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Equity Dispatch

Creating Safe & Inclusive Schools:
Bullying and Harassment Prevention

March 2012



IMPACT: Educate, Engage, Empower--For Equity

"When you know better, you do better." -Maya Angelou

Equity Spotlight

Educate



Creating Safe and Inclusive Schools

A common characteristic of those who choose education as a career path is a strong affinity for young people and a desire to provide them with opportunities to build happy and successful lives that endure beyond their K-12 years of schooling. A school environment that fosters these outcomes is one in which students feel safe and included. Feeling safe and included allows students the freedom to engage in learning by responding to curriculum through expressions of their own lived experiences and creativity.

Safe and inclusive schools contribute to and protect students' physical, psychological, and social well-being through both proactive and supportive strategies. Proactive strategies are aimed at creating and strengthening students' sense of worth and belonging, so that all are empowered to engage in a learning community where they are treated with dignity and respect, and appreciated for the contribution of their knowledge and experience to the richness and excellence of the entire school community. Equally important is the acknowledgement that certain interactions in schools are harmful to students and prevent and interrupt students' opportunities to engage in learning and social growth; incidents of bullying and harassment require supportive strategies

Connie Reyes Rau is currently an educational consultant at Hamilton County Educational Service Center where she has been the director of the Title III Consortium for five years. She has been responsible for administering funds, professional development and consultation for over 25 districts in Southwest Ohio. Her job is to advocate for the culturally and linguistically diverse students in educational systems and is working on helping districts close the gap for this population.

Her work often involves

aimed at intervening in and eliminating negative treatment of students, and preventing future incidents.

Measures to create safe and inclusive schools are often mistaken for the development of zero tolerance policies that attempt to define and punish acts rather than prevent them. Funds are readily allocated to schools for safety protection supplies such as fences, locks, and cameras although these tools have failed to produce the desired effect of reduction in bullying and harassment (Pack, 2011). Work in the field has indicated that prevention measures are most successful when the social climate of a school community is addressed at the face to face level of cultural interactions.

Accordingly, both proactive and supportive strategies for building safe and inclusive schools start with an analysis of the way student groups are represented and/or marginalized through everyday policy, practices, and curriculum. Consider, for example, that while verbal bullying is the dominant form of bullying among boys and girls, "Girls are more likely to report being targets of rumor-spreading and sexual comments" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). This statistic would be more effectively counteracted by addressing how women are represented in school curricula (such as canonical literary representations of women as sexually deviant), rather than simply responding with retribution through suspensions, expulsions, and legal prosecution. Likewise, a recent study concluded, "the most commonly reported reasons for feeling safe were because of their [students'] family constellation, i.e. having LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender] parents (23%) and because of their [students'] actual or perceived sexual orientation" (Kosciw & Diaz, xvi, 2008). According to this report, affiliation with lesbian/gay culture is by and large the most common characteristic targeted in incidents of bullying and harassment. Given the virtual absence of LGBT representation in staff and curriculum, and the oppression of culture through decades of "Gag orders" in which educators were not allowed (nor willing) to address these issues in the classroom, it is likely that bullying and harassment of LGBT students reflects what has been reproduced through the hidden curriculum in schools, although often unintentional.



In light of this information, proactive strategies would require that school communities examine the ways in which students are represented in curriculum, and are provided opportunities to participate in classroom learning, classroom and school leadership, and decision-making. Supportive strategies would explicitly identify and examine patterns across incidents of problematic treatment of certain student groups. Proactive and supportive strategies hold students responsible for incidents of bullying and harassment and also include an educational component where their behavior is discussed in the interest of uncovering root causes and teaching pro-social skills. These strategies provide reassurance to students who are the target of bullying and harassment and demonstrate that the way they have been treated is unacceptable and will be eliminated. Further supportive strategies may include mentoring and/or counseling for both targeted students and those who bully or

consultation around systemic change and policy development for English Language Learners. She has trained over 500 educators in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol methodology and is assisting districts that use this model with fidelity. Connie serves on the Ohio Department for Education ESL Advisory Board and received an award for excellence in education for her work in advocating for English Language Learners. Connie maintains a large library of materials that her districts may utilize in their work with ELLs. In addition to the consortium, Connie also works as a school improvement coach for two urban districts in her region and has trained state employees on culturally responsive practices.

Before becoming the director of the Title III Consortium for Hamilton County ESC, Connie worked as a school psychologist in many different settings for over 15 years. Prior to being a psychologist, Connie worked as a special education teacher in an institutional setting. She has her school psychology degree from the University of Cincinnati and her undergraduate degree in special education from Xavier University.

Upcoming Events:

The Call for Proposals for NAME's 22nd Annual International Conference is now online
at <http://www.nameorg.org>

Ohio

April 19-21, 2012, Columbus
Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children
Ohio Early Care and Education Conference
[Click Here to read more](#)

Michigan

harass other students. The latter is necessary because learning to treat all people with respect requires an ability to emphasize with others based on the recognition that every individual, in all her/his facets, deserves basic human rights and dignity. The teaching of respect for human rights cannot be learned through superficial attempts to tell students that they should be respectful or be punished. Educators need to create safe and inclusive school environments through the use of proactive and supportive instructional strategies.

Equity-Driven Practices to Reduce Bullying and Harassment	
PROACTIVE STRATEGIES	SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES
Engage students, families, and community members in identifying problematic behavior and generating expectations of teacher/student, student/student, and family/teacher interactions and school climate.	Immediately and consistently address any incidents of bullying and harassment. Name the behavior: "I heard you use the word _____. Your behavior is unacceptable because you are violating another student's rights." Make sure that everyone can hear you.
Explicitly teach empathy and compassion through curriculum that uses authentic situations requiring student analysis of the treatment of individuals and groups, in historical and current contexts.	Hold students who inappropriately treat other students accountable by reporting the incident, ensuring disciplinary actions are firm and fair, and giving support to all actors involved in the incident.
Validate and value difference in the classroom by including diversity and student representation across the curriculum. Take care not to include students' diversity as an example of <i>otherness</i> , but rather as normative perspectives, values, and knowledge.	Support the targeted student, and continue to give support.

For a list of this section's references, click [here](#).

Engage

Get to Know Akron Public Schools

Akron Public Schools (APS), of Akron, Ohio, promotes safe and inclusive schools by engaging in an innovative strategy to address bullying and harassment among students. The APS bullying prevention program combines school support, student education and leadership programs, as well as community outreach to provide a comprehensive approach to safety and inclusiveness.



APS started the program five years ago in efforts to address the affect bullying can have on students' academic performance. The district employs four part-time specialists, who have backgrounds in mental health or counseling, to provide direct assistance to school staffs. These bullying prevention specialists deliver a variety of services including working one-on-one with students, and facilitating community forums for families and community members, and conducting lessons about acceptance, getting along and advocating pro-social behaviors among peers.

District and school leaders understand that in order to sustain safe

March 18 – 20, Saginaw
Annual State of Michigan
Equity Within the Classroom
Conference
Equity in Education Through
Partnerships & Collaboration
[Click Here to read more](#)

Indiana

June 13 -15th, Indianapolis
Conrad Hotel
Annual Region IV Parent
Technical Assistance Center
Conference
[Click Here to read more](#)

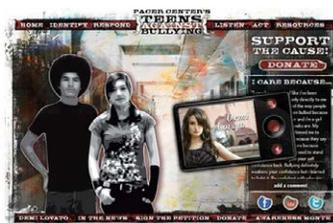
learning environments for all students, strategies to prevent bullying and harassment must not be seen in isolation, but integrated into a school's overall approach to discipline. As a result, these activities are incorporated into the district's and each school's Positive Behavior Support plans. Since the program's inception in 2002, APS has seen considerable decreases in reports of actual bullying incidents demonstrating a 20% decrease in bullying referrals from 2009-10. While there was a slight increase in referrals during the 2010-11 school year, the numbers of incidents were still substantially lower than in years prior to the program's implementation.

Students are also joining in efforts to ensure safe and inclusive schools. In one of Akron's public high schools, students have formed a group called Harmony, a multi-racial/ethnic student-led group that encourages younger students to be accepting of differences and stand up against unacceptable student treatment. The student group uses an anti-bullying curriculum to teach middle and elementary grade students about bullying prevention.

When asked, how the program promotes safe and inclusive schools, Merle Bennett Buzzelli, Program Manager replied, "We talk about [the fact that] every child has the right to feel safe, feel joy, and be treated with dignity and respect. Everyone has the right to come to school and feel safe; these are the words we use with students every day. We are really proud about the work we are doing. We try really hard to be accessible to families and the community, but especially to students. We want all children to have a good educational experience and our goal is to help children have a positive healthy experience."

Empower

Something to Share!

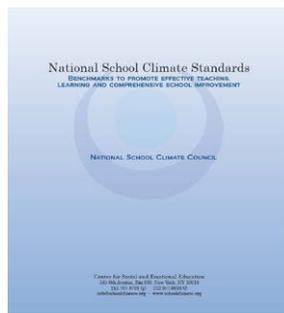


Could your students benefit from some positive peer guidance with regard to bullying? KidsAgainstBullying.org, a website built by and for elementary school students, offers games, original artwork and stories, celebrity videos, and questions and answers about bullying. Similarly, TeensAgainstBullying.org features teen-created bullying-related music videos, stories, activities, quizzes, and information. Both websites are sponsored by the National Bullying Prevention Center.

Something to Use!

National School Climate Standards

The National School Climate Standards provide a roadmap for schools looking to create a safe and inclusive school environment. The five standards and set of indicators and sub-indicators were developed by the National School Climate Council with the help of many educational leaders and have been endorsed by multiple organizations, including Teaching Tolerance, the National PTA, and the National School Board Association.



<http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/documents/school-climate-standards-csee.pdf>

Promoting a Positive School Climate Worksheet

PROMOTING A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE Worksheet for Discussion and Planning		
Questions about elements that contribute to a positive school climate	What do we do at our school to address this point?	What else do we need to do?
<p>Student Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we support students in making contributions to society and providing service to others? How do we involve students in conversations about their own learning and their learning environment? How do we incorporate their ideas into school improvement planning? What kinds of opportunities are available to allow students to act as leaders? Are there leadership opportunities for groups, school teams, (clubs, etc.)? 		
<p>Parent Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do we do to make parents feel welcome in our school? In what ways do we encourage parents to share their ideas and concerns to help support student achievement and learning? What feedback mechanisms are in place to respond to parents' input? How do we ensure that the diverse communities represented in the school are also represented on our school committees? What strategies are in place to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit the engagement of students, parents, and others? What protocols are in place for parents to communicate with teachers or other staff members if their child is experiencing problems? How do we support our students and families as they become part of the school community? How do we involve family and community members in the school? (e.g., by having them to ensure that children always have someone to talk about Aboriginal history and culture?) How do we share information with parents about the school's expectations with respect to student behaviour and school safety? 		

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reach every student Ontario

Wondering how to initiate a dialogue with your colleagues about school climate? The Promoting a Positive School Climate Worksheet for Discussion and Planning asks critical questions about student voice, parent engagement, community partnerships, learning environment, social-emotional environment, and physical environment and provides space to catalogue what is currently being done and what needs to be done to create a safe and inclusive school.

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/Worksheet_fillableEng.pdf

Something to Do!

[Cyberbullying Lesson Plans](#)

One of the best practices for bullying prevention is to take some time to discuss bullying and harassment in the classroom. This resource from the Anti-Defamation League contains three ready-to-implement, standards-aligned lesson plans that educators can use to address cyberbullying:

- [Elementary Lesson Plan](#): Over the course of 2-3 hours or 3-4 class periods, students will use literature, hypothetical scenarios, and creative activities to learn about safe and respectful online communication.
- [Middle Grades Lesson Plan](#): This 90-minute lesson for students in grades 5-9 provides information about cyberbullying, while encouraging critical thinking through

group work, brainstorming, and case studies

- [Secondary Lesson Plan](#): High school students who participate in this two-hour lesson will complete a pre-lesson survey, build awareness about cyberbullying and empathy for victims of online attacks, and engage in a discussion about social norms.

Reference List:

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