BULLYING IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

History Of Bullying

Historically, bullying was not seen as a problem that needed attention, but was accepted as a fundamental and normal part of childhood. Bullying is deeply embedded in our culture. There are bullies not only on the school playgrounds but bullying tactics are routinely used in both the public and private sector. Bullies may be company CEOs, university presidents, politicians, teachers, police chiefs, or religious leaders. Bullies may achieve results in business by increasing profits, dominating markets or maintaining positions of power.

In the last two decades, however, the attitudes toward bullying have been changing. The emergence of cyberbullying has affected attitudes. Additionally, school bullying has come under intense public and media scrutiny recently amid reports that it may have been a contributing factor in shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in 1999, at Santana High School in Santee, California, in early 2001, and in other acts of juvenile violence, including suicide.

There has also been an increased concern internationally about school bullying over the last thirty years. This concern is rooted in human rights. It has been evidenced by an awareness of, and legislation against, forms of discrimination based on sex, race, age, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

As a result of these trends, schoolyard bullying and cyberbullying are seen as serious problems that warrant attention. Numerous anti-bullying
programs and zero-tolerance policies have proliferated as schools attempt to reduce and control bullying.\textsuperscript{29,30} In order to develop and implement effective anti-bullying programs, it is important to define bullying.

**What Is Bullying?**

Although there is no universally agreed definition, there is some consensus, at least in the western research tradition on defining bullying. Bullying is defined as the calculated, ongoing abuse that is aimed at a less powerful target. A school violence specialist with the School of Social Work at Michigan State University, defined a bully as an individual who seeks to control, dominate and terrorize the life of another. The important parts of this definition are that bullying is *repeated* behavior, *intended* to harm another, and that involves a *disparity of power*. A disparity of power may be viewed from different angles: target cannot defend himself or herself or the aggressor is seen to have more power than his or her target. It involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with the more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful.\textsuperscript{14,15} Nevertheless, the two criteria of repetition and power imbalance are still not universally accepted. They face particular resistance in the context of cyberbullying, and with the “intent to cause harm” criterion.

Bullying is a relationship and goes beyond individual incidents which by themselves can seem petty and insignificant, but bring great pain and torment to the victims. The dynamics of violence and school playground bullying are very similar. As mentioned, it is an issue of power. The essence of bullying is not in the actions of the bully but in his or her intentions: Will they bring harm? Is there intention to control?
Bullying is distinct from general aggression because of the additional element that it involves aggression with a real or perceived imbalance of power. In order for a study on bullying to provide meaningful information, it must evaluate aggression in the context of an imbalance of power.

Bullying often involves a minimum of two people, one the perpetrator and the other the victim. A large number of people may be involved in an indirect manner as an audience. These bystanders may be other students who witness the bullying event but remain uninvolved. They are frequently afraid of becoming the next victim if they do interfere. They often feel powerless and show a loss of self-respect and self-confidence.\textsuperscript{6,28,37}

It is important to know the difference between normal peer conflict and bullying. Normal peer conflict is when two students of equal status and power get into an argument or a fight, but it is more accidental, and not serious. In the bullying incident, there is an imbalance of power and the students are not friends. Ultimately, the bully is an individual who seeks to control, dominate and terrorize the life of another.\textsuperscript{25}

No matter how bullying is defined, it cannot be dismissed as inconsequential. It can be a humiliating or terrifying experience and, at its worst, bullying may lead to violence. It deserves serious attention.

**Evolution of the Definition of Bullying**

The above definition of bullying seems clear but the definition of bullying is fluid today because of societal and technological changes. Because of these changes it is also difficult to arrive at a final or closed definition of what constitutes bullying.
Societal Changes

Typically, traditional forms of bullying have fallen into three categories: physical (hitting, kicking), verbal (name-calling, teasing) and social (ignoring or isolating). Older generations saw or experienced bullying as children but it often involved physical contact. It is now recognized, however, that bullying may be passive, as in rumors, exclusion or manipulation. Today, it is recognized that bullying may be centered around the use of psychological methods.

Technological Changes

The difficulty in defining bullying is also further complicated by the introduction of cyberbullying discussed in more detail below.

Models And Theories of Bullying

The explanations for bullying fall into a number of categories: 1) bullying arises from the outcome of differences between individuals, 2) bullying is part of the childhood developmental process, 3) bullying is a socio-cultural phenomenon based on perceived group differences, 4) bullying is a response to peer pressure, and 5) bullying may be viewed from the perspective of the bully’s relationship to the school and the concept of restorative justice.

Bullying: Outcome of Differences Between Individuals

The theory that bullying is an outcome of individuals’ differences suggests that the motivation to bully and the tendency to be victimized are a result of disparate strength in individual characteristics, whereby one individual seeks to oppress another to gain power in a social group. Anti-bullying methods that address individual differences include therapeutic interventions such as assertiveness training for victims and anger management for bullies as well
as school counseling and parenting classes. Such approaches refer to the suggestion that particular traits may influence the tendency to perform a certain role and also relate to individual characteristics acting as behavioral predictors.

In addition, parenting styles have been linked with child behavior outcomes and familial influences have also been implicated in bullying and victimization. Indeed, the co-existence of bullying siblings confirmed familial transmission of bullying whereby abusive behavior in the home is adopted in interpersonal relationships.

**Bullying as a Developmental Process**

The model of bullying as a developmental process considers the nature of the problem in relation to stages of child development, whereby direct bullying scenarios between a bully and victim generally involve younger age groups, and relational bullying involving a social process occurs more often with older students (such as a group excluding or ignoring an individual). Approaches that acknowledge the developmental process involved in bullying include teacher training to ensure staff are more aware and sensitive toward subtle forms of bullying, and this is especially important during the initial secondary school years. In exploring the impact of age on ability to participate in and understand complex bullying scenarios, cognitive development has been considered as influential in child perception of bullying.

Some students might not even be aware that bullying is taking place as the behavior may fall outside their understanding of what constitutes bullying. The suggestion that bullying becomes more sophisticated and subtle as the
perpetrator develops cognitive abilities also explains the move toward skilled social manipulation involved in covert relational bullying.

**Bullying as a Socio-cultural Phenomenon**

This theory identifies individuals most at risk of victimization because of a perceived difference and therefore considered a threat to wider group norms. It can include students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students from minority ethnic groups, and students with learning difficulties or disabilities. The curricular approaches to anti-bullying in schools address the socio-cultural phenomenon through events which celebrate diversity and promote acceptance of individuality. Research presents mixed evidence whereby victimization is more likely to happen in large, inner city schools, which are typified by a multicultural population with low social economic status and a high level of need. In support of these findings, there is evidence of victimization in schools serving students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Children with learning difficulties are especially at risk of school bullying.

The relationship between the ethnicity of a school and level of bullying is also evidenced but the case for prejudiced bullying remains unclear. The variation in ethnic minority groups represented on a global or even national level may impact on consistency of results. In a recent study of Asian student bullying experiences, name-calling and teasing of cultural differences was reported among Hindu, Indian Muslim, and Pakistani students, suggesting that studies of ethnicity-based bullying involving majority-minority interaction should also consider inter-group interactions.

**Bullying as a Response to Peer Pressure**
The theory of peer pressure initiating bullying behavior recognizes the importance of relationships formed within a friendship group operating within the wider school context, and the influence that group membership can have on an individual and school community. Anti-bullying methods best suited to bullying through peer pressure include group interventions such as the ‘support group’ method, the method of ‘shared concern,’ or social skills training of bystanders. Indeed, the power of the peer group impacts on many aspects of adolescent behavior in school and is predictive of bullying incidents, more so than the individual themselves.

Bullying can be viewed as an interactive group process involving the interplay of individual role characteristics. Maintaining a sense of belonging to a group by supporting the values, beliefs and attitudes held by its members can encourage an inclination toward bullying behavior.

**Bullying from the Perspective of Restorative Justice**

The model based on principles of restorative justice involves the relationship between the bully and school as well as the bully and victim relationship. A student might be inclined toward bullying when a bond has not been successfully formed with the school and, therefore, the consequence of bully behavior is not considered to be detrimental to the wider school community.

A restorative justice approach to intervention can involve family meetings with the bully and victim, as well as peer mediation. The format of such meetings can include a peer group conference led by a trained member of staff to address the incident and resolve the problems, or a structured conference with all parties, along with parents and school personnel to discuss the hurt and harm caused, and identify the actions needed to be taken to repair the damage done to those affected. This is intended to
inform the bully about the impact such behavior has on the whole school community and encourage them to acknowledge the negative consequence of their behavior on others. Encouraging pro-social behavior enables students to contribute effectively to the school environment, which promotes a sense of ownership.

A school climate can be altered to improve antisocial behavior with a proactive school ethos and positive atmosphere of the school community reflected in the student outcomes. In contrast, school climate can be implicated in negative outcomes, lack of commitment or attachment to school can impact on negative behavior, with bullies reporting a poor school relationship. A school ethos placing responsibility on the teachers creates a sense of apathy within the student population, thus reducing the effectiveness of anti-bullying measures in place. ⁷¹, ⁹⁶, ⁹⁷

**Forms of Bullying**

There are many forms of bullying that can take place in the school environment. It is critical that teachers and staff working at schools are educated in the different forms of bullying that could be happening around them and learn techniques on how to identify and stop behavior from becoming prevalent.

The word “bullying” is broadly used to describe many different types of behavior, which may be physical or verbal. Because of their generational experiences, adults are naturally on the lookout for physical, overt forms of bullying. Bullying today is not so overt: Research shows that most bullying today does not involve physical contact. ³ It also includes psychological methods, such as labeled gateway behaviors. Bullying may arise when a person ignores a serious assault or abuse. Bullying may embrace
discrimination on a more individual basis; identity-based bullying or prejudice-driven bullying refer to bullying based on a group rather than individual characteristic, and may include racial harassment, faith-based bullying, sexual harassment or homophobic bullying. The important thing is not the action but the effect on the victim.

**Labeled Gateway Behaviors**

Labeled gateway behaviors are socially inappropriate behaviors used to convey contempt and dominance, such as whispering about others in front of them, laughing at them openly, eye-rolling, ignoring, name-calling, encouraging peers to drop friends, posting embarrassing photos online, and so on. Gateway behaviors in and of themselves do not necessarily indicate bullying. Students may use gateway behaviors when they are in a quarrel or simply annoyed with a peer. Regardless, these “beginning” or low-risk ways of asserting power or expressing contempt, left unchecked, can normalize disrespect and thus escalate into conflict and bullying. It is the repeated and targeted use of gateway behaviors by powerful peers, with the intent to demean and harass, which becomes true bullying.

**Physical Bullying**

Physical bullying involves contact with another person or their possessions and includes hitting, kicking or pinching another person, spitting, tripping or pushing them, or making them do things they do not want to do. Other forms of physical bullying are destroying possessions or making inappropriate or mean gestures.

Those negative actions, which can include threats, physical attacks, words, gestures, or social exclusion, occur in a context always characterized by an imbalance between the bully and the victim. The repercussions of bullying,
even when it doesn’t escalate into violence, are rarely limited to the victims alone. Students in schools with serious bullying problems report feeling less safe and less satisfied with their schools. Students in schools where bullying problems are ignored and aggressive behavior is not addressed are likely to become more aggressive and less tolerant as well. Bullying affects the school climate and the learning environment of every classroom.\textsuperscript{5,13}

**Verbal Bullying**

Verbal bullying is defined as any words used to cause pain or harm. Examples include calling someone by a rude name, making inappropriate or sexual comments, teasing or taunting, or making a threat.\textsuperscript{6} A child may bully another child by making the other child feel uncomfortable or scared.\textsuperscript{10-12}

**Social Bullying**

Social bullying, which can also be known as relational bullying or social aggression, revolves around endangering another person’s relation to his or her community. This type of bullying may take the form of ostracism, spreading rumors (so there is a verbal bullying aspect of social bullying), causing public embarrassment, or telling falsehoods behind someone’s back.\textsuperscript{7} Examples of this may include saying or writing nasty comments about the person, leaving the person out of activities or not talking to him or her.\textsuperscript{10-12} This social aggression rises to the level of bullying when it is repetitive and when the instigator intends to harm the victim.

**Gender And Bullying**
Girls as well as boys engage in bullying behavior. Bullying has been described as a gendered phenomenon and a relationship problem. Understanding what these characterizations really mean requires investigating how gender influences every aspect of bullying relationships: how children understand bullying, contexts in which children bully, forms that bullying might take, processes by which bullying may unfold, and whether and how children feel empowered to respond or even to intervene. Examining how gender influences bullying requires careful thinking about gender differences in frequency of bullying behaviors, as well as moving beyond these differences to consider other ways in which gender might have an effect on the complex phenomenon of bullying.

Moving beyond consideration of gender differences in bullying requires careful consideration of where gender differences do and do not exist. In a large, nationally representative United States sample, it was found that boys reported perpetrating and being victimized by bullying more than girls. When specific forms of victimization were examined, boys reported experiencing more physical bullying than girls, and girls reported more bullying by rumors and sexual comments. In another U.S. study, 4th and 5th graders responded to a survey about “Who bullies whom?” Boys were more likely to be bullies and bully-victims, and girls were more likely to be victims. In a study of developmental trajectories for bullying from ages 10 to 17 with a large Canadian sample, the high and moderate bullying trajectory groups included more boys than girls, and the trajectory group for low involvement included more girls than boys. One reason why boys may have a higher bullying trajectory than girls is that the definitions of bullying include physical and social aggression but do not differentiate between them. A wealth of evidence documents that boys are higher on physical and direct
aggression than girls. However, gender differences are less clear for social aggression.\textsuperscript{40,41}

Competing terms have been used to describe aggression that hurts others by disputing friendships or social status: indirect aggression, social aggression, and relational aggression. These constructs overlap; there is currently no consensus as to which is best, and empirical evidence does not clearly support their differentiation. A recent, large meta-analysis found the gender difference in social aggression so small as to be trivial. The \textit{gender oversimplification} of social aggression has likely been fueled by popular media, as well as by gender stereotypes that portray girls as catty and manipulative — stereotypes that children seem to understand as early as preschool. Bullying is a subset of the broader phenomenon of aggression because criteria for bullying include chronicity and a power imbalance. Still, the fact that bullying is broadly defined to include physical and social aggression may explain why boys are characterized as higher on perpetrating bullying; boys are clearly higher on physical aggression but gender differences in social aggression seem small if they exist at all.\textsuperscript{16,42}

Though researchers use a precise definition of bullying, children themselves may conceive of this phenomenon differently and conceptions of bullying may differ for girls and boys. In a study with a large sample of children from 14 different Asian and European countries, children were shown 25 cartoons of stick figures depicting social encounters with simple captions, and were asked to sort the cartoons as to whether the situation did or did not constitute various terms for bullying behaviors in each native language. Overall, boys and girls had very similar conceptions of what was and was not bullying, and six types of terms referring to bullying emerged. These included 1) bullying of all types, verbal and physical, 2) verbal only, 3) social
exclusion, 4) physical only, and 5) mostly physical. Young children (8-year-olds) primarily distinguished between aggressive and non-aggressive behaviors but 14-year-olds made distinctions between physical bullying, verbal bullying, and social exclusion.⁴³,⁴⁴

Another study examined whether gender differences in conceptions of bullying emerge when 8 to 18-year-old children were asked to provide their own definition. Interestingly, both boys’ and girls’ definitions rarely included the three criteria of the research definition, which are intentionality (1.7%), chronicity (6%), and power imbalance (25%). Girls in this study were more likely than boys to mention social aggression in their definitions of bullying, especially during middle childhood. These results strongly suggest that social aggression is more common in girls’ conceptions of bullying and that understanding the phenomenon of bullying for both gender groups requires consideration of both subtle and overt forms.⁴³,⁴⁴

If bullying is indeed a gendered, relationship phenomenon, then it is important to understand whether the social processes involved in bullying differ for girls and boys. Because many studies have relied on surveys to study bullying, our knowledge of social processes in bullying is scant. However, existing work provides some interesting clues. Girls and boys seem likely to play different roles in the group process of bullying. According to self- and peer-reports, girls are more likely to assume the roles of defender and outsider, whereas boys are more likely to play the roles of bully, reinforce, and assistant. Similarly, a U.S. study found that according to self-reports, girls are more often classified in an uninvolved cluster for bullying, whereas boys are more likely to be classified in bully, victim, and bully-victim groups.
A naturalistic, observational study of peer intervention in playground bullying found that girls were more likely to intervene in bullying when the bully and victim were female, and boys were more likely to intervene when the bully and victim were male. Girls and boys were equally likely to intervene and their interventions were equally effective. Girls and boys used physical aggression to intervene at similar rates, but girls’ attempts were more likely to involve verbal assertion than were boys’ interventions. Girls’ bullying may take subtle forms and even be associated with social power. In support of this hypothesis, a recent study found that compared to boys identified as bullies, girl bullies were more socially and less physically aggressive, reported greater friendship intimacy, and were rated by peers as more attractive. If girls’ bullying is more likely to be verbal or social and less likely to be physical, then an important context for examining gender and bullying is electronic communication, where bullying must be conveyed by verbal communication.10,17,45

Cyberbullying is an important context in which to examine gender differences and bullying. Gender differences in the context of cyberbullying are discussed below.

**Cyberbullying**

A generation of children and adolescents are now growing up in a digital world. Digital communication changes how we communicate and thus, in turn, changes the social interactions that ensue both online and offline. Children do not see the school hallways and cyberspace as separate. For them, text messaging is just another way of talking, and the Internet is just another place where they see their friends. Over 90% of adolescents use the Internet, with current estimates ranging from 93% to 97% of American adolescents being online. A majority of adolescents reported using the
Internet on a daily basis and that they are able to access the Internet both at home and at school. Four out of five adolescents have a mobile device, and many are able to text message, use the Internet, and take digital pictures with their phones.

This expanding ability to communicate with others via the Internet and cell phones has the potential to be extremely advantageous to young people, creating opportunities to foster greater feelings of connectedness. However, the proliferation of these technologies may also be associated with growing risks. Cyberbullying is also important because a vast majority of youth communicate with peers electronically.\(^\text{38,39}\) Cyberspace may become a burgeoning venue for bullying peers.

Bullying others through electronic media is a fairly new phenomenon. Higher rates of cyberbullying are reported in studies that ask about a wider variety of digital behaviors or about problems that may have happened during longer periods of time but researchers have pointed to the lack of scholarly attention devoted to studying technologically assisted bullying specifically and they have called for more empirical research in this area.\(^\text{7,46,47}\)

It does appear that as children grow, digital bullying occupies an increasingly larger proportion of all bullying incidents. In a 2015 research study, 31 percent of elementary school bullying was reported to have occurred electronically, but almost all (97 percent) of high school bullying involved electronics.\(^2\)

Many terms have been used to refer to bullying through electronic channels including cyberbullying, electronic bullying, e-bullying, online harassment, Internet bullying, and online social cruelty. There are almost as many
definitions of bullying online as there are definitions of terms to refer to the phenomenon, and there is no consistent definition as of yet. Most recently, however, people have begun to regularly use the term cyberbullying and define this construct as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices.” Cyberbullying includes many different types of behaviors and can occur through different technological mediums. Cyberbullies may use behaviors that are either direct (i.e., threatening someone online) or indirect (i.e., spreading rumors online) in nature. Many behaviors that bullies use in the school setting may also be applied to cyber environments including ignoring, exclusion, name calling, rumor spreading, and physical threats. Cyber environments also allow for the introduction of a new set of hostile behaviors such as outing and trickery, masquerading, happy slapping, and picture or video clip bullying.

Outing and trickery refers to convincing a target to reveal personal information and then sharing this private information with others electronically. Masquerading, also known as impersonation, involves the bully pretending to be the victim and then sending messages to others that seem to come from the target and/or changing information the target has posted about him or herself online. Happy slapping entails digitally recording an instance of physical aggression and then electronically sharing this episode with others. Bullies may also alter pictures and/or video clips of their victims and then post these for others to see in the hopes of embarrassing the victim. Cyberbullying behaviors can occur through many different communication modalities including instant messenger, email, text message, social networking sites, chat rooms, blogs, voting and rating websites (i.e., Hot or Not), websites built to embarrass another, and online gaming sites.
Cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying in many important respects. Given young peoples’ wide access to the Internet and cell phones, cyberbullying can take place outside of the school setting and can occur anywhere at any time; thus, the potential omnipresence of cyberbullying may result in victims feeling more vulnerable.\textsuperscript{13,50}

Cyberbullies can maintain a sense of anonymity by using pseudonyms in online environments. This sense of anonymity coupled with a lack of face-to-face contact may lead to greater feelings of disinhibition among cyberbullies as compared to traditional bullies. In fact, 31\% of adolescents report they have said something over instant messenger that they would not have shared in a face-to-face context. Further, cyberbullies have the potential to reach a very wide audience; cyber-attacks can be easily shared with many in a very short time or posted in a public forum. Given these differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying, an important question is whether the gender differences seen in traditional bullying also hold for bullying in cyber environments.

**Gender Differences and Cyberbullying**

Some researchers have suggested that girls may be more likely to engage in cyberbullying than traditional forms of bullying. With cyberbullying, gender differences in physical size and strength are less relevant. This may be especially important for girls. Also, girls often have strong verbal abilities and may be adept at delivering attacks through electronic text. Girls may feel less inhibited interacting with others through online media as compared to face-to-face encounters.\textsuperscript{51,52}

In considering whether boys and girls cyberbully at equivalent rates, it is important to remember that many forms of cyberbullying resemble social
aggression rather than physical aggression (*i.e.*, online exclusion and spreading of rumors). As described above, a recent meta-analysis suggests no strong gender differences in social aggression; however, this meta-analysis did suggest that boys are more physically aggressive than girls, and some forms of cyberbullying involve physical aggression (*i.e.*, happy slapping, threats of physical harm). Gender differences exist in the way adolescents perceive cyberbullying. In focus groups on cyberbullying with middle and high school students, girls were more likely than boys to acknowledge that cyberbullying was a problem facing students in their schools. Adolescents also mentioned that their responses to cyberbullying would depend on the gender of the perpetrator. One adolescent participant said: "It depends on if it’s a guy or a girl or how mean they are. Some people are just going to do it anyway. Girls are harder to stand up to. Cause like guys can be like 'stop bothering me.' I’m not afraid that a guy is going to hit me, but girls are like catty. They get back at you in a more subtle way."  

Boys reported a greater willingness to confront perpetrators of cyberbullying than did girls. Studies examining the frequency of cyberbullying by gender have yielded mixed results. Estimates of the frequency of bullying as well as estimates of gender differences vary from study to study. This is likely the result of researchers conceptualizing cyberbullying along different lines and using diverse methods to study this phenomenon. Most research has examined cyberbullying with surveys that are administered online, by phone, or in the classroom. However, researchers often ask about cyberbullying in different ways through their questionnaires. Some researchers may simply ask participants if they have experienced cyberbullying either as a perpetrator or victim. Alternatively, other researchers may ask respondents if they have perpetrated or been victim of specific cyberbullying behaviors.
such as online threats or online rumors. Studies differ along other important dimensions, such as whether researchers inquire about cyberbullying within a specific time frame as well as key characteristics of the sample (i.e., age of respondent). These differences in definition and methodology likely account for the discrepant findings in the cyberbullying literature regarding frequency and gender.\textsuperscript{54,55}

Some studies have found that boys are more likely than girls to cyberbully others. The First Youth Internet Safety Survey was a nationally representative phone survey in which children and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 17 were interviewed. As part of this larger study, youth were asked about experiences with online harassment. More cyberbullies were reported to be boys (54%) than girls (20%). The gender of the perpetrator was unknown for 26% of the episodes. Similarly, a survey of Canadian middle-school students found that boys were more likely to perpetrate cyberbullying than were girls; 22% of boys reported cyberbullying others as compared to 12% of girls. However, the majority of the extant research suggests that girls are involved in cyberbullying both as perpetrators and as victims at rates that are equal to or higher than that of their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{56-58}

In a study of 5th, 8th, and 11th grade students, boys and girls were equally likely to report spreading lies about peers through email or instant messaging. Likewise, a survey of adolescents found that gender was not a significant predictor of involvement in cyberbullying. In addition, an online study of youth found no significant gender differences in the frequency with which boys and girls engaged in cyberbullying. These researchers also specifically examined serious cyberbullying, which they assessed with the following two items regarding online behavior: 1) threatened someone with
physical harm, or 2) made other kids scared of them. No significant gender differences were found for serious cyberbullying. An investigation by Kowalski and colleagues found that girls might be more likely than boys to perpetrate cyberbullying. More girls (13%) than boys (9%) reported cyberbullying others at least once in the past two months. However, different findings emerged when chronicity of cyberbullying was examined. Boys were more likely than girls to admit cyberbullying others on a weekly basis. Similar findings emerged from the Youth Internet Safety Survey.  

In interviews, youth were asked to specify the number of times they cyberbullied others in the past year. Participants were assigned to categories on the basis of this information to specify the regularity with which they cyberbullied others. Those who rarely cyberbullied others were assigned to the category of limited perpetrators, and those who often cyberbullied others were assigned to the category of frequent perpetrators. Although girls were significantly more likely to be classified as limited perpetrators, boys were more likely to be classified as frequent perpetrators. As is the case for perpetration of cyberbullying, studies that have examined gender differences in victimization by cyberbullying have also yielded mixed results. Some studies have found that girls and boys are equally likely to be victims of cyberbullying. However, other research including the Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey find that girls are more likely to be targeted by cyberbullying than are boys. In this large survey of online adolescents, 38% of girls and 26% of boys reported being the target of cyberbullying.  

Future research is needed to move beyond examining gender differences in cyberbullying and to consider the methods and mechanisms through which adolescent girls and boys aggress and are victimized online. Initial research
suggests that boys may be more likely to hack into others’ systems and engage in online name-calling. Girls, on the other hand, may be more likely than boys to gossip in cyberspace, and in turn may also more frequently be the subject of online rumors. Research on traditional bullying has found that boys are more likely than girls to engage in physical aggression; cyberbullying research should specifically examine forms of physical aggression such as threats of harm and happy slapping to determine if these gender differences hold in cyberspace. Initial evidence for gender differences in physical forms of cyberbullying comes from examining emotional responses to cyberbullying. A recent study found that girls are more likely to feel frustrated whereas boys are more likely to feel scared following cyberbullying, and they suggest that this difference may result from boys being subject to more online physical threats. In terms of mediums used to cyberbully, girls more often report being bullied through email and text messages than do boys.60,61

Future research is needed to study gender differences in how cyberbullying unfolds. Girls and boys have different online footprints; boys are more likely to play games online and to post videos to video sharing websites, and girls are more likely to have a blog and use instant messaging. These different activities that online girls and boys gravitate toward may be the mediums through which they are likely to aggress against their peers. Additional research will allow for firmer conclusions to be drawn regarding gender differences in bullying in the new arena of cyberspace.62,63

Bullying: A Significant Issue

Bullying behavior may seem insignificant compared to kids bringing guns to school or getting involved with drugs but this is incorrect. There appears to
be a pattern in school shootings that the shooter was a victim of bullying. In most cases, it was discovered that the shooter resorted to violence only after the school administration repeatedly failed to intervene in cases of bullying, as in the case of the shootings in Virginia and at Columbine.

Bullying should not be dismissed as part of growing up. It may be an early form of aggressive, violent behavior. For example, one in four children who bully will have a criminal record by the age of 30.

Bullies often cause serious problems for schools, families and neighborhoods. Because of the repetitive nature of bullying, a school child will experience fear and anxiety about the next confrontation. This may cause a child to avoid school, carry a gun or knife for protection, or even commit a violent act.

Bullying and teasing top the list of children school troubles. The pain brought about by taunts and threats at school appears to have played a role in recent fatal school shootings, which is evidence that this unrelieved stress may explode into tragedy. More than two-thirds of school shooters said they felt persecuted or bullied by other students. The motive for the shootings was often revenge.\textsuperscript{3,8,9}

Bullying can affect the social environment of a school, creating a climate of fear among students, inhibiting their ability to learn, and leading to other antisocial behavior. Through research and evaluation, successful programs to recognize, prevent, and effectively intervene in bullying behavior have been developed and replicated in schools across the country.\textsuperscript{18,19}
The National School Safety Center agrees that bullying is the most enduring and underrated problem in American schools today. Many children in our nation’s schools are robbed of their opportunity to learn because they are bullied and victimized daily. Bullying exacts a terrible toll on children, and the scars can last a lifetime.

**Prevalence Of Bullying**

Bullying, as a form of abuse and sometimes violence among children, is common on school playgrounds, in neighborhoods, and in homes throughout the world. Estimates on the prevalence of bullying vary; however, all findings show bullying to be a pervasive problem. For example, 2014 data from the U.S. Department of Education showed that 32% of students 12 to 18 years of age reported having been bullied during the school year. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the prevalence of bullying among students in grades 6 through 10 (in public schools) is 23.6% (including students identified as both victims and perpetrators). A widely-accepted definition of bullying is that it is a specific type of aggression in which: 1) the behavior is intended to harm or disturb, 2) the behavior occurs repeatedly over time, and 3) there is an imbalance of power, with a more powerful person or group attacking a less powerful one.

Playground observation research has shown that one incident of bullying occurs every seven minutes. Adult intervention occurs in 4 percent of incidents, and peers intervene in 11 percent of incidents. No interventions take place in 85 percent of incidents.

Additional research shows that between one-fourth and one-third of children report being targeted by bullies annually. Notably lacking are statistics on bullying at very young ages. According to recent research, 6 percent of
kindergarten parents, 7 percent of first-grade parents, and 19 percent of second-grade parents reported that they were aware their child was being, or had been, bullied at school or online (and cyberbullying can indeed start this early).\(^1\)

Some studies have found up to 30% of students self-reported moderate or frequent involvement in traditional bullying. The prevalence rates of cyberbullying also tend to vary widely. These variations are most likely due to the type and methodology of the investigation; the emerging, unwieldy nature of cyberbullying, and the potential for under-reporting. Thus, the extent of reported cyberbullying ranges from very low (1–4%) to relatively high (49%–53%). In a sample of 900 students between the ages of 11 and 18, almost 19% of respondents reported being cyberbullied two or more times over the course of the previous 30 days. A recent study indicated the most prevalent forms of cyberbullying reported are text messaging, phone calls, and online instant messaging. Researchers also found that students viewed the impact of picture or video-clip bullying as worse than face-to-face bullying. Moreover, students have cited cyberbullying that included widespread and public audiences as the most harmful forms.\(^{32,33}\)

Studies of traditional forms of bullying have found that boys engage in more direct bullying behaviors (physical, verbal) more often than girls, who are more frequently involved with indirect bullying (social exclusion, spreading rumors). Recent research has shown girls are much more likely than boys to report they had been bullied in various ways, except in-person bullying, which happened to boys and girls in roughly equal proportion. Other studies have shown negligible gender differences in cyberbullying as both victims and perpetrators. However, the types of cyberbullying activities and experiences vary by gender. For example, girls are more likely to be called
names and to have rumors spread about them. Boys, conversely, are more likely to receive threats online. It is well established that both girls and boys who are bullied suffer immediate harm as well as long-term mental distress. Victims may withdraw from friends and activities, experience lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression, anxiety, all of which can lead to academic disengagement and decreased academic performance. In the most tragic of cases, bullying and cyberbullying have been linked with increased suicidal ideation and completion.\textsuperscript{34,35}

As mentioned above, up to 30 per cent of students in American schools are frequently or severely harassed by their peers. Only a slim majority of fourth to twelfth graders (55.2 per cent) reported neither having been picked on nor picking on others. Furthermore, bully-victim cycles are found where individuals are both bullies and victims. Numerous surveys of students have found that face-to-face bullying by peers in school is a frequent experience for many children. One in six children report being bullied at least once a week although that figure is as high as 50 per cent if the duration of the bullying is taken as lasting only one week. In another study, 40 per cent of adolescents reported having been bullied at some time during their schooling. However, the percentage of students who report longer term bullying of six months or more decreases to between 15 per cent and 17 percent.\textsuperscript{36}

**Predicting Bullying And Violent Behavior**

Bullying or being bullied appear to be important indicators that something is wrong. Negative peer influence was found to predict involvement in bullying and victimization. In a recent study, the strongest predictor of both bullying and victimization was delinquency (measured as engaging in vandalism, being a member of a gang, and carrying a weapon onto school property).
In light of the recent shootings, parents and educators have become concerned about whether bullying behavior or being the victim may contribute to more serious acts of aggression. Experts disagree about predicting future violent behavior from earlier bullying tendencies. Aggression is a very stable trait and can be long lasting. There is some correlation between behavior and later violence, but research is uncertain how strong it is. One commonly cited British study reported that individuals with a history of bullying had a fourfold increase in criminal behavior by the age of 24. The British study, however, examined only violent behaviors — such as beating up someone after school, and not the minor offenses such as name-calling.\textsuperscript{20,21}

Bullying is a serious and widespread problem that may lead to school shootings and suicide. In the United States alone, 269 students, teachers and support personnel died in school-related violence between September 1992 and May 2000. As shocking as that statistic is, those deaths represent only a small percentage of thousands of violent acts that occur each year in the nation’s schools. Parenthetically, the Secret Service recently attempted to create a profile of a child who acts out with gun violence, and found that a student’s tendency to become a school shooter cannot be predicted based on involvement in bullying activities. Poor academic performance and psychological disorders were not indicators of potential violent behavior.

This was very disturbing to educators. Educators see these children every day, and they know if certain students have violent tendencies, they want to be able to predict them. The rash of school shootings in recent years has made it even more vital to deal with the problem.
Characteristics of Bullies

When identifying characteristics of bullies, one can never be sure how accurate they are or that we are not stereotyping. No one symptom stands out to label a bully. Educators, parents and community members must observe children for certain traits. In this way, they can establish whether there is a pattern of mild, moderate or severe levels of bullying. This will help them to increase the ability to recognize early warning signs by establishing close, caring and supportive relationships with children and youth. Bullies tend to do one or more of the following:\[^3,27\]

- Harass or intimidate others, both verbally and nonverbally
- Call other children names
- If they are boys, bully more often and use more physical means
- If they are girls, use more subtle means such as whispering about others, spreading rumors and shunning their victims
- Perpetrate bullying in and around school, where normally an audience is available

In most cases, there are early warning signs that children who have bullying tendencies will harm themselves or others — certain behavioral and emotional signs that, when viewed in context, can tell us we have a troubled child. However, early warnings are just that — indicators that a child may need help. Such signs may or may not indicate a serious problem. When a profile was presented to school principals, their response was: *how many characteristics does a child display before I seek action?* Early warning signs provide school staff with the impetus to check out concerns and address the child’s needs; they allow staff to act responsibly by getting help for the child before problems escalate.
It is important to avoid inappropriately labeling or stigmatizing individual students because they appear to fit a specific profile or set of early warning indicators. Teachers and administrators — and other school staff — are not professionally trained to analyze children’s feelings, motives and behaviors. However, they see these children every day, eight hours a day. Effective schools offer special training to identify children who are bullies and may have violent tendencies. Educators, families and communities can increase their ability to recognize early warning signs by establishing close, caring and supportive relationships with children and youth. Unfortunately, however, there is a real danger that early warning signs can be misinterpreted. Nonetheless, certain behaviors and characteristics should alert educators to the possibility that a child is bullying others. These may include the following.\textsuperscript{24,130}

Verbal Abuse (General Name-calling)

- Using accusatory terms such as fag, gay, lesbian, or shrew
- Calling other people names just to be mean, \textit{i.e.}, geek, four-eyes, shrimp, wimp, fruitcake
- Giving other children dirty looks
- Making fun of their religion or nationality by calling them names like Jew Boy, Wop, Spick, Yellow, or Jap
- Telling others they are no good: “You can’t do this, nobody likes you, get away.”
- Calling others crazy
- Abusing their parents or family members: “Your mother is poor as dirt,” “Your brother’s dumb as a door nail,” or “Your whole family is crazy.”
Verbal Abuse (Appearance)

- Making fun of a child’s appearance by using terms like metal face, metal mouth or midget
- Using put-downs like “You’re skinny as a rail,” “Your smile looks like your teeth fell out,” “You’re ugly,” or “You’re fat,” or “You’re too tall.”
- Questioning another child’s care: “Don’t you have anything else to wear?” or “You stink — don’t you take showers?”

Verbal Abuse (Academics)

- Assailing another child’s academic abilities by calling them retarded, teacher’s pet, and the like
- Making another child feel inadequate by saying things like, “You sure got the short end of the stick when they gave out brains,” “Don’t you have any common sense?” “You’re stupid because you can’t read,” or “You’re dumb because you can’t do that math problem.”
- Belittling another’s successes with phrases like, “Don’t you have a life after school?” or “He’s a geek, he knows more than the teacher.”

Verbal Abuse (Athletics)

- “Can’t you run any faster?”
- “You are so weak.”
- “What a wimp!”
- “You kick like your momma.”
- “You can’t do anything right.”
- “What? You got two left feet?”
- “You are so slow you wouldn’t be able to catch the lice.”
- “Our team won—because we’re the best. Your team stinks.”
Spreading Rumors

- Talking behind other people’s backs and starting rumors.
- Telling someone a secret that really is not the truth. Then the next person tells someone else and the entire thought is miscommunicated.
- Passing notes which contain cruel statements about others.
- Telling lies on others that are demeaning and hurtful.

Prejudice

Calling other names like white trash, black trash, or Mexican trash.
Putting down another’s religion.

Physically Hurting

- Beating up on smaller and or younger children
- Punching others until they start to cry
- Pushing and shoving others or elbowing
- Fighting with others in front of the victim’s friends or girlfriend
- Throwing things at or on them — such as milk or food in the cafeteria

Pranks and Mean Games

- Making others drop their books or papers
- Tripping others and laughing when they fall
- Emptying another person’s book bag in front of others
- Hitting others as they are standing in line
- Cutting in line and cutting others off when they are talking
- Picking smaller kids up and making them into flying airplanes
- Stuffing others into a trashcan or dumpster
Destroying Property

- Taking lunch money from others
- Spitting on an individual’s clothing or possessions
- Cutting someone’s hair (this can also be considered assault)
- Destroying others’ property such as throwing paint on someone’s jacket or cutting holes in someone’s gym shorts

Personality Characteristics

- Mean
- Arrogant
- Always putting other kids down — very degrading
- Acting like they’re better than everyone else
- Acting like they can do anything they want because they’re older or bigger than everyone else
- Always having to be the best or the center of attention

Poor Emotional Self-Control

- Having a lot of hatred or built-up frustrations
- Hot tempered — very excitable
- Rude, always in your face, and crowd pleaser
- Always the class clown
- Always going with what their friends say — not what their heart tells them

Physical Characteristics

- Average size or the largest one in the class
- Possibly athletic and think they’re better than the others
- Wearing baggy pants or shorts — cool clothes, especially boys
• Wearing very fashionable hairstyles

Poor Support System

• Treated poorly at home (Bullies often witness the violent behavior of parents or relatives; and children from violent homes are three or four times more likely to become a bully.)
• Parents lack a solid bonding or attachment with the young child
• Poor supervision and neglect of the child’s needs
• Acceptance and modeling of aggressive or bullying behaviors by parents or older siblings

Isolation

• Don’t have a lot of close friends.
• Are envious of fellow classmates
• May not be very popular and use bullying as a way of getting attention

Behavioral Characteristics

• Getting in trouble at school either with the principal or teacher
• Showing a lack of respect for authority or resisting authoritative figures
• Talking back to adults
• Performing poorly in academic areas

Attitudes and Feelings

• Are bossy
• Are nice to others outside of class or when others are not around.
• Interrupt when others are speaking.
• Laugh when something is not funny but is demeaning.
Recognizing The Signs Of Victimization

Repeated bullying causes severe emotional harm and can erode a child’s self-esteem and mental health. Whether bullying is verbal, physical or relational, the long-term effects are equally harmful. Both boys and girls report high levels of emotional distress and loneliness as well as lower self-esteem, anxiety and depression. In some situations the outcome is tragic; the child may take his or her own life.

Here are possible warnings that a child may be bullied and needs support. Of course, these signs could indicate other problems, but any of these warrant looking into further. Every child is different and any child can have an “off” day, so look instead of a pattern of behavior that is not typical for the child, such as:\textsuperscript{79,131}

- Unexplained physical marks, cuts, bruises and scrapes
- Unexplained loss of toys, school supplies, clothing, lunches, or money
- Clothes, toys, books, electronic items are damaged or missing or child reports mysteriously “losing” possessions
- Doesn’t want to go to school or other activities with peers
- Afraid of riding the school bus
- Afraid to be left alone: wants you there at dismissal, suddenly clingy
- Suddenly sullen, withdrawn, evasive; remarks about feeling lonely
- Marked change in typical behavior or personality
- Appears sad, moody, angry, anxious or depressed and that mood lasts with no known cause
- Physical complaints; headaches, stomachaches, frequent visits the school nurse’s office
- Difficulty sleeping, nightmares, cries self to sleep, bed wetting
- Change in eating habits
• Begins bullying siblings or younger kids. (Bullied children can sometimes flip their role and become the bully).
• Waits to get home to use the bathroom. (School and park bathrooms, because they are often not adult-supervised, can be hot spots for bullying).
• Suddenly has fewer friends or doesn’t want to be with the “regular group.”
• Ravenous when he comes home. (Bullies can use extortion stealing a victim’s lunch money or lunch).
• Sudden and significant drop in grades. (Bullying can cause a child to have difficulty focusing and concentrating).
• Blames self for problems; feels “not good enough.”
• Talks about feeling helpless or about suicide; runs away.
• Lost or damaged property
• Feigning illness
• Declining grades
• Change in social activity level
• Mentioning or attempting self-harm

If a student is being bullied at school they may:

• become aggressive and unreasonable
• start to get into fights
• refuse to talk about what is wrong
• have unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches, particularly those appearing after recess or lunch
• have missing or damaged belongings or clothes
• have falling school grades
• be alone often or excluded from friendship groups at school
• show a change in their ability or willingness to speak up in class
• appear insecure or frightened
• be a frequent target for teasing, mimicking or ridicule

Physical Signs of Bullying:
• Has unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
• Comes home with missing or damaged belongings or clothes
• Comes home hungry
• Unexplained injuries

**Risk Factors And Vulnerable Populations**

There is no *single* causation factor that *will* identify a bully; however, experts point to a number of potential contributing factors common among children who display violent behavior.\(^{22-24}\) Family behavior, the child’s personality, the school climate and community climate can contribute to bullying.\(^64\)

**Personality Factors of Bullies**

Some personality characteristics are common among bullies include:

• Children with an impulsive temperament are more inclined to develop into a bully.
• Boys who are physically bigger or stronger than peers of the same age are more likely to become bullies.
• Bullies like to be in charge, dominate, and assert their power. They like to win at all cost.
• Bullies crave attention, so they show off and act tough in order to get it from their peers.
• Bullies lack empathy for their victims and have difficulty feeling compassion.
• Bullies believe the victim provoked the attack and deserves the consequences.
• Bullying is a cry for help.

**Individual Risk Factors**

Individual characteristics may affect whether an individual is a bully or a victim. On the victim side, anyone may be the target of bullying behavior. Some children are picked on for physical reasons such as being overweight or physically small, having a disability, or belonging to a different race or religion. These individual risk factors, are highlighted below.\(^{17,65}\)

**Gender**

While both girls and boys are involved in bullying perpetration and victimization, research has found that boys are involved in bullying at greater rates than girls.

**Psychological Traits**

A victim is often singled out because of his or her psychological traits more than physical traits. A typical victim is likely to be shy, sensitive or perhaps anxious or insecure.

**Physical Traits**

Some children are picked on for physical reasons such as being overweight or physically small, having a disability.

**Grade Level**

Bullying has generally been shown to be most prevalent in middle school; however, research has suggested that bullying peaks during school
transition (i.e., between elementary and middle school and between middle and high school) as youth are negotiating new peer groups and use bullying as a means to achieve social dominance.

**Ethnicity**

Involvement in bullying is a cross-cultural phenomenon and transcends ethnicity. However, research has shown that students who are in the ethnic minority in a school are more likely to be bullied than students who are in the ethnic majority.

**Religious Orientation**

Surprisingly, while the media has reported on the connection between bullying and religious orientation (i.e., Muslims in the United States), a paucity of research on this risk factor for bullying has been conducted. In a study of 243 Hindu, Muslim, and Pakistani children in the U.K., 57% of boys and 43% of girls reported being bullied because of religious or cultural differences. Indeed, most students report being bullied because they are different from the normative group.

**Socioeconomic Status**

Greater disparities between socioeconomic status within a country were associated with higher levels of victimization. Other research has found that low-income status was a risk factor for aggression in male and female students. However, it is likely that the relationship between socioeconomic status and being bullied is contextually driven and varies across communities.
**Poor Social Skills**

Bullying has been called a “social relationship problem.” Indeed, victims, bully-victims, and some bullies display deficits in social skills.

**Superior Social Skills**

However, among a subset of bully perpetrators there are students who are perceived as popular and cool. For these youth, their popularity status affords them high social standing which contributes to their ability to bully and manipulate others.

**Low Academic Achievement**

The relationship between bullying and academic achievement is complicated. Some research has demonstrated that bully victims do poorly in school, while other research has found that the connection between being bullied and low academic achievement is more robust when there is low parental support and school disengagement.

**Sexual Orientation**

Recent media reports have drawn attention to youth who have been bullied due to their sexual orientation. Research conducted with 7,261 students (ages 13 to 21) in 2009 found that 84.6% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 40.1% reported being physically harassed and 18.8% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation. This topic is discussed more at length below.

**Disability Status**

The research on bullying toward and by students with disabilities has yielded mixed results. Some research has found that students on the autism
spectrum are more likely to be victimized than their non-disabled peers. Other research has found that students with behavior disorders are more likely to perpetrate bullying, but the bullying behavior may be retaliatory, in response to being bullied. This topic is discussed more at length below.

Externalizing Behavior

One of the DSM-5 criteria for conduct disorder in an individual is that the individual “often bullies, threatens, or intimidates others.” Bullying is an aggressive behavior and studies have consistently found there to be an association between conduct problems and bullying. Adolescents who are bully-victims have reported the highest levels of conduct-disordered behavior.

Internalizing Symptoms

Research has found that bully-victims, victims, and bullies all experience depressive disorders. In one study, 18% of bully-victims, 13% of bullies, and 10% of victims experienced depression, which is higher than the estimated 8.3% of adolescents who are diagnosed with a depressive disorder. Other research has supported the finding that bully-victims are at the greatest risk for experiencing comorbid internalizing and externalizing problems. In a recent study depression and suicidality were predictors of both bullying and victimization.

Peer Group Risk Factors

Homophily

Homophily is a term captured by the proverb, *birds of a feather flock together* and the homophily hypothesis has been shown to explain how bullying is a peer group phenomenon.
Peer Norms

When members in a peer group are involved in bullying, the other members tend to take part. Additionally, students who are involved in bully perpetration tended to come from larger peer groups.

Delinquency

Although there is no single causation factor that will identify a bully, as discussed above, negative peer influence was found to predict involvement in bullying and victimization.

Alcohol/Drug Use

The relationship between alcohol/drug use and bullying is well-documented. In a study of middle through high school students, researchers found that aggressive victims and aggressive non-victims were more likely than their nonaggressive counterparts to use drugs and alcohol and a study of 43,093 U.S. adults found that bullying was significantly correlated with lifetime alcohol and drug use. Thus, involvement in bullying is related to concurrent alcohol/drug use as well as future alcohol/drug use.

School Risk Factors

In schools, bullying usually occurs in areas with minimal or no adult supervision. It can occur within or around school buildings, though it more often occurs in physical education classes, hallways, bathrooms or classes that require group work and/or after school activities. Bullying in school sometimes consists of a group of students taking advantage of, or isolating, a specific student and outnumbering the student. Targets of bullying in school are often pupils who are considered strange or different by their
peers, making the situation harder for them to deal with. Bullying can also be perpetrated by teachers, or instigated against them. A negative school climate where negative behavior gets most of the attention encourages the formation of cliques and bullying.

The response of adults, or lack of response, plays a key role in creating a school climate that tolerates or discourages bullying. The amount of adult supervision is directly tied to the frequency and severity of bullying in schools.

*School Climate*

The adults in our nation’s schools play a major role in creating a positive or negative school climate. When the school climate is not supportive and unhealthy, then bullying and concomitant problems proliferate. In schools where high levels of bullying exist are schools that have a negative and punitive school climate, the learning environment can be poisoned by bullying and put-downs, raising the fear and anxiety of all students.

*Teacher Attitudes*

When adults in the school system ignore bullying or feel that bullying is just “kids being kids,” then higher levels of bullying will exist. Twenty-five percent of the teachers see nothing wrong with bullying and put-downs. Schools condone this behavior and do nothing to prevent bullying and put-downs. Some teachers threaten, tease or intimidate students to maintain control of their classroom.

*Classroom Characteristics*

Schools are comprised of classrooms and it stands to reason that healthy classroom environments will have less bullying and victimization. There are
four classroom characteristics that have been found to be associated with greater levels of bullying and victimization: 1) negative peer friendships, 2) poor teacher-student relationships, 3) lack of self-control, and 4) poor problem-solving among students.

**Academic Engagement**

When students are challenged and motivated to do well in school, engagement in bullying and victimization is lower. Students involved in bullying and victimization are less academically engaged.

**School Belonging**

Elementary students who bullied others reported lower rates of school belonging than students who were victimized or not involved in bullying. Data from 16,917 middle and high school students showed that feelings of school belonging were associated with less bullying and victimization.

**Lack of Intervention**

Identification and early intervention programs are lacking in many schools. Bullies can be identified as early as pre-school.

**Family Risk Factors**

The home is the most violent place in the United States. Contrary to popular belief, the majority of violence directed at young children in the home comes from the mother and older siblings. There are three primary predictive family factors: 1) a lack of solid bonding or attachment with the young child, 2) poor supervision and neglect of the child’s needs, and 3) acceptance and modeling of aggressive or bullying behaviors by parents or older siblings.
Parental Characteristics

In a synthesis of research on family characteristics of bullies, bully-victims, and victims, psychologist Renae Duncan found that bullies typically come from families with low cohesion, little warmth, absent fathers, high power needs, permit aggressive behavior, physical abuse, poor family functioning, and authoritarian parenting. Bully-victims come from families with physical abuse, domestic violence, hostile mothers, powerless mothers, uninvolved parents, neglect, low warmth, inconsistent discipline, and negative environment. Male victims had mothers who were overprotective, controlling, restrictive, coddling, overinvolved, and warm while their fathers were distant, critical, absent, uncaring, neglectful, and controlling. Female victims had mothers who were hostile, rejecting, withdrawing love, threatening, and controlling, while their fathers were uncaring and controlling.

Family Discord

Being in a family where parents fight and use drugs and alcohol, and who are physically or sexually abusive, is a predictive factor of both bully perpetration and victimization. Adolescents who bully others consistently report family conflict and poor parental monitoring.

Community Risk Factors

There are specific characteristics of communities that may contribute to bullying behavior on the part of children. State and local policies on early identification and intervention can influence a community’s intolerance to such behavior.

Neighborhoods
Characteristics of neighborhoods have a significant effect on bullying behavior. Neighborhoods that are unsafe, violent, and disorganized are breeding grounds for bullying. Living in a safe, connected neighborhood predicted less bullying and victimization.

**Impact on Schools**

A school in poor urban neighborhoods experiences more violence in and around the school. Also, People feel less safe in neighborhoods where there is evidence of crack houses and drug dealing–related violence. This spills over into the neighborhood schools, where there is more drug dealing–related violence. Schools located in neighborhoods with high turnover also have more bullying.

**Societal Risk Factors**

*Media Violence*

Decades of research have examined the question of whether or not exposure to violent video games, television, and film are associated with greater levels of aggression. In fact, meta-analyses of these studies clearly support the fact that media violence is correlated with aggressive and antisocial behavior. A recent study examining the dosage effects of playing mature video games predicted greater risk for bully perpetration among middle school students.

*Intolerance*

Discrimination and prejudice have been documented over time. Prejudices such as homophobia, sexism, classism, racism, set fertile ground for bullying and victimization.
Special Needs And Disabilities

The social hierarchy extant in the system of education, in which bullying and victimization are generally considered a social ritual, a typical part of adolescent experience, or even a student’s rite of passage may prove to be more detrimental for students with disabilities. While evidence suggests that special education status does not directly predict victimization among primary-aged student, preschool-aged victims may be characterized as having preexisting internalizing problems.68,69 These internalizing problems (anxiety, withdrawal, or sadness) may be exacerbated by the early development of group dynamics where students migrate into social clusters based on social, physical, or environmental similarities. The development of these early social clusters may exclude students with disabilities, because evidence suggests that students with disabilities are regarded as unpopular and have fewer close friendships than students without disabilities, thereby placing them at a greater risk for victimization.

Although special education status may not serve as a predictor for victimization at the primary level, as students’ progress through their educational careers, the discrepancy between students with and without disabilities becomes increasingly more evident. Contextually, special education status may not be a direct predictor during the early stages of education because students may not be able to cognitively identify the Differences, the disability may not be noticeable, or the disability may yet to have been identified. Presumably, once these differences have been established within a social context, disability status emerges as a potential predictor for involvement within the bullying dynamic. This broad assumption is grounded in the majority of the extant literature that explicitly
identifies adolescents with disabilities as being victimized significantly more often than their general education peers.\textsuperscript{70}

It is important to recall that when general and special education are viewed as a dichotomy (\textit{i.e.}, presence or absence of a disability), research suggests that students with disabilities are victimized significantly more than students without disabilities. For example, typical estimates suggest that approximately 20\% to 30\% of the student population have experienced bullying either through victimization or perpetration. Conversely, several reports suggest that students with disabilities, without consideration for disability labels, are victimized at least twice as much as their general education peers. More specifically, by making the dichotomous distinction between general and special education, a recent study found in a large-scale sample of middle school students ($n=1009$) that students with disabilities reported significantly higher rates of victimization when compared to their general education peers.\textsuperscript{69}

Additionally, significant differences between students with and without disabilities are not necessarily isolated to victimization. At the present time, a growing number of research reports are beginning to investigate the bullying behaviors of students with disabilities. While approximately 13\% of the American school population exhibits bullying characteristics, several research reports suggest that students with disabilities are identified as bullies twice as often as students without. However, escalated victimization rates among students with disabilities may lead to increased bullying rates, because victimized students may develop aggressive characteristics to combat victimization.\textsuperscript{71}
Unfortunately, bullying and overt aggression may be interpreted in a similar manner even though the terms are distinctly different. For example, a recent study found that students with and without disabilities reported similar rates of bullying behaviors, but students with disabilities reported significantly higher rates of fighting behaviors. Interestingly, students without disabilities who reported being victimized also reported higher levels of bullying behaviors, while students with disabilities who reported being victimized reported higher levels of fighting behaviors. These findings suggest that victimization may lead to more aggressive behaviors in students with disabilities, but not necessarily more bullying behaviors.

The distinction between students with and without disabilities, in reality, is more complex than a simple dichotomous approach. While the term “disability” is used to refer to a large subgroup of students, in actuality, disability status falls upon a continuum. More specifically, the federal government has identified 13 disabilities categories that maintain different eligibility criteria. However, eligibility criteria may differ from state to state, and each disability maintains a range of severity. This range of severity leads to a range of supports and instructional placements for students with disabilities. Therefore, it becomes necessary to explore the discrepancy in bully involvement for students with and without disabilities in terms of class placement (i.e., inclusive classrooms, segregated settings), the severity and overt nature of the disability, and the specific disability characteristics.\textsuperscript{72}

One of the central issues currently facing students with disabilities is access to the general curricula. The 1997 amendments of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) escalated the initiative to increase access for students with disabilities by requiring participation and progress in the general curriculum. More specifically, the Individualized Education Plan
(IEP) must include statements regarding how the disabilities affect participation in the general curriculum, annual measurable goals geared toward increasing the participation in the general curriculum, and program modifications (i.e., services, adaptations, supports) necessary to achieve these goals.

More recently, the revisions of IDEA, now referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), placed a strong emphasis on improving the educational outcomes for students with disabilities through evidence-based practices. These provisions allow school districts to use up to 15% of their federal budget for early intervening services, which include extra academic and behavioral supports in general education classrooms. However, all the provisions to IDEA or IDEIA to date have allowed for the continuum of services for students with disabilities (i.e., inclusion, self-contained classrooms, and segregated schools) as long as the placement is justified by the student’s least restrictive environment. The continuum of services available for students with disabilities may be necessary for some students to be successful either functionally or academically. These additional services, however, provide a fundamental difference between students with and without disabilities, because they often include alternative classroom placements, overt academic accommodations, or increased personnel support.71,73

Traditionally, class placement is broadly defined in terms of inclusive or segregated settings. Inclusive services represent a philosophy of education that is geared toward including all students in the general education classroom with the purposes of providing a meaningful, challenging, and appropriate curriculum for everyone. In contrast, segregated settings (i.e., pullout programs) are provided outside the general education classroom for
purposes of providing specific academic instruction or behavioral supports. While these two approaches are distinctly different, students with disabilities may be subjected to multiple variations of each defined by their least restrictive environment. Based on the ambiguity of the definitions and the general assumption that all students with disabilities require some level of academic or behavioral supports, this chapter will consider inclusive services where the student receives a majority of their core academic instruction in a general education classroom.\textsuperscript{74,75}

In general, students and teachers consistently rank students with disabilities as frequent victims of bullying. When consideration is given to class placement, rates of victimization often vary between students in inclusive settings and students in more restrictive placements. This variation could be attributed to educational practices, classroom structure, or the severity of the disability. For example, one study investigated the victimization rates of 93 students with disabilities in an inclusive setting and their demographically matched peers and determined that the students with disabilities were victimized significantly more than their general education classmates. Similarly, another study explored the victimization rates of students with disabilities in inclusive and restrictive settings and compared them to their general education peers. The researchers reported that students in self-contained settings were victimized significantly more than their peers with disabilities in inclusive settings and their general education counterparts. These findings are supported by current literature that has documented that students in segregated settings are victimized by their peers twice as often as any other subgroup of students.\textsuperscript{20,76,77}

Similar to victimization, class placement could also serve as a predictor of bullying perpetration. Although current research is limited regarding bullying
among students with disabilities in inclusive and restrictive settings, foundational research suggests that perpetration follows the same pattern as victimization. For example, in a large-scale middle school sample, it was determined that students with disabilities in a more restrictive environment engaged in more bullying and fighting behaviors than students with disabilities in inclusive settings and their general education peers. It has also been suggested that students with disabilities who were victimized in inclusive environments tended to exhibit bullying behaviors when moved to a more restrictive environment. Unfortunately, as previously stated, bullying and aggressive behaviors could be interpreted synonymously, and this distinction will be discussed further in the disabilities characteristics section.\(^2,65\)

Although current research suggests that students with disabilities are victims and perpetrators more often than their general education peers, inclusive practices could serve as a preventative factor for the victimization of and perpetration by students with disabilities. The preventative characteristics of inclusive settings could be attributed to positive behavior modeling, acquisition of social skills, increased social and academic development, increased acceptance, reduction in negative stereotypes, and increased participation in classroom activities. However, it should be noted that not all of the existent literature has documented the discrepancy between victimization rates among students in inclusive and restrictive settings, indicating that inclusion does not always maintain these preventative characteristics. For example, if students are not fully integrated into peer groups, inclusion may maintain or exacerbate victimization and perpetration. This lack of integration could hinder the development of a protective peer base and limit students’ opportunities to learn, practice, and validate social skills. Thus, ineffective inclusive practices could be detrimental for students
with disabilities in regards to involvement in bullying as perpetrators and victims.\textsuperscript{3,70}

**Disability Type and Severity**

Given the Least Restrictive Environment mandate (i.e., continuum of placements) for students with disabilities, the discrepancy between perpetration and victimization among students in inclusive or restrictive settings could partially be explained by the disability type and severity. For example, current educational trends and national mandates are placing a strong emphasis on Response to Intervention and Positive Behavior Supports, defined by a multi-tiered framework for providing academic interventions and behavioral accommodations for all students. Based on this framework, as a student’s academic or behavioral needs increase the level of support also increases. Therefore, once a student’s needs exceed pre-set criterion, their supports and classroom placement become more individualized in order to provide the most appropriate curriculum.

Often, the restrictiveness of this placement, which is based on the severity of the student’s disability, causes the student to be removed from the general education classroom for an extended period of time. Based on the aforementioned framework, with the general assumption that students have been placed in their Least Restrictive Environment, an argument can be made that the discrepancy in victimization and perpetration rates among students in inclusive and self-contained settings may more likely be due to the severity of the disability as opposed to the actual classroom placement. Therefore, attention must be paid to the overall severity and overt nature of the disability. For example, a recent study by Dawes investigated the difference between victimization rates of students with observable and unobservable disabilities.\textsuperscript{78,79}
The researchers documented that 50% of the students with observable disabilities reported being victimized at least once during the current term, with 30% victimized on a regular basis. Conversely, 21% of students with unobservable disabilities reported being victimized at least once during the current term, and 14% on a regular basis. Therefore, students with unobservable disabilities reported victimization rates similar to the United States average, where students with observable disabilities reported significantly higher victimization rates.

While empirical research supports other studies, it is important to note that visibility of disabilities also fall upon a continuum. For example, one report noted that students with mild to moderate learning difficulties were two to three times more likely to be victimized, whereas students with physical disabilities and hearing impairments were two to four times more likely to be victimized than their general education peers. Similarly, students with language impairments and psychiatric disorders reported being victimized 20% more, and students with emotional/behavioral disorder reported being victimized 30% more than students without disabilities. Additionally, recent reports suggest that students with Asperger’s syndrome or autistic traits are victimized as much as, if not more than, any other subgroup of students. Interestingly, all of the aforementioned disability labels account for a significant proportion of students who are educated in self-contained settings.16,80

While evidence suggests that the observable nature and severity of a disability predicts escalated victimization, bully perpetration follows a much different pattern. Presumably, the social nature of bullying, which is reinforced by peers and peer groups, dictates the difference between
victimization and perpetration among students with disabilities. For example, students with high-incidence disabilities (i.e., learning disabilities, emotional-behavioral disorders (EBD)) engage in bullying behaviors twice as often as the United States average. Additionally, students with EBD demonstrate the highest level of bully perpetration when compared to any other subgroup of students. However, students with low-incidence disabilities (i.e., severe cognitive disabilities) report much lower rates of perpetration when compared to students with high-incidence disabilities and students without disabilities.

This discrepancy may be attributed to minimal interaction opportunities with chronically aged peer groups, social skills development, and cognitive understanding of bully perpetration. While these factors could be limited for all students with disabilities, students with high incidence disabilities have a higher likelihood of being included within the typical school structure.  

**Disability Characteristics**

Although educational setting and severity of the disability may serve as predictors for victimization and perpetration, it is necessary to explore the disability characteristics that may place students with disabilities at a greater risk for involvement in bullying. A 2014 study found that “being a victim was correlated with emotional problems and interpersonal problems.” More importantly, the concept of bullying is complex, based on the social interplay between perpetration and victimization, and can only be understood in relations among individuals, families, peer groups, schools, communities, and cultures. However, students with disabilities often struggle with these social relationships because they often lack age-appropriate social skills.
Based on the general lack of social skills combined with the social nature of bullying, several hypotheses have been developed to explain the escalated rates of victimization among students with disabilities. According to a 2013 study, victims of bullying may be too passive, exhibit timid responses, misread non-verbal communication, or misinterpret non-threatening cues. This passivity may reinforce the bullying and misinterpretation may incite aggressive responses from peers. Additionally, students with disabilities may be at greater risk for victimization because they lack the appropriate socializing behaviors that help them avoid being victimized. This lack of socializing behaviors may also lead to the victim’s inability to develop close friendships, rejection from classroom peers, and the perception that they are dependent on adult assistance. Conversely, research suggests that when students with disabilities possess age-appropriate social skills with a positive self-concept, exhibit academic independence, maintain quality relationships, and participate in school and classroom activities, they are less likely to be targets of bullying.

With respect to perpetration, Rose and colleagues argue, “bullying perpetration by students with disabilities is often a learned behavior, possibly a reaction to prolonged victimization, or an overall lack of social skills.” While a lack of social skills may cause students with disabilities to have greater difficulty with assertion and self-control, they may also misread social communication, misinterpret social stimuli, or act too aggressively toward the wrong peers. Additionally, lack of social skills may also lead students with disabilities to misinterpret rough and tumble play as a physical attack and thus respond inappropriately with aggressive behavior.14,36,83
Although perpetration may be a learned behavior, below average social skills may also indicate that students with disabilities who engage in bully perpetration could have social information-processing deficits. If bully perpetration is a reaction to prolonged periods of victimization, a distinction must be made between overt aggression (i.e., fighting) and actual bullying behaviors. This distinction must be made because bullying is a social construct and, as stated above, many students with disabilities who are involved in bullying display a general lack of social skills. For example, a recent study determined that students with disabilities who are victimized tend to fight, while students without disabilities who are victimized tend to bully.

Some theorists suggest that students maintain distinct developmental patterns, and many of these patterns hinge on development of social skills. More specifically, they theorize that aggression is more direct during the early stages of development, becoming more indirect with age (i.e., physical, verbal, indirect). For students without disabilities, these developmental patterns are achieved at an age-appropriate rate, allowing them to process social information and effectively engage in social behaviors. Therefore, students without disabilities maintain the social skills necessary to engage in more indirect forms of bullying. However, students with disabilities often have delayed social skills placing them in the earlier stages of the developmental trajectory. Therefore, the behaviors displayed by students with disabilities in response to victimization may be more appropriately defined as overt aggression as opposed to bullying.84-86

**Sexual Minority Youth**

Sexual minority youth, or youth who are perceived as such, are disproportionately subjected to bullying relative to their heterosexual
counterparts. Over the past 20 years, progress has been made through state laws prohibiting bullying and implementation of innovative programs within schools and classrooms to reduce harassment and improve the safety of LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender) youth. However, to accelerate the decline of this problem and its resulting disparities, additional comprehensive efforts must be made. The American Public Health Association (APHA) sets forth a series of recommendations that can be used to advance policies promoting safety and providing sufficient recourse for victims. Most important, these recommendations advocate for comprehensive health education, sex education, and sexual health programs that will address the problem upstream by influencing children’s beliefs and behaviors at a very early age.32

**LGBT Students and Bullying**

Lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender youth (or those perceived as such) are disproportionately subjected to harassment and bullying relative to their heterosexual counterparts. The terms “LGBT” and “sexual minority,” as used here, encompass those whose identities are more accurately described as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender variant, gender neutral, questioning, queer, two-spirit, or intersex. The defined terms are used for brevity and not for exclusionary purposes.

Bullying has a strong impact on students’ wellbeing (regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity), social functioning, and academic achievement. Bullying places young people at increased risk of suicide, depression, high-risk sexual behaviors, and substance use, among other negative health outcomes. Those who engage in bullying also suffer ill effects throughout their lives, such as escalating use of bullying or violence and psychiatric disorders.87
Data specifically focused on the LGBT population, including LGBT youth and those who are perceived as such, are highly limited, with few high-quality data sets and a lack of sufficient sample sizes. A 2015 Institute of Medicine report recommended, as a minimum for further research, that “data on sexual orientation and gender identity ... be collected in federally funded surveys ... which could provide valuable information on the context for health disparities experienced by LGBT people. Similarly, surveys on crime and victimization ... would be aided by the development of standardized measures.” Such gaps in the data have forced those studying disparities among LGBT populations to rely on data sets that are not as current as would be desired or to use combinations of different data sets through statistical manipulation. For example, the biennial Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), does not include any questions on sexual orientation or gender identity, instead encouraging states and cities to add their own questions. This practice has resulted in wide variance in what is asked, how it is asked, and, ultimately, the reliability of the resulting data.\textsuperscript{16,88}

In April 2013, the Journal of Adolescent Health issued an editorial statement recognizing that one of the difficulties in data collection is a lack of understanding by researchers during survey instrument design. Sexual orientation involves constructs of attraction, behavior, and identity. Within each construct, a wide spectrum exists that evolves throughout adolescence and adulthood. The recognition of this complex requirement for thorough data yielded an editorial position according to which providers, clinicians, and researchers must exercise caution in assigning any labels to an adolescent. Large-scale cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that incorporate standardized language to assess sexual orientation and gender
identity are necessary to capture the complexities of these constructs. Such improvements will enhance the value of future survey data so that disparities can best be addressed through directed programs and interventions suited to specific subpopulations.\textsuperscript{78,89}

Beyond the issues noted in that editorial statement, many data sets are small and cross-sectional and rely on self-reported information. Youth may not respond to any nonconforming classification. The language used to ask about sexual orientation or gender identity is inconsistent in contemporary research. Perhaps most importantly, researchers have had difficulty adequately separating the experiences of the different populations within the broad LGBT umbrella because of small sample sizes. Data have shown strong evidence suggesting that youth who have participated in same-sex behavior or who are questioning their sexuality represent a very significant portion of the population most bullied. Yet, it is this very group that is least likely to be addressed through interventions because they are not captured in surveys that do not allow for a spectrum of orientations and identities.\textsuperscript{44,90} LGBT youth frequently deal with bullying in the form of harassment, violence, and attacks.

Studies have shown that LGBT students constantly received bigoted verbal abuse such as name-calling like homo, fag or sissy more than two dozen times per day.\textsuperscript{92-94}

- As many as 93 percent of teenagers hear derogatory words about sexual orientation at least once in a while, with more than half of teens surveyed hearing such words every day at school and in the community.
- Negative name-calling and harassment about sexual orientation can be harmful to all students. Three out of four students who are bullied with
such remarks are not identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (GLBTQ). These derogatory comments are often used broadly to inflict harm in a school setting.

• Seventy-eight percent of gay (or believed to be gay) teens are teased or bullied in their schools and communities, a percentage significantly higher than for heterosexual youth.

• According to findings from the Indicators of School Crime and Safety report, in 2003, 12 percent of students ages twelve to eighteen reported that someone at school had used hate-related words against them, and 36 percent of students saw hate-related graffiti at school during the previous six months. One percent reported that the hate-related words concerned their sexual orientation.

• A national survey of 760 students, ages twelve to seventeen, indicates that the most likely group to be bullied are "kids who are gay or thought to be gay." Most teens (78 percent) said that they disapproved of anti-gay teasing or bullying.

• In a nationally representative sample of nearly 3,500 students ages thirteen to eighteen, one-third reported that students in their school are frequently harassed because of their perceived or actual sexual orientation.

**LGBT Students and Cyberbullying**

LGBT bullying statistics show *they suffer from more cyberbullying*. According to GLSEN and BullyingStatistics.org: 80

• 42 percent of LGBT youth have experienced cyberbullying
• 25 percent more than once
• 35 percent receive online threats
• 58 percent say something bad is said to them or about them online
- Cyber bullying of LGBT youth is three times higher than other student’s experience.
- 33 per cent report sexual harassment online, which is four times higher than the experience of other students.
- 27 percent of LGBT youth do not feel safe online.
- 20 percent report receiving harassing text messages from other students.

Cyberbullying combined with bullying at school lowers self-esteem, which affects grades and mental health.

Fifty percent of all youth do not understand that discriminatory language is offensive, nor do they realize the negative impact on LGBT youth. GLSEN also found that LGBT youth spend more time online than youth in general. LGBT youth make friends online, and use the Internet to gather information about sexuality and health including information about HIV/Aids. LGBT youth are twice as likely to participate in political activities as other youth, making these connections online also. Because LGBT youth spend more time online, they are more likely the targets of cyberbullying.  

### Negative Impact of Bullying on GLBTQ

Bullying and harassment can have negative effects on the development and mental health of GLBTQ students, such as extreme anxiety and depression, relationship problems, low self-esteem, substance abuse, and thoughts of suicide. These students are also at much greater risk of physical assault than other children and youth.

It is well established that LGBT youth experience great disparities with respect to mental health. One early 1990s study, highly regarded for its
methodology and large sample size, showed that 41% of males and 28% of females (under the LGBT umbrella) were either very troubled or extremely troubled by depression (as compared with a national average of 8% among all individuals over 12 years of age). These numbers have been confirmed more recently by the CDC, indicating little progress over 20 years. Suicide, suicidal ideation, and substance use also occur among LGBT youth at rates much higher than those among their heterosexual counterparts.

A 2013 study incorporating pooled data from 14 jurisdictions revealed stark differences between sexual minority students and sexual majority students in these areas. For example, 32.2% of sexual minority students (versus 11.7% of nonminority students) reported suicidal ideation, and 22.8% (versus 6.6% of nonminority students) reported actual suicide attempt. In another study, GLBTQ students are two to three times as likely to commit suicide as heterosexual students and may account for a startling 30 percent of all completed youth suicides. These students are also more likely to experience suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts than other students.

Students who had experienced anti-gay harassment are four times more likely than non-harassed youth to be threatened with or injured by a weapon. Twenty-two percent of GLBTQ students had skipped school in the last month for safety concerns and are three times more likely to drop out of school. GLBTQ students are also at risk for not getting the support they need when they are being bullied due to their perceptions that adults at school may have intolerant attitudes or may not provide confidential help in which to deal with their situation. Four out of five GLBTQ students say they know of no supportive adult at school.
School Programs And Responsibilities

It is the National Education Association’s top goal in the launch of a National Bullying Awareness Campaign to reduce and eventually eradicate bullying in public schools. Convincing research indicates that this goal can best be achieved by fostering the active involvement of teachers, administrators, school support personnel, parents and community. Therefore, the National Education Association (NEA) is enlisting collaboration in this effort by joining with other national and community organizations. Bullying and harassment are community issues that need multifaceted, systematic approaches, which should include all community and national stakeholders.\textsuperscript{75,132}

Adult behavior is crucial to the success of any anti-bullying initiative. All adults in school must become aware of the extent of the bully-victim problems in their own school and community. Adults must become engaged in a focused and sustained effort to change the situation. There exists a number of comprehensive bullying preventive programs which can help schools restructure the existing school environment to reduce opportunities for bullying behavior and its effects. These programs focus on creating a school climate of respect, acceptance and caring. Statewide promotion of proven anti-bullying programs which are supported with staff training and continuing assistance in implementation would be a powerful intervention toward diminishing the effects of bullying behavior. Schools have a huge problem dealing with bullies; parents have an even greater responsibility to be alert and to recognize if their child is a bully or a victim. Teachers and administrators cannot afford to look the other way.\textsuperscript{133,134}

In some cases of schoolyard bullying, authority figures observed the bullying but did nothing to intervene or stop it. Students, as well, may witness bullying but do nothing about it. Under zero tolerance rules, children are
informed of the limits and given the means to report bullying without being targeted as snitches.

A written anti-bullying policy distributed to everyone in the school community can help to send the message that bullying incidents will be taken seriously. To be effective, a policy must be fairly and consistently applied. Mapping a school’s hot spots for bullying incidents can be very helpful. Once problematic locations have been pinpointed through survey responses or a review of disciplinary records, supervision can be concentrated where it is most needed. Providing better supervision is not necessarily costly. Principals can assign teachers and staff members to have supervisory duties in these areas. To achieve permanent changes in how students interact, negative consequences should be provided and positive behavior through modeling, coaching, prompting, praise and other forms of reinforcement are necessary. Schools need to take a proactive role by implementing programs that teach students social skills, conflict resolution, anger management and character education.135,136

Effective school-based bullying prevention involves a social-ecological, whole-school approach that engages students, families, and all school staff in prevention efforts and establishes consistent expectations for positive behavior across all school contexts.

Researchers generally agree that preventing bullying in schools requires the application of a wide range of evidence-based approaches. These approaches include 1) adopting clear anti-bullying policies, 2) implementing a multi-tiered approach that involves students at all levels of risk, 3) providing adequate adult supervision during unstructured time, 4) training teachers to respond to bullying incidents effectively, 5) promoting effective
classroom management, 6) using positive behavior support systems, 7) providing supports to students who have been bullied, 8) collecting data to monitor bullying and increase accountability, 9) involving families and communities, and 10) integrating and sustaining prevention efforts. These evidence-based approaches are discussed in greater detail in the table below.\textsuperscript{34,42,137-139}

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Adopt School Policies That Recognize and Prohibit Social Bullying</strong></th>
<th>Clear anti-bullying policies are essential elements of a successful schoolwide prevention effort. Most school districts have established local policies to prevent or reduce bullying, often in response to expectations in state legislation. However, for schools to appropriately identify and respond to incidents of social bullying, school policies must recognize social bullying as a form of aggression and must contain clear prohibitions against these behaviors. Advocates have also argued that school policies should clearly communicate a lack of tolerance for bullying due to race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.</th>
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| **Train School Personnel to Respond to Social Bullying Incidents Effectively** | School policies should communicate clear roles and expectations for school personnel to respond to incidents of school bullying. However, national surveys suggest that while the majority of teachers and other school personnel are aware of their school bullying policies, less than half had received formal training on policy guidelines.

For school personnel to respond effectively and consistently to social bullying behaviors, they need clear guidance, support, and practice on how to identify social bullying interactions, how to immediately intervene to resolve bullying situations, and how to provide appropriate follow-up and support to bullying-involved youth (National Education Association). Resources on bullying prevention, including strategies for how to support and intervene with students, are available from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE). |
| **Implement Whole-School, Multi-tiered Prevention Approaches** | Application of whole-school strategies based on a three-tiered public health model is a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to the prevention of bullying and other emotional and behavioral problems. This model includes a universal system of support, or a set of activities that affect all students within a defined community or school setting. Layered onto that first tier of support are selected interventions that target a subgroup of students who are at risk—for example, those who are close friends with students who bully other students.

A tiered approach might include lessons on social emotional skill... |
development for all students, thus making it a universal program. In fact, research highlights the importance of providing class time to discuss bullying and the use of lessons to foster social-emotional skills and competencies, effective communication, and strategies for responding to bullying; such strategies can also have a positive impact on academic and other behavioral outcomes.

At the second tier, selective interventions may include social skills training for small groups of children at risk for becoming involved in bullying. Finally, an indicated preventive intervention (third tier) may include more intensive supports and programs for students identified as bullies or victims and their families. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is one such tiered prevention model that is commonly used in schools and has been shown to be effective at reducing bullying and other aggressive behavior problems.

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<tr>
<th>Provide Adequate Adult Supervision During Unstructured Time</th>
<th>Studies have suggested that increases in bullying prevalence in the transition to middle school may be related to reductions in adult supervision. Effective supervision, especially in bullying “hot spots” such as playgrounds, buses, and cafeterias, represents an important component of effective school approaches. Unstructured time is a particularly important context for increased supervision.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use Professional Development and Policy to Promote Effective Classroom Management</td>
<td>Effective classroom management is also critical because well-managed classrooms are rated as having a more favorable climate, being safer and more supportive, and having lower rates of bullying. Such preventive approaches provide clear and consistent expectations for behavior in the classroom, which can also be extended schoolwide. Several classroom management models, such as the Good Behavior Game, have proved to be effective at addressing a wide range of behavioral problems and mental health concerns and improving academic performance in both the short-term and long-term.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce Positive Behavioral Interventions as an Alternative to Punitive Disciplinary Approaches</td>
<td>There is a general consensus in the literature that zero-tolerance policies that result in automatic suspensions are not effective at stemming bullying or addressing its consequences. Ensuring the safety of a targeted student should remain the top priority. However, aside from extreme situations in which the targeted student’s safety cannot be ensured, school personnel are strongly encouraged to implement a continuum of positive behavioral supports as an alternative to exclusionary disciplinary approaches such as suspension.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide Supports to Students Who Have Been Bullied</td>
<td>Children who have been bullied require a systematic assessment of the potential mental health and social effects of the bullying. It is also important to reassure children who have been the...</td>
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targets of bullying that the behavior will not be tolerated by the school, that the bullying behavior is not deserved, and that adults will work to ensure their safety.

Supports should be provided to promote effective coping and to prevent the development of behavioral or mental health concerns. In some instances, a referral to community-based mental health services may be needed; however, school-based clinical staff (*i.e.*, school psychologists) may also be well positioned to provide supports to students who are targets of bullying.

**Use Data to Support Monitoring and Accountability**

Monitoring the prevalence of bullying among students at school and off school grounds is another useful strategy. Collecting data on bullying through anonymous student surveys can inform the supervision and intervention process (Health Resources and Services Administration, n.d.). For example, school climate surveys are a central needs assessment, monitoring, and planning tool for many whole-school interventions. These data can identify potential areas for intensive training for school staff, which is an essential element of successful bullying prevention efforts. Data on bullying and school climate more broadly are also important for monitoring progress toward the goal of reducing bullying.

**Involve Families and Communities**

Families play a critical role in bullying prevention by providing emotional support to promote disclosure of bullying incidents and by fostering coping skills in their children. Parents need training in how to talk with their children about bullying, how to communicate their concerns about bullying to the school, and how to get actively involved in school-based bullying prevention efforts.

There also are important bullying prevention activities that can occur at the community level, such as awareness or social marketing campaigns that encourage all youth and adults—such as doctors, police officers, and storekeepers—to intervene when they see bullying and to become actively involved in school- and community-based prevention activities.

**Integrate and Sustain Prevention Efforts**

It is essential that schools integrate prevention efforts with their other existing programs and supports. Research by Gottfredson and Gottfredson indicated that, on average, schools are using about 14 different strategies or programs to prevent violence and promote a safe learning environment. This can often be overwhelming for school staff to execute well, thereby leading to poor implementation fidelity. Therefore, schools are encouraged to integrate their prevention efforts so that there is a seamless system of support that is coordinated, monitored for high-fidelity implementation, and includes all staff across all school contexts.

Instead of adopting a different program to combat each new
problem that emerges, it is recommended that schools develop a consistent and long-term prevention plan that addresses multiple student concerns through a set of well-integrated programs and services (Health Resources and Services Administration). Such efforts would address multiple competencies and skills in order to prevent bullying and help students cope and respond appropriately when bullying occurs. The three-tiered public health model provides a framework for connecting bullying prevention with other programs to address bullying within the broader set of behavioral and academic concerns.

**Basic Principles for Prevention and Intervention**

Any anti-bullying program will be more successful if educators follow through with the duties listed here:  

- Strive for awareness and warm, positive involvement of adults, teachers, principals, counselors and parents.
- Set and stick to firm limits as to what behavior is unacceptable.
- Consistently apply non-hostile, non-physical consequences for rule violation and unacceptable behavior.
- Encourage adults to act as authorities and positive role models in students’ academic learning and social relationships in school.

**Creating a Whole-School Campaign**

The school, or preferably the school district, can initiate a whole-school campaign. This involves strong commitment and a willingness to work together on the part of everyone involved. It must include all school personnel, other professionals as needed, students and parents. These elements are important to a successful school campaign:

- A code of conduct, effectively communicated to all students.
- Making the school become a telling school. Any child who is bullied by another child or adult, or who sees another child being bullied, is urged to report the incident to designated school personnel.
• Coaching on what to do when being bullied and how to describe the incidents to adults, available to children in the early stages of the implementation of this program.

• Experts from outside the school for staff training. There are a number of good programs that can be brought into the school district to assist in the whole school campaign.

• Social skills instruction, incorporated into classroom activities and school events. Wise selection of materials can increase students’ awareness of when they are being bullied and how to respond.

• Demonstration of alternative behavior shown to students exhibiting bullying behavior.

• A common vocabulary related to bullying as harassment and positive interpersonal relations. When the language used in bullying awareness activities becomes the language of the school, the incidents of bullying will diminish.

A constructive approach must be taken to minimize or avoid labeling children inappropriately and to ensure that conclusions are not drawn prematurely, thereby risking inappropriate responses, interventions or disciplinary actions.

Currently, a tendency exists to blame children for problem behaviors rather than trying to understand what may be underlying their behavior. Environmental and social influences must be considered. What role does the media play? What kind of role modeling by parents, teachers and other adults promotes bullying or healthy social interaction? What is the relationship between bullying and exposure to family violence, which is well described, and frequently occurring risk factor for involvement in violence?

School Level Interventions
School level interventions are designed to improve school climate. The interventions below target the entire school population.\textsuperscript{18}

- Establishing a bullying prevention coordinating committee: This committee will coordinate all aspects of a school’s violence prevention efforts, including anti-bullying.
- Administering an anonymous questionnaire survey: A student questionnaire can determine the nature and extent of bully-victim problems in the school.
- Holding a school conference day: Raise school and community awareness and involvement by creating a long-term anti-bullying plan. In addition to school personnel, selected students and parents should participate.
- Improving supervision and outdoor environment: Provide an adequate number of adults to supervise recess, lunch and breaks in an effort to intervene quickly in student conflicts.
- Involving parents: Conduct meetings with parents and disseminate information to parents at the school to make them aware of the school’s anti-bullying plan of action.

Classroom Level Interventions

Classroom level interventions are designed to improve an individual classroom’s social climate. These interventions target the entire class and include:\textsuperscript{142,143}

- Establishing classroom rules against bullying: Involve students in creating rules against bullying in order to develop a student’s personal responsibility for conforming to those rules.
- Creating positive and negative consequences of behavior: Establish social reinforcement for positive behavior and sanctions for
undesirable behavior. The negative consequence should cause discomfort without being perceived as malicious or unfair. Negative consequences should be appropriate and related to the behavior. Extra assignments, such as homework or copying from a dictionary, should not be used.

- Holding regular classroom meetings: Provide a forum for teachers and students to develop, clarify and evaluate rules for anti-bullying behavior.
- Meeting with parents: Hold general classroom or grade level meetings with parents to improve school family communication and keep parents informed about anti-bullying efforts.

**Individual Level Interventions**

Classroom level interventions are designed to change or improve the behavior of students in general. These interventions target specific students who are involved in bullying, either as bullies or victims. A person in authority should talk to the bully or bullies immediately after they have behaved inappropriately. These talks should include:

- Documenting involvement of participation in bullying
- Sending a clear, strong message that bullying is not acceptable
- Warning the child or children that future behavior will be closely monitored
- Warning that additional negative consequences will be administered if bullying does not stop

Serious talks with the victim and his or her parents should occur after a bullying incident. These talks should include.\(^{144, 145}\)
• Documenting specific bullying incidents that include: How did the bullying start? What happened? How did it end? Who participated and in what way?
• Providing the victim information about the teacher’s plan of action in dealing with the bully or bullies
• Attempting to persuade the victim to immediately report any new bullying episodes or attempts to the teacher

When a bullying situation is discovered, the teacher should contact the parents concerned. Depending on the situation, meetings can be held together with the parents of both the bully and the victim, or to minimize tension, meetings can be held with each family separately. A teacher might want to invite the school psychologist, guidance counselor, principal or assistant principal to attend.

If anti-bullying measures are in place and the problem persists despite these measures, moving the aggressive student can bring about change. If possible, the aggressive student should be moved before considering moving the victim. This solution should not be taken lightly, and all concerned parents and teachers should plan and consult with each other.34

**Dealing with Bullying Incidents**

Each school board or district has its own policies and procedures for dealing with discipline and violent incidents at school. These policies and procedures should be reviewed at the start of each school year in order to see if they are current and relevant. Suggested steps for intervening in bullying situations include:9,29,146
• Intervene immediately; stop the bullying behavior as soon as it is seen or comes into others awareness.

• Talk to the bully and talk to the victim separately. If more than one child is involved in perpetrating the bullying, talk to each perpetrator separately, in quick succession.

• If a peer mediation program is in place, be very careful in referring cases where there is bullying, as the power imbalance will likely make this a very intimidating situation for the victim. The victim’s communication and assertiveness skills may be very low, and will be further eroded by the fear resulting from past intimidation and fear of future retaliation. It may be decided to exclude such cases from peer mediation.

• Consult with the administrator and other teachers, as well as staff, to get a wider reading on the problem and to alert them to the problem. Get advice as to how this situation fits with school policies.

• Expect that the perpetrator will deny his or her actions or responsibilities. Refer to class and school codes in telling the bully why their behavior was unacceptable. Tell them what behavior is expected of them. Inform the bullies of the sanctions which will be imposed and that their parents will be involved.

• Reassure the victim that all possible steps will be taken to prevent a recurrence.

• Inform the bully’s parents of as soon as possible. A quick call to the home the same day is preferable, followed by an appointment at school for parents, if it is deemed necessary. Better results are obtained when parents are involved early in a bullying situation, before behavior patterns are entrenched and extremely serious.

• Involve parents in designing a creative plan of action, whenever possible.
For victims, it is important to involve them in groups and situations where they can make appropriate friends and develop their social skills and confidence. An example of this is a peer support group, new student orientation group, a co-operative learning group in class, or a special activity group or club. Parents can also arrange for these kinds of opportunities outside of the school. For the bullies, specific re-education as to their behavior is important, in addition to sanctions such as removal of privileges, detention, etc. Some schools have had success with in school detention where aggressive students must complete social skill modules designed to reduce aggressive behavior and develop empathy for others.

Follow up in communicating with parents and with other teachers and administrators about the situation until it is clearly resolved. Monitor the behavior of the bully and the safety of the victim on a schoolwide basis. If the bully will not change his or her behavior despite concerted efforts on the part of the school, he or she should be removed from the class or school, or transferred to an alternative program. Consequences for the perpetrators will be of considerable interest to all students and will set the tone for future situations.

**Steps To A Successful School-wide Program**

An approach that involves interventions at the school, class and individual levels must include the following components.24,44

- An initial questionnaire can be distributed to students and adults. The questionnaire helps both adults and students to become aware of the extent of the problem, helps to justify intervention efforts, and serves
as a benchmark to measure the impact of improvements in school climate once other intervention components are in place.

- A parental awareness campaign can be conducted during parent-teacher conference days, through newsletters, and at P.T.A. meetings. The goal is to increase parental awareness of the problem, point out the importance of parental involvement for program success, and encourage parental support of program goals. Questionnaire results are publicized.

- Teachers can work with students at the class level to develop rules against bullying. Many programs engage students in a series of formal role-playing exercises and related assignments that can teach those students directly involved in bullying alternative methods of interaction. These programs can also show other students how they can assist victims and how everyone can work together to create a school climate where bullying is not tolerated.

- Other components of anti-bullying programs include individualized interventions with the bullies and victims, the implementation of cooperative learning activities to reduce social isolation, and increasing adult supervision at key times.

In the school setting, children experience bullying as a frequent challenge. It is important to counter views that bullying is an inevitable part of school life. The wider community, and particularly the adults within it, must take responsibility for making it clear that bullying is an act of violence and will not be tolerated in our society. Schools have an obligation to ensure they are a safe place for all students.

Any meaningful response to bullying must recognize that a whole community approach is necessary. A whole group approach may involve:18,137
• increasing staff knowledge and awareness of bullying issues
• gathering information about the current situation and the school’s strategies
• developing a common understanding of bullying within the school
• consultation with parents, community groups, and students, to develop an anti-bullying program
• development of advice and information pamphlets and dissemination
• intervening in ways that do not model the actions that are unacceptable (punishment, blaming, excluding)

At Central York Middle School in Pennsylvania, all students sign anti-teasing pledges and are taught to appropriately manage their anger. Since this practice was started, the school reports a reduction in fistfights. At Laurel Elementary in Fort Collins, Colorado, students undergo “Be Cool” training in which counselors present them with provocative situations and help them recognize the difference between a “hot response” and a “cool response.” To discourage peers from acting as an audience to bullying behavior, Seeds University Elementary School in Los Angeles has a policy of sending bystanders as well as bullies to after school mediation. Students and their parents sign a contract at the beginning of the school year acknowledging they understand it is unacceptable to ridicule, taunt, or attempt to hurt other students. If an incident occurs, it can be used as an opportunity to educate students about alternative ways of resolving similar situations in the future.  

A number of bullying prevention programs have been developed and tested in elementary and middle school settings over the past 20 years. However, a growing body of research suggests that staff attitudes about bullying, their perceptions of its prevalence, and their self-efficacy beliefs to intervene are
critical markers as to whether intervention efforts will be successful. This research is heavily skewed toward teachers. Thus, a glaring omission in most studies to date is the lack of inclusion of noncertified staff. Understanding the differences in attitudes, perceptions, and self-efficacy beliefs among certified and noncertified staff as they relate to bullying intervention stands to provide an important platform for enhancing training, particularly for noncertified staff, to target key behavioral precursors suggested by both theoretical and empirical evidence to be important to successful anti-bullying efforts.73,133

**The School Nurse as a Resource**

School nurses can have a pivotal role in caring for students who are bullied because they have a rapport with students that is different compared to that of other employees. Because the school nurse is not a disciplinarian, students are more likely to confide in the nurse. As a result, nurses are often on the front lines of bullying, being the first adult the victim and the bully go to for help, which makes nursing the ideal profession to coordinate care for those involved in bullying episodes.19

Bullied adolescents visit the nurse an average of 4.7 times in a school year. School nurses are important healthcare professionals and need to be identified as essential members of the bullying prevention team at each school. According to National Association of School Nurses (NASN), school nurses are leaders in the development of school safety programs to address bullying and other school violence. If schools work together as a team, then outcomes will include fewer incidences of bullying, early identification of bullies and bullied victims, safer schools, and children who enjoy going to school in a safe environment. School nurses are caring and compassionate
health professionals who want to provide a safe environment for students, and are eager to learn about how to stop bullying.\textsuperscript{147,148}

The primary responsibilities associated with the school nurse, in regards to bullying, include:\textsuperscript{19}

- Advocating for Students
- Educating Students and Staff
- Promoting Equal Access for Students
- Avoiding Labels
- Identifying At-Risk Students
- Creating a Safe Space
- Promoting Activities that Reduce Bullying
- Engaging Parents
- Preventing Violence

School nurses who receive additional education about the many facets of bullying will be better prepared to focus on early identification of bullies and bullied victims in their schools. Evidence-based guidelines need to be developed for bullying identification and prevention to improve practice based on research conducted by interprofessional teams of nurse scientists, school nurses, nurse practitioners, as well as psychologists, counselors, social workers, and physicians. When a child enters the health clinic for a sports physical, illness, injury, health promotion or health maintenance appointment, a bullying assessment should be completed and placed in the child’s health record. Supplementary educational resources on bullying prevention and identification need to be incorporated into practice.\textsuperscript{43,56}

The NASN in 2014 reported that school nurses have the ability to work with school personnel and community members to create a safe school
environment where children can learn without fear. School nurses can maintain a secure and orderly learning environment by participating in anti-bullying programs, teaching conflict resolution, and providing an inviting atmosphere where students can express their emotions and feel safe to discuss problems. School nurses are committed to the health and safety of children, and are in an ideal position for identifying children who are being bullied by others. School nurses can play a vital role in developing and implementing bullying prevention initiatives in schools. Utilization of a Bullying Assessment Tool (BAT) may help school nursing staff identify bullied victims early and may prevent long-term emotional or physical harm as a result of bullying. The school nurse can integrate the BAT during routine health promotion assessments.\textsuperscript{149,150}

In elementary schools, a school nurse can play an important role by assessing, planning, and coordinating care for the victims and perpetrators of bullying. According to a recent study on school bullying and prevention activities, the school nurse's office is often a haven for children who have been bullied, as well as by their aggressors. The study found that both groups of children tend to present to the school nurse for somatic complaints, illnesses and injuries more often than other students. As a result, researchers have recommended that health clinicians be involved in screening and identification, as well as initiating an appropriate intervention to the situation. They feel that school nurses can play a significant role in addressing bullying and its effects on children. School nurses can lead prevention efforts, contribute to school-wide or district-wide anti-bullying programs. Judith Vessey, PhD, MBA, RN, professor of nursing at Boston College in Massachusetts, and a national expert on the issue of bullying, expressed the view that \textit{school nurses are really on the front line of being able to deal with this.}
Students regularly designate the school nurse's office as one of the safest spots in the school. Knowing that there is someone to talk to who also has the power to actually do something about the situation can be reassuring for children. The school nurse can be on the lookout for signs of aggressive behavior that provokes negative reactions, repetitive aggressive behavior over time, and a balance of power of some sort. The nurse can monitor absenteeism, and logs of visits to the nurse's office.

When addressing a student, the nurse needs to ask the right questions to find out how the child is really feeling. It is the question behind the question that needs to be asked. A nurse might ask a child who shows up with a playground injury why he or she was running, such as running away from someone or something. School nurses can also teach children ways for dealing with bullies who are bullying them using electronic forms of communication. They can encourage students to delete unwanted emails without reading them, ignore text messages and report problems to parents and teachers.

If a school does not provide specific bully prevention training to the school nurse or if a school does not have the school nurse involved in bully prevention efforts, it is imperative that the nurse leaders and school district become actively involved in helping the school nurse participate in bully prevention strategies. Because of staffing issues and high student-to-nurse ratios, it may be difficult at first to get a program initiated, but it is important to establish a process and get some sort of program in place.

It is crucial for health clinicians and others to get involved and intervene whenever bullying happens. Children who bully often grow up to be adults...
who bully. In addition, children who are bullied may have difficulty reaching their full potential as adults. The following websites have bully-free training for school nurses:

- **For School Nurses/Training & Services/Bully Free:**
  www.bullyfree.com/training-and-services/for-school-nurses
- **Bully Free Program for School Nurses:**
  www.bullyfree.com
- **Early Identification and Intervention Bullying:**
  www.indiana.edu/-safesch/SrsBullying.pdf

School nurses provide a medical home for children during school hours, and are well-qualified to be key team members involved with the development and planning of bullying prevention and intervention programs within the school. For school nurses to be effective in their role against bullying, they should be included as members of the bullying crisis intervention team and have an efficient method of documenting bullying behaviors in the health record. To properly identify bullied victims and bullies, nurses need additional education about the many facets of bullying and reporting procedures.\(^{25,80}\)

The school staff development department should provide educational programs that teach nurses how to recognize potential signs of bullying, different types of bullying, how to identify students at risk for being bullied, and characteristics of bullies. Results of this educational program validate the importance of bully prevention education and training for school nurses so they can be adequately prepared to identify bullied children and bullies, and to assist them. Early identification of bullying is paramount in establishing a safe environment where children can learn without fear and
prevent the long-term mental health outcomes of experiencing bullying in childhood.87,153

**Assessing And Identifying Bullying**

Identifying students at risk for involvement in bullying is difficult because there is no “bully personality.” However, environmental factors and peer group factors can be used to predict involvement in bullying. Students who lack strong support systems, whether from their parents, friends, or teachers, are more likely to engage in bullying. Students who have been bullied are more likely to engage in bullying. Additionally, students who are transitioning into a new social environment often use bullying as a means of moving up the social ladder. Schools should therefore pay particular attention to students during transition years, such as freshmen coming into high school.

Students who are involved in peer groups that have positive attitudes towards bullying may also be more likely to engage in bullying in order to better affiliate with their peers. In most cases, in order to recommend a student for interventions, schools often require documentation that prevention efforts (*i.e.*, consistent behavioral expectations, universal prevention programs) were tried first, but not effective for the student. Additionally, administering a comprehensive bully survey and holding staff and student focus groups that highlight the needs of youth involved in bullying can help identify students involved in bullying.68

Assessments, such as surveys, can help schools determine the frequency and locations of bullying behavior. They can also gauge the effectiveness of
current prevention and intervention efforts. Knowing what’s going on can help school staff select appropriate prevention and response strategies. Assessments involve asking school or community members, including students, about their experiences and thoughts related to bullying. An assessment is planned, purposeful, and uses research tools to assess the following aspects.¹⁵⁴

- What’s going on:
  Adults underestimate the rates of bullying because kids rarely report it and it often happens when adults aren’t around. Assessing bullying through anonymous surveys can provide a clear picture of what is going on.

- Target efforts:
  Understanding trends and types of bullying in your school can help you plan bullying prevention and intervention efforts.

- Measured results:
  The only way to know if your prevention and intervention efforts are working is to measure them over time.

An assessment can explore specific bullying topics, such as:

- Frequency and types
- Adult and peer response
- Locations, including “hot spots”
- Staff perceptions and attitudes about bullying
- Aspects of the school or community that may support or help stop it
- Student perception of safety
- School climate

Schools may choose to use school-wide surveys to assess bullying. There are several steps involved, as shown below.⁹¹,¹²⁸,¹⁴⁴,¹⁵⁵
• Choose a survey:
  There are many free, reliable, and validated assessment tools available. Choose a set of measures that covers the questions you want answered, is age appropriate, and can be answered in a reasonable amount of time.

• Obtain parental consent as required:
  Some allow passive consent; others require active consent. According to federal guidelines, at a minimum, each year the Local Education Agency (LEA), must notify parents about the survey and when it will be conducted. Parents have the right to opt their child out of the survey. Parents also have the right to inspect and review the surveys before they are given.

• Administer the survey:
  School staff are best equipped to judge how to carry out a survey at school, but the following tips can help.
    - Administer surveys early in the school year. Schedules surveys after students are settled in a routine but there is still time to use the findings in the school year’s prevention efforts.
    - Assess at least once every school year. Some schools like to survey students at the start and end of the school year to track progress and plan activities for the following year.
    - Decide which students will be surveyed to ensure statistically significant results. Schools may choose school-wide surveys or surveys of specific grades.
    - Plan to administer the survey when all students can take it at once. This will reduce the chance that they will discuss it and affect each other’s answers.
• Protect student privacy:
  Many surveys are subject to the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Assure students that their responses will be kept confidential and that their answers can’t be tracked back to them.

• Analyze and distribute findings:
  Make sure you continue to protect students’ privacy by ensuring that no personally identifiable information is accessible. Consider how the survey results will be shared with teachers, parents, and students.

• Prepare to respond to the results of the survey:
  Have a clear plan for prevention and intervention in place or in development.

Sample Assessment

Gatehouse Bullying Scale:

1a. Has anyone TEASED YOU or CALLED YOU NAMES recently?
   0 No (skip to 2a)
   1 YES

1b. How often?
   1 Most days
   2 About once a week
   3 Less than once a week

1c. How upsetting was it when you were teased?
   1 Not at all
   2 A bit
   3 I was quite upset

2a. Has anyone spread RUMOURS ABOUT YOU recently?
   0 No (skip to 3a)
   1 YES

2b. How often?
   1 Most days
   2 About once a week
   3 Less than once a week

2c. How upsetting were the rumors?
   1 Not at all
   2 A bit
   3 I was quite upset
3a. Have you been DELIBERATELY LEFT OUT OF THINGS recently?
0 No (skip to 3a)
1 YES

3b. How often?
1 Most days
2 About once a week
3 Less than once a week

3c. How upsetting was it being left out of things?
1 Not at all
2 A bit
3 I was quite upset

4a. Have you been THREATENED PHYSICALLY OR ACTUALLY HURT by another student recently?
0 No (skip to 3a)
1 YES

4b. How often?
1 Most days
2 About once a week
3 Less than once a week

4c. How upsetting was it being threatened or hurt?
1 Not at all
2 A bit
3 I was quite upset

Scoring Instructions:
A score for peer victimization is computed for each of the four types of bullying (teasing, rumors, deliberate exclusion/social isolation, and physical threats/violence). This scale was devised with the objective of rating the severity of peer victimization to which an individual was subjected.

Being bullied frequently and being upset by bullying were considered to have equal value; the presence of both factors was considered to be worse than either factor on its own. Thus, the following scale is used to score each of the four types of bullying:

0 = Not bullied
1 = Bullied but not frequently and not upset
2 = Bullied, either frequently or upset, but not both
3 = Bullied frequently and upset

Item scores can be used individually or a scale score can be computed by taking the mean item score across the four types of bullying.
While the kids involved have the entire story, the adults may only see the immediate gateway behaviors, with no real information about whether the underlying problem is bullying, fighting, or some other issue. Not being able to tell if a problem is bullying, however, does not mean one cannot respond effectively, however. It is necessary to explore how to assess an incident to determine if a situation is bullying.\textsuperscript{128,156,157}

\textit{Assessing Intentional Cruelty}

Sometimes it is obvious that a student is being \textit{intentionally} cruel but often it is not. It can be difficult to judge an internal process like intention. However, there are clues that can help detect indications of bullying, such as power imbalance and repetition.

\textit{Assessing Power Imbalance}

In research studies, subjects who reported that they were able to exploit bullying successfully for their own social gain rated themselves as significantly more popular than other children. Because most children’s power today is derived from high social status (rather than from physical size), consider any known differences in social power (popularity and social status) between the children involved. Perhaps the alleged aggressor is much more popular than the target; or, the alleged target may belong to a socially vulnerable group.

Popular kids and groups vary from school to school, but students often targeted for bullying are those with special needs and those who identify (or who are identified, accurately or not) as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning (LGBTQ). They report being bullied (and violently attacked, including sexually attacked) at very high rates.
The 2015 report of the CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, which analyzed the results of its Youth Risk Behavior Survey of representative samples of U.S. high school students, found that 34 percent of these vulnerable students reported being the targets of bullies on school property, 23 percent experienced sexual dating violence, and 42.8 percent had contemplated suicide. A study published in the journal of the American Sociological Association found that LGBTQ students are four times more likely to be targets of cyberbullying. This situation could be termed a crisis, and one in which the imbalance of power is playing a pivotal role.

Assessing Repetition

It is important to distinguish, when possible, between problems that are ongoing but have been detected only for the first time, and problems that are genuinely one-time incidents. Just because a child reports a bullying incident for the first time does not mean it is the first time it has happened. The bottom line is, the child may know things that have not been disclosed to adults and the victim may be the only source likely or able to divulge that information. The only way to discover a child’s hidden exposure to bullying is to develop enough of a connection with the student that he or she is likely to disclose their entire history.

A child may be experiencing repeated episodes of cruelty but he or she may not be willing to divulge such information to adults. The most responsible course of action is probably locating an adult to whom the child can comfortably confide. Very recent research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has in fact confirmed what many educators have observed anecdotally; namely, that lesbian and gay students experience higher levels of bullying than their peers.
Intervention And Prevention Programs

Educational settings are struggling to determine and implement suitable anti-bullying approaches. A myriad of anti-bullying programs is available — many claiming significant reductions in bullying — and schools are unsure which ones work best for them. Further, there is a fundamental misunderstanding of the potency of individual programs related to bullying. Comprehensive anti-bullying approaches require schools to mobilize substantial resources, forcing administrators to balance this need against ever-increasing budget constraints. Without a deep understanding of the pervasive effect of harassment, intimidation, and bullying and its connection to overall school culture and climate, schools can find it tempting to opt for contained and less costly approaches. Clear guidance is needed regarding the parameters of truly effective intervention.\textsuperscript{135}

Effective programs employ a whole-school approach, ensuring that all school community members are on board with preventing harassment, intimidation, and bullying. Students and staff are provided with basic information on the nature and definition of bullying as well as ways to effectively respond. Whole-school approaches involve:\textsuperscript{133}

- Infusing this information in schools’ curricula
- Adopting clear and consistent policies with regard to anti-bullying practices
- Targeting the entire student population for prevention
- Systematically involving youth directly in program planning and evaluation

A positive school climate where a school’s norms, values, and expectations result in all children feeling safe, respected, and valued has been found to be
a strong determinant of effective anti-bullying approaches. Such a climate has been associated with lowered aggression and violence and, more specifically, reductions in bullying.

A central component of a positive school climate is an emphasis on nurturing not only students’ academic and intellectual growth but also their social, emotional, and character development. An emphasis on social, emotional, and character development concomitant with a positive school climate necessarily translates to a commitment to an ethos of caring in the school community. Importantly, these provide the foundation for a norm of upstanding behavior where children engage in strategies to stop or reduce bullying such as reporting such incidences to an adult in the school. Thus, students should mirror the positive values of the school and be prepared to act when they observe injustices.

To reinforce upstanding behaviors, schools must stipulate explicit expectations as part of any code the school adopts. This necessarily means that passively watching or supporting bullying when they see it is clearly against the norm. In addition to the school environment, generally successful programs emphasize the importance of family and community. Strategies such as sending home an anti-bullying newsletter, hosting evening meetings with parents, and media campaigns have all been effective at raising awareness about bullying. Accordingly effective bullying interventions are sensitive to the broader influences in the lives of youth.¹⁴²,¹⁵⁸,¹⁵⁹

**Immediate Response Plan**

Schools should have an immediate response plan in place to address issues of bullying. When a child is bullied (or suspected of being bullied), the school
must act quickly to assess the situation and provide any immediate assistance to the child. In most instances, the school nurse will collaborate with other school personnel and administrators to provide immediate assistance to a bullied student.

The immediate response protocol involves assessing the situation and providing conflict management and injury care for the child. Although all bullying situations will differ and will not require the same response strategies, the following is a list of the most common immediate response strategies and tasks:37

- Coordinate Emergency Response
- Provide Care for Injured
- De-escalate Conflict
- Identify Students Who Require Counseling
- Participate in Crisis Intervention

When bullying does occur, schools must have transparent, firm, and consistent policies in place to restore the bullied child’s confidence that school is a safe place and to address the broader issue of school climate. What follows are specific recommendations for effectively intervening when harassment, intimidation, and bullying occur with the caveat that strategies implemented in the absence of programing focused on school climate are unlikely to influence ongoing harassment, intimidation, and bullying. A school’s policies and response to harassment, intimidation, and bullying is a direct expression of the school’s climate, culture, and values.160

Effective anti-bullying programs employ clear policies that are proactively and frequently communicated to all in appropriate ways, with explicit guidance on reporting and investigating instances of possible bullying,
disciplinary procedures, and when police should be called. Also, it is important for children who bully to receive consequences for their behavior.

Graduated and clearly articulated sanctions that reasonably escalate with the severity of bullying behaviors have proven most effective. The consequence should be accompanied by encouragement for reflective activity, including dialogue with staff about the behavior and writing about the behavior. The *Method of Shared Concern*, which avoids shaming or blaming the child who bullies while still emphasizing the child’s responsibility to change their behavior, is an example of such an approach that has proven effective. This contrasts with ineffective approaches that punish the child who bullies in arbitrary ways without promoting self-reflection. Additionally, as stated above, there is no evidence that zero-tolerance approaches are effective.\(^{70,161}\)

In addition to these specific approaches, it is important to focus on developing a core group of individuals with expertise derived from the school community, which is called a Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Action Team (HIBAT). Team members generally consist of administrators, school counselors or psychologists, teachers, and child study staff called in as needed. HIBATs should strive for continuity and build expertise by operating as professional learning communities and socializing new members. The HIBAT should:\(^{162}\)

- Coordinate resources and services to the bullying and the bullied child
- Discuss the occurrence with an eye toward systemic problems
- Consider the occurrence in light of professional development requirements and any changes that may be needed
- Include a summary report of the occurrences, including actions taken and recommendations to the principal
• Ensure that an incident report has been made in compliance with their state’s reporting system

Long-Term and Programmatic Strategies

Any effort to respond to harassment, intimidation, and bullying should be considered long-term and planned accordingly. Here, the key elements of sustained implementation success include:163
  • Dedication to teacher and staff professional development regarding harassment, intimidation, and bullying
  • A plan for the program rollout, i.e., different strategies for children in different grades
  • A data-driven evaluation of the program over time

Findings suggest that when teachers are trained in how to effectively handle bullying incidents and are aware of school policies, victimization rates are lower. Trained teachers report greater confidence in their ability to adequately address harassment, intimidation, and bullying and are thus more likely to act when bullying occurs in their presence. Preventing harassment, intimidation, and bullying must be successfully addressed throughout the school. The lunchroom, hallways, bus, recess, school entry and dismissal, gym class and locker rooms, school sporting events and musical performances and assemblies, and even cyberspace all must be as well managed as classrooms because bullying can migrate to those unmonitored areas.164

Overall, the elements of an implementation plan should include:165
  • A clear definition of harassment, intimidation, and bullying
• Developmentally appropriate and sequenced classroom activities that promote student engagement and self-reflection on harassment, intimidation, and bullying, including cyberbullying
• A well-outlined protocol for reacting to harassment, intimidation, and bullying
• Ongoing assessment of school climate and bullying occurrences, including analyzing incidents for indications of areas of school culture needing strengthening or of vulnerable children and populations needing increased support
• In-person or online professional and paraprofessional staff training (bus drivers, lunch room aides, etc.)
• Leadership strongly committed to providing resources for staff professional development for plan implementation

Programs that are designed to reduce bullying are most effective when bullying is addressed from both a prevention and intervention standpoint. In other words, bullying programs produce the best results when schools incorporate three tiers of increasingly more intensive intervention.

Universal interventions are designed to impact all students, while targeted or secondary interventions are designed to meet the needs of students who demonstrate or are at-risk for demonstrating bullying behaviors. The purpose of such strategy is to describe interventions for students who are at risk or who have already been identified as engaging in bullying behavior. Strategies should address bullying prevention and intervention more generally and focus more particularly on preventing bullying.5

School nurses play a primary role in establishing and implementing long-term programs and strategies to address bullying. They must work alongside
school administrators and other personnel to create comprehensive programs that focus on education and prevention. There are a number of strategies and programs that schools can incorporate to address these problems, which are discussed further in the following sections.

**Building a Schoolwide Foundation**

Development should involve the entire school community, including students and their parents. It should reinforce the values of empathy, caring, respect, fairness, and personal responsibility, and must clearly define unacceptable behavior, expected behavior and values, and consequences for violations.

*Code of Conduct*

A code of conduct should apply to adults and students, reflect age-appropriate language, and be prominently placed throughout the school.

*Consistently Enforce Consequences for Bullying*

Consequences should be understood by all students and should combine sanctions with supportive interventions that build self-management skills and alternate positive behaviors.

*Students' Sense of Responsibility for School Community*

Personal responsibility comes with a sense of ownership. Students should help develop the code of conduct, determine where and how it is displayed, contribute to schoolwide activities, and participate in peer mediation and conflict resolution.
Distinguish Between "Ratting" and "Reporting"

Most adolescents are reluctant to turn in their classmates. They usually do not want to get their peers in trouble, particularly if the bully is popular or known as a “rat”. Ensure confidentiality and establish a nonthreatening way for students to report bullying of themselves or classmates. Identify which staff members handle bullying issues, but make it clear that students can contact any trusted adult.

Train All School Personnel

Some teachers will need specific training on bullying prevention curriculum, but all school personnel (including bus drivers, coaches, and after-school program supervisors) need to know how to identify and respond to bullying as well as how to model and reinforce positive problem solving. They should know symptoms of victimization, how to reach out to victims, and the protocol for contacting the appropriate staff members or a student's parents.

Ensure Cultural Competence

To be effective, communications, curricula, and interventions must reflect the cultural needs of students and parents. Students who are not fluent in English may have difficulty communicating a problem and may be reluctant to do so. Written information should be translated into relevant languages.

Increase Adult Supervision

Adults should be visible and vigilant in such common areas as hallways, stairwells, cafeterias, and locker rooms. In particular, school employees should be aware of students' behavior on buses and on the way to and from school for students who walk or ride bikes.
Conduct Schoolwide Bullying Prevention Activities

Bullying prevention activities brings the community together, generates energy around the program, and conveys the consistent message that bullying is wrong and that everyone has a role in prevention. Consider an all-school assembly, a communications campaign, or a creative arts contest highlighting caring community values.

Early Interventions

Teach Specific Skills and Values in the Classroom

Target those areas identified as universally important to students, (i.e., empathy, impulse control, or taking a stand). Address skill acquisition and application and their roles in academic and social success, emotional awareness, seeing others' perspectives, alternative thinking strategies, and problem solving. Instructional strategies include adult role modeling, discussion, and practice.

Integrate Skills Into Other Curricula Whenever Possible

Teach conflict resolution and peer mediation. Teaching students how to solve their own problems can redirect potentially negative or passive behaviors to positive problem-solving and leadership skills. This also gives students a greater stake in promoting a positive school environment.

Hold Parent Meetings

Parent involvement is crucial. Group discussions convey what students are learning, teach parents how to reinforce those skills at home, and support the parents' role in fostering a caring school community. Meetings at the classroom level also help build connections among parents and teachers.
**Individual Interventions**¹⁵³,¹⁶⁶

*Protocol to Intervene/Investigate a Bullying Incident*

Adults should separate the victim and the bully. Meet with the victim first, then the bully, then bystanders. Name the behavior, reiterate the rules, and review expected behaviors. Determine if there is a pattern of bullying, the appropriate consequences, and the need for further interventions for the bully or the victim. Increase observation of the students involved and contact their parents, as necessary.

*Determine the Impetus for the Behavior*

Interventions should address underlying causes. Bullies and victims may need additional skills development or reinforcement on how to apply the skills they have. It may be necessary to focus on the subculture of a group of students who bully as a unit. Students may also be exhibiting signs of more serious problems, such as depression, an anxiety disorder, or being victimized at home.

*Reinforce Alternative Behaviors*

Ask students to address the thoughts and circumstances that preceded a bullying incident. Guide them in determining more appropriate strategies to express their feelings or resolve conflict. For bullies, this may mean identifying their thinking errors and reinforcing calming and impulse-control strategies.

Victims may need help with strategies to avoid provoking a bully, reading social cues, or walking away. Bystanders may need to learn how to reach out to vulnerable peers and to diffuse bullying when they see it.
Parenting Style and Family Issues

Parenting style and family issues often contribute to bully and victim behaviors. Sustained student and family counseling may be necessary to help parents learn new approaches to discipline, communication, and positive interactions with their child.

Address Off-campus Bullying

The code of conduct should include off-campus student behavior, particularly if it involves other students from the school. Students and parents should be encouraged to report such bullying. A growing concern in this arena is cyberbullying, which involves a student harassing another student via e-mail or student-run webpages. This is particularly harmful because students may do and say things anonymously that they would not do otherwise, the messages can be transmitted to scores of people instantaneously, and the messages can be very difficult to eliminate. Schools can help to contact the relevant authorities (i.e., Internet service providers) to track down the source and stop the abuse.

Schools have a responsibility to safeguard the physical and psychological safety of students, and the evidence is unmistakable that harassment, intimidation, and bullying compromise the victim’s wellbeing. Its adverse influences are pervasive. Harmful effects can persist into adulthood for the individuals involved — even bystanders. For that reason, an overall approach to harassment, intimidation, and bullying that strives to build schools as positive, respectful, and supportive learning communities is strongly supported. Such communities will have strong norms of inclusiveness and dedication to providing all youth with a sense of belonging and purpose in being in school, and the skills and competencies to promote social-emotional and character development and positive mental health.
The importance of harassment, intimidation, and bullying as an impediment to education, mental health, and physical health requires advocacy for policy reform. Because schools require technical assistance to aid in appropriate program selection, implementation, and assessment of program effectiveness, state and local departments of education should develop and use expert advisory groups consisting of researchers, university professors, and other professionals with the capability to provide support. Such groups would help guide schools in selecting and implementing programs that best fit a school’s needs, as well as establishing data collection systems to assess effectiveness.\textsuperscript{47,100}

**Targeted Interventions**

Targeted interventions are usually delivered in a classroom or small group format (\textit{i.e.}, counseling group, psychoeducational group) and usually include role-play, discussion, and example scenarios. Small group, targeted interventions for bullies and victims are the most prevalent type of bullying intervention implemented in a school setting due to the cost-effectiveness of these interventions over school-wide approaches. These small group interventions for students are sometimes coupled with parent-training and teacher-training groups that address how to implement the bullying interventions with fidelity. Small group interventions may also be appropriate for bullies and victims with more chronic mental health problems that are at-risk for developing clinical levels of depression, anxiety, or anger issues.

In many instances, when bullying intervention programs are implemented in a stand-alone fashion, teachers view them as another task to complete, feel that they are not adequately trained, and are not motivated to implement the curriculum with fidelity if they are not certain of the effectiveness. No
one program will be effective without supplemental school-wide efforts that seek to adequately train staff in not only specific programming, but also how to improve the overall school climate.\textsuperscript{9,167}

Students who qualify for supplemental bullying interventions may be those who have been involved in bullying, and the involvement does not decrease following primary intervention. A common supplemental intervention consists of small group interventions designed to build social skills, empathy, and conflict resolution strategies, among others. These interventions are often referred to as psychoeducational group interventions and provide students with awareness, an open forum to ask questions, and guidance for generalization of these techniques to other settings.

Small group interventions do not generally focus on rehabilitation, which would be more appropriate for an individualized intervention. Another intervention at this level may involve a group role-playing with bullies and/or victims on how to problem-solve peer conflicts. These small groups are often led by teachers, administrators, and counselors and usually include specific lesson plans and objectives. Many small group interventions for bullying also contain parental involvement components.\textsuperscript{168,169}

Several bullying intervention programs have been developed that include services for students who do not respond to prevention efforts, including Bully Busters, Bully-proofing Your School, The Peaceful Schools Project, and Steps to Respect. When choosing an intervention, schools should consider the unique components and targeted skills of each instead of adopting a “one size fits all” approach. Readers are directed to the National Registry of Programs and Practices, Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, and the Model Programs Guide resources at the end of this brief as aids when
choosing evidence-based interventions. Although many programs have now been deemed “evidence-based,” these programs still vary in effectiveness and are designed for specific populations (i.e., ethnic groups, age, type of bullying). Additionally, none of these programs are likely to be effective without careful implementation and without being monitored to ensure that they are being implemented as designed.\textsuperscript{9,34,47}

**Individual Interventions in Chronic or Extreme Bullying Cases**

Although school-wide bullying prevention programming is necessary and beneficial, school-wide approaches may not be effective for the most extreme or chronic cases in which children are experiencing bullying, victimization, or both. Before targeting family, peer, and community interventions, it may be most appropriate to start with interventions that address individual level variables that are linked with bullying behaviors.

Individual counseling may be able to target mental health problems experienced by individuals experiencing long-term bullying involvement. During individual counseling, it is imperative to stress the goals of the intervention, expectations for therapy, and consequences for deviations from expectations with the student. It is recommended that students should be taught emotional regulation skills, including how to identify maladaptive emotions, negative thoughts, and how they connect to bullying behaviors.\textsuperscript{85}

Therapists often encourage students to track the situations they experience and the accompanying thoughts and emotions through a diary or worksheet with the end goal being to challenge and reframe maladaptive thoughts or cognitive distortions (i.e., “aggression is an effective way to handle conflict”) that contribute to bullying involvement. Thought records can also aid in
decreasing hostile attribution biases (i.e., tendencies to misinterpret social cues as overly aggressive) or blaming others for bullying involvement.

Anger management may also be addressed in an individual therapeutic or counseling setting by helping students identify anger triggers and problem solving. In addition, it may be beneficial for students to engage in empathy training that emphasizes how bullying may affect victims (i.e., mental health problems, physical health problems, school refusal, family issues). The Target Bullying Intervention Program is a three-hour, individual cognitive-behavioral intervention that aims to reduce bullying (as measured by office disciplinary referrals and suspensions) that takes advantage of many of these strategies.134,170

**Peer Mentoring And Mediation**

The potential for using the peer group to solve bullying conflicts is enormous. Although teachers and parents may have the best intentions in the world, the power of the peer group, from an early age but especially from adolescence onwards, is very great. This power is often a cause of bullying, but it can also be used to find solutions.

Peer mentoring and peer mediation are action-based strategies designed specifically to address the damage bullying can do, to individuals and within peer and school cultures, and to solve conflicts. They can be called upon when conflict is observed or reported; or by those in dispute who can ask for help to deal with their conflict. The intention is to defuse a situation as quickly and thoroughly as possible, and to address the aftershocks of bullying. Encouraging peer support strategies is like running an anti-virus program through a computer: it makes the system healthier and disinfects the problem areas. It also enhances relationships within the school, which
are, after all, the foundation of its success as a social as well as educative institution.91,171

**Peer Mentoring**

Peer mentoring is a practical and effective anti-bullying strategy. It involves slightly older, more experienced students using their skills and energy to help stop bullying by giving support to younger peers. It can be utilized to deal with issues of bullying for middle and secondary school pupils, and specifically to 1) assist victims to recover from and avoid bullying, 2) help perpetrators of bullying to find more useful ways of acting, 3) support bystanders to develop the skills and confidence to resist and oppose bullying.172

**Peer Mentoring and Recovering from Bullying**

When someone is in an accident and they suffer bodily injuries, time is required for that person to fully recover from their injuries. When someone has been bullied, they may not be physically hurt but they will have emotional and psychological damage (which may be hidden and hard to detect). Those who have been traumatized by bullying will need time to recover from their emotional and psychological damage in the same way a person who has been in an accident needs time to recover from physical injuries.

When a person is being bullied, the first step is to halt it. The next step is to assess the damage and create an action plan. These are the jobs of the school counsellor, anti-bullying team or psychologist. Depending on the duration and severity of the bullying and the personality of the victim, the effects will vary. After an initial diagnosis and counselling (and the application of an anti-bullying strategy), the counsellor may suggest that a
mentoring relationship be arranged to provide support and develop strategies to assist the recovery/change process.

A similar process can be set up for those who bully or who are bystanders. Peer mentoring normally includes the following four components: 

1. Befriending:
   
   Being a friend, providing companionship, sharing ideas and activities, perhaps meeting outside of school.

2. Coaching:
   
   Sometimes those who have been bullied benefit from coaching about how school and student cultures work. This can be done by discussion, focusing on issues such as acceptance, expectations, fairness, friendships and rules (both written and unwritten).

3. Problem-solving:
   
   Whereas it is not the responsibility of the person being bullied to stop the bullying, it is important for them to learn how to avoid unsafe places and situations, and who they can go to if bullying recurs.

4. Providing ongoing support:
   
   The mentor provides a safe point of contact and a sense of constancy and reliability. The mentor can give practical help with organizational needs and academic problems.

**Establishing a Peer Mentoring Program**

*Stage 1: Initial Preparations*

Step 1 - Creating a program:

In order for the program to be accepted and supported, all staff at the school must be given information about it and the opportunity to be involved
in its inception and running. The school psychologist is in charge, and teachers with skills and enthusiasm are recruited. A time line, specific structure and processes should be developed.

Step 2 - Making students and staff aware:

The peer mentoring program should be put forward at the beginning of the year and explained to students at school assembly; teachers should discuss the mentoring program in class. The peer mentoring program is a strategy developed to provide assistance to victims, bullies and bystanders and to help tackle the universal problem of bullying in schools. Information about the extent of bullying should be disseminated and organizers should look for potential peer mentors among upperclassmen.

Step 3 - Choosing the peer mentors:

Suitable students should be nominated, volunteered or shoulder-tapped. They must be carefully screened and a shortlist created. Generally, the shortlisted students have a high degree of empathy, warmth and an interest in others, are not judgmental and were good role models, have a stable personality and lifestyle, and have problem-solving skills.

Stage 2: Training the Mentors

The training workshop:

The purpose of the workshop is to explain what peer mentoring is and to teach the skills required. The workshop is intended to be interactive so as to enthuse the students about peer mentoring, encourage ‘ownership’ of the peer mentoring program, and draw upon their knowledge about, and experience of, school culture as the basis for an effective program.
During a training workshop, most activities are carried out in groups so that group processing can provide the foundation for ongoing and mutual support between participants as the peer mentoring program takes shape. Schools do not generally have the luxury of abundant free time. Therefore, while it is preferable to run several consecutive training sessions; the reality is that most schools will have to find ways to present maximum information with optimum effect in minimum time.

Stage 3: Running the Program

Step 1 - Carrying out the mentoring:

Once mentors are ready to begin, they are paired up with the students they will mentor, they should work to establish trust and gather information. They will also identify the main issues and begin to put solutions and strategies into place.

Step 2 - Mentoring support:

The mentors should have regular ‘information and maintenance’ meetings with the program coordinators and through a mentor’s support meeting. They should also meet with their supervisors at least once a week to discuss how things are going and to receive support and feedback.

Stage 4: Maintaining the program

All schools are governed by regular cycles. Every year as one cohort of students in the upper school departs, a new group at the lower end arrives. Within the rest of the school, there will be comings and goings as families move in and out of the district. Similarly, there are movements within a school’s staff. It is always important therefore that someone is in charge of maintaining the peer mentoring program and of overseeing the dynamics
and its yearly cycle. If the job is passed on, then this should include full training in the running of the program as part of the change-over process.

In order for the program to work, to develop its own ecology and safe regeneration, the school administration and teachers need to be informed about and involved to some extent in its process, running and success.

**Peer Mediation**

Peer mediation is an action-based strategy designed specifically to solve conflicts. It can be called upon when conflict is observed or reported, or by those in dispute who can ask for help to deal with their conflict. The intention is to defuse a situation as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Whereas peer partnering and peer mentoring are based on one-to-one relationships that model acceptance, tolerance and prosocial behavior, peer mediation is action based and involves the main protagonists in a dispute or antisocial conflict coming face to face with each other in the presence of a neutral peer. Choose a building block.

It is important that mediators have specific skills that build on those required by peer mentors. The process of peer mediation is as follows:  

- The disputants meet with the peer mediator and a set of ground rules is agreed upon. Both sides agree not to interrupt or be abusive in any way, to be honest and open, and to try to find a solution.
- Each side in the dispute tells their story without interruption. The peer mediator listens carefully.
- He or she paraphrases what has been said and repeats it to the disputants to allow any elaborations and corrections to be made. Both disputants are allowed to speak at this point and to seek clarification.
This can go back and forth a few times and interruptions should not occur.

- The disputants are each asked what outcome they hope for, and how they would like the matter resolved. This is discussed until an agreement is reached.

If at any point the disputants break the rules they have agreed upon, the peer mediator will need to point this out. If this continues, then the meeting should be stopped. The peer mediator can then decide whether it is best to bring in an adult or to have a 24-hour cooling-off period.

**Benefits of Peer Programs**

In peer programs, students develop an appreciation of conflict as something that can be handled positively and learned from. Disputes between students are generally permanently settled in 80–85 per cent of cases. Students become equipped with valuable skills for handling conflicts both within and outside the school.

A much improved and more cooperative school atmosphere develops. There are fewer incidents of troublesome behavior beyond the school gates and a general increase in students’ self-esteem. Teachers are better able to leave students to find suitable solutions to their problems, thus freeing teachers from a good deal of time-consuming dispute settlement and disciplinary action.

**Summary**
Bullying among school children is not new. Research indicates that bullying is harmful and there are no beneficial effects for the target, the perpetrator, or even bystanders; bullying cannot be explained as merely a normal part of growing up. Research into bullying has also lead to changes in the definition of bullying; new approaches to identify and understand bullying; and creative ways to address or deal with the bully and the victim. This has all become more complex as computers and cell phones have become so popular with adolescents. Cyberbullying is now emerging as a new form of bullying. There is also evidence showing that similar to traditional victimization, experiences with cyber victimization are associated with psychosocial problems such as emotional distress.

School bullying has been identified as a problematic behavior among adolescents, affecting school achievement, pro-social skills, and psychological wellbeing for both victims and perpetrators. The problems of bullying and victimization are extremely complex. Consequently, identifying and predicting bullying, and intervention for these problems are also complex and should extend to all those involved: bullies, victims, peers, school staff, parents and the broader community.

Bullying is a problem that occurs inside school grounds and in the greater social environment outside of school. Effective interventions involve the entire school community, parents and community groups. It is important to counter views that bullying is an inevitable part of school life. The wider community, and particularly the adults within it, must take responsibility for making it clear that bullying is an act of violence and will not be tolerated in our society. Schools have an obligation to ensure they are a safe place for all students.
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