven to reduce bullying in the school to create a more positive, caring atmosphere. More information on this program is provided at:

[www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools/bullying/overview.html](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools/bullying/overview.html) (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Steps to Respect is another program available for educators to implement in their schools. Like the other program, this program addresses all levels of interventions and is adjusted to meet the needs of all school-aged levels. This program educates children on the three R's of bullying, which includes recognizing, refusing, and reporting (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). The curriculum of Steps to Respect teaches students how to appropriately respond to bullying behaviors. In addition, this program also educates students on proper social behaviors. In order to implement this program in your school, the school staff must attend a three-hour training. The goal of this training is to promote awareness and to encourage educators to adhere to appropriate responses regarding bullying behaviors (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). More information on this training as well as the lessons provided in the Steps to Respect program can be found at [www.cfchildren.org](http://www.cfchildren.org) (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Another program that has been proven to be effective in bully prevention is the Don't Laugh at Me program. This accomplished program derived from the Operation Respect Organization, includes music, videos, and classroom activities to teach about

preventing bullying and positively enhance the school environment

([www.dontlaugh.org](http://www.dontlaugh.org)). The Don't Laugh at Me program targets elementary and middle school-aged students and is designed to convert classrooms and schools into a "Ridicule Free Zones" ([www.dontlaugh.org](http://www.dontlaugh.org)).

In addition to implementing successful bully prevention programs in the schools, there are anti-bullying campaigns that students can get involved with. Bullybusters is an anti-bullying campaign designed to help elementary and middle school students learn more about the effects of bullying (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). This program includes the students acting out skits that demonstrate common bullying situations. The skits are used as a tool to evoke discussions about bullying. Students are then informed on how they can make a difference in preventing bullying in their schools. This campaign has not yet been evaluated, however administrators that have executed this campaign reported a 20 percent reduction of bullying incidents during the years in which the campaign took place (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Furthermore, there are many programs available designed to reduce and prevent bullying behaviors. However, there are many factors to consider before implementing a bully prevention program in a school. When implementing a bullying prevention program or anti-bullying campaigns, it is important that the program is implemented wholeheartedly based on the needs of the school. In addition, Whitted and Dupper (2005), state, "the strategies or program should have empirical evidence, should be developmentally appropriate, meaningful, and enjoyable for the students, and are culturally sensitive, provide training, and are cost-efficient (p 172).

## Chapter Three: Summary, Critical Analysis, and Recommendations

### *Introduction*

This chapter will include a summary of key points from the information discussed in chapter two. In addition, a critical analysis of the literature from chapter two will be included as well. This chapter will conclude with recommendations from the analysis.

### *Summary of Key Points*

Violence incidents in the schools can be prevented. Often times there are warning signs before such tragic incidents occur. In most of the violent cases discussed in chapter two, there was disclosure from the perpetrators about the horrific acts they were planning. Taking these threats seriously may have prevented these violent events from transpiring. Children in schools often times form a social order, filled with cliques, that consist of rejection and exclusion of others. It is this caste system that will result in some children feeling left out, rejected, or often times harassed. Coloroso (2002), attests, "School cultures that nurture cliques and elevate some groups above other also nurture discrimination and bullying" (p 26). Furthermore, educators need to be aware of the prevalence of bullying as well as the negative impacts of cliques and realize that it is up to them to practice effective anti-bullying interventions in order to stop bullying and harassment in the schools.

Before educators can implement any interventions, they must realize that males and females tend to bully in different ways. While males may be predisposed to more violent acts of bullying, females tend to use friendships and language to harass others. Females are more likely to act out in aggressive behaviors for different reasons than males. Where males are more likely to use violence first, females are more prone to use violence only if they feel there is no other way to solve the problem. When implementing anti-bully programs, it is

essential that gender be taken into consideration. Consequently, what may be a useful intervention for a male, may not be beneficial to a female. Even though females tend to bully in a more nonabrasive manner, their actions still hurt. As well as being knowledgeable about the gender differences in the way children bully, educators must also be aware of what they can do to prevent bullying in the schools.

Schools play a colossal role in preventing violence and harassment. Implementing effective anti-bullying programs will aid in the prevention and intervention of children hurting other children. In addition, responding appropriately to threats and integrating a “zero tolerance” policy when appropriate will assist in this goal. Most importantly, the school system needs to work together in combating harassment in the schools. Working as a team will be more effective than just working as a single unit. Bullying goes beyond the classroom, and if the whole school is congruent with the anti-bullying policy, it is less likely harassment will occur in other places in the school. Furthermore, implementing only effective bullying programs will aid in the decrease of harassment within the schools

When implementing anti-bullying programs in the school it is important that the program that is being implemented has been proven to be effective and addresses the need of your school. Although teaching kids to fight back against their intruder seemed like an exemplary approach, when it was actually implemented and received media coverage many disagreed with its intention to keep children safe. Therefore, the aspect of the program where children fought the invader discontinued from lack of supporters. In addition, bullying prevention programs should be appropriate for the developmental age group as well as engaging to that particular age group. Most of the exemplary programs that have been discussed are ones in which adhere to the elementary and middle school aged student.

Therefore, because there are not as many programs that are specifically designed for the high school student, a bully prevention program must be one in which the student will remember throughout their development. According to Whitter and Dupper (2005), “because bullying among elementary school-age children may be an antecedent to more violent behavior in later grades, it is critical that prevention efforts begin in elementary school” (p 169).

Implementing developmentally appropriate engaging material to students at an early age will decrease their likelihood to victimize or be victimized in the future.

Another important aspect to consider when implementing programs in the school is to carry out the program as it was intended. In often times programs are put into practice and then implemented partially due to time constraints (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). These half implemented programs have not been proven to be effective. Making a commitment to a program and sticking with it will increase the chance of the program's success (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Furthermore, there are many programs available for educators to adopt, but not all of these programs have been proven to be exemplary.

Programs that have been proven to be effective include, the Bully Proofing Your School Program, Bullying Prevention Program, Steps to Respect Program, Don't Laugh at Me Program, and the Bullybusters Campaign. All of these programs have been deemed effective. Although there are many programs out there that attempt in bully proofing, it is important that the program that is chosen meets the needs of the whole school system.

### *Critical Analysis*

Educators need to be more prepared and educated about how to deal with violent threats. In most of the cases of school violence incidents that were discussed in Chapter two were the result of threats that were not taken seriously enough to report. When educators

receive a report that a child wants to do harm to others, it is imperative that these threats are taken serious and reported. In order to provide a safe school environment, educators need to be aware of the appropriate measures that must be taken when a violent intimidation is made (Cappozzoli and McVey, 2000). Inquiring about district policy and procedures when a threat is made is the best way to ensure the school's safety. Knowing how to deal with these threats as well as acknowledging bullying behaviors and harassment in the schools are critical components when preventing violence in the schools.

Educators need to stop turning their heads when observing bully issues within the schools. As stated in chapter two, many educators may find it easier to avoid these issues. However, evading bully confrontations will only encourage it to continue. It is up to educators to be role models and provide good examples on how they treat their students, as well as their educator peers. It is not only the participation from the school personnel that is desired in order for these anti-bullying programs to be effective, it is demonstrating the behaviors that educators want children to replicate. In addition, creating an environment where cliques are not acceptable is another important factor in preventing bullying and violence in the schools.

As researched, females and males tend to bully each other in different ways. However, any behaviors that result in another student's demise should not be tolerated. Because females tend to use social isolation as a tool to harass or bully other females, it is important that educators treat this form of bullying as they would violence between students (Simmons, 2002). All forms of bullying are hurtful, even though the victims may not have the bruise to substantiate their injuries. Educators have the responsibility in ensuring student's safety at school and by being aware of the gender differences in the way children

bully may decrease the number of school violence incidents. Another way to prevent violence in the school is to adopt a zero-tolerance policy.

Many researchers agree that an effective way to prevent school violence and bullying in the schools is to implement a zero-tolerance policy. Employing a zero-tolerance policy in case of school violence and bullying has proven to be effective in many instances (Cappozzoli and McVey, 2000). However, some disagree with the inflexibility of this procedure. Researchers who disagree with implementation of the zero-tolerance policy claim that each situation should be treated individually and not systematically (Coloroso, 2002). Therefore, the consequences of each act would not be the same for every situation. As previously discussed there are some positive and negative effects to this policy. It is up to the school district to determine if this policy would best fit the needs of the school. Furthermore, when determining the school needs it is essential that the most effective prevention programs be put into practice based on these requirements.

A critical analysis of the prevention program that requires teaching students to fight back against intruders may not be the most effective way in keeping children safe. If children fought back against their intruder this may increase the level of hostility in the invader, therefore resulting in more violent episodes. While educating students on safety procedures if an invasion were to happen is imperative, teaching children to fight back is not. When preparing to implement an anti-bullying program it is crucial that the program has been evaluated and demonstrated its effectiveness. In addition, a prevention program must be implemented at early grade levels, should be fun to evoke memory, and must be age appropriate in order to be valuable.

When providing a bullying prevention program to high school aged students' exemplary curriculums to adapt is the Bully-Proofing Your School Program and the Steps to Respect Program. These programs have been proven to be proficient and they provide age appropriate material for high school students as well as junior high and elementary students. Programs such as The Bullying Prevention Program, The Don't Laugh at Me Program, and the Bullybusters Campaign have been proven to be effective for the younger grade levels. A critical analysis of these programs is that when the prevention programs are implemented appropriately and consistently, they will decrease the amount of bullying and violence in the schools.

### *Recommendations*

Formulating a committee within the school that directly deals with harassment issues is one recommendation to decrease bullying in the schools. This committee should meet frequently to discuss the school's needs regarding bullying and school violence issues. By designating these issues to the committee of school professionals there will be less chances that reports of harassment will be disregarded and overlooked. Furthermore, this committee should be in charge of implementing effective prevention programs, researching adequate workshops for educators to attend, and finding other professionals to come to talk with students and staff about bullying and school violence issues. Most of all the goal of this committee is to develop policies to create a safe school. Furthermore, because bullying and school violence is everybody's problem, education on prevention is significant to all students as well as all school personnel. This committee should not require the use of a lot of monetary resources. The only funding that may be needed is to acquire resources, attend

workshops, as well as purchasing other educational materials for students as well as other educators.

Implementing anti-bullying prevention programs for all grade levels may decrease the amount of bullying and violence that occurs in schools (Astor, Meyer, Benbenishty, Marachi, & Rosemond, 2005). Educating the bullies, the victims and the bystanders of bullying about the repercussions of bullying and what they can do to stop bullying will expectantly evoke change in their behaviors. In addition to implementing programs it is important that educators follow through with these programs (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Reminding children about the acceptable ways to treat each other will help assist in the effectiveness of any program. Although it may be costly at first to receive the resources to provide an effective program to the students, it does not have to be a yearly cost. As long as a school staff member has attending a workshop and have been trained they are certified to instruct the program. These anti-bullying programs are possibly tasks that a school counselor, school social worker, or school psychologist could take on (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

One of the ways educators can help to decrease bullying and violence is to be present during unstructured school times (Astor, Meyer, Benbenishty, Marachi, & Rosemond, 2005). It seems as though children will bully or fight when their time is unstructured. Places such as the halls, recess, at lunchtime, or even in the bathroom are places where students can be very vulnerable to attacks. Therefore, it is important the educators are present during these unstructured places and times to prevent violence or bullying incidents from occurring (Leff, Power, Costigan, & Manz, 2003).

Educators can create a positive school climate by incorporating team building learning activities in the classroom. Stancato (2003) agrees that when children are given the

opportunity to work with their peers in order to accomplish a goal they learn to depend on each other and work together constructively. As a result of team building activities their self-esteem increase, and the way they treat each other improves (Stancato, 2003). Furthermore, the first step in trying to change behavior can be in taught within the confines of the classroom (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Because of the recent occurrences of invaders coming into the school, one recommendation to prevent these attacks is locking all doors besides one during school hours. Although many schools have implemented this procedure, there are some schools that have not. By locking all doors besides the main door, will assist in regulating the amount of visitors that enter the school during school hours. When all doors of the school are open it may be hard to determine who is coming in and out of the school as well as the reasons they are there. Although this may become an annoyance for school personnel, it will assist in developing a safer school environment.

Another recommendation for providing a safer school is to develop a zero tolerance harassment policy (Cappozzoli and McVey, 2000). A harassment or bullying policy may help in the way each harassment or school violence case is handled. When the policy is understood and visible to all students the greater the chances that students will understand the repercussions of their behaviors if they chose to harass or bully their peers. In addition, setting a policy will help educators remember the proceedings when these cases occur.

As discussed in Chapter two, it is important that educators report threats of violence. In addition, it is important the students report these threats as well. Because students may not feel comfortable telling an adult about these intimidations, one way to have students report anonymously is to apply a report hotline (Cappozzoli and McVey, 2000). This hotline would

only be for students to utilize so they can report suspicious behaviors namelessly.

Furthermore, this reporting hotline would be most effective if implemented in a school with a larger population of students. Because it may be harder for educators to see bullying and harassment in a larger enrollment school, it is important that a hotline be used to assist in the formation of a safer school.

Recommendations to positively increase the school environment should be based on the needs of the school (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Furthermore, these recommendations will not ensure a safe school, but are steps in the right directions for change.

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