



Investing in innovation in public schools

Bullying Prevention - Teacher Fact Sheet

Teachers are committed to bullying prevention and want training and support.

- Over half of teachers surveyed said that bullying was a moderate or major problem at their school and 62% reported witnessing bullying two or more times in the previous month (Findings from the National Education Association's Study on Bullying, 2011).
- 98% of teachers surveyed said they felt it was their job to prevent and respond to bullying (Findings from the National Education Association's Study on Bullying, 2011).
- 54% of teachers received training on their district's bullying prevention policies. The most frequent requests for training included: cyberbullying and responding to bullying based on perceived sexual orientation or gender related issues (Findings from the National Education Association's Study on Bullying, 2011).
- Teachers were significantly more likely to intervene if they felt they had effective strategies and if they perceived that others in the school were likely to intervene (Findings from the National Education Association's Study on Bullying, 2011).

Teachers can play an important role in strengthening local bullying prevention efforts.

There are several things that you can do as a teacher to strengthen bullying prevention efforts in your district, school, and classroom.

- **Talk to your school board members, superintendent, and principal** about the importance of updating your local bullying prevention policies to include:
 - Clear prohibitions against cyberbullying and bullying based on disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, ancestry or the need for special education services
 - Clear policies and procedures for reporting and responding to bullying
 - Training to support teachers and students in preventing and responding to bullying
- **Join or start a local team in your school** to monitor bullying and support safe, inclusive schools (Safe Schools Coalitions, PBIS teams, School Safety Teams).
- **Teach students how to respond to bullying** and the importance of being an active bystander.
- **Intervene immediately** and consistently when you see bullying.
- **Join the national movement.** The NEA, the PTA, and many other national organizations have launched campaigns to prevent bullying.

Resources are available to support teachers in bullying prevention.

- US Department of Education's StopBullyingNow campaign – www.stopbullying.gov

- Colorado Department of Education bullying prevention website – coming in November 2011
- Colorado School Safety Resource Center – www.safeschools.co.state.us
- Colorado Legacy Foundation – www.colegacy.org

Teacher Talking Points for Policy Makers and School Administrators

Bullying is a serious problem, not a rite of passage.

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

- 18.8% of high school students in Colorado reported being bullied on school grounds (Colorado Healthy Kids Survey, 2009).
- 20% of students report being cyber-bullied at some point in their lifetime (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010).
- 87% of gay and lesbian students reported being verbally bullied based on their sexual orientation and 30% were physically assaulted (GLSEN Colorado Survey, 2009).
- According to a report from the White House Bullying Prevention Summit, reasons students frequently reported being bullied included: gender, race/ethnicity, religion, academic performance, socio-economic status, and disability. (Swearer, 2011; Graham, 2006; Eslea & Mukhtar, 2000).

Bullying has serious academic and emotional consequences.

Bullying has serious academic and emotional consequences for students who are bullied and ultimately impacts the school climate and academic performance of the entire school.

- Every day, an estimated **160,000 students miss school** due to bullying (US Department of Justice and National School Association of School Psychologists, Banks, 2000).
- Gay and lesbian students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression had **grade point averages almost half a grade lower** than students who were less often harassed (2.7 vs. 3.1) (GLSEN Survey, 2009).
- Students who experience high levels of victimization are significantly **more likely to report that they do not plan to pursue post-secondary education** compared to students who experience lower levels (14% vs 9%).
- **25% of youth who reported being bullied in the previous year attempted suicide** compared to 11% of students who were not bullied (Colorado Healthy Kids Survey, 2009).
- Youth who were bullied were also more likely to report **being in a fight or having used alcohol or marijuana** (Colorado Healthy Kids Survey, 2009).

Colorado enacted HB 1254 to strengthen Colorado's bullying prevention efforts.

- **HB-1254 explicitly protects students from bullying based** on disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, ancestry or the need for special education services.
- **HB-1254 addresses cyberbullying** and acknowledges that bullying is occurring beyond the schoolyard, in locker rooms and on school buses, and that students are often bullied online and through their phone.

- **HB-1254 promotes the development of new resources to support schools by** directing the Colorado Department of Education to establish a bullying prevention website and by creating a Bullying Prevention Education and Grant Program to be funded by grants and gifts.

Some instances of bullying may also constitute a violation of civil rights under Federal Law.

- Although federal law does not directly address bullying, recent guidance from the Office of Civil Rights in the Dear Colleague letter dated October 26, 2010 indicates that some instances of bullying may constitute harassment and may be a violation of civil rights protected under federal law (Title IX, Title VI, Title II and Sec 504). Bullying instances may be classified as harassment under federal law if they are based on race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation), and disability and if the harassment interferes with the student's ability to participate in and benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by the school.

Clear policies reduce bullying and empower teachers and students.

Anti-bullying policies that enumerate (specifically list and prohibit bullying based on characteristics such as race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, or disability) reduce overall harassment, including physical assaults, and make students feel safer:

- Students **report fewer incidents of bullying and feeling safer** in schools with enumerated policies (GLSEN Survey, 2009).
- Students report that **teachers in schools with enumerated policies are more likely to intervene** when they witness this type of bullying (GLSEN Survey, 2009).
- **Leading national education organizations endorse enumeration** as an effective policy tool for reducing bullying. These organizations include: the US Department of Education, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Bar Association, the National Parent Teacher Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Secondary Principals, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the American Bar Association.

Positive school climates empower teachers and students.

- Teachers who felt their school climate was positive and reported that “adults in the school feel that they are valued as individuals and professionals involved in the learning process” **were more likely to intervene and stop bullying** (NEA Study, 2011).
- A Colorado study found that schools with **lower levels of bullying had higher CSAP scores** (Evaluation of the Colorado Trust's Bullying Prevention Initiative, 2008).
- Research links positive school climates **to improved test scores, improved graduation rates, improved student attendance, reduced drop-out rates, improved working environments and higher rates of teacher satisfaction** (US Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, Osher & Bonccanfuso, 2011).

For more information on how Colorado is working to ensure all students are learning and achieving in safe schools, please contact Erin Yourtz at the Colorado Legacy Foundation at 303-887-7463.