

UNDERSTANDING BULLYING  
ANTI-BULLYING SCHOOL POLICY DEVELOPMENT  
SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION AND  
INTERVENTIONS THROUGH THE FOSTERING  
OF POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

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INTERVENTIONS THROUGH THE FOSTERING OF  
POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE**

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### **Dedication**

This report is dedicated to my Mom and Dad, Shirley and James Tapp. Your never-ending love and support have been my rock even during the stormiest of seas. You have always encouraged me to strive to do my very best and your inspiring ways have made me feel like all my dreams are possible. You truly are two very special people and I am blessed to have you in my life. Thank you for always being there to listen. You make my world complete.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper folio is to provide a resource for educators to combat bullying in their schools. Dealing with bullying can be very frustrating. Learning that there are effective preventative measures and interventions that can be applied to counter bullying is extremely encouraging.

Understanding the complexities of bullying is a first step in beginning the fight. It is important for educators to understand the bully's view of the world as well as the victim's perspective so that they can in turn attempt to tackle the problem. Research also suggests that establishing an anti-bullying policy is essential to bullying prevention and intervention. An understanding of the policy development process is critical in establishing a successful policy that will endure. Central to the literature on policy development is the necessity to involve all stakeholders. But, policies cannot exist in isolation. Policies must become an integral part of the school culture. Nurturing an anti-bullying culture can be achieved in a variety of ways such as through the physical environment, a cooperative curriculum, the peer group, teacher interventions and community involvement. Schools have an important role to play in taking up the challenge of tackling bullying.

## **Acknowledgments**

It takes many hours of dedication to realize an accomplishment of this magnitude. It is only fitting that I thank those people who helped to make this folio a reality.

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A special note of thanks is extended to the Labrador School Board for agreeing to distribute a copy of this report to all the schools in our district. It is important that educators engage in a dialogue on bullying and this initiative should help in that endeavor.

I would like to thank my colleagues and friends, Susan Kennedy and Ramona Noseworthy, for their continued support and good sense of humor which keeps me going. This year has been unusual to say the least, but we have made it through. A special thank you to my mentor and dear friend, Eric Hart, for his words of encouragement and advice. To all my friends, thank you for your patience in understanding the time constraints I have been under to get this work completed.

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**INTRODUCTION TO THE  
BULLYING PAPER FOLIO**

Images of violent school crime such as those demonstrated at Columbine and Santana High are becoming all too familiar. In the aftermath, years of senseless bullying are often found to be a precursor to the horrific events. Further headlines of students ending their lives, unable to cope with the schoolyard bully abound. The media seems replete with appalling stories of school bullying and violence on a regular basis. Particularly bothersome is the age at which serious crime is being committed. As each new, tragic incident occurs, it begs the questions - why and how do we do something about it? Surely, students should not have to endure their school years living in fear or worse.

### **Bullying Paper Folio**

#### **Rationale for the Paper Folio**

As principal of a primary school, the researcher deals with bullying issues of varying degrees on a daily basis. Spurred on by a personal and professional interest in the topic, preliminary research was undertaken during the summer of 2001. This thirst for increased knowledge on the subject, coupled with a recognition that others could benefit from this research, created the initial impetus for this report.

Three areas for further development clearly emerged from the initial literature examined. They included: gaining an understanding about bullying, policy development and the creation of an anti-bullying school culture.

#### **Purpose of the Paper Folio**

While relevant to all stakeholders (particularly the paper entitled **Understanding Bullying**), this paper folio is aimed mainly at educators providing them with a basis to tackle bullying in their schools. Before bullying can be dealt with successfully, its complexities must

be understood. For too long, bullying has been brushed off as a “normal” part of growing up. An examination of what constitutes bullying, where it takes place, the dramatic effects of bullying, characteristics of bullies and victims, as well as its prevalence in schools brings the issue of bullying to the limelight. Educators also need to know how to develop an anti-bullying policy. Furthermore, once bullying policies are written, educators must then begin the arduous task of implementing and enforcing them. An understanding of organizational culture and the creation of a positive school climate are crucial in keeping the anti-bullying campaign alive. Many references to these points are scattered throughout the literature and this paper folio provides a ready reference to such material.

#### **Significance of the Paper Folio**

This paper folio enabled the researcher to explore the literature on bullying and subsequently report the findings in a succinct manner. It is hoped this paper folio will become a source of information for individuals seeking knowledge on how to combat school bullying. In the researcher’s own school district support has been sought and secured from senior administration that will see a copy of this paper folio in every school in the district. By engaging in this effort, the researcher hopes to create a much needed dialogue on the issue.

#### **Organization of the Paper Folio**

The paper folio, comprised of three parts, is a synthesis of bullying research coupled with the research on effective schools. Entitled **Understanding Bullying**, Part 1 delves in depth into the process of bullying revealing what it is, characteristics of bullies and victims, the effects of bullying behavior and the prevalence of bullying in schools. Part 2, **Anti-bullying School Policy Development**, investigates the literature on policy development, outlines the process (including

raising awareness of bullying, consultation, policy development, monitoring and evaluation of the policy) and proposes a sample bullying policy. Part 3, **School Bullying Prevention and Interventions Through the Fostering of Positive School Culture**, connects policy development to school culture, maintaining that school policies are worthless if they are not embedded in the ethos of the school culture. It explores school culture, transformational leadership, empowerment and ways of nurturing an anti-bullying culture (such as through the physical environment, positive interactions, curriculum, peer interventions, teacher interventions, and community involvement).

## **UNDERSTANDING BULLYING**

Bullying is not a new problem, nor is it unique to Canada (e.g., Canada: Craig et al., 1998; O'Connell et al., 1997; Australia: Rigby & Slee, 1991; England: Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Scandinavia: Olweus, 1993). For years students around the world have been repeatedly verbally physically harassing and teasing one another. To many individuals these events have been simply viewed and accepted as a natural part of growing up - kids being kids. Therefore, until fairly recently comparatively little was even known about bullying. However, within the past fifteen years the winds of change have heightened public interest in bullying and it is now emerging as an international issue with educators in many parts of the world learning from each other about what can work (Ohsako, 1997; Slee & Rigby, 1998; Smith et al., 1999; Tattum & Herbert, 1993). Bullying is increasingly coming to be viewed as intolerable physical and psychological violence (Rigby, 1998). Inspired by the Scandinavian studies on bullying spearheaded by Olweus, many researchers have, of late, begun investigating this issue. Their work is encouraging, revealing that the struggle against bullying can be successful.

Before the problem of bullying can be successfully tackled though, the complexities of bullying need to be understood. Gaining an understanding of the process of bullying includes exploring its definition, examining the characteristics of bullies and victims, determining the effects of bullying behavior, pinpointing where it takes place and discussing its prevalence. All of these aspects of bullying will be expanded within the framework of this paper.

## **The Bully**

### **Definition of Bullying**

One of the first steps in researchers' attempts to study bullying and subsequently find

ways to prevent it has been to clearly define it. Many definitions have been put forth, but over time certain common elements in its definition have surfaced to the forefront. Bullying, generally, is defined as involving negative actions that have hostile intent, are repeated over time and involve a power differential (Craig et al., 1998; Newman et al., 2000; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1998; Sullivan, 2000; Weinhold, 2000). The asymmetric power relationship, while in many instances referring to differences in size, is not limited to that factor. Other sources of power differential include stature, socio-economic status and known vulnerabilities (O'Connell et al., 1997). Researchers are quick to point out that play fights, rough and tumble play and playful teasing, while possibly requiring disciplinary action, are not examples of bullying (Sullivan, 2000).

Bullying can be differentiated as direct or indirect. Direct instances of bullying include open attacks on a victim while indirect bullying is more subtle such as encouraging the exclusion of a person from a group, spreading rumors and engaging in mindless gossip. Direct and indirect bullying can be further distinguished as being physical, non-physical, verbal or non-verbal (Sullivan, 2000). Physical bullying includes hits, pushes, kicks, pinches, punches, scratches, spitting and any other form of physical attack. Non-physical bullying can be verbal or non-verbal. Examples of verbal bullying are name-calling, teasing, threats and spreading rumors. Non-verbal bullying includes making faces or rude gestures as well as manipulating relationships.

### **Myths About Bullying**

Researchers suggest that there are a number of commonly held beliefs about bullying that influence perceptions and therefore require examination (Newman et al., 2000; Sullivan, 2000).

First of all, some individuals believe that bullying does not exist in their schools (Sullivan, 2000). In reality, bullying occurs in all schools and acknowledgment of this fact is a first step in its prevention. Secondly, a pervading belief is that if students do not complain about bullying, then everything must be fine (Newman et al., 2000). This statement is not necessarily true. Just because students do not discuss their victimization does not mean it is not happening. Educators have a responsibility to break this code of silence and engage students in conversations about bullying. A third myth is that the size of a class or school can predict the frequency of bullying (Newman et al., 2000). The reality of this myth is that bullies appear in schools of all sizes. A more accurate indicator of the level of bullying is the amount of supervision - the lesser the degree of supervision, the higher the rate of bullying (Newman et al., 2000). Another widespread myth is that the aggressive behavior of bullies results from school related failures and frustrations (Newman et al., 2000). While it is true that bullies often experience academic difficulties, these school related failures normally follow the aggression and not the other way around (Olweus, 1993). Lastly, some individuals believe that being bullied is character-forming (Sullivan, 2000). Clearly, the response to this ridiculous claim is that victims of bullying are not to blame. Bullying is not normal nor is it acceptable; it is however abusive and humiliating.

### **Portrait of a Bully**

Much of the research characterizes bullies as aggressive, domineering, impulsive, having a positive view of violence, lacking empathy for their victims and showing little or no remorse about bullying (Craig et al., 1998; Olweus, 1993; Sullivan, 2000). Their aggressive nature is consistent across contexts displaying aggressive tendencies toward their peers, teachers, parents, siblings and others (Craig et al., 1998).



Stephenson and Smith (cited in Sullivan, 2000) identify three types of bullies: confident bullies, anxious bullies and bully victims. Confident bullies, being physically strong and feeling secure, take a particular liking to aggression. Anxious bullies, normally less popular, are weak academically and are less secure. Bully victims are very unpopular, being bullies in some situations and bullied in others. Olweus (1993) adds another type of bully to the list, calling them passive bullies or henchmen. These students do not usually take the initiative, but join the leader in a desire for a feeling of superiority and supremacy.

### **The Bully's View of the World**

Bullies often perceive events differently from non-bullies (Newman et al., 2000; Zarzour, 1999). Cues in the environment are incorrectly perceived thereby leading to errors in assumptions made about what is occurring. For example, if a child pats a bully on the back in a friendly manner, the bully may perceive the touch as an act of aggression or as a threat. Similarly, an accidental bump in many instances is perceived by the bully as a push or a shove demanding retaliation. This different interpretation of social interaction skews the bullies' view of the world. The bullies' relationships become discolored by feelings of anger and hostility. Newman et al. (2000) explain that one of the most difficult aspects of working with bullies is figuring out their cognitive processes and then working to change these thought processes.

### **Gender Differences in Bullying**

Research suggests that boys tend to bully and be bullied more than girls (Olweus, 1993; Sullivan, 2000). Furthermore, boys are more likely to physically bully and girls are more inclined to use indirect forms of bullying such as purposely leaving someone out of a group (Sullivan, 2000). That said, it is important not to underestimate the amount of bullying

perpetrated by aggressive girls. As Pepler and Sedighdeilami (1998) reveal "recent data from Statistics Canada indicate that the prevalence of violent offending among adolescent girls has increased much faster than for adolescent boys" (p.2).

Owens (cited in Sullivan, 2000) argues that "differences in aggression between boys and girls are linked to differences in friendship patterns" (p.21). Early socialization patterns of children reveal that boys tend to play in large groups while girls in smaller, more intimate ones. Boys' relationships are more loose and conflict free, while girls tend to develop friendships that are more possessive and ultimately conflict-ridden. The small, intimate nature of girls' groupings instinctively increases the opportunities for indirect aggression since isolation, in this context, can be viewed as a form of punishment (Sullivan, 2000).

### **Family Factors Contributing to Bullying**

As Tattum and Herbert (1997) maintain "bullies are not born, they are created by those most influential in their lives" (p.2). Newman et al. (2000) further contend that "children are not seen as being predisposed to perform specific aggressive acts; rather, the underlying assumption is that aggressive behavior is learned" (p.52). While it is true that children may be born with psycho-neurological conditions such as hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder, literature suggests that the family environment may in fact be more influential than biological factors in providing a breeding ground for aggressive behavior problems such as bullying (Craig et al., 1998; Glover et al., 1998; Newman et al., 2000; Olweus, 1993; Pepler & Sedighdeilami, 1998; Rigby, 1998; Tattum & Herbert, 1997; Zarzour, 1999).

Family demographics (e.g., socio-economic status; single-parent families; education of the parents), parenting techniques (e.g., permissiveness; little supervision; harsh and inconsistent

discipline) and parent-child relationships (e.g., lack of warmth and involvement of the primary care-giver during the child's early years; hostility; rejection; authority; number of positive and negative interactions) may all play a major role in the development of aggressive behaviors (Newman et al., 2000; Olweus, 1993; Patterson, cited in Craig et al., 1998). Further factors such as substance abuse and mental illness increase the likelihood of child aggression problems (Newman et al., 2000). Being raised in families with such characteristics does not in itself doom a child to problems, but the needs of the family may interfere with the children receiving the level of nurture and support they require.

Patterson and Dishion (cited in Craig et al., 1998) found that stressors within the family unit such as low income, unemployment and lack of education can augment parental antisocial tendencies thereby leading to inconsistent discipline practices. By setting inadequate limits, demonstrating poor communication skills, providing inconsistent supervision and implementing inappropriate punishments, parents fail to consistently provide consequences for negative behaviors (Craig et al., 1998). In these instances, children learn that the limits of acceptable behavior vary with mood and they become confused by these warm-cold responses (Tattum & Herbert, 1997). In such homes where harsh punishment practices are accepted, aggression is repeatedly modeled and parents demonstrate that the person with the bigger stick wins. Older siblings can also add to this cycle by bullying younger brothers and sisters. Furthermore, when an older child is left in charge in these households, they may also wield this big-stick discipline since it is the only way they know of getting control (Zarzour, 1999). By being the victims of bullying at home, many bullies seek revenge for the injustice in their lives by being unjust to the less powerful in their schools (Newman et al., 2000).

Families further enhance bullying tendencies by suggesting that their children retaliate (strike a blow or use insults) when faced with an apparent problem. Problem-solving skills are thereby not developed and violence is seen as the solution. Bullies' parents often see their son's or daughter's behavior as admirable - a chip off the old block (Tattum & Herbert, 1997). This creates a very difficult dilemma when a school is disciplining a student for acting in a manner that the parents wholeheartedly support.

### **Media Factors Contributing to Bullying**

Social science research for several decades has investigated the relationship between exposure to media violence and childhood aggression (Sege, cited in Gullotta et al., 1998). While the overall size of the effect is disputed, the relationship between media exposure and aggressive behavior is clear. As Sege (cited in Gullotta et al., 1998) reports, "... a preference for violent programs at a young age results in increased viewing of these programs, which leads to the learning of TV behavior, which in turn is related to subsequent aggressive behavior" (p.129).

Statistics reveal that North American children spend more time watching television than any other waking activity and by the time they are fifteen they will have spent more hours in front of the television than in school (Zarzour, 1999). During that time they will have witnessed about eight thousand murders and one hundred thousand acts of violence (Sege, cited in Gullotta et al., 1998). Even seemingly innocent children's cartoons pack a punch of between twenty-five and fifty acts of violence per hour (Sege, cited in Gullotta et al., 1998).

Through the media (television, movies, music, video games and the internet), children have a window on the adult world. What they see in many instances is not complimentary. In fact, violence is presented as socially acceptable. On television, violence is often used as the first

and most effective way of resolving conflict (Sege, cited in Gullotta et al., 1998). Furthermore, a distorted view of violence is portrayed - that is, on television characters are seldom if ever hurt through the use of violence. While parents may tell children what they see is not real, research suggests that it is difficult for seven and eight year olds to distinguish between fantasy and reality (Zarzour, 1999). This concept of violence without pain is ultimately internalized by children and teens. Television violence, therefore, can create a blunting of sensibility. As Donnerstein et al. (cited in Gullotta et al., 1998) explain "a single exposure to violent images in television or media can cause anxiety and discomfort for most adolescents, whereas repeated exposure to violence simply desensitizes adolescents to its emotional effects" (p.137).

The American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth (cited in Gullotta et al., 1998) outlines three effects of media violence on children: an increased likelihood of aggression, the increased likelihood of being a victim and the bystander effect. The type of effect experienced by individuals depends largely on other environmental variables. Children who identify with violent characters on TV are likely to use aggression in their own lives, viewing it as a normal part of life. Some children resign themselves to the violence becoming victims, while others become bystanders encouraging the protagonists to fight or refraining from interfering since it is viewed as a component of everyday life. In response to these effects, Zarzour (1999) suggests that one way to fight back is to take control of the remote control.

### **The Victim**

#### **Portrait of a Victim**

More is known about bullies than about their prey - the victims (Zarzour, 1999). Zarzour (1999) contends that perhaps this is because it is tough to ignore the bullies' behaviors. Victims,

on the other hand, who tend to be quiet and relatively well-behaved, are easily forgotten. Victims are normally the kind of children teachers and parents adore - obedient and compliant. But, it is also these same qualities that draw them into the clutches of the bully.

The research that has been carried out on victims suggests that there is a pattern to victimization. The majority of victims are typically characterized as passive, weak, shy, anxious, fearful, unpopular and lacking self confidence (Craig et al., 1998; Olweus, 1993; Sullivan, 2000; Zarzour, 1999). Victims often do not retaliate because they feel they are not worth it: their self-esteem is so poor they justify the bully's attacks in their own minds, coming to believe they deserve the persecution (Zarzour, 1999). They feel depressed and rejected by their peers; often not even divulging they are the victims of bullying (Craig et al., 1998; Olweus, 1993; Sullivan, 2000; Zarzour, 1999). They are often loners; unlikely to have reliable friends to help them (Olweus, 1993; Zarzour, 1999). It is, in fact, this element of isolation coupled with being different (age, size, skin color, physical challenges, speech difficulties, dress) that sometimes renders them the bullies' target (Sullivan, 2000). When attacked by bullies, they commonly react by crying (in the lower grades) and withdrawal.

Four types of victims have been identified (Newman et al., 2000; Olweus, 1993; Stephenson & Smith, cited in Sullivan, 2000). They include: passive or submissive, provocative, bully victims and bystander victims. Passive victims (described as physically weak, anxious and lacking self-confidence) do nothing to provoke attacks and do little to defend themselves. Provocative victims are generally physically stronger than passive victims. They are characterized as causing tension and irritation around them, thereby provoking others. Bully victims, as described previously, both instigate aggressive acts and provoke aggression in

others. Bystander victims may observe bullying on a continual basis. While they are not bullied directly, they are continually impacted by the abuse since they witness it. Often bystander victims experience a sense of helplessness since they feel they can do little to help without jeopardizing their own safety.

### **Possible Symptoms of Being a Victim**

Research suggests that beyond the primary signs of victimization (repeatedly teased in a nasty way; picked on; belongings taken; injuries that cannot be explained), there are a number of secondary signs that may indicate that a child is a victim of bullying (Olweus, 1993; Sullivan, 2000). Signs to watch for in possible victims include: being alone and excluded from the peer group during breaks; trying to stay near adults during breaks; not having a single good friend; chosen last in team games; seldom invited to parties; reluctant to come to school; increase in reported headaches and stomach pains and showing a sudden deterioration in school work.

### **Family Factors Contributing to Victimization**

Family demographics may have an effect on victimization (Craig et al., 1998). It is suggested that children who are bullied tend to be overprotected and do not develop the independence skills necessary to make them less vulnerable to bullying (Sullivan, 2000). As in the case of bullies, victims may come from homes where there are few positive interactions and harsh, inconsistent punishment practices. Evidence indicates that children who develop victimization problems are more likely to have family histories of insecure attachment (Craig et al., 1998; Zarzour, 1999). When parents are either insensitive or unresponsive to their child's needs, the child gradually develops a lack of trust. Some children respond to this insecurity in a hostile way by becoming a bully while others withdraw.

Siblings also play a role in the victimization spiral (Zarzour, 1999). Many social skills are learned through brother sister interactions. Unfortunately, siblings do not always act as positive role models - bullying pain may fester for years in silence. In this way, children learn how to be victims keeping the code of silence alive and thereby setting the pattern for future relationships.

### **Where Does School Bullying Take Place?**

Bullies are very clever in selecting where they prey on their victims. Generally, bullies prefer areas with less supervision (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1998; Sullivan, 2000). Crowded school corridors provide a venue for bullies to accidentally-on-purpose bump into, insult or play havoc with their victims (Rigby, 1998). Playgrounds during break times give bullies ample opportunity to stalk their prey and inflict their harm (Rigby, 1998). Walking to and from school or traveling on the bus is another common bullying hotspot (Rigby, 1998). Finally, a good deal of bullying goes on in the classroom since it provides a captive audience for the bullies' antics. It occurs mostly when the teacher may be out of the room for a brief moment, but can even go on subtly in the classroom with the teacher present in the form of looks and gestures (Rigby, 1998).

## **Bullying and Victimization**

### **The Effects of Bullying and Victimization**

Along with the immediate effects of bullying (physical - scratches, bruises, cuts, broken bones, concussions; emotional - constantly living in fear, isolation, exclusion, disempowerment), bullying behavior has long-term negative consequences for all involved. Studies around the world point to alarming trends.

Longitudinal research indicates that childhood bullying is associated with adult anti-



social behavior such as criminality (Farrington, cited in Craig et al., 1998; Rigby & Cox, cited in Sullivan, 2000). Olweus (1993) found that around sixty percent of boys considered as bullies in upper elementary school had at least one criminal conviction by the time they were twenty-four. In another study, fifty percent of all identified school bullies became criminals as adults (Olweus, cited in Weinhold, 2000). An American study revealed that those who were identified as bullies early in school had a twenty-five percent chance of having a criminal record by the age of thirty (Eron et al., cited in Sullivan, 2000). Moreover, Olweus (cited in Weinhold, 2000) found that bullies at age eight were three times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age thirty. In adolescence, bullies are more likely to engage in acts of sexual harassment and date violence, join gangs and become juvenile delinquents (Craig, cited in Rigby, 1998).

In addition to criminality, the effects of bullying behavior encompass other domains. Research suggests that bullies in adolescence tend to be bullies in adulthood (Zarzour, 1999). Furthermore, bullies as adults tend to have children who are also bullies (Farrington, cited in Craig et al., 1998). Zarzour (1999) even contends that "some studies show bullies are more prone to depression and serious thoughts of suicide" (p.9).

For victims, repeated bullying can cause significant psychological distress and interfere with many domains of daily living (O'Connell et al., 1997). Changes in school performance, absenteeism from school, truancy and dropout rates are higher among bullied students (Newman et al., 2000). A frightening statistic reveals an estimated 160 000 children miss school every day in the United States for fear of being bullied (Zarzour, 1999). In an Australian study, Rigby (1998) found that frequently bullied children were more likely than others to suffer poor health (which could contribute to the increased absenteeism).

O'Connell et al. (1997) point to a victim's stable propensity to be victimized. Olweus (cited in Craig et al., 1998) found that adolescent boys who were victimized at age thirteen were generally also victimized at age sixteen. Furthermore, similar to bullies, children who are victimized tend to have children who are victimized thereby perpetuating the vicious cycle (Farrington, cited in Craig et al., 1998).

Victimized individuals are often more depressed, anxious and insecure, and tend to have lower self-esteem even into adulthood (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Craig et al., 1998; Olweus, 1993). In fact, those who have been victims of bullying often have difficulty forming positive relationships and in general lead less successful lives (Sullivan, 2000). For some victims, the stress associated with being the brunt of persistent bullying becomes insurmountable; seeing no more options but to commit suicide. Other victims, unable to take it anymore, retaliate violently against the years of teasing and exclusion by engaging in brutal school shooting rampages such as those witnessed of late in the media.

### **The Prevalence of Bullying and Victimization**

The prevalence of bullying in schools has been likened to an iceberg (Weinhold, 2000). Known cases of bullying are like the tip of the iceberg. What lies beneath, many times larger than the tip, are the unknown incidences. Unfortunately, all too often many instances of bullying embedded in a culture of violence go unreported, undetected or are not dealt with.

International research indicates that school bullying is widespread (Sullivan, 2000). Estimates of incidence vary depending on the research questions posed, research methods utilized, as well as the individual schools studied (Rigby, 1998). Scandinavian studies reveal fifteen percent of students are involved in bully-victim problems more than once or twice per

term: seven percent as bullies, nine percent as victims and one percent as both bullies and victims (Olweus, cited in O'Connell et al., 1997). In Ireland, three percent of primary school children report engaging in bullying behavior while eight percent report being the victims of serious bullying (O'Moore, cited in O'Connell et al., 1997). In England, twenty-six percent of students report being bullies sometimes and fifteen percent are bullied frequently (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). The Sheffield studies also reveal twenty-seven percent of primary school students reporting being bullied sometimes and ten percent reporting being bullied once a week or more. For secondary school students, these figures were ten and four percent respectively (Sullivan, 2000).

Moving to another part of the world, in Australia, surveys of more than 38 000 students indicate that approximately one child in six is bullied on a weekly basis (Rigby, 1998). Adair et al. (cited in Sullivan, 2000) found that seventy-five percent of respondents in New Zealand had been bullied and forty-four percent reported they had bullied others.

Nolin (cited in Sullivan, 2000), adding the American perspective, reports half of the 6504 Grade 6 through 12 students surveyed as witnessing some form of victimization and one in eight reporting being victimized at school. Similarly, in a Canadian study (children ages 4-14), one third of students were involved in bullying situations (Charach et al., cited in Sullivan, 2000). In another Canadian study, O'Connell et al. (1997) report six percent of children bullying others more than once or twice in the previous six weeks and fifteen percent reported they had been victimized at the same rate. Interestingly enough, in this study bullies were more likely to be known to teachers, whereas victims were more likely to be known to parents. A further alarming finding of this Canadian study was that "with increasing age, there was an increase in the

tendency to join in bullying, a decrease in willingness to help a victim, and a decrease in reports of peers assisting victims" (O'Connell et al., 1997, p.5). These developmental trends reflect the decreased concern for victims found in Rigby and Slee's (cited in O'Connell et al., 1997) Australian study.

### **Conclusion**

Bullying deprives children of their rightful entitlement to go to school in a safe environment (Quarles, 1993; Stein, 1996). Surely, no one should have to endure such abusive, humiliating practices. Studies indicating the high prevalence of bullying in schools further add to the urgency of combating bullying. Moreover, bullying needs to be addressed because of the potential long-term effects for all involved, whether as bullies, victims or witnesses to the violence (O'Connell et al., 1997).

Schools have a legal and moral responsibility to address bullying. As Nesbit (1999) affirms, "teachers must talk about bullying and encourage students to talk about it as well. It thrives in secrecy and cannot be confronted effectively if it remains hidden. Schools can overtly confront the problem" (p. 195).

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**ANTI-BULLYING SCHOOL POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT**

Schools can take effective action against bullying. Researchers concur that establishing an anti-bullying policy is an essential ingredient for successful intervention (Eslea & Smith, 1998; Glover et al., 1997; Glover et al., 1998; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Rigby, 1998; Sharp & Thompson, cited in Sharp & Smith, 1994; Sharp & Thompson, cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994; Sherman, 1999; Sullivan, 2000). In fact, Johnstone, Munn and Edwards (cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994) state that "the single most important thing a school can do to prevent bullying is have a clear policy to which staff, pupils and parents are committed" (p. 57). The policy itself is a statement of intent that guides action within the school (Sharp & Thompson, cited in Sharp & Smith, 1994).

Before the policy can be effectively implemented though much of the literature suggests that certain characteristics must be present (Nesbit, 1999; Rigby, 1998; Sharp & Smith, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). These factors include: a general recognition by the school community (staff, students, parents) that bullying is occurring at the school on a significant level; widespread belief that bullying has serious consequences; and optimism that applying new policies and practices will result in a reduction of the problem.

This research paper has as its focal point an examination of anti-bullying school policy development. It provides a source for individuals to consult in order to begin the process of achieving such a change. The sections include: an abbreviated review of literature with respect to bullying policies; an overview of the stages of initiation, awareness-raising, gathering input and policy development; the formulation of a plan for acceptance, implementation and continuation; a policy evaluation procedure; and finally, concluding comments. The appendices offer sample questionnaires and the framework of a sample bullying policy.



### **Selected Review of Literature on Bullying Policies**

A whole-school policy should be central to any efforts to tackle bullying in schools (Eslea & Smith, 1998; Glover et al., 1998; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Nesbit, 1999; Rigby, 1998; Sharp & Smith, 1994; Sherman, 1999; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). As Glover et al. (1998) maintain "a policy makes clear to everyone in the school community what the school is doing about bullying and why; it communicates clearly that bullying is not tolerated; and it can be used to monitor progress" (p.52).

School anti-bullying policies can take on different formats. Some policies are shorter documents which concentrate on a school definition of bullying and how it will be handled. Other policies are more detailed including procedures, responsibilities of individuals, effects of bullying and specific strategies. In many instances the shorter policies are made into posters and displayed around the schools. Longer policies generally are put into student and staff handbooks and circulated to parents (Glover et al., 1998).

There has been some discussion in the literature as to whether a bullying policy should be an integral part of a discipline policy or a separate entity distinct from the code of conduct. Research suggests that it may, in fact, be better to have a separate bullying policy since this highlights its importance within the school (Smith, cited in Tattum & Herbert, 1997; Zarzour, 1999).

There have been a number of studies which emphasize the establishment of whole-school anti-bullying policies. The national anti-bullying campaign in Norway, spearheaded by Olweus, provided the first large scale study of such interventions, monitoring a sample of forty-two primary and junior high schools (Smith & Sharp, 1994). While this campaign was not

specifically referred to as a whole school policy, many of its features paralleled policy development. The results of the study found that schools which implemented consistent whole-school approaches to bullying experienced considerable reductions in bullying behaviors in their schools. Roland (cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994) further monitored the long-term effects of this Norwegian intervention campaign. His findings suggested that schools with established routines to combat bullying were more successful with reducing the level of bullying in their schools.

In the United Kingdom there have been two large projects to investigate ways to deter bullying in schools. The first of these includes the Sheffield Project. In the early 1990s, twenty-four schools in Sheffield became involved in implementing a whole-school anti-bullying policy (Smith & Sharp, 1994). Two surveys taken a year apart were carried out to determine the level of bullying in the schools. Analyses of variance (ANOVAS) were used to examine changes over time for varying types of bullying. The results indicated statistically significant reductions in bullying. In general, project schools improved in most measures of bullying. A difference was noted, however, between primary and secondary schools with primary schools showing more substantial reductions. Secondary schools did note an increased likelihood of bullied students to seek help.

Subsequent to the end of the Sheffield Project, Eslea and Smith (1998) investigated the continuing progress made in some of the Sheffield schools in the year after the end of the project. Their main focus was to assess the longer term effectiveness of anti-bullying work since some of the schools had only finalized their policies shortly before the second survey in the Sheffield Project. Four schools administered the Olweus bullying questionnaire and reported varying degrees of success. Two schools had a consistent decline in reported bullying, one school had a

consistent rise and the other school experienced an initial decline and then subsequent increase. Eslea and Smith purport that the extent of the consultation process was an important factor influencing the success of the schools. All four schools reported reduced levels of bullying among boys, but three of the schools experienced a rise in bullying among girls. This last finding has implications for policy development in so far as efforts must be made to ensure that the policy addresses all types of bullying, including indirect bullying.

The second United Kingdom study involved the Safer Cities Project (Smith & Sharp, 1994). Similar to the Sheffield Project, schools were invited to develop whole-school anti-bullying policies. Schools which concentrated on the development and implementation of such a policy were more successful in tackling bullying in their schools.

From the body of school-based research it is evident that some schools are more successful than others in combating bullying. Certain key characteristics for success have been identified in the establishment of a whole-school anti-bullying policy. These include: identifying a need for policy development (initiation); awareness raising; consultation; policy development; communication and implementation of the policy; and finally maintenance and review (evaluation) (Sharp & Smith, 1994; Smith & Sharp, 1994). Similarly, a number of difficulties have been gleaned from the literature with respect to the development of an anti-bullying policy. Some of these include: managing the leadership of the project; the change in personnel; a reluctance to involve certain groups in the school community; a lack of trained staff and uncertainty as to the reaction of the public (Sharp & Smith, 1994). Clearly, it is important that these characteristics and potential difficulties be considered in the development of subsequent policies.

The length of time it takes to develop a bullying policy is another factor to consider in the process. Generally, researchers (e.g., Sharp & Smith, 1994; Smith & Sharp, 1994) suggest that it will take four semesters to develop and begin to implement a policy (working groups have been a popular way of developing policies whereby the working group gathers information and writes the draft policy for discussion by the rest of the school community). One term should be allowed for planning and preparation, another term for thorough consultation, a third semester for drafting and redrafting the policy and finally, in the fourth term the policy should be ready for the early stages of implementation. The literature suggests in the initial stages of implementation, schools will probably witness an increase in the number of students reporting being bullied due to an increased awareness of the problem (Sharp & Smith, 1994). It is important to remember, as Clemmen (cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994) points out "permanent and pervasive cultural change takes at least two to three years to really start taking hold" (p.74). Fullan (1991) reiterates this concept by suggesting that three to five years is a reasonable time frame for substantial change to take place.

### **Stages in Policy Development**

#### **Initiation**

Downey (1988) describes the first phase in the policy-making process as initiation. At this stage it must be determined if, in fact, there is a real need for the policy and thus whether the policy-making process should be activated. Downey maintains that in making that determination environmental scanning must be employed. Environmental scanning involves assessing the educational system for needs, evaluating policies in existence for their relevance and recognizing any emerging trends that might require the development of a new policy. Fullan (1991) further

contends that it is not only a question of whether a given need is important, but also how important it is in relation to other needs.

Clearly, recent research and the media have helped to focus public and educational attention on the extent of bullying in schools (Smith & Sharp, 1994). Documentaries such as those produced by CBC (e.g., CBC National News Documentary - "School Bullies") point to the serious effects of bullying on individual lives. This dialogue, in turn, has encouraged schools to reflect on their own practices and created a shift in thinking away from the perspective that bullying is "harmless fun" or "character building". Moreover, the accepted knowledge that all schools encounter bullying to some degree has led to an expectation that schools make a concerted effort to address this stimulus for serious concern.

In the initiation stage, the principal would seek the formal backing of the district administration by discussing the possibility of the development of the bullying policy with the school board. As Fullan (1991) suggests, initiation of change never occurs without an advocate and one of the strongest advocates is the senior district administration. This support could be garnered through a presentation highlighting many of the findings in the literature on bullying.

### **Awareness-Raising and Consultation**

Gorin (cited in Nesbit, 1999) emphasizes that everyone has a role to play when it comes to providing a healthy environment for learning void of bullying. To ensure that the concerns of all stakeholders of the school population and the broader community are considered in the policy development process, input from a number of groups must be secured. But before input can be sought, the level of awareness on the issue of bullying must be elevated. This requires educating staff, students and parents on the topic.

Many researchers (Brant, 1987a; Brant, 1987b; Fitch & Kopp, 1990; Fullan, 1991; Slavin, 1987) suggest programs have a greater success in accomplishing their objectives if teachers choose the goals and plan the activities rather than assuming a receptive role. In fact, since teachers are central to the implementation of the policy, it is vital that they are consulted and supportive of all efforts. Teachers in essence must buy into the process (Fullan, 1991). Downey (1988) reiterates this belief by maintaining that, in organizations, unless the people affected by policies are involved in shaping the policies, they are not likely to be implemented with vigor.

For staffs, the initial stage of raising awareness might take the form of a professional development day on bullying. An overview of the related literature could be presented and literature on bullying could be provided for the staff's perusal. Videos and/or guest speakers are another good way to introduce the topic. The July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2001 CBC documentary entitled "School Bullies" would be an excellent starting point for staffs, delivering a powerful message on the subject.

A follow-up activity to this could be to get staff members to collectively define bullying (Sharp & Thompson, cited in Sharp & Smith, 1994). In order to determine the values and beliefs of staff members with respect to what constitutes bullying, a values-beliefs assessment could be carried out using an instrument similar to the one outlined in Appendix A. Staff members would be presented with approximately ten situations and their task would be to determine if these scenarios were examples of bullying. Obvious discussion would ensue. Following this initial encounter, staff would have an opportunity to ponder the initiative and further input would be obtained through other staff meetings.

At this point in the process continuum, staff members could be asked to seek the input of

the students in their classrooms by gathering information about their thoughts on bullying. Questionnaires can be very useful in gathering data pertinent to the state of bullying in the school and then presenting that data to staff, students and parents (Miller, 1995; Rigby, 1998). A useful technique for primary schools would be to have children indicate on a school map where they feel unsafe. For older students, bullying questionnaires such as those outlined in Appendices B, C and D might be more appropriate. It is certain that these age-appropriate approaches would in turn spark dialogue on the subject.

The support of the parents and community with respect to a bullying policy would be needed. This could be achieved by holding a public meeting and informing parents of the proposal outlining what the bullying policy would encompass. Newsletters could be circulated inviting parents and community members to the meeting. The newsletter could also serve as a venue to explain some of the literature on bullying. As Slavin (1987) reiterates, cooperation with parents and community is essential if a school is to become fully cooperative with both teachers, students and parents working in a collegial, cooperative environment. Consultation is an effective means to foster this cooperation (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Fitch & Kopp, 1990).

Following this initial contact with staff members, school board, students, parents and the community at large, an anti-bullying committee could be established. This committee would be comprised of a representative of school administration, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, students (if it is an upper elementary or high school), bus drivers (high risk environment), the community and, if possible, a representative of the legal profession.

The task of the anti-bullying committee would be to gather further input from all the stakeholders. This could be achieved by further general meetings with both staff members and

the school community. This gathered input would form the basis for the first draft of the bullying policy.

Effective policy development is dependent on this preliminary consultation process (Rigby, 1998; Sharp & Thompson, cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). As Sharp and Thompson (cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994) reveal, those schools which involved all stakeholders in a meaningful way in the Sheffield Project in England had the biggest decreases in bullying behavior. Through awareness raising and consultation, the roles and responsibilities of everyone are clearly defined. This certainly is likely to lead to increased detection of bullying behavior and greater confidence in dealing with it (Sharp & Thompson, cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994).

### **Policy Development**

The chief features of an anti-bullying policy have been identified in the literature (Rigby, 1998; Sharp & Smith, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). They include: the school's stand in relation to bullying; the rights of children with respect to bullying in the school; a succinct definition of bullying (examples can be included); the process school personnel should follow when bullying occurs; the responsibilities of all stakeholders, including children, who witness incidents of bullying; what the school will do to counter bullying on the premises and an evaluation process.

The school's stand in relation to bullying requires a strong statement concerning the unacceptability of bullying in the school. Included in this stance should be bullying between peers, bullying of teachers by students, bullying of children by teachers and bullying of teachers by other teachers (Rigby, 1998).

Since the primary purpose of an anti-bullying policy is to protect vulnerable people from being bullied, a statement of their rights in this matter should be prominent (Rigby, 1998). One



school in New South Wales, Australia summed this up by writing "the right to be left alone is the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized people" (Rigby, 1998, p. 35). In this way, the school recognizes an obligation to take steps against bullying.

Widespread agreement between some academic researchers (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1998; Sharp & Smith, 1994; Sullivan, 2000) suggest that bullying includes several key elements: physical, verbal or psychological attack that is intended to cause fear, distress or harm to the victim; an abuse of power in an asymmetric power relationship; general absence of provocation by the victim; and repeated incidents over a prolonged period of time.

Sullivan (2000) outlines a seven step process for dealing with cases of bullying. These steps include: intervening and defusing the situation; gathering information; deciding on the appropriate intervention; implementing the intervention; monitoring the situation and trying another intervention if required; following up and keeping a record of the incident.

The component concerning the responsibilities of stakeholders is crucial to the success of any anti-bullying policy. Everyone has a role to play and it is desirable to have those responsibilities outlined in the policy. With respect to students, Rigby (1998) points out that unless students feel they should and can make a difference in bullying, such as by informing teachers, policy statements are unlikely to have an effect.

What the school will do to counter bullying depends upon what the school has decided are the best and most acceptable means available. Some schools will outline specific preventative and intervention measures, while others might take an extreme stance by adopting zero tolerance policies. In such schools all bullying infractions result in suspensions or expulsions (Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996). The societal pendulum has swung back

and forth with respect to the severity of penalties and actions taken.

The last component of the policy, i.e., evaluation, is extremely important since it renews the commitment to the policy (Rigby, 1998). Effective evaluation encompasses ways to improve the existing policy.

Appendix E provides the framework of a sample policy based on the guidelines outlined in this section. In the sample policy, the sections including the responsibilities of stakeholders and what the school will do to counter bullying have been combined.

### **Formulation of the Implementation Plan**

#### **Plan for Acceptance**

While the previous section provides a framework for an anti-bullying policy, it is by no means the panacea. The anti-bullying committee would utilize the input of all stakeholders to formulate a draft of the anti-bullying policy, following the process as proposed by Smith and Sharp (1994). This draft version would be circulated among all partners (staff members, parents, students (if old enough), school community, school board) and comments would be requested. The policy would be revised after each feedback process (at least three revised drafts would be produced). The anti-bullying committee would meet on a regular basis to revise drafts. The final draft would need to be placed before school council for acceptance. After acceptance, the policy would undergo a one year pilot with close review.

#### **Implementation**

Fullan (1991) purports that implementation consists of the process of putting into practice an idea, program or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change. However, implementation can be a very complex process to facilitate since there are a

multitude of factors affecting its success.

Downey (1988) posits that the most requisite requirement for the implementation of a policy is a sense of commitment to and ownership of the policy by the people required to effect its implementation. The participatory model, where members are involved in the policy-making process, is heralded as being an effective means of enhancing commitment to the policy. Administration would have a key leadership role to play in fostering the successful implementation of the policy.

In an effort to facilitate the implementation of the anti-bullying policy, the anti-bullying committee could establish a Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) whereby the implementation of the program could be broken down into units to be achieved within specific time lines (Downey, 1988). For the anti-bullying policy, this critical path might include the gathering of input from stakeholders during the first term, the drafting of policies during the second term and the beginning of implementation of the policy during the third term. The following year would be a pilot year of implementation and stringent review.

Fullan (1991) states that clarity is a perpetual enigma in the change process. Even when it is agreed that a change is needed, the proposed method of change may not be clear as to how to implement the necessary changes. To help improve clarity and to reduce false clarity, it is proposed that school personnel would receive inservicing on bullying. These sessions would be facilitated by someone knowledgeable in the field. As Fullan suggests, failure to realize that there is a need for inservice work during implementation is a common problem.

Regular time could be allocated at monthly school council meetings and staff meetings to discuss the efforts, progress, positive results and even frustrations experienced with the policy.

This would be an appropriate time to obtain valuable feedback on the progression of the policy.

### **Continuation**

The problem of continuation is common to all programs and policies regardless of their origins whether it be external initiatives, internal developments or a combination of both (Fullan, 1991). It is a phase deserving of some discussion in this paper.

Research (Fullan, 1991) suggests that one of the most powerful factors known to have an effect on continuation is staff and administrative turnover. In an attempt to counteract this determinant, it is proposed that continued inservicing of, support for and orientation to the anti-bullying policy be maintained so that new members arriving after the policy commenced and even those people who were already engaged in the plan of action would remain committed to the cause.

It is important to consider where this anti-bullying policy would rest within the vast array of other policies. It is hoped that the anti-bullying initiative would become a continuous cyclical process of renewal within the framework of the school improvement plan.

### **Evaluation Procedures**

#### **Evaluation**

In the evaluation or review phase of the policy-making process, Downey (1988) explains that the task is to appraise results. Criteria for evaluation, purported by Downey include assessing goals, the implementation process, acceptance, cost-effectiveness and consideration of any spill over effects.

Evaluation would be an ongoing cyclical process. The success of the anti-bullying policy would be measured against its set of objectives. Therefore, its goals would serve as the

benchmark for evaluation.

In determining effective implementation and acceptance of the policy, the degree to which the policy had been accepted within the school would be important. Evidence of internalization of the policy coupled with a feeling of project ownership among the school community would be paramount in determining its success. Feedback from parents, students and staff members would be a useful tool to evaluate the success of the initiative. Discussion sessions, surveys and questionnaires could give feedback on the degree of success that the policy had experienced.

Cost analysis would not be a major factor in this particular initiative since the cost of inservicing is minimal and, when weighed against the benefits, seems almost too trivial to entertain its consideration.

In assessing spill over effects (intended or unintended consequences), bus discipline referrals as well as parent phone calls could give some indication to the success of the policy.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to view policy development and implementation as a process. The effort to develop and implement a policy must continue over time. As Sharp and Thompson (cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994) concur, schools must find "new and imaginative ways of re-promoting the school's anti-bullying values from year to year" (p.82). Equally important in the process is the ability of the entire school community (parents, students, staff, community) to take ownership for the policy. Through such efforts changing views of fundamental values can begin to emerge and the war against school bullying can be won.

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## Appendix A

### Values-Beliefs Assessment

What is bullying?

Consider the following situations and decide whether you believe they are examples of bullying.

Be prepared to share your thoughts with your colleagues after you have completed the assessment individually.

#### Yes or No

1. One student knocks another student's blocks over at recess.
2. Two students won't let another student play with them.
3. One student tells another student that if he doesn't give him \$5 each week he will beat him up.
4. Each time that this student walks into a class a select group of students start to whisper and laugh.
5. One student tells the entire class that one of their classmate's parents have just broken up.
6. A group of girls spread rumors about another girl that they do not like very much.
7. One student nicknames another student "Red" for her hair color now all the students call her that too.
8. A group of boys will not let anyone else play with the blocks at recess.



9. Every time this student walks past this other student he always pulls on her hair.
10. This student always takes another child's baseball cap and throws it around.

**Individual Reflection**

What are the common characteristics of the situations that you felt are bullying?

**Group Reflection**

In your group, share your responses to the situations. Attempt to create a group definition of bullying.

(Sharp & Smith, 1994)

**Appendix B****Bullying Behavior Questionnaire 1 (Upper Primary/Elementary)**

Boy \_\_\_\_\_ Girl \_\_\_\_\_

How many times have any of these things happened to you today?

**Not at all      Once      More than once**

1. Somebody called you names
2. Somebody said something mean about you
3. Somebody pushed, kicked or punched you
4. Somebody took your belongings
5. Somebody threatened you
6. You were left out on purpose

(Sharp &amp; Smith, 1994)

### Appendix C

#### Bullying Behavior Questionnaire 2 (Elementary)

Boy \_\_\_\_\_ Girl \_\_\_\_\_

**Not at all      Once      More than once**

During this week in school, another student

1. Called me names.
2. Said mean things about me my family.
3. Tried to kick push hit me.
4. Said they would beat me up.
5. Tried to make me give them money.
6. Did not allow me to play a game.
7. Was mean because I am different.
8. Tried to frighten me.
9. Tried to make me hurt others.
10. Tried to hurt me.
11. Took something from me.
12. Was rude to me.
13. Tried to trip me up.
14. Laughed at me.
15. Told a lie about me.

(Sharp & Smith, 1994)

### Appendix D

#### Bullying Behavior Questionnaire 3 (Junior/Senior High)

5. Boy \_\_\_\_\_ Girl \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which grade are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How often are you bullied?

Never              Once in a while              More than once a week

8. **Yes**              **No**

Have you been bullied in these ways?

a) hit pushed punched kicked

b) left out of things on purpose

c) belongings damaged or stolen

d) threatened

e) gossip spread

f) teased

g) other \_\_\_\_\_

5. How often do you bully others?

Never              Once in a while              More than once a week

6. **Yes**              **No**

Have you bullied others in these ways?

a) hit pushed punched kicked

b) left out of things on purpose

c) belongings damaged or stolen

d) threatened

e) spread gossip

f) teased

g) other \_\_\_\_\_

7. Have you witnessed bullying take place at this school?

Never

Once in a while

More than once a week

8.

**Yes**

**No**

What kind of bullying have you seen take place?

a) hit pushed punched kicked

b) left out of things on purpose

c) belongings damaged or stolen

d) threatened

e) gossip spread

f) teased

g) other \_\_\_\_\_

9.

**Yes**

**No**

Where does bullying take place?

a) on the way to school

b) in the parking lot

c) in the corridors

d) in the classrooms

e) in the washrooms

f) on the way home from school

g) on the bus

(Sullivan, 2000)

## **Appendix E**

### **Framework of a Bullying Policy**

#### **A. Beliefs & Intent Statement**

Bullying of any form is not tolerated at this school. Everyone at the school is committed to ensuring a safe, caring environment which promotes positive self-esteem and growth of all its members. All cases of bullying will be treated very seriously and all necessary steps to stop it will be taken.

#### **B. Definition of Bullying**

Bullying involves repetitive acts of aggression and or manipulation by one or more persons against another person. Bullying includes the following elements: intention of harm; imbalance of power; and repetition.

#### **C. Examples of Bullying**

Bullying can be any one of the following or a combination of them.

##### **(i) Physical Bullying**

- hitting, pushing, kicking, punching, biting, scratching, pinching, spitting, hair-pulling
- damaging or destroying someone else's property

##### **(ii) Non-Physical Bullying: Verbal**

- teasing or spreading rumors about others
- put-downs
- ridiculing others about their culture, religion, social background or appearance

##### **(iii) Non-Physical Bullying: Non-Verbal**

- excluding others from a group

- writing mean comments about others
- making rude gestures faces

#### **D. What School Personnel Should Do When Bullying Occurs -The Process**

Once a bullying problem is identified or reported, the following process should be followed.

Step 1: intervene and defuse the situation

Step 2: gather information (talk to the bully victim bystanders to determine what is going on)

Step 3: decide upon an appropriate intervention

Step 4: implement the intervention

Step 5: if the problem is not resolved try another intervention (involve administration if they are not already aware of the situation)

Step 6: follow-up (check to ensure there are no further difficulties between those involved)

Step 7: keep a record of the incident

#### **E. Division of Responsibilities**

Ensuring the creation of a safe, caring environment in a school setting depends on the cooperation of the entire school community. It is important that all stakeholders understand and fulfil their responsibilities in order to achieve this goal.

##### **(i) Responsibilities of the School Principal/Vice-Principal**

- to ensure that annual inservicing by a knowledgeable individual takes place to provide school personnel with the necessary information to recognize bullying and the procedures to respond to it
- to raise awareness among the school community about bullying
- to encourage cooperation and positive interactions



- to foster school values by example
- to implement school-wide procedures to confront bullying
- to be observant of possible signs and incidents of bullying
- to promote teaching strategies that challenge bullying behavior
- to encourage students to tell about bullying
- to listen to all parties involved in incidents
- to investigate bullying incidents as fully as possible
- to take appropriate action
- to inform parents of bullying incidents
- to monitor this process
- to be a member of the anti-bullying committee

#### **(ii) Responsibilities of Teachers**

- to encourage cooperation and positive interactions
- to foster school values by example
- to implement school-wide procedures to confront bullying
- to be observant of possible signs and incidents of bullying
- to promote teaching strategies that challenge bullying behavior
- to encourage students to tell about bullying
- to listen to all parties involved in incidents
- to investigate bullying incidents as fully as possible
- to take appropriate action
- to inform parents of bullying incidents

- to possibly be a member of the anti-bullying committee

### **(iii) Responsibilities of Support Staff**

- advise teacher and or administrator of any bullying incidents witnessed (this includes bussing situations)
- to be observant of possible signs and incidents of bullying
- to foster school values by example
- to possibly be a member of the anti-bullying committee

### **(iv) Responsibilities of Students**

- to refuse to be involved in any bullying situations (use strategies to remove yourself from the situation e.g., be assertive; walk away; use conflict resolution skills)
- if present when bullying occurs, take preventative action
- report the incident to a teacher administrator
- to possibly be a member of the anti-bullying committee

### **(v) Responsibilities of Parents**

- watch for signs of victimization in your child (e.g., unwillingness to attend school; a pattern of sickness; bruises; requests for extra money)
- advise your child to tell a teacher administrator if bullying is occurring
- encourage cooperation and positive interactions
- do not encourage your child to retaliate
- inform the school if bullying is suspected
- be open to discuss the matter if your child is involved in a bullying incident (either as the bully, victim or bystander)

- to possibly be a member of the anti-bullying committee

**(vi) Responsibilities of the Community**

- to support the school's anti-bullying campaign
- offer resources to parents children that foster positive interpersonal relationships
- be involved with the anti-bullying message throughout the community (posters, ads, etc.)
- enlist knowledgeable community members to educate the community about bullying

**F. Evaluation Process**

The anti-bullying committee will be responsible to spearhead the formal evaluation of this policy annually. All stakeholders will be involved in this process. The anti-bullying committee will enlist their feedback through discussions, surveys and the like. Necessary changes to the policy will take place in consultation with all stakeholders.

Once the policy is written, Eslea and Smith (1998) stress the importance of maintaining the momentum of anti-bullying work. Ensuring that a school policy on bullying remains alive and active after the initial impetus has receded is paramount to the success of anti-bullying prevention and interventions. As Sherman (1999) summarizes "written plans and policies by themselves clipped into dusty binders on administrators' bookshelves don't change behavior. Policies must become part of the school culture, communicated clearly and repeatedly to students, parents and staff" (p.6). Welsh (cited in Hinkle & Henry, 2000) maintains that school culture theories carry promise not only for explaining school disorder, but also for bullying prevention and intervention. School disorder, such as bullying, can be reduced by conscious efforts by school administrators, teachers, students, parents and the community at large.

The all-encompassing question asked repeatedly by concerned school personnel is how then does one continue the anti-bullying momentum so that the policy development does not get lost in a vast chasm of other initiatives. While certainly not proposing a "recipe book" approach on how to achieve this goal, this research paper does provide an overview of the literature establishing the link between school culture and bullying prevention interventions. It further suggests possible prevention intervention measures for the reader's perusal and scrutiny. The sections include: school culture; transformational leadership; empowerment; nurturing an anti-bullying culture through the school environment; tackling bullying through a cooperative curriculum; using the peer group to combat bullying; teacher interventions; enlisting the community to counter bullying; and finally, concluding comments.

## **The School Culture and Bullying**

### **School Culture**

Understanding school culture is a vital part of school improvement, yet culture due to its elusive nature is difficult to define. While varying definitions exist, all seem to agree that culture includes the attitudes and beliefs of people within and outside the organization, the norms of the organization and the relationship between and among individuals and groups (Schein, 1985). Shafritz and Ott (1996) concur that organizational culture is "comprised of many intangible things such as values, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, behavioral norms, artifacts and patterns of behavior" (p. 420). Simply stated, organizational culture can be viewed as the way we do things around here (Deal & Kennedy, 1983). An administrator intent on fostering long-term positive change must assess the assumptions and beliefs which are driving forces for the culture's artifacts and values (Schein, cited in Shafritz & Ott, 1996).

An examination of the effective schools research and the school reform movement demonstrates the importance of strong organizational culture in influencing organizational behavior (Owens, 1998). Kanter's research (cited in Owens, 1998) further reinforces the impact of organizational culture on members' feelings and attitudes. Organizations that foster a positive culture of pride (acceptance of diversity of ideas, emphasis on the wholeness of the organization, and constant stimulation in terms of trying innovative projects) seem to have more success in creating a strong culture. Members in such environments feel that they belong, that their opinion counts for something and that their contributions are accepted and valued. While administrators cannot directly influence peoples' motivation, indirectly they can do so by creating a positive culture which helps promote the personal growth of the members of the organization and lead to

effective organizations.

Owens (1998) posits "one of the outstanding characteristics of effective schools is that they take responsibility for meeting the educational needs of students to a greater degree than their less successful counterparts" (p. 93). This research suggests that one of the goals of an effective school organizational culture is for staff, parents and students to take ownership of their school by taking responsibility for school improvement (Goldring & Rallis, 1993; Irwin, 1996; Lieberman, 1995; Sarason, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1990; Trafford, 1997). The key to establishing effective schools is to develop "within the school a culture-norms, values, beliefs- that unites those in their unending quest of seeking increased educational effectiveness" (Owens, 1998, p. 95).

### **Transformational Leadership**

The leadership of administrators in reshaping organizational culture is highly significant (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1994; Hoy et al., 1990; Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Sarason, 1996). Schein (1985) speculates "the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture" (p.2). Research suggests that educational leaders interested in cultural systemic change need to adopt a transformational style of leadership (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Brown, 1993; Goens & Clover, 1991; Koehler, 1999; Leithwood et al., 1999; Sagor, 1992; Telford, 1996).

Brown (1993) contends that effective educational organizations practicing a transformational leadership approach possess certain characteristics. In such organizations, leaders provide staff with opportunities to share a common vision, educational expectations are set at a high standard for both administration and staff, and opportunities are provided to staff to

explore new avenues with regard to their teaching practices. The staff must be involved in goal setting and have a clear understanding of the school's goals. This leadership style embedded in an ethos of empowerment and collegiality encourages participation and replaces leading by control with leading through support. As Conley (1997) purports, "facilitative notions of leadership require a letting go illusion of control and an increasing belief that others can and will function independently and successfully within a common framework of expectations and accountability" (p. 358).

### **Empowerment**

The examination of transformational leadership necessitates an exploration of the concept of empowerment. In its purest and simplest definition, Kreisberg (1992) defines empowerment as the process through which people increase their control or mastery of their own lives and the decisions that affect their lives. Expanding on this concept, Maeroff (cited in Irwin, 1996) defines teacher empowerment as the "power to exercise one's own craft with confidence and to help shape the way that the job is to be done" (p.4). Similarly, Ashcroft (cited in Sleeter, 1991) stresses the individual's power to achieve his or her own goals by "bringing into a state of belief in one's ability compatibility to act with effect" (p.3). Empowerment of teachers has to do with their "individual deportment and not their ability to govern others" (Heller, 1993, p.95).

Zimmerman and Rappaport (cited in Johnson and Short, 1998) describe empowerment "as a construct that ties personal competencies and abilities to environments that provide opportunity for choice and autonomy and demonstrating these competencies" (p.149). In essence, individuals develop competencies to steer their growth and resolve their own problems (Johnson & Short, 1998). Covey (cited in McBride and Skau, 1995) describes an empowered organization

as one in which "individuals have the knowledge, skills, desire and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to organizational success" (p.267).

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) maintain that empowerment is not something given, but something which emanates from within. It is a willingness and sense of desire to act professionally, heightened by a feeling of self-esteem, autonomy and competence. In the same vein, Johnson and Short (1998) posit that empowerment is found in the depths of one's existence. Lieberman, in a conversation with Brant (1989), defines empowerment as "involving people authentically in dealing with their professional lives" (p.24). According to Lieberman (cited in Brant, 1989), "it is the real participation by teachers reflecting their vision of participation" (p.24).

At the heart of the word empowerment is its root word "power". Brant (1989) suggests that this can create a value-laden interpretation of its meaning. At first blush, conceptions of power in our culture and emerging definitions of empowerment would seem to be in conflict. Predominant theories of power define it in terms of domination or the ability to control others (Kreisberg, 1992). Power is often conceived as a commodity that one either has or lacks (Sleeter, 1991). Juxtaposed to this concept, empowerment theories, in seeking to maximize individual power, reject relationships based on domination. This antithetical relationship would seem to imply that empowerment involves transcending power (Kreisberg, 1992). Sergiovanni (1990) contends that empowerment can be best understood as the exchange of "power over" for "power to" where collaborative rather than dominating relationships are emphasized.

By empowering others, leaders can actually acquire more productive power - the power needed to achieve organizational goals (Shafritz & Ott, 1996). Within the transformational



leadership paradigm, administrators must move from a “power over” to a “power through” belief. In order for real change to occur, traditional notions of power must be relinquished and in contrast a supportive environment that facilitates power for everyone in the school must be fostered (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991). Being aware that power can be derived from channeling information, establishing ownership, obtaining directing resources, capitalizing on opportunities, and managing critical problems, enables leaders to better empower his/her group toward shared problem solving (DuBrin, 1998).

The link between empowerment and the creation of positive school culture has significant implications for nurturing an anti-bullying culture in the school setting. Empowering techniques such as providing a positive atmosphere, rewarding and encouraging in visible and personal ways, expressing confidence, fostering initiative and responsibility, and building on success all help to foster positive growth (DuBrin, 1998). Goldstein (cited in Newman et al., 2000) confirms this link by identifying certain characteristics of schools with lesser degrees of aggression. Specifically, low aggression schools have administrators who are highly visible and available to students and staff, know what is happening in the school, are fair and consistent, rapidly take steps to address any problems in the school, and support and empower the school community.

### **Nurturing an Anti-Bullying Culture Through the Environment**

Consideration of the physical environment of the school is a first step in fostering an anti-bullying culture (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1998; Sullivan, 2000). Bullying hotspots include the classroom, the corridors, washrooms, outside the school building and to and from the school. Researchers suggest that there are two major ways of tackling bullying in the school

environment: by extending control over areas where bullying is likely to occur and by creating an enjoyable school environment (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1998; Sullivan, 2000).

Olweus (cited in Rigby, 1998) argues "staff surveillance is the most effective single means of reducing bullying in schools" (p. 64). Of course, this should be treated as a short-term measure with the eventual goal being the creation of an anti-bullying school ethos. Rigby (1998) explains that while research evidence is clear that the number of teachers present during break periods at school correlate significantly with low levels of reported bullying, not all supervision is equally effective. Teachers taking no action can be perceived as condoning bullying. Likewise, teachers intervening everywhere does not necessarily allow students to develop their conflict resolution skills.

With respect to creating a stimulating school environment, much can be accomplished by engaging student interest through diverse extracurricular activities such as clubs, sports, leadership groups and the like (Rigby, 1998). The value of such extracurricular activities cannot be overstated. Similarly, school beautification projects and enhanced playground equipment have positive impacts helping to avert bullying behavior (Nesbit, 1999).

The successful introduction of a change that will affect attitudes clearly requires the shared values of the staff, students and parents (Townsend, cited in Glover et al., 1997). Much can be accomplished by encouraging positive interactions within the school (Sherman, 1999). Having teachers in the hallways to greet students by name, meeting students at classroom doors, administrators greeting students when they get off the bus and using positive reminders instead of punitive practices for minor infractions help foster a positive school culture (Sherman, 1999).

## **A Cooperative Curriculum**

### **Tackling Bullying Through a Cooperative Curriculum**

Research indicates that another way of tackling bullying is through the curriculum (Cowie & Sharp, cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994; Rigby, 1998; Sharp & Smith, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). Cowie and Sharp (cited in Smith and Sharp, 1994) argue that a curriculum rooted in cooperative values can create the kind of context where bullying is unlikely to flourish. A survey conducted by Rigby and Cox (cited in Rigby, 1998) confirms that those identified as bullies were significantly less cooperative in their attitudes. Fundamental to the cooperative curriculum is a commitment to the values of trust and respect that help students develop an understanding of self and others. As Cowie and Sharp (cited in Smith and Sharp, 1994) maintain "proponents of the cooperative curriculum aim to create a positive climate of goodwill in the classroom which will give pupils a secure base for solving problems, for confronting controversial issues, for facing difficulties in their social relationships and for developing a sense of ownership of their class and school community"(p.86).

### **Quality Circles**

One approach to developing cooperation between students is through group problem-solving, employing a method known as Quality Circles (Nesbit, 1999; Rigby, 1998). Having its origins in business and industry it can be adapted for school use. Typically the process includes forming a group between five and twelve students to solve a problem (bullying), brainstorming to elicit possible solutions, investigating the problem through gathering relevant data, identifying causes, suggesting solutions, presenting the solutions for appraisal to the management and monitoring evaluating the outcome. The management in this case is the administration and staff.

Effectiveness of Quality Circles was evaluated in the Sheffield Project (Cowie & Sharp, cited in Smith & Sharp, 1994). In a survey of fifty-seven students' attitudes towards participation in a Quality Circle, over half stated they had become more aware of bullying and that they now tried to stop it. While there is no research to suggest that Quality Circles work to stop bullying behavior on its own, research indicates it raises awareness about the problem of bullying and helps students reflect upon their own behavior and attitudes (Rigby, 1998).

### **Bullying Blitz**

An approach increasingly being used to heighten student awareness of bullying and its effects is the bullying blitz. Through one day sessions to full week extravaganzas, bullying issues are coming to the forefront, being discussed in schools around the world (Nesbit, 1999). Such events serve as a catalyst to stimulate student thought, develop empathy and devise ways of openly confronting the problem.

### **Drama, Role-Play, Videos and Literature**

Another powerful element in the bullying prevention formula is the use of drama, role-play, videos and literature to foster social skill development and a sense of empathy (Nesbit, 1999). Drama teachers have long been aware of the potential of drama to assist students in gaining an understanding of their own lives, to explore the hypothetical (Socratic voice) and to come to terms with disturbing emotions (Cowie & Sharp, cited in Sharp & Smith, 1994). Drama can create a context in which students can explore bullying within the safety of a role-play situation. Through drama, students learn to express feelings of hurt, rejection and fear while in role and thereby understand how people feel when they are victims of different forms of bullying. Furthermore, it affords students the opportunity to rehearse responses to bullying behavior.

To lessen the possibility of the role of bully being glamorized or an individual being labeled, Cowie and Sharp (cited in Smith and Sharp, 1994) suggest having an adult to take on the role of the bully or even better yet to use an empty chair representative of that role. In this manner there is less likelihood of stereotyping to occur.

Rigby (1998) contends that videos can also be an excellent stimulus for sparking discussions on bullying. Through the use of such videos as Sticks and Stones, Only Playing, Miss and Bullying at School: Strategies for Prevention students become engaged in dialogue. It is important to note, however, that watching the video alone does little to reinforce anti-bullying ideology.

Literature can be a very powerful tool in raising school awareness about bullying (Nesbit, 1999; Rigby, 1999). By choosing age-appropriate stories with bullying themes, teachers can establish a forum in which students can talk openly about the injustice and violence displayed in bullying acts. Froschl et al. (1998) offer an annotated bibliography of appropriate literature to raise the issue of bullying with primary and elementary students. Moreover, Sharp and Smith (1994), as well as Zarzour (1999), include comprehensive listings of suggested readings for all age groups.

### **Assertiveness Training**

One further possibility in the curriculum is student assertiveness training which can be taught to students of all grade levels (Cowie & Sharp, cited in Smith and Sharp, 1994). When discussing ways of responding to bullying, oftentimes the most common piece of advice offered seems to be either to ignore the bullying behavior or encourage the students to stand up for themselves. Rarely, however, are students told how to stand up for themselves without being

aggressive. Sharp and Cowie (cited in Smith and Sharp, 1994) suggest that students can respond to bullying in assertive manners that are appropriate to the situation.

Assertiveness training provides students with defined structures or a script that they can use in social contexts. During these sessions students are taught how to make assertive statements; look and stand assertively; remain calm in stressful situations utilizing breathing control, physical relaxation and visualization; block out insults without reacting to them; resist manipulation and threats by saying no or using the broken record technique (keep repeating the same statement until the other student gives up); respond to name calling; leave the bullying situation; enlist the support of bystanders; and boost their self-esteem (Sullivan, 2000). By responding assertively, the students stand up for their rights without violating the rights of the bullies. Reacting assertively means stating intentions, wishes or feelings clearly and directly. Assertive responses go beyond verbal messages to include eye contact and body language.

It is important to point out, however, that while exiting quickly from a bullying situation can at times be an effective solution, avoiding the bully is not always the answer since there is a danger that an over reliance on such a strategy can disempower the victim (Smith & Sharp, 1994). Students must learn to utilize all skills taught in assertiveness training.

### **Using the Peer Group**

#### **Using the Peer Group to Combat Bullying**

Literature indicates that the potential for using the peer group in combating bullying is enormous (Nesbit, 1999; Rigby, 1998; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). Pikas (cited in Sullivan, 2000) argues that the peer group is not comfortable watching bullying, but feels powerless to do anything about it. If these students are provided with a way of stopping the

bullying then they are more likely to respond positively. If the culture of the school rejects bullying and supports students who tell, then the war on bullying can be won. Some suggested ways a school can create this culture in the literature is through the adoption of peer support strategies such as peer partnering, peer mentoring, peer counselling, the bully line, peer mediation and bully courts (Sullivan, 2000).

### **Peer Partnering**

Peer partnering is a buddy system in which an individual is chosen to provide friendship for a student who has been identified as at risk of being bullied (Rigby, 1998; Sullivan, 2000). This approach, suitable for all grade levels, can be used when new students arrive at a school, when a child seems to have low self-esteem or has been bullied. Such an arrangement can allow the victims of bullying to develop a circle of friends, to feel safe and to gain self-confidence. Sullivan (2000) adds a cautionary note, though, that students should not be befriended for a short while and then dropped. For that reason, the friendship development must continue to be monitored by an adult.

A variation of peer partnering is the "buddying up" idea which sees older students helping younger ones. Pink and Brownlee (cited in Nesbit, 1999) describe a program in Britain where children from first year and fourth year were twinned in an effort to develop collaboration and tolerance. Similarly, Zarzour (1999) describes the Peace By Peace program which pairs university students with students in grades 4, 5 and 6. For ten weeks, the older students spend an hour and a half each week talking and playing cooperative games with their younger counterparts. Students learn about conflict de-escalation, self-esteem and anger management - all necessary elements to combat the schoolyard bully.

## **Peer Mentoring**

Both victims of bullying and the bullies themselves can benefit from peer mentoring programs (Rigby, 1998; Sullivan, 2000). Peer mentoring, appropriate for use in secondary schools, pairs more socially skilled students with those of their own age group who are experiencing difficulties with bullying (either as victims of bullying or as perpetrators). The optimum time for a mentoring relationship to last is approximately six months (Sullivan, 2000).

Sullivan (2000) explains that peer mentoring encompasses three elements: being a friend to someone and thereby sharing activities together; talking about school and life in general; and supporting the person by helping them to find a solution to their bullying problems. Training is an essential ingredient in the successful running of such a program. Peer mentors must acquire active listening skills in order to carry out their roles effectively.

One of the issues accompanying peer mentoring is that of confidentiality (Sullivan, 2000). Clearly, if the person being mentored says something that suggests a risk situation (such as suicidal feelings, sexual abuse, a bad beating), these items go far beyond the scope of the peer mentor and would have to be referred to the peer mentor's supervisor: guidance counsellor.

## **Peer Counselling**

Like peer mentoring, peer counselling is based on a relationship which provides careful listening, feedback and helps people find solutions to their problems (Rigby, 1998). The difference, as Sullivan (2000) explains, is that "whereas the peer mentor plays a supporting role to one person over a negotiated period of time, the peer counsellor has a more formal counsellor-client relationship with several people and offers counselling by arrangement over a shorter period of time" (p.145). All the while, the peer counsellor still remains under the supervision of



the guidance counsellor and must report any disclosures of sexual/physical abuse and the like to the supervisor.

Specialized training with an experienced adult counsellor is a prerequisite to becoming an effective peer counsellor. In that regard, opinion is divided on exactly how effective students can be in a counselling role. Myrick (cited in Rigby, 1998) warns against entrusting too much responsibility to students working as counsellors. Similarly, researchers (Rigby, 1998; Smith & Sharp, 1994) caution against the perceived usage of peer counsellors to relieve the caseload of guidance counsellors. To the contrary, Pikas (cited in Rigby, 1998) believes that students can develop appropriate technical skills to help their peers.

### **The Bully Line**

A natural extension of peer counselling involves the usage of peer counselling techniques on a bully hotline (Nesbit, 1999). It has been tried in numerous countries around the world and is meeting with much success. In essence, the role of the bully line is to offer a listening service. By offering the listening service over the telephone, it allows a greater measure of anonymity to the person seeking advice (Rigby, 1998). In describing one such line in England, Sharp and Cowie (cited in Smith and Sharp, 1994) posit "the bully line became an alternative to teacher support, complementing rather than detracting from the anti-bullying strategies put into practice by the adults in the school community" (p.118).

### **Peer Mediation**

Research suggests that many children are unable to manage conflict in a positive and constructive manner (Cowie & Sharp, cited in Sharp & Smith, 1994; Wilde, 1995). Much conflict is dealt with by employing bullying behavior. Cowie and Sharp (cited in Sharp and

Smith, 1994) contend that if children are taught how to resolve their conflicts peaceably, much of this bullying behavior might be avoided.

Peer mediation is one such approach to conflict resolution (Sullivan, 2000). It is an action-based intervention designed specifically to solve conflicts. As Nesbit (1999) affirms, "students trained as mediators serve as catalysts in resolving disputes. The mediator does not impose a solution or give advice; rather, the students experiencing the problem take responsibility for arriving at a solution" (p.184). Through this process, students are empowered by the experience of being heard and becoming active decision-makers (Nesbit, 1999).

The Cool Schools Program is a type of peer mediation designed initially for primary school to teach both classroom and playground mediation to students. It now encompasses programs for all grade levels. Developed by Duncan, Hancock and Ware, it has been used extensively in schools in New Zealand (Sullivan, 2000). Duncan (cited in Sullivan, 2000) explains "if you raise children's awareness and understanding of what conflict is about and teach them skills they can implement themselves, it is the most effective way of changing behavior" (p. 153).

The Peacemakers Project in Ontario is another example of peer mediation at work (Nesbit, 1999). In this instance, students patrol the schoolyard in pairs wearing orange vests or armbands identifying them as peacemakers. When they detect any bullying behaviors such as pushing or shoving they rush in to assist using mediation techniques.

Bagshaw (cited in Rigby, 1998) identifies nine points in the mediation process. They include: establishing credibility and trust in both parties; explaining the mediation role and outlining the process; instilling confidence in the process; agreeing upon rules; getting to know

how each sees the problem: finding out what is really important to each of them; focusing on common ground; finding acceptable solutions and reaching an agreement.

Clearly, the mediation process is more likely to be a success if there is a readiness on the part of both parties in conflict to seek mediation. Rigby (1998) also stresses the need for the persons in conflict to be of roughly equal power.

Peer mediators require intensive training to prepare them for their role. These training sessions are devoted to learning to listen effectively, recognizing types of responses to conflict and dealing with difficult situations. In terms of support for the intervention, opinions vary (Rigby, 1998; Sullivan, 2000). Since bullying most often involves an imbalance of power and mediation is most successful in instances of similar power levels, this raises questions as to the suitability of this intervention. Additionally, some educators view the potential dangers as enormous, while others are cautiously optimistic holding the view that students may in fact have an inside track to conflict resolution since "they know from personal experience how their peer group works and can 'talk the talk' in a way that adults cannot" (Sullivan, 2000, p.161).

### **Bully Courts**

Bully courts are another peer intervention worthy of some mention in this paper. First established by Laslett as an intervention strategy to respond to bullying incidents, the bully court approach requires the election or appointment of students as well as teachers to the court (Rigby, 1998). It becomes the court's responsibility to examine cases of bullying put before it.

Bully courts have received mixed reviews in the literature. While bully courts might seem to be a logical extension of the principle of empowering students, some negative drawbacks exist. As Sharp and Smith (1994) explain, bully courts have remained largely unpopular with

teachers since they can have unpredictable consequences, largely out of the hands of teachers. Johnstone et al. (cited in Nesbit, 1999) highlight the potential of a bullied child going home even more devastated and humiliated after a bully court hearing thereby countering any possible benefits of the strategy. Furthermore, another looming drawback is the possibility of the courts being used vindictively and becoming a way of bullying the bullies. Clearly, any school's contemplation of utilizing this strategy would require close scrutiny of these factors.

### **Teacher Interventions**

A number of interventions have been developed to assist teachers in dealing with bullying in schools. Central to these approaches is the understanding that it is more important to solve the problem of bullying than to punish the bully. The empowering strategies aim to get the students to empathize with the victim of bullying and develop pro-social alternatives to their antisocial acts. Three approaches to teacher intervention that have been used successfully are the Method of Shared Concerns, the No Blame Approach and the Circle of Friends.

#### **The Method of Shared Concerns**

The Method of Shared Concerns, designed by Pikas, is a counselling based approach for resolving bullying situations (Sharp, Cowie & Smith, cited in Sharp & Smith, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). The overall goal of the method is to establish ground rules for the students to coexist within the same school (Sullivan, 2000). Its aim is not to create a friendship between the bully and victim or to uncover the details of the bullying situation, although the teacher should try to gather as many details as possible concerning the incident prior to the meeting. Using a specific script, the teacher manoeuvres the bullies into changing their behaviors. The method has three stages including: individual chats with each student involved (about 7 to 10 minutes per child);

follow up interviews with each student (about 3 minutes per child) and a group meeting (about half an hour) (Sullivan, 2000). The method is particularly appropriate for bullying situations where a group of students have been bullying one or more students. The strategy has been found to be effective with upper primary students and onwards.

### **The No Blame Approach**

Similar to the Pikas method, the No Blame Approach, created by Maines and Robinson, emphasizes a constructive solution to bullying with students themselves involved in resolving the problem (Sullivan, 2000). Instead of blaming the child who has been the perpetrator of bullying, the adult facilitator talks about how the victim is feeling. The method has seven steps which include: interviewing the victim; meeting the students involved; explaining the problem to the group; sharing the responsibility; identifying solutions; letting the students take action and meeting the students again to discuss progress. Robinson and Maines believe that the No Blame Approach can be used with students of all ages.

### **The Circle of Friends**

The Circle of Friends approach, developed originally in Canada to facilitate the inclusion of disabled children and adults into the community, has been used successfully with students whose behavior has hurt others (Sullivan, 2000). Similar to the other two approaches, the philosophy behind the program is that individuals with behavioral problems need teaching and support rather than punishment. After discussion with the person experiencing the behavioral difficulty as well as discussion with their parents, a group of volunteers from the class would be elicited and chosen as the individual's Circle of Friends. The Circle of Friends should include a balance of supportive students as well as students who may be at odds with the individual.

Several meetings are then held by the Circle of Friends to determine how they can support and help the individual overcome his/her problem. Usually, the Circle of Friends gains insights into why the individual is acting in a particular manner and can subsequently offer constructive assistance. Sullivan purports that this intervention is particularly effective with students in the primary and intermediate grades.

### **Community Involvement**

One way that communities are becoming more involved in countering bullying tendencies is through the Roots of Empathy program. Developed by a former Kindergarten teacher (Mary Gordon), Roots of Empathy is increasingly capturing the interest of people around the world (Zarzour, 1999). It is formulated on the basis that students can be taught empathy by watching the interaction of a parent and child. In this program, classes "adopt" a baby. Once a month the baby and his/her parent visits the classroom. As Zarzour (1999) maintains, students learn "to put themselves in someone else's shoes - a valuable skill in the battle against bullying" (p.167).

### **Conclusion**

Policies cannot exist in isolation and therefore must be lived through in all aspects of teaching and learning (Fullan, 1991). While policy creation does make a difference, the fundamental culture of the school is more important than the policy in securing change (Fullan, 1991; Glover et al., 1997; Nesbit, 1999). Through the conscious efforts of all stakeholders in the school community, bullying can be reduced by fostering a positive school culture where nurturing, inclusiveness and a sense of community emanates.

The anti-bullying message can and must be conveyed through the curriculum and instructional approaches, by using peer group strategies, by utilizing teacher interventions and by

engaging community involvement. A multitude of resources are available to schools to help in this fight against bullying. Many researchers (Froschl et al., 1998; Newman et al., 2000; Rigby, 1998; Sharp & Smith, 1994; Sullivan, 2000; Zarzour, 1999) have included listings of suggested resource packs, videos, further readings and internet sites that offer a wealth of information on the topic of bullying. Schools have the power to shape social norms (Sherman, 1999). As Nesbit affirms, "schools must take up the challenge, creatively mustering their best thinking and resources" (p.195).

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