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Making a Difference in Bullying

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SECTION 1: WHAT IS BULLYING? Making a Difference in Bullying

Objectives

1. To gain an understanding of bullying and victimization.
2. To learn how teachers, students, schools, and parents can work together to reduce bullying.
3. To develop specific skills to recognize and deal with bullying problems.
4. To develop a plan to implement anti-bullying strategies within your school.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is a form of aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between the bully and victim. The bully (or bullies) is always more powerful than the victim (or victims).

Bullying can be physical, verbal and/or psychological.

It can be direct (face-to-face) or indirect (behind someone's back). Indirect bullying includes exclusion and gossip.

The key elements of bullying are:

- Power imbalance
- Bully's intent to harm
- Victim's distress
- Repeated over time (reputations and power differential become consolidated).

Principles of the Developmental Perspective

- Nature of bullying and victimization changes with age and differs by gender.
- Previous experiences influence the likelihood that a child will become a bully and/or a victim.
- Bullying and victimization place a child at risk for a range of problems in adolescence and adulthood.
- There are many different pathways into bullying and victimization and many different ways in which we can make a difference to stop children's experiences of bullying and victimization.

Developmental Changes in Form and Context of Aggression

The type of aggression and the relationship context for aggression change as children grow older. The following chart provides a general guideline for the type of aggression and the target of aggression that emerge from early elementary through high school.

The Type of Aggression by Developmental Stage			
	Childhood Ages 4-9	Adolescence Ages 10-13	Late Adolescence Ages 14-18
Form of Aggression	Context of Aggression	Context of Aggression	Context of Aggression
Verbal	Same-sex peers	Same-sex peers	Same-sex peers

		Opposite-sex peers	Opposite-sex peers
Physical	Same-sex peers	Same-sex peers Opposite-sex peers	Same-sex peers Opposite-sex peers
Bullying	Same-sex peers	Same-sex peers Opposite sex peers	Same-sex peers Opposite-sex peers
Social		Same-sex peers Opposite sex peers	Same-sex peers Opposite-sex peers
Sexual harassment		Same-sex peers Opposite sex peers	Same-sex peers Opposite sex peers
Date violence			Romantic relationships
Gang behavior			School and Community
Delinquency			School and community

Bullying from A Lifespan Perspective

We believe that bullying, the combined use of power and aggression, is a problem throughout the lifespan. Children do not “just grow out of it”. On the contrary, we believe that children who learn how to acquire power through aggression on the playground may transfer these lessons to sexual harassment, date violence, gang attacks, marital abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse.

Developmental Continuum of Bullying: Power and Aggression

Normative Aggression	Bullying	Sexual Harassment	Delinquency	Gang Involvement	Date Violence	Workplace Harassment	Marital Abuse	Child Abuse	Elder Abuse
CHILDHOOD		ADOLESCENCE			ADULTHOOD				

Who Is At Risk?

Some children are more at risk of becoming bullies and victims than others, although this is in no way predetermined. It depends on a combination of individual, family, peer, school, and broader experiences.

Previous Experiences that May Contribute to Bullying and Victimization

Individual characteristics of the child

Bullying: Difficult temperament, Attention Problems, Hyperactivity.
Victimization: Anxious temperament, Social Withdrawal, Exceptionality

Family Factors

Bullying: Aggression within the home, Ineffective Parenting, Family Stress.
Victimization: Over protective parents, Family Stress.

Peer Factors

Bullying: Aggressive peers, Rejection, Marginalization,
Victimization: Rejection, Isolation, Marginalization, Reputation

School Factors

Bullying: Ignoring antisocial behavior, inconsistent consequences, alienating interactions
Victimization: Lack of recognition, communication, and openness around victimization.

Targeting Children at Risk

Many children may experience problems of bullying and victimization. For the majority (70-80%) the problems are minor and transitory. With minor intervention and support, these children's problems will improve. For some (10-15%), experiences of bullying and victimization may be more concerning and enduring. These children may require support and intervention to get them back on the right track. For a small proportion of children (5-10%), the problems of bullying and/or victimization are very serious and require prolonged and comprehensive intervention to support their adaptive development and to move them onto a positive pathway. These proportions are illustrated in the figure below: Targeting Children at Risk for Bullying and Victimization. The children in the middle of the target are those we should be most concerned about. These are the children who need immediate support.

How Do We Identify the Children at Greatest Risk?

The children at greatest risk of bullying and victimization problems can be identified by asking the following four questions?

Are the bullying and/or victimization **SEVERE**?

(Does it involve serious physical or verbal aggression?)

Are the bullying and/or victimization **FREQUENT**?

(Does it occur often in this child's life?)

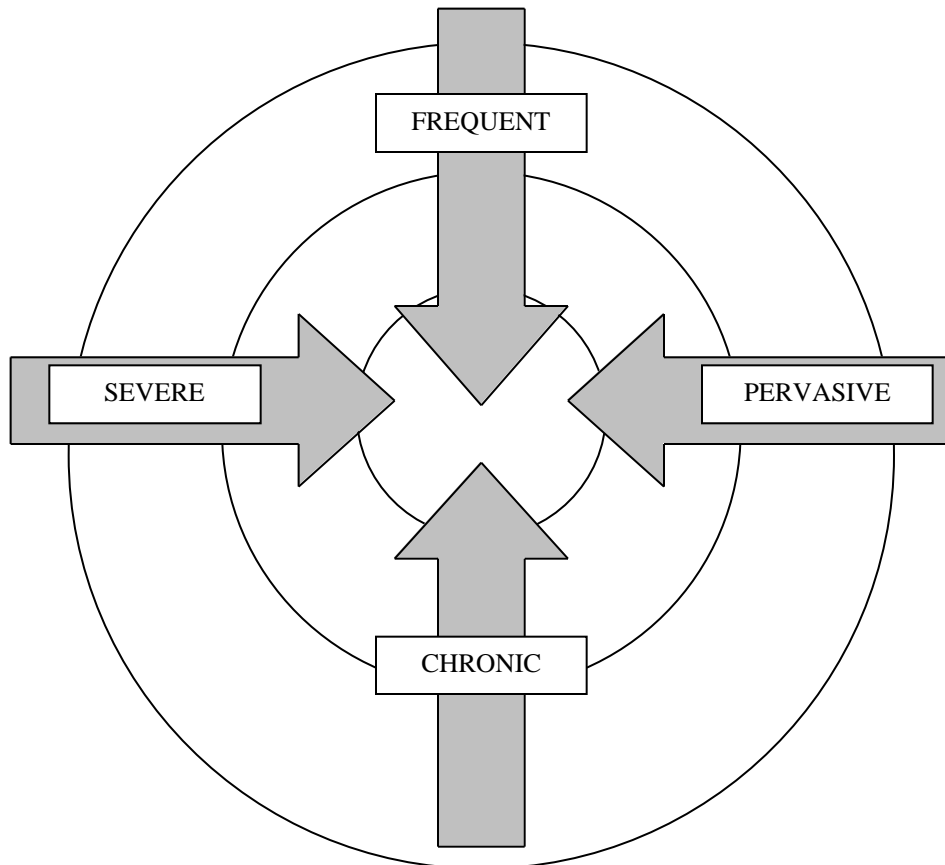
Are the bullying and/or victimization **PERVASIVE**?

(Does it occur in many contexts; e.g., home, school, community?)

Are the bullying and/or victimization **CHRONIC**?

(Has it been a problem for a long time; e.g., since early childhood?)

Targeting Children at Risk for Bullying and Victimization



The Outcomes of Bullying and Victimization

Children identified in the previous figure as at high risk for problems of bullying and victimization are likely to experience a wide range of problems if they do not receive support. Although not all children experience all these problems, the following problems are associated with chronic problems of bullying and victimization.

Mental Health Outcomes Associated with Bullying

Externalizing Problems (i.e., Conduct Disorder)
Aggression
Delinquency
Early Dating Experience
Sexual Harassment
Academic Problems and School Dropout
Internalizing Problems (i.e., Anxiety)
Victimization
Negative peer reputation
Continued problems throughout adulthood

Mental Health Outcomes Associated with Victimization

Internalizing Problems
Anxiety
Somatization Problems
Withdrawn Behaviors
Victimization by Sexual Harassment
Aggression
Peer reputation as someone who can be victimized
School Problems (i.e., school refusal, poor concentration, and school dropout)

Lessons from Bullying and Victimization

The primary lesson is the use of power and aggression: Those with power can be aggressive and being aggressive may enhance status.

- Lack of intervention implies that bullying is acceptable and can be performed without fear of consequences. If there are punishments, the responsibility is diffused among peers.
- Bullies learn that power and aggression lead to dominance and status. Peers learn to align with the dominant individual for protection and status.
- Victims may learn helplessness, submissiveness and negative means of gaining attention from peers. Peers learn to blame the victim.

Our concern is that these lessons transfer to more serious forms of violence that continue to combine power and aggression in adolescence and into adulthood, as shown on page 5.

Peers' Involvement in Bullying and Victimization?

Peers play a central role in the problem of bullying. Our research has highlighted the following important positive and negative aspects of peers' involvement in bullying and victimization.

Peers can be a positive influence in stopping bullying. Their role in addressing the problems in schools is critical as they are almost always present and occasionally intervene, whereas adults seldom witness and intervene in bullying.

- 11% of children report they almost always tried to stop bullying. In our observations, peers intervened in 11% of the playground episodes.
- When peers intervene, they are successful in stopping bullying about half the time. Without guidance, however, they are just as likely to intervene aggressively as prosocially. A focus of intervention, therefore, is to teach the children appropriate ways to handle the situation.
- 80% - 90% of peers report that it is unpleasant to watch bullying.
- Peers are present in 85% of the bullying episodes on the playground and in the class.
- 1/3 of children report they “could join in bullying someone they don’t like”.
- Peers assume many roles in bullying: co-bullies, supports, audience, and interveners.

Peer Contributions to Bullying and Victimization

- Peers are drawn into bullying interactions by arousal and excitement of aggression. Peers are the audience for theater of bullying.
- Positive attention, alignment, imitation, deference, and lack of opposition reinforce bully’s dominance.
- Lack of empathy and intervention, negative attention, and attributions of blame substantiate victim’s role.
- Peers who align with the bully may become desensitized and aggressive. They may experience protection and increased social status. Group cohesion develops through a coordinated attack.
- There is a risk for peers who align with the victim: They may become the next victim.

School Staff's Involvement in Bullying and Victimization?

School staff is generally unaware of the extent of bullying and victimization problems.

- 42% of bullies and 46% of victims report that they have talked to teachers about problem.
- 71% of teachers and 25% of students say that teachers almost always intervene.
- Our observations indicate that teachers intervene in 14% of classroom episodes and only 4% of playground episodes of bullying.
- Low teacher intervention may occur because:
 - the majority of episodes are verbal
 - episodes are brief
 - bullying occurs when monitoring is low

Why Worry about What School Staff Think About Bullying and Victimization?

School staff may inadvertently encourage bullying if they believe that:

- Bullying is a normal part of growing up.
- Children who bully will just grow out of it.
- Children are always best left to resolve their own conflicts.
- Children's conflicts reflect play fighting and teasing which do no real harm.
- Sometimes victims provoke attacks.
- Adults should not encourage tattle-telling. Telling is to get someone out of trouble, whereas tattling is to get someone into trouble. It is essential that children tell an adult when they or someone else is not safe.

Parents' Involvement in Bullying and Victimization?

Parents are generally unaware of the extent of bullying and victimization problems.

- 48% of bullies indicate that they have talked with their parents about bullying problems and 62% of victims indicate that they have talked with their parents about being victimized.
- Parents of bullies may inadvertently support this form of behavior if they model the use of power and aggression and fail to monitor, set limits and intervene with consequences for bullying at home.
- Parents of victims may inadvertently place their child at risk for victimization by not encouraging independence and sociability.

Why Worry about What Parents Think About Bullying and Victimization?

Parents may inadvertently encourage bullying if they believe that:

- Bullying is a normal part of growing up.
- Children who bully will just grow out of it.
- Children are best left to resolve their own conflicts. They should learn to stick up for themselves. If my child fights back just once, the bullying will stop.
- My child thinks it will get worse if I tell, so begs for secrecy about bullying. I cannot tell the school.
- My child could never be a bully.

Why Worry about Community and Society in Bullying and Victimization?

Within our communities and broader society, there are numerous examples of successful models using aggression to secure power and solve problems.

Politicians
Media
TV, movies, video games
War

Not all children will be similarly influenced by images of power and aggression. Those who are predisposed to be aggressive are more likely to model the aggression.

SECTION 2: WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS? A Systemic Approach to Bullying

We believe that bullying and victimization must be addressed from a systemic perspective. In order to intervene successfully to stop these problems, action must be taken on many levels. We have illustrated the systemic approach to bullying problems in the figure on page 14. It illustrates that interventions should be implemented not only with the bully and victim, but also within the school, within the peer group (classroom and playground), and with parents. The following principles of the systemic approach are important to remember when addressing bullying and victimization.

- Bullying and victimization do not occur in isolation. Therefore, interventions with the bully and/or victim are necessary but not sufficient.
- We need to extend our focus beyond the bully and the victim to include: peers, school, parents, community, and society.
- To address the problem effectively, change is required at all of these levels of the system.

Systemic Principles for Anti-Bullying Interventions

Implementing an anti-bullying program is a complex and a prolonged process because of systemic nature.

- Change must occur with the bully, victim, peers, school staff, parents, and community.
- Recognizes the roles and responsibilities of bullies, victims, peers, teachers, counselor, principal, community.
- Unless the adults in the school change their attitudes and behavior, the students will not.
- Leadership to address bullying problems is essential for change.

Creating a Whole School Policy

A whole school policy is the keystone of anti-bullying interventions.

What?

A statement of the rights, roles, and responsibilities of all members of the school community. It includes commitment to address bullying, a definition, and processes to prevent and intervene.

Who?

A steering committee to develop and implement Whole School Policy includes the school principal, representatives from parent council, teachers, other school staff, and students.

How?

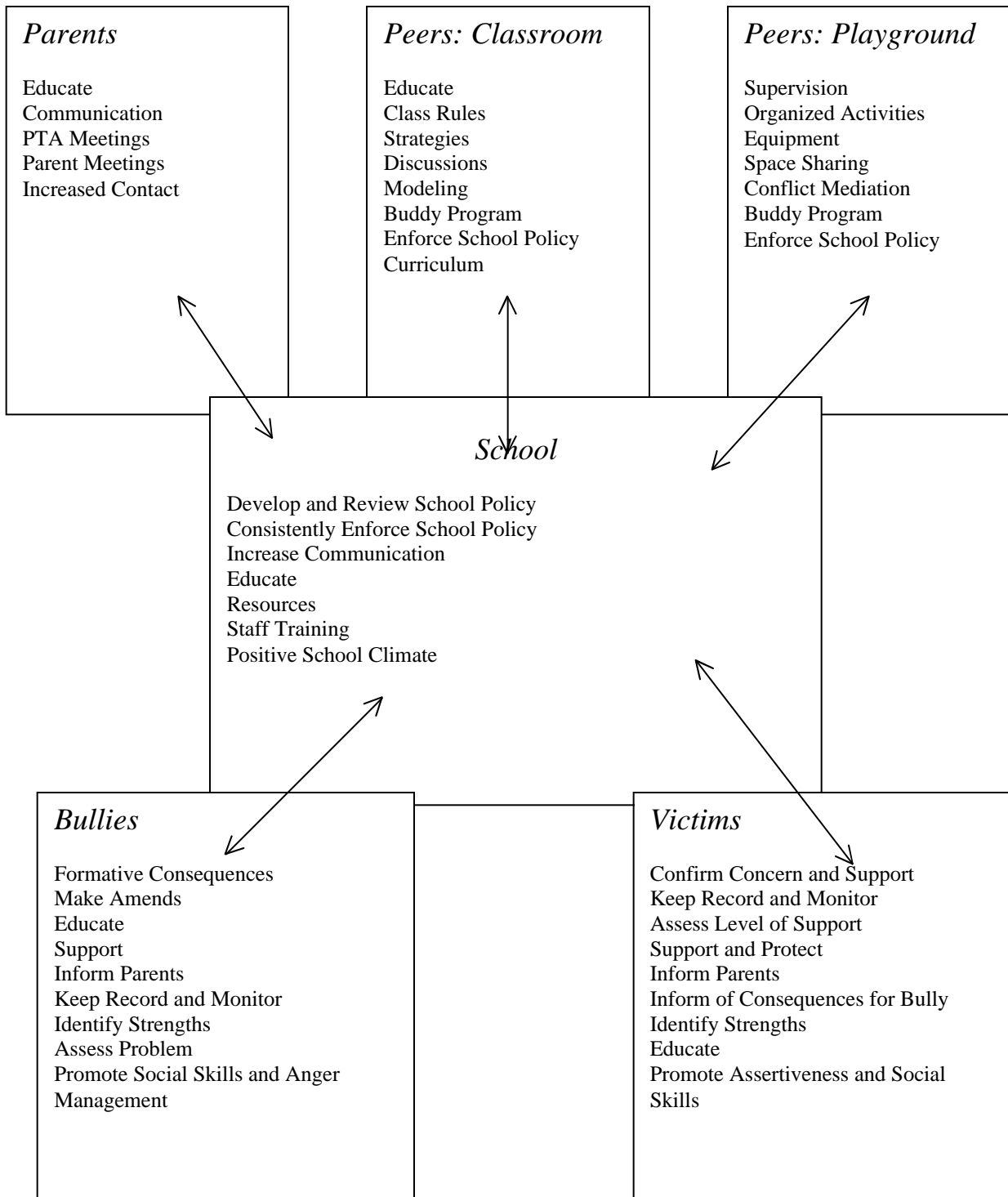
- Increase awareness about bullying
- Steering committee consults with all school staff, parents, students, and community leaders.
- Prepare draft policy, consult, final policy.
- Inform stakeholders about implementation.
- Insure consistent application and revision of policy, procedures, and strategies.

Whole School Policy Outline

A whole school policy defines the specific goals for this school community and includes:

- A definition of bullying: types, severity, identification, dynamics (e.g., child-child, adult-child, child-adult).
- Strategies for preventing bullying:
 - develop awareness and prosocial attitudes
 - teach children to avoid bullying
 - promote cooperative interactions
 - Staff model positive conflict resolution.
- Reporting:
 - steps for children and staff to report bullying
 - ensure communication, recording, follow-up
- Responding to bullying:
 - develop formative consequences
 - who is responsible for immediate and follow-up responses
 - strategies for supporting bullies and victims
 - when are parents involved
- Implementation:
 - changes required in school organization and interactions
 - time and resources required, available strengths
 - necessary training for staff, students, parents, and community
- Assessment:
 - information and strategy to monitor effectiveness of policy, prevention, and intervention

A Systemic Approach to Bullying: Overview of Strategies



SECTION 3: HOW CAN THESE SOLUTIONS BE IMPLEMENTED? A Bullying Scenario

We present the following scenario as an example of a systemic approach to dealing with bullying problems at school.

Ellen is the kind of girl who always gets her way, no matter what. She'll do anything to get what she wants and doesn't care what others think of her. She usually hangs around with some other tough girls and most of the kids at school have learned not to cross Ellen and her friends. Every day for the last two weeks, Ellen has been extorting lunch money from Zoë, a younger girl. When Zoë enters the cafeteria, Ellen or one of her gang approaches her, demanding a favored snack from her lunch or money. Ellen threatens that if Zoë doesn't give in, her hair will be cut, her clothes torn, and she'll probably be beaten up. Zoë's mother phones the school after battling with her daughter every day to go to school. In the last month, Zoë has missed at least two days a week of school because she has complained of dizziness, nausea, and headaches.

Guiding Principles for Responding to Bullying in this Scenario

- Safety for students at school is essential.
- Bullying relationships develop over time and require long-term interventions.
- Teach students about bullying; develop norms and empathy to counter bullying.
- The more severe and frequent the problem, the more intense the consequences.
- Those with power should not be allowed to use it aggressively.
- Recognize that students in a group act differently than individually act and all "in group" members are responsible.
- Adults need to intervene to right the power imbalance.

Roles and Responsibilities

We believe that all members of the school system have roles and responsibilities in addressing problems of bullying. The extent of involvement of distal elements of the school system (e.g., school counselor, police, community) will depend on the severity, frequency, duration, and pervasiveness of the problem as discussed earlier.

Problems of aggression require broad-based responses because they arise from many different causes. In the following section, we suggest short-term and long-term strategies for teachers who identify the incident, principals, parents, counselors, police, and peers. Sample responsibilities for the girl who has been aggressive and suggestions for supporting the victim of the aggression follow these general suggestions.

Teacher

Short Term Responsibilities

- Talk to victim and take her story seriously. Although it is often difficult to observe girls' bullying, students seldom make up stories of this form of harassment. Assure victim that you will be responsive and tell her that you want her to keep you informed.
- Talk to victim's parents; express concern and determination to take action.
- Identify perpetrator(s).
- Identify peer group that is backing the bully.
- Take the girl who is bullying to the principal's office and report concern.
- Support victim in conjunction with principal.

Long Term Responsibilities

- Bring together group of girls involved in bullying to discuss their responsibilities, the problem and its consequences.
- Work with principal/counselor to develop guidelines for behaviors, solutions for bullying problems, and potential consequences if bullying continues.
- Check in with victim to ensure that this and/or other problems do not persist.
- Discuss bullying with class and guidelines within the school community.
- Watch and listen for even minor forms of bullying and intervene on each occasion. All students should be encouraged to treat others with respect.

Principal

Short Term Responsibilities

- Record incident on tracking sheet.
- Determine if this is a repeat infraction.
- Proceed according to guidelines in Code of Conduct.
- Since bullying is generally a longstanding problem, place a call to the bully's parents and follow up with a letter that describes the incident, defines bullying and outlines the Code of Conduct related to bullying (see Sample Letter).
- If this is a repeat offence, meet with the parents.
- Determine formative consequences by talking to the bully, her parents, the co-bullies, and their parents, and by consulting the board and school policy.
- Make plans for monitoring the problem and its resolution.
- Determine if police are to be called because it is extortion and liaise with police.
- Discuss problem and approaches with mentor/teacher.

Long Term Responsibilities

- Work with bully and her co-bullies to develop their understanding of their responsibilities, the problem behavior and its consequences.
- Work with bully and co-bullies and teacher to determine opportunities for them to make amends.
- Determine appropriate formative consequences if bullying continues.
- Monitor for persistence of extortion and other forms of bullying by the girl.

Parents

Short Term Responsibilities

- Meet the principal to discuss the bullying by their daughter.
- Work together with the school to develop strategies for daughter's bullying problem.
- Principal meets with parents and student to clarify the nature of the agreement (consequences, amends, and future strategies).
- Parents monitor bullying problems at home and work with school support staff to deal with similar problems if they arise at home or in the neighborhood.

Long Term Responsibilities

- Continue supporting their daughter's domains of competence to provide her with positive experiences of leadership.
- Build connections in the community for activities and leadership opportunities.
- Communicate regularly with teacher on daughter's progress.
- Be alert for signs of bullying and victimization. For example, bullies may have extra money, clothes; they may boast about their exploits. Victims may experience headaches, nausea, and other somatic complaints, be hesitant to go to school, avoid extra-curricular activities, need extra money, have lost clothes, etc.

Peer Group Work

A member of the school staff must engage with the peers involved in the incident, as they play a critical role.

Short Term Responsibilities and Activities

- Identify the students who were aware that bullying was occurring (i.e., bystanders).
- Clarify their role as spectators in perpetuating the aggression.
- Review with them appropriate responses (i.e., get an adult to help) and what their responsibilities are.
- Review with them what they could have done to stop the bullying (e.g., speak up, tell an adult) while at the same time keeping themselves safe.

Long Term Responsibilities and Activities

- Identify responsibilities and implement consequences for peers such as involve them in a helping act or another “act of caring”, ask them to write a plan of what they should do the next time bullying occurs, or to develop a role play about intervening in conflicts. These solutions could be presented to their classes.
- No Blame or Method of Common Concern approach might be used to generate a set of strategies that peers can implement immediately to ensure that bullying will not recur.
- Help peers to recognize the dynamics that draw them into supporting a bully (e.g., peer pressure, seeking to belong). Support them in standing up to peer pressure to become involved in bullying.

Counselor/ Special Education Teacher/Social Worker/Advisory Teacher

Short Term Responsibilities

- Meet with bully and her parents as well as with the victim and her parents to review bullying problem and solutions.
- Try to get to the heart of why the bully is behaving aggressively. This will provide direction for intervention.
- Identify the bully’s and victim’s strengths and involve them in activities that will promote and encourage these strengths.
- Use Alternative Dispute Resolution, if this type of program exists at your school.

Long Term Responsibilities

- Examine the potential underlying causes of girls’ bullying behaviors.
- Build empathy and work on building leadership skills.
- Find opportunities for positive leadership (e.g., peer mediation, leadership in play, team involvement).
- Assess need for other supports for the girls (e.g., academic, psychosocial counseling).
- Connect girls and families to community services.
- Regular check-in with parents as required.

Police

Short Term Responsibilities

- Meet with girls and parents to discuss the situation, explain problem, and the consequences.
- Explain the nature of extortion and the legal consequences.
- Work to avoid problems in the future.
- Impress upon them solutions and how to avoid other such problems of antisocial behavior.

Long Term Responsibilities

- If charges are indicated, proceed supportively, involving parents and girls as much as possible.

Sample Responsibilities and Formative Consequences for Bullying

In all cases, students should be held responsible for their bullying behavior. It is important to remember, however, not to bully the bully as this generates feelings of hostility and alienation. The following is a range of consequences that not only provide a clear message that bullying is unacceptable, but also build awareness and skills to promote the students' responsibility. We refer to these as formative consequences, as they provide support for students to learn the skills and acquire the insights that they are lacking. In this way, the consequences for bullying can provide an opportunity to educate and support students who are in difficulty. Through formative consequences, students who bully can learn to turn their negative power and dominance into positive leadership.

- Withdraw privileges (e.g., recess, basketball practice) and replace with an instructive activity.
- Make amends that are formative (i.e., work in cafeteria in school and give money to the victim).
- Activities that promote perspective taking skills and empathy (e.g., novel study, story writing, drawing a picture of what it feels like to be a victim).
- Bully reflects on his/her own strengths and weaknesses.
- Role-play the victim of the same behaviors with the teacher.
- Observe acts of kindness around the school and in the community. Encourage the bully to identify the link between power (or strength) and kindness. It is important for them to view prosocial behavior as worthwhile, valid, and consistent with positive leadership.
- Lead a class discussion on the harmful effects of bullying.

Principles and Strategies to Support the Victim of Bullying

When dealing with a bullying problem, it doesn't help to instruct the victim to solve the problem herself. Children who are persistently victimized have most likely exhausted their strategies for responding to bullying. Each time they have been bullied, they have likely tried something to stop it. By the time they approach an adult, they have likely reached the end of their tolerance because no strategy they have tried has been successful in stopping the bullying. Furthermore, peers consider it "acceptable" to bully someone with low social status. Therefore, it is essential that an adult assists the victim and intervenes to shift the power imbalance between the victim and bully. The goal is to take the power to torment away from the bully and to protect and empower the victim.

- Reassure the victimized child that it is her right to feel safe at school.
- Assure the student that you view the bullying as serious and that her concerns and fears are justified.
- Counsel to support victim to cope with effects of bullying.
- Generate a list of possible responses that she could use if similar attacks occur. Ensure that the victim understands the importance of confiding in an adult if this form of harassment occurs again.
- Provide the student with language to speak out for herself. Empower her to speak out against her own victimization and that of others.
- Develop strategies to strengthen and protect the victimized girl. Build on her strengths to develop confidence. Ensure that she has others to support her and enhance her social status. This support can be built in numerous ways: (1) connecting the victim with prosocial peers from her own age group; (2) Budding up with an older girl in the school might provide a confidant, someone who can keep an eye on the victim, and start rebuild the victim's social status.

Signs of Victimization

- Fear of going to school
- School work problems
- Missing possessions
- Injuries
- Withdrawal (quiet, sullen, daydreaming)
- Depressed
- Being difficult and argumentative
- (Message: Everyone is picking on me)
- Nightmare and disturbed sleep
- Low self esteem

Principles and Strategies for Dealing with Parents

Schools occasionally find dealing with parents of bullies and victims a challenge. It is essential, however, to build the links between the family and school in order to support both the children who are aggressive and those who are the victims of bullying. The following are principles that we suggest in connecting with parents.

- Always contact and inform of problem
- Convey school's concern
- Work together to gain understanding
- Be supportive
- Recognize differences in family values
- Use a problem solving approach
- Provide the school's perspective and school plans for monitoring the problem
- Invite future communication and collaboration in supporting the children at risk.

Possible Contributing Family Factors

We believe that it is helpful for school personnel to consider the family circumstances that may underlie children's problems of bullying and victimization. Often children who are experiencing difficulties at school are exposed to considerable stress at home. In working with children and their families, it is important to keep these potential stressors in mind.

Family Factors Related to Bullying

- Experience a number of family stressors (i.e., financial, single parent, illness)
- Family may lack social support
- High levels of parental conflict
- Lack of monitoring child's activities
- Inconsistent and harsh punishment
- Low levels of communication and intimacy

Family Factors related to Victimization

- Overly protective parents
- Lack of independence in family
- Non assertive parents
- Family Stressors (e.g., divorce)
- Over involvement by parents
- May be scape-goated by siblings

Strategies to Give Parents

Communication:

- Getting the questions right – it is important to have open conversations with your children. Find a quiet time each day to review the positive and difficult aspects of their day.
- No Spanish Inquisition – we believe that the questioning of children must be open and nonjudgmental. It is important that children feel accepted and loved, even though their behavior is displeasing and must be corrected. Positive behavior is encouraged and enhanced by positive reinforcement.
- Use stories or play to get information – when children are distressed and has difficulties talking about their experiences, it is sometimes helpful to talk about similar problems experienced by other children. Reading stories about children who have difficulties bullying or being bullied helps children examine the problem and think about possible solutions.

Actions:

- Surveillance
- Communication with school
- Observe behavior at home
- Role playing at home
- Develop strategies together
 - Be with a group and use peer support
 - Avoid predictability
 - Reporting

Challenges of Interviewing Parents of Bullies

- Encountering myths:
 - Denial
 - Not my child
 - Children need to stand up for themselves
 - Not a real problem
- Unsupportive to school's concerns
- Aggressive and challenging
- Lack the personal resources to deal with problem
- Helpless
- Dismissive

Responses to Challenging Parents of Bully

- Listen and do not argue with parent
- State school's position and goal of creating safe and caring environment
- Educate concerning why this may be a problem
- Problem solve how can work together for solutions
- Inform of school's response and monitoring
- Be prepared not to change their perspective
- Set clear expectations and consequences of bullying

Challenges of Interviewing Parents of Victims

- Heightened emotion
- Anger
- Frustration

- Anxiety
- Need for retribution
- Helplessness re the problem
- Wanting the school to do more
- Dismissive

Responses to Challenging Parents of Victim

- Acknowledge parents concerns and worries
- Healthy to advocate for child
- Inform them of what the consequences were for the bully
- Educate concerning the importance of making amends and having formative consequences
- Indicate measures taken to support and protect their child
- Ask for their input
- Offer to update parents the following week
- Educate on effects and how parents can help

Principles and Strategies at the Peer Level

Principles

- Peers play a central role in bullying interactions
- Watching bullying interactions inadvertently supports the bully
- Lack of action to support victim reinforces bully
- Changing who the peers support will decrease bullying

Why Peers Do Not Intervene

Peers are reticent to intervene due to:

- Fear
- Lack of strategies and skills
- Group dynamics
- Lack of understanding their role
- Status management

Strategies for Classroom Interventions with Peers

- Develop a code of behavior and rules about bullying
- Consistently monitor bullying and provide consequences for it
- Conduct regular class meetings to discuss bullying
- Educate students about bullying
- Integrate issues of bullying into the curriculum through activities such as drama, books, films, story writing, and art
- Discuss power and how it can be used aggressively
- Highlight everyone's role in bullying
- Create a supportive and cooperative climate to ensure students are not marginalized. Create climate that permits and supports those who disclose victimization
- Develop attitudes and activities that promote empathy for victims
- Recognize and discuss dilemma for peers
- Differentiate tattling and reporting
- Develop language and scripts for intervening when you see someone being bullied
- Teach skills for intervening

Strategies for Playground Interventions with Peers

- Conduct assessment to identify hot spots
- Increase supervision
- Create organized play and supervised play areas
- Be aware of groups of children coming together
- For structured play areas, develop a rotating schedule
- Recess buddies
- Clear rules and consequences
- Conflict Mediation

Conflict Mediation on the School Playground

Goal of conflict management

- To reduce amount of destructive conflict
- Manage and resolve conflict in a positive manner
- Empower students to solve conflicts
- Provide students with skills to solve conflicts

Assumption

- Conflict has positive potential and consequences can be positive.

Skills Developed from a Conflict Management Program

- Communication skills including
 - active listening
 - developing language skills to express feelings
 - speaking with clarity and strength.
- Developing critical thinking skills such as brainstorming and problem solving
- Building positive self-esteem and the ability to recognize successes.
- Supporting basic equity principles of acceptance and respect for differences.
- Teaching resolutions techniques that focus on negotiation and the ability to reach WIN/WIN solutions and will bring about feelings of satisfaction.

What Can Teachers Do to Support Conflict Mediation?

- Model positive social skills by supporting conflict resolution efforts, treating children with respect, active listening
- Enabling group decision-making by regular class meetings providing children with an opportunity to discuss their differences and provide solutions to those differences.
- Using other classroom opportunities to demonstrate effective conflict resolution and problem solving
- Giving increased responsibility to students to work through their own problems

Why Teach Conflict Management?

Increases self-knowledge and esteem
 Develops self reliance

Builds trust
Promotes friendliness
Develops emotional control
Decreases hostility
Reduces frustration
Reduces tension
Accepts and expects uniqueness
Encourages co-operative learning
Teaches decision making
Identifies positive and creative solutions to problems
Promotes problem solving
Teaches leadership
Improves communication skills
Enhances interpersonal relationships
Improves classroom and school climate
Makes a more peaceful classroom
Encourages staff and student empowerment

Mediator's Checklist

1. Agree there is a problem.
2. Agree to work together for a solution.
3. Describe problem from own perspective.
4. Paraphrase and check each person's understanding of the other person's view of the problem.
5. Correct or revise any misconceptions.
6. Discuss feelings associated with the problem.
7. Acknowledge other person's feelings.
8. Brainstorm alternative solutions.
9. Edit win-lose solutions.
10. Identify WIN/WIN solutions.
11. Generate other solutions, if necessary.
12. Specify details of the agreement.
13. Leave door open for future discussions.
14. Compliment outcome and congratulate on reaching an agreement.

SECTION 4: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF A SYSTEMIC APPROACH?

Challenges and Strategies in Addressing Bullying at School

Remember!

- Implementing an Anti-Bullying Program is a complex and prolonged process.
- Implementation must be systemic or “whole school”. Change must be at all levels of the school.
- Change in students’ behaviors will not occur without change in the adults’ behaviors.
- When change takes place within the school staff, students, bullies and victims, as well as the parents, significant decreases in bullying are realized.

Challenge 1: Bullying is About Power

All schools (institutions) need to reflect upon the use of power within the school community and the relationship between responsibility and power (positive and negative power). The issue of power is often sensitive for some school staff.

Strategies for examining power in relationships

- Provide forums for formal and informal communication (e.g., learning circle, staff meetings, parent meetings)
- How much power do I have, how do I use it, how is it used with me, what is the balance between “we” and responsibility for “me”, what frustrates me within this system, what can I do about it?
- Increase problem-solving communication between parents-staff, staff-administration, parents-students, teachers-students, students-students, etc.
- Power and responsibilities need to be distributed and coordinated. Articulate rights, roles and responsibilities for administration, teachers, students and parents. This forms the foundation for a Whole School Policy — the keystone of an Anti-Bullying Intervention.

Challenge 2: The Process of Change

Success of implementation and integration of a new element into a school community will depend on the health of the school relationships prior to the initiative.

- Attitudinal change precedes behavioral change.
- The process of change is slow and gradual and needs constant nourishment and never ends.
- Often when you introduce an anti-bullying intervention and sensitize the school community to the problem, it appears to get worse.
- Bullying is about power and aggression in interpersonal relations — an emotionally laden concern for both children and adults.

Strategies to create signposts for changing school climate:

anti-bullying days
cooperative activities
cooperative games
class presentations
workshop for students
novel study related to bullying

mentoring
bullying posters
class activities
thought for the day
drama/role plays
media study

Challenge 3: Know About Bullying in Your School

For program development and evaluation, it is important to understand the nature and extent of bullying problems within your school community. You can assess the extent and nature of bullying in many ways. The following are a few suggestions.

Strategies for assessing the problem

1. What happens and how frequently?
 - bully -victim survey for students, staff, and parents
 - Anonymous report box
2. Where does bullying happen?
 - environmental assessment: know where and when the problems occur in your school community
 - draw maps of the school with “hot spots”
 - questionnaires
 - create a bully locator map (all students look out for bullying and put a sticker on the map to indicate its location)
 - have students do observations of bullying on the playground. Record what type of bullying it is and where it occurs.
3. With the students, follow-up with an assessment of why bullying occurs more frequently in certain “hot spots”

Challenge 4: Build Awareness and Skills among School Staff

School staff is generally unaware of the extent of bullying problems. Increased awareness will increase staff’s recognition of bullying and willingness to intervene.

Preventing bullying problems starts with a general change in the school climate. The processes described above achieve this (self-reflection, school assessment, signposts of the changing climate, increased communication, focused problem solving). The following are some specific strategies for supporting the professional development of staff regarding the complex problem of bullying.

Strategies to increase staff awareness

- Educate school staff about the definition of bullying, the nature of bullying, the secrecy surrounding bullying, children’s reluctance to report bullying
- Help teachers to develop strategies to detect and intervene in bullying.
- Differentiate between rough-and-tumble play and bullying or teasing and bullying.
- Learn how to recognize power imbalance, which is sometimes subtle in bullying.

Skills in responding to aggression

When school staff encounter aggression and/or bullying problems, the most important strategy is to do react promptly to give the aggressive student the message that aggression is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. The following strategies are suggestions for school staff in responding to aggression.

- Trust your instincts, use your judgment, and follow through with one of a range of strategies from careful observation to immediate action, depending on the situation.

- Always approach and assess the situation (watch, stop it, talk to students who are witnesses, intervene, record, follow up, and evaluate).
- Beware of group dynamics that are likely to favor the bully.
- There are many possible responses, depending on the situation.
 - If equal power, then both parties receive equal consequence and opportunity for mediation to solve their dispute.
 - If unequal power, bullying, then bully receives formative consequences and victim receives supportive consequences.
 - When a group of children is involved, even as an audience, focus consequences on the group (e.g., No Blame Approach, Method of Common Concern)

Challenge 5: Supporting Bullies to Change

The problems of bullies are complex and often require intensive and long-term support for change. The following are some general strategies for supporting bullies to change.

1. Watch for Early Signs!

Interventions for mild forms of bullying can be less intensive than those for fully developed problems.

- A clear direction about no teasing, no name-calling, or no exclusion may avoid later problems of verbal aggression, social aggression and harassment.

2. Don't Wait Until it's Full Blown!

Interventions when a problem starts to emerge are more effective than interventions applied once the behavior has become frequent and severe.

- Clear and consistent interventions for sexual harassment in early adolescence, for example, may be effective in curtailing this problem among the majority of students.
- If procedures are in place at the beginning of the school year, staff will have clear guidelines for identifying, monitoring, and intervening.

3. Think Long!

Students who bully generally develop their behavior problems over a long period of time (duration) and in many contexts (pervasiveness). Therefore, the interventions to change these patterns must necessarily be **long-term and broad-based**.

- Students may need support at school and at home, with long-term monitoring.

4. Creative Consequences and Responsibilities

Establishing consequences and responsibilities for bullying requires careful thinking. Here are some guidelines:

- Consequences and responsibilities for aggressive behaviors must be immediate and consistently applied.
- Effective consequences and responsibilities are **formative**: they help develop behaviors, skills, insights, and empathy.
- Responsibilities with some form of retribution promote understanding of impact of bullying.
- Consequences and responsibilities must be delivered nonaggressively -- hostile adults inadvertently provide lessons on bullying.

5. Age Appropriateness!

Although the basic principles for intervention are similar regardless of age, the strategies chosen will depend on the age of the students involved.

For young children, adults must play a central role in establishing the expectations, following through with formative consequences, and providing support for victims.

As children mature, they increasingly look to peers for support and direction. Adolescents, therefore, are often more comfortable talking to their peers than to adults. Peer mediation and peer counseling programs have been developed in schools to support this developmental trend.

Nevertheless, adults are still essential for establishing expectations (often in conjunction with students) and for following through with appropriate consequences in cases too serious to be handled through peer counseling.

Specific Interventions for Bullying

1. Record the problem behavior and provide consequences.
2. Educate the child about what bullying is and why it is not acceptable.
3. Withdraw privileges (recess, lunch) and provide formative replacement activities
 - letter of apology
 - reading and reporting on bullying story
 - caring act (see Garrity et al)
 - role playing victim with teacher to develop empathy
4. Determine ways in which this student can develop positive forms of leadership and experience power in a prosocial way.
5. Assess the complexity of the bully's problem.

What if Interventions Do Not Work?

Most students who bully are average children without major psychosocial problems. Situational factors are generally responsible for promoting their bullying activity. The interventions described above are likely to bring these children into line. If a student continues to bully in the face of these formative consequences, then there is likely a more significant problem.

- If you haven't contacted the student's parents before this, now is the time to bring them in to help support the child. Carefully assess the parents' abilities to be supportive.
- Children who bully repeatedly, seriously, and in different contexts, require a behavior management program developed in consultation with a mental health professional.
- Given the systemic nature of the problem (i.e., it isn't just a problem with the child), the family may need help to support the student and to deal with bullying within the home context.

Challenge 6: Working with Victims

Principles

- Trust your instincts, if you think a child is being victimized they probably are
- Find a private opportunity to raise your concerns with the student

- Ensure safety of the victim
- Support the child who is being victimized
- Record the event and follow through with actions
- Inform the parents

Different Types of Victims

Passive Victims

- Avoid aggression and confrontation
- Do not elicit help from peers
- Cry easily
- Will not fight back
- Are not assertive
- Are anxious in social situations

Aggressive Victims

- May behave in ways that may irritate others
- May tease and taunt others
- Lack social skills
- Tend to be aggressive
- Will often respond to others aggressively

Strategies for Staff in Supporting Victims

- Assess their level of support and create opportunities for them to gain peer support
- Provide class wide lessons in assertiveness strategies for standing up to bullies
- Identify two or three prosocial peers in class and provide them with activities to work on with the victim
- Work collaboratively with the victim's family to support and protect the student
- Encourage the student to experience accomplishments in a favored domain
- Promote assertiveness and social skills
- Coach the student in ways to respond if it happens again

Strategies to Suggest to Victims

- Play with a group
- Stay in sight of adults and peers on the playground
- Look confident when dealing with the bully
- Stay calm and not react
- Be assertive
- Tell an adult
- Bring attention to yourself
- Enlist the help of a peer by using their name and asking them directly to do something
- Vary your routine on the playground

- Practice responses to bullying at home
- Make a plan of actions for the worst case scenario
- Engage in activities with others

Challenge 7: Peers are Central to the Problem and Solution of Bullying Problems

In the following section, we highlight three different strategies for working with groups of peers who engage in bullying.

No Blame Approach

From Robinson, G. & Maines, B. (1997). *Crying for Help: The No Blame Approach to Bullying*. Lucky Duck Publishing Ltd.
 3 Thorndale Mews
 Clifton, Bristol, England BS8 2HX
 Phone: 00 44 (0) 117 973 2881
 Fax: 00 44 (0) 117 973 1707
 e-mail: publishing@luckyduck.co.uk
<http://www.luckyduck.co.uk>

This is most effective when practiced through role-plays with colleagues before using it directly with students involved in a bullying problem.

The seven steps are as follows:

1. Talk with the Victim

Interview the student who has been bullied to discuss her feelings and to establish who is involved.

2. Meet with group

Meet with all the students involved (cheerleaders and onlookers included).

3. Explain the problem

Discuss how the bullied student is feeling. The focus is on feelings, not details of the incident.

4. Share responsibility

Focus on what can be done. Focus on resolving the problem rather than blaming.

5. Identify solutions

Each student suggests a way they could help to make the bullied student feel better. Contract with them to implement their suggestions.

6. Give responsibility

End the meeting by giving responsibility to the group to solve the problem.

7. Meet with group again

One-week later meet with group members individually to determine whether the bullying has stopped and whether the bullied student feels better.

Although not specifically recommended by Robinson and Maines, the monitoring (Step 7) may need to be done earlier than a week later, depending on the severity of the situation (e.g. 1 or 2 days later).

When the bullying situation involves a victim who is also a bully or who is provocative, the strategy may need to be turned around – you may need to work with the victim to help identify role in the problem and solutions to avoid being provocative.

Method of Shared Concern

Developed by Anatole Pikas, a Swedish psychologist, as described in:

Roland & Munthe (Eds.) (1989) *Bullying: An International Perspective*,
and Sharpe, Cowie, & Smith in *Tackling Bullying in Your School*, Sharp & Smith (Eds.)

- Bullying is a collective phenomenon with rationalization (i.e., bullying is okay) and insensitivity to the victim.
- Goal of the intervention is to “reindividualize” members of the group and stimulate empathy.
- Suggested for children 9 years old and older.
- It is important for the teacher or counselor to remain neutral, not accusing, and not punitive.
- Most effective when practiced through role-plays with colleagues before using it directly with students.

The steps of the Method of Shared Concern are as follows:

1. Gather information

Who are the key players? Is the victim “provocative” (i.e., a bully-victim)?

2. First Meetings

Interview group members individually for 5 minutes.

Interview the “ringleader” first, immediately followed by other group members and finally the victim. Students should not be forewarned.

The following **script** is suggested for the first meeting (Sharpe, Cowie & Smith, 1994):

“I hear you’ve been mean to _____. Tell me about it.”

Follow up student’s denial with:

“Yes, but mean things have been happening to _____. Tell me about it.”

Close the first part of the interview (once student has acknowledged that there is a problem) with:

“Okay, I was wondering what you could do to help _____ in this situation.”

The interviewer must be prepared to wait patiently. If the proposed solution is unrealistic provide a probe:

“What would happen if you did that?”

If no solution is forthcoming, make suggestions:

“How about if you asked _____ to sit beside you?”

Once at least one workable strategy is agreed upon:

“Great, try that out for a week, and we will meet to see how it is going. Goodbye!”

3. Follow-up Meetings

Individual follow-up meetings are held a week later, with more focus on problem solving if necessary.

4. Group Meeting

When Step 3 is successful, implement the final meeting with the entire group to ensure long-term maintenance of the change in bullying behavior and to reintegrate the group.

Formulate back-up plans (e.g., formative consequences).

Empowerment Groups for Girls' Group Bullying

Within a class or school, concerns arise about girls' bullying. The problems often arise from social exclusion, rejection, and humiliation of a single targeted girl by a group of girls. We have implemented empowerment groups to support changes among girls who bully. These groups are conducted on the premise that learning about bullying and group aggression occurs most effectively within the peer group in which it naturally occurs. When the group processes new information, the group dynamics can be transformed. By working with group of girls, there is an opportunity to raise awareness, change attitudes, and shape behaviors to achieve a collaborative, rather than an adversarial, climate among the girls.

Our observations and consultations indicate that the following processes are often operating and underlie bullying within girls' groups.

- The victim is isolated and feels betrayed because no one is supporting her. She does not reach out to the other "vulnerable" girls due to concerns of losing status by aligning with lower status girls.
- Bully is coercive – those who successfully use power and aggression to bully another acquire dominance and heightened social prestige within the group. Allies provide support by joining, attending, encouraging, and laughing. They minimize the victim's distress, and report to school staff that the whole thing is a joke.
- When girls act as a group in bullying one or more other girls, feelings of individual responsibility for aggression are diminished.
- When girls bully as a group, their sense of group cohesiveness is strengthened by pulling together to push away another girl or group of girls.

Basic Tenets for Empowerment Group Process

- It is easier to awaken empathy and reduce tolerance of bullying among the silent majority than it is to change the behavior of individual aggressive girls.
- Aggressive girls are more likely to respond to peer censure than to adult censure. Therefore, by working with a group of girls to help them understand the dynamics of power, the abuse of power, the experience of victimization, and the strategies for positive power, significant change can occur within girls' peer groups.
- It can be done with all the girls in a class or with a specific group of girls, depending on situation.

Goals for Empowerment Groups

1. Gain greater understanding of power in relationships and how violation of power causes harm to individuals and to the group.
2. Awaken empathy for victims of bullying or group aggression.
3. Empower "silent majority" to support the victim.
4. Reduce "stigma" associated with victimization.
5. Decrease support, prestige, and power that bullying behavior is achieving for the "Leader".
6. Transform the group atmosphere to become more cohesive, caring, and trusting.
7. Girls who bully choose to stop.
8. Victim no longer feels isolated and humiliated, has strategies for responding and a support network.

Adapted from Lewis, J.A. (1992). Gender sensitivity and family empowerment. *Topics in Family Psychology and Counseling*, 1, 1-7.

Strategies for Empowerment Group

Leader must:

- Communicate a respectful collegial attitude, rather than a punitive or blaming one.
- Create a working alliance with the group to engage them productively.
- Communicate an accepting and nonjudgmental attitude about personal worth of all the girls and not condone bullying behavior.

Group Process promotes:

1. Recognition of the impact of social, ethnocultural, and political factors in their lives.
2. Moving beyond limitations of stereotyping.
3. Recognizing ways in which individual behaviors, particularly bullying-related, may reflect internalization of harmful social standards.
4. Developing and integrating traits that are culturally defined as "masculine" and "feminine".

Empowerment Group: Method

- Meet in a special place, establish schedule.
- Openly tell students why you are there.
- Establish rules for group meetings: no specific names and incidents, respect, listen without interruption.
- Have an agenda for discussions, but be flexible.
- Use subgroup - large group format (to encourage everyone to talk, go around circle)

Sample Agenda Items

- Power -- its use and abuse.
- Popularity -- What does it mean?
- Self-worth -- consideration of self worth beyond boys; positive female role models.
- Emotions that happen when girls get together.
 - Anger, envy, jealousy
 - Embarrassment, shame, intimidation, shyness
 - Joy, excitement, silliness
- Relationships -- their importance and what it takes to maintain healthy relationships.
- Thin line between bullying and flirting with boys.
- How to speak up for people who need us.

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Worksheet

Action Plan for Anti-Bullying Intervention

Goal	Action	Who	How	When
Whole School Policy				
Developing Understanding				
Assess				
School Climate				
Communication and Monitoring				
Environment Upgrade				

Goal	Action	Who	How	When
Consequences				
Supports				