



Summary of Bullying in Minnesota Schools: An analysis of the Minnesota Student Survey, 2010

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is administered every three years to students in 6th, 9th, and 12th grades. In the 2010 administration, 89 percent of school districts in the state participated in the survey. Of those students participating, 42.9 percent reported no involvement in bullying whatsoever. Of those remaining, 12.6 percent were classified as victims (were made fun of, teased in a hurtful way, or excluded from friends or activities by others with a frequency of weekly or more), 9.3 percent were classified as bullies (engaged in the actions listed above toward victims with a frequency of weekly or more), and 3.1 percent were bully/victims (bullied and victimized at least weekly).

Throughout the reports in this series, several findings emerged consistently.

- Students regularly involved in bullying incidents, whether victim, offender or bully/victim (bullying-involved students), have high rates of associated experiences, most of them negative.
- The data in these reports indicate that those classified as bullies have been victims of maltreatment themselves, in many cases.
- Bully/victims stand alone as the most at-risk group in every domain.

Recommendations

Prevention and Intervention

Bullying is best prevented by working to reduce its prevalence, increasing the capacity of adults and students to identify and respond, and utilizing formative (non-punitive) discipline. Bullying prevention and intervention initiatives “should include individual, peer, family, school, and community efforts” (Swearer, et al. 2010). “Bullying is a relationship problem that requires relationship solutions” (Morrison, 2011; Craig, 2007). To prevent bullying, school staff need to be intentional and consistent in teaching the skills of respect, responsibility and reparation/restoration (Morrison, 2007).

Tiered levels of support

Implementing and maintaining a comprehensive, whole-school bullying prevention or positive school climate program using tiered levels of support is necessary to re-affirm, restore and re-build relationships damaged by bullying. In this framework, students and staff participate in universal education regarding bullying, relationship skills and social emotional learning, to build a school ethos of care that *re-affirms* relationships. Targeted interventions intending to *repair* relationships are applied at the earliest possible sign of disconnection or harm. Early interventions can include peer mediation to address conflict, class problem-solving to address behaviors that disrupt the learning environment, and adult-facilitated conversations to repair harm (Hopkins, 2004, Morrison, 2007).

Formative (non-punitive) discipline

Intensive interventions, designed to *re-build* relationships are offered when on-going harm has occurred. These interventions are facilitated by adults trained in non-punitive processes. Depending upon the

severity of the harm, participants include family members and other supportive adults, as well as the people affected by the bullying (Morrison, 2007). Non-punitive interventions include Method of Shared Concern, No-Blame Approach (or Support-Group Approach) and Restorative Justice Approaches (Morrison, 2011, Rigby, 2007).

Increase bystander and adult skills to intervene

Research indicates that when a student speaks up and tries to stop bullying, the “bullying behavior stops within 10 seconds, 75 percent of the time (Hawkins, Pepler & Craig, 2001). Teach all students how to intervene assertively—walk away, support the child who is the target, report to a responsible adult, or assertively tell the child who is bullying to stop.

Students learn from adult behavior. Adults can treat all students with respect, help all students look valuable in the eyes of their classmates, and learn to intervene in a non-shaming manner to harmful, hurtful behaviors. Debra Pepler recommends teachers use buddies, circles of support, peer mentors and workgroups to mix students together in the classroom to foster relationships. In addition, adults should monitor their own use of power to ensure positive relationships and healthy role modeling (Pepler, 2007).

Promote students’ asset and protective factors

Young people who are regularly involved in bullying incidents do seem to demonstrate attempts to thrive. Adults should build on this inclination, by providing both students who bully and students who have been bullied opportunities in school and out of school to build social skills, find safe places to contribute to the school or community, and connect with caring adults (Benson, 2008).

Differentiate discipline and expand interventions

If a student is identified as bullying other students, in addition to any disciplinary intervention sanctioned by the school, the student should be referred to student assistance staff to explore other experiences of victimization in their life, whether in the family, community or in dating relationships. Similar referrals should be considered for victims of bullying. Use formative consequences in lieu of suspension or detention so as to maintain the connection between the student and the school and caring adults. (See PrevNet, <http://prevnet.ca/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx> > Downloads > formative consequences.)

Student assistance staff/teams can strategize interventions with these associated behaviors in mind. For instance, there is a high level of association between weapons possession and bullying experiences, especially as student grow older. Consider exploring with a student who brings a weapon to school if they have experienced bullying as a victim, an offender or a bully-victim.

Attend to the needs of the victim

Students regularly involved in bullying, whether victim or bully, participate at higher rates than their peers in at-risk behaviors that create larger safety concerns in the school and community and that may lead to offending behavior. Districts should establish a policy of attending to the needs of victims of bullying, which may include discussions with student support staff, family members and family health care providers. Interventions such as restorative measures, when applied by a trained, experienced restorative facilitator, can help address the needs of victims, bullies, and others (Anderson, 1977).

Educate school staff

Teach principals, deans, assistant principals, behavior specialists and staff about the associated behaviors and experiences of victims, offenders and bully-victims. Because the students regularly involved in bullying experiences may have other forms of victimization or trauma, all staff should be trained in the universal precautions for trauma informed care:

“As part of trauma informed care...each adult working with any child or adolescent *presumes* that the child has been trauma exposed...the use of **universal precautions in support of trauma**

informed care involves providing unconditional respect to the child and being careful not to challenge him/her in ways that produce shame and humiliation. Such an approach has no down side, since children who have been exposed to trauma require it, and other, more fortunate children deserve and can also benefit from this fundamentally humanistic commitment” (Hodas, G. Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, February 2006).

Use Common Principles of Effective Practice

Whole-school bullying prevention or positive school climate programs have many components that need integration into the practices and policy of the school to be effective. This process of building a safe environment takes time and intentional management of the system of program that is being implemented to decrease incidents of bullying. For more information, see:

<http://education.state.mn.us> > Implementation of Effective Practice.

References

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Websites

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning: <http://www.casel.org/>.

Cyberbullying Research Center–Resources for Cyberbullying <http://www.cyberbullying.us>.

Minnesota Department of Education: <http://education.state.mn.us>.

Implementation of Effective Practice

http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/Implement_Effect_Practic/.

Minnesota Student Survey

http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/Safe_and_Healthy_Learners/Minnesota_Student_Survey.

Safe and Healthy Learners

http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/Safe_and_Healthy_Learners.

Minnesota Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports website, <http://pbismn.org/>.

PREVNet: <http://prevnet.ca>.

Stop Bullying: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>.

Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center, U.S. Department of Education

<http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov>.

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The Bullying Briefs can be found on the Minnesota Department of Education website at:

http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/Safe_and_Healthy_Learners/Safe_Learners/Bullying_Prevent_Res/index.html