

A Statewide Blueprint for Bullying Prevention



Creating a Colorado where ALL students are learning and achieving in safe, respectful schools

Introduction

Research shows that positive school climates where all students feel safe and engaged lead to better outcomes for schools, for students, and for educators (1). However, recent tragic school violence and youth suicides highlight the need to enhance our efforts to reduce bullying and to create schools that are safe and foster a positive learning environment for all students. Colorado has included bullying prevention as a component of many state and local policies, systems, and programs and we have many assets and much infrastructure to draw upon in our efforts. However, there is still much work to be done at the state and local levels to fully integrate and sustain effective bullying prevention policies, systems, and practices. We are being asked to enhance, integrate, and sustain efforts at a time when the demands on districts and schools are increasing and resources are constrained. The challenge for education leaders is to find creative, innovative ways to tackle these challenges and to implement effective practices that foster positive school climates, improve student achievement, support health and wellness, and ultimately develop students who have the wide range of skills necessary to succeed in college, career, and life.

Education leaders from across the state came together for a Statewide Bullying Prevention Summit on April 15, 2011 to dialogue about these challenges and opportunities. Participants included the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Attorney General's Office, the Colorado School Safety Resource Center, the Colorado Association of School Executives, the Colorado Association of School Boards, the Colorado Education Association, state legislators, local school board members, district and school leaders, community partners, and youth. These leaders engaged in critical dialogue focused on analyzing the needs for enhancing school climate and bullying prevention efforts, identifying opportunities for innovation and creative collaboration, and prioritizing key strategies that could be pursued to enhance school climate and bullying prevention systems and supports across the state. The following report summarizes the results and recommendations from the Summit.

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**A Report from the Colorado Statewide
Bullying Prevention Summit April 15, 2011**



18.8% of high school students in Colorado reported being bullied (Healthy Kids Survey, 2009)

Needs Analysis

Summit participants explored the need for bullying prevention using national and local data on student experiences of bullying along with statewide needs assessments of local needs and gaps. These data point to three overarching themes.

1. Too many students are experiencing bullying and some students are more likely to be bullied based on their race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or religion.

- 19.9% of students reported being bullied nationally (2).
- 20% of students reported being cyberbullied (3).
- 60% of students (aged 13-18) reported being verbally or physically harassed or assaulted during the past school year because of real or “perceived race/ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, or religion” (4).
- 90% of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) students reported being bullied (5).

2. Bullying has serious academic and emotional consequences for youth.

- An estimated 160,000 students miss school every day due to bullying (6).

- One study found that 9% of LGBT students report having missed 4 or more days of school in the last 30 days compared to 1.8% of their heterosexual peers (7).
- Children and youth who are bullied are more likely than other children to be depressed, lonely, anxious, have low self-esteem, feel unwell, and think about suicide (8).
- In Colorado, youth who were bullied were twice as likely to report being sad for more than two weeks in the previous year and 25% of youth who were bullied also reported attempting suicide in the previous year compared to 11% of students who were not bullied (9).
- In Colorado, youth who were bullied were also more likely to have been in fights, engaged in binge drinking and used marijuana (10).

3. Districts, schools, and teachers in Colorado are committed to addressing bullying effectively and need resources, training, tools, and best practices to enhance their efforts.

- 98% of teachers said it was their job to intervene in bullying but only 54% reported receiving training in their district’s bullying policy (11).
- The greatest areas of need for training that teachers identified included: cyberbullying and sexting as well as additional information related to sexual orientation, gender issues, and disability (12).

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Needs Analysis

- 59.4% of respondents to a Colorado school safety survey indicated that bullying and harassment were priority problem behaviors among their students (13).
- 61% of respondents to a Colorado school safety survey indicated a high need for effective bullying prevention strategies (14).
- Districts and schools identified four priority needs for enhancing their bullying prevention efforts: training, consistent approaches, resources for engaging and educating parents, and curriculum and classroom tools (15).



Best Practices

One outcome of the Summit was to begin to articulate a framework for best practices in bullying prevention. This framework is adapted from recommendations set forward by the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services based on a review of effective bullying prevention programs and input solicited from national experts in bullying prevention. These ten strategies provide a framework of best practices in bullying prevention that districts and schools can use to assess current efforts; identify existing assets and gaps; and select, develop, or enhance effective approaches.

These best practices include:

- Commit to provide leadership to create and sustain a positive, respectful school climate.
- Form or identify an existing team to coordinate bullying prevention efforts.
- Regularly assess and monitor school climate including the nature of bullying and effectiveness of bullying prevention efforts.
- Garner staff, parent, and community support and build partnerships.
- Establish or revise and enforce school policies and procedures related to best practices in bullying prevention and intervention.
- Train all staff in bullying awareness, prevention, and appropriate intervention.
- Increase active adult supervision in hot spots where bullying occurs.
- Intervene immediately, consistently, equitably, and appropriately when bullying occurs.
- Integrate time into academic and social activities for teaching students bullying prevention skills including awareness, responding, and reporting.
- Continue to implement, monitor, and update bullying prevention efforts over time.

*Adapted from Best Practices in Bullying Prevention—
U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of
Health And Human Services 2011*



Lessons from the Field

Pueblo School District 60

“The real story is school culture—if adults don’t own school culture someone else will”

- Bullying prevention efforts should be integrated into all school climate, social emotional and prevention efforts.
- Consistent language, expectations, and responses across the school create and sustain school culture.
- Schools need to model, define, and provide opportunities to practice expected behaviors.
- Providing booster trainings for staff is key to creating and sustaining staff buy-in and skills.
- Building administrators and leaders are key.
- Families and community stakeholders provide key support and resources for the effort.

Aurora School District

“Integration is key to sustainability”

- Take a district-wide, systemic approach.
- Make sure it’s not “just one more thing” for teachers.
- Focus on stopping the behavior rather than on the “bully”.
- Integrate into existing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) efforts which makes it sustainable from year-to-year.

Mesa School District 51

“Consistency is key to long-term effectiveness”

- Create and disseminate a consistent definition.
- Updated board policy and report on progress annually to board.
- Community involvement is key—district SEAC and community advisory councils advise and monitor the efforts.
- District level data is analyzed and used to target support.
- Executive directors of elementary, middle, and high school monitor data collection and support action planning at the schools.
- Efforts must be continued, supported, monitored, and intentional over time to remain effective.

Cherry Creek School District

“The part can never be well until the whole is well”

- Bullying prevention is integrated into a district-wide comprehensive wellness approach.
- Best practices include: clear messages; active supervision; clearly communicated policies; teaching students skills and strategies; empowering bystanders; informing parents; and using data.
- Efforts have evolved to respond to emerging issues and have driven new approaches including: comprehensive internet safety; a district-wide gay-straight alliance (GSA) summit; alternative use of suspension; and convening a subcommittee to review current bullying/harassment practices and make recommendations for curriculum/common language and tools for administrators.





Frugal Innovation

Colorado has many policies, systems, and programs that can positively impact school climate and support bullying prevention. However, efforts are often fragmented and resources are scarce. More than ever before we are being challenged to think creatively and innovatively about how we can leverage existing resources for greater impact. Developing countries, particularly India, are drawing on the principles of “frugal innovation” to respond to a similar challenge— “how can we meet the needs of the most people with the fewest resources?” Frugal innovation works by taking a large challenge (e.g. how can we make filtered drinking water available to a large majority of people) and working with existing resources (people, skills, materials) in creative ways to address the need. One example of frugal innovation in India is Tata Swatch which has developed an affordable water filter using discarded rice husks (a major waste product) and recycling them into water filters (16). Another example is Dr. Ram, an optometrist who discovered a way to utilize existing skills that locals were using to weave metal filaments into colorful Saris to make locally manufactured electrodes for sophisticated optometry equipment at a fraction of the cost making retinal screenings available and affordable (17).

“We had to reframe our thinking and once we did we realized we were actually resource-rich with all our community partners”

-District leader, Bullying Prevention Summit

Some lessons suggested by frugal innovation include: use innovation as a tool to tackle complex issues at scale; distill the solution down to its essential components; build on local context and indigenous materials; and engage local experts in the creative, innovative use of existing knowledge, skills, and resources to create something new.

Drawing on lessons from frugal innovation, participants at the Summit were challenged to think in creative, innovative ways about how to leverage resources to address bullying statewide. Participants identified three key approaches to leveraging existing resources to support bullying prevention efforts locally and across the state:

- **Leverage existing state and district policies, standards, data and accountability structures** to address school climate and bullying prevention in an integrated, sustainable manner (e.g. state content standards, Universal Improvement Plans (UIP) school safety teams, PBIS).
- **Build authentic partnerships with youth** to assess need, develop or select interventions, evaluate effectiveness of approaches and promote positive school climate (e.g. youth action-based research, youth-led groups such as Gay Straight Alliances (GSA); youth-led awareness campaigns).
- **Foster creative collaborations with families and community-based organizations** to increase school capacity for providing training, peer education, youth leadership development and supervision of hot spots.

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Statewide Strategies for Bullying Prevention

Strategic Objective #1—Promote whole district approaches to building positive school climate and integrating bullying prevention into existing efforts.

1.1 Support districts and schools in integrating bullying prevention best practices into existing school climate, school safety, and prevention efforts and sustaining efforts over time.

1.2 Support districts and schools in implementing effective approaches to building positive school climate (e.g. PBIS).

1.3 Integrate school climate measures into existing accountability structures (e.g. UIP's, district youth or parent surveys)

1.4 Foster innovative approaches to creating and sustaining broad “ownership” of school culture by administration, teachers, students and parents.

1.5 Foster approaches to school climate that are respectful and inclusive of all students, particularly those most impacted by bullying (e.g. LGBT, students with disabilities)

Strategic Objective #2—Raise awareness of bullying and best practices in bullying prevention and intervention

2.1 Create and disseminate common messages regarding best practices and model policies for bullying prevention

2.2 Use district and school policies to promote awareness of school-wide expectations regarding fostering a respectful school culture and appropriate adult and youth responses to bullying

2.3 Create statewide and local campaigns to educate school board members, administrators, teachers, students, and parents on the need for and best practices in bullying prevention.

2.4 Engage media in promoting positive messages about successful strategies in preventing and responding to bullying.

2.5 Support student-designed awareness campaigns that utilize social media and other innovative approaches to promote bullying prevention to peers, parents, and other adults.

Strategic Objective #3—Provide practical training and tools based on best practices to school personnel on how to prevent and appropriately respond to bullying.

3.1 Provide training on best practices and policies in promoting positive school climate and preventing bullying to school board members and administrators.

3.2 Provide tools for integrating bullying prevention into new state content standards (PE, Health, Civics) and teacher quality standards (e.g. exemplar lesson plans, sample teacher tools, integration into teacher preparation programs).

3.3 Develop state, regional, and community partnerships to increase resources, training, and support for positive school climate and bullying prevention efforts.

3.4 Promote innovative uses of technology to make training, exemplar or promising approaches, and tool kits on school climate and bullying prevention available to districts and schools across the state.

3.5 Develop training, tools, and resources for administrators and teachers to effectively address and respond to bullying including addressing key gaps (i.e. high school strategies, cyberbullying, LGBT).

3.6 Develop and disseminate tools for educating and engaging parents in bullying prevention efforts.



Statewide Strategies for Bullying Prevention

3.7 Foster innovative, youth-led efforts to educate and support peers in fostering respectful school climate and responding appropriately to bullying (e.g. GSA's, No Place for Hate or other peer-led groups, social media campaigns).

Strategic Objective #4—Monitor, measure, adjust, and sustain efforts at state, district, and school levels

4.1 Provide toolkit for districts and schools on measuring school climate (e.g. guidelines for administering climate surveys; frequently asked questions; measuring different types of bullying—cyberbullying, bullying based on race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability; tools for using data to inform interventions).

4.2 Support statewide data collection efforts to monitor the prevalence of bullying (e.g. Colorado Healthy Kids Survey).

4.3 Identify, incentivize, and evaluate promising, innovative practices and promote replication of effective approaches through recognition of exemplars, peer-to-peer learning opportunities and sharing of lessons learned).

4.4 Foster innovative approaches to sustaining positive school climate and bullying prevention efforts at the state, district, and school levels and disseminate information on successful approaches to sustainability.

Next Steps and Future Directions

This statewide blueprint is intended to be a living document that can inform ongoing statewide and local school climate and bullying prevention efforts and to inspire creative collaborations and innovative approaches. Colorado has many active partners working on bullying prevention statewide including: the Colorado Association of School Boards, the Colorado Attorney General's Office, the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Education Association, the Colorado Legacy Foundation, the Colorado Parent Teacher Association, the Colorado School Safety Resource Center, and Safe2Tell. In addition, there are numerous local efforts driven by BOCES, district and school leaders, community-based organizations, and community coalitions.

We hope this blueprint can serve as a roadmap to spur further collaboration among these and other partners to identify and replicate effective practices, foster and evaluate innovative practices, and support the implementation of the strategic objectives and priority activities outlined in this report.



About the Colorado Legacy Foundation

The Colorado Legacy Foundation (CLF) exists to incubate innovation in public schools. Through its work convening stakeholders, identifying and promoting promising practices, and investing in pioneering ideas, CLF is poised to create transformational change for schools, the field of education, and—most importantly—for students. Since its inception in 2007, the Colorado Legacy Foundation has leveraged its unique partnership with the Colorado Department of Education to have an impact on education across the state. CLF has raised and distributed funds to support promising practices in bullying prevention, health and wellness initiatives, educator effectiveness programs, and math-science programs aimed at closing the achievement gap. CLF has leveraged partnership with governmental agencies, not-for-profits, philanthropic partners, and the business community to build a collective vision and agenda around improving outcomes for students. To learn more about the Colorado Legacy Foundation, please visit www.colegacy.org.

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www.gillfoundation.org

Citations

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