

Slide  
1

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## Bullying: What We Can Do

Stuart Green, DMH, LCSW

NJ Coalition for Bullying Awareness and Prevention  
[www.njbullying.org](http://www.njbullying.org)

Associate Director, Overlook Family Medicine  
Behavioral Scientist, Overlook Medical Center,  
Atlantic Health System

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Slide  
2

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### *Our Students/Their World*

*Key Findings from 2010 Survey of One School District's High School Students*

Almost one in three students regularly feel hopeless (about their school careers).

Almost one-half of students have no vision for their future beyond high school.

And more than one-third don't believe that any of us care.

(ref. Jean Synodinos, ICF Macro, OSDFS National Conference, August 8, 2011)

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Slide  
3

### *The Wingspread Declaration on School Connections*

(Journal of School Health, 2004).

- 1) **Connectedness:** from strengthened bonds with school.
- 2) **Requires:** high expectations, feel supported, feel safe.
- 3) **Impacts:** academic performance, fighting, truancy, drop out rates.
- 4) **Result:** improved educational motivation, higher classroom engagement, better attendance, then higher academic achievement.
- 5) **Related** (pos. corr.): less disruptive behavior, less substance and tobacco use, less emotional distress, later age of first sex.
- 6) **Built through:** fair and consistent discipline, trust, high expectations, effective curriculum/teaching strategies, feeling connected to at least one member of the school staff.

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### ***Essential Supports for School Climate Improvement***

Carol Nixon, *Ph.D., Edvantia, Inc.* (posted by National School Climate Center, 11/7/11)

School climate impacts attendance, engagement, achievement, behavior, social emotional adjustment, teacher turnover, instructional time/effectiveness, success of school improvement and reform efforts, and drop-out rates.

(Chicago Consortium) researchers identified five essential supports for school

improvement including :

student-centered learning climate,  
school leadership,  
parent-community ties,  
professional capacity of faculty and staff,  
ambitious instruction.

Elementary schools that demonstrated strengths in these areas were ten times more likely than others to show significant gains in reading and math.

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### ***What To Do***

Whole School or Systemic Model (e.g., Olweus/OBPP), or School Climate Model (e.g., Cohen/NSCC), or Elias/Rutgers-CASEL

- school the most common site
- change the culture of schools
- *adult*-initiated and led (children involved)

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6

### ***What Does Not Work – and What Does***

(ref. Stan Davis/Youth Voices Project)

#### **Does Not Work:**

- telling youth to solve their own problems (leaves least able least protected)
- telling youth to ignore it or say 'stop'
- telling youth bullying is 'wrong'

#### **Does Work:**

- positive staff-student connections
- fair/consistent rules and discipline collectively agreed upon/fairly enforced
- staff action to discourage and interrupt low-level mean student behavior (fire prevention vs. fire fighting)
- supporting mistreated youth
- positive peer norms/actions

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**Strengthen School Climate**

- emphasize warmth, engagement, inclusion, community
- positive relations and shared understanding between staff
- positive staff-student interactions
- support/inclusion for all (diverse clubs/activities, proactive education, increase support for vulnerable groups)
- character education /social-emotional learning/ 'universal' social skills training
- clear/consensus expectations ('how we do things here')

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Slide

8

**School-Wide**

- Administrative support
- Coordinating group/staff discussions/training
- Assessment (surveys, reporting system)
- Positive staff-staff and staff-student relations
- Proactive effort to identify all incidents/relationships
- Supervise high-risk areas (schoolyard, lunchroom, school bus, team activities, locker room, cyberspace)
- Consistent rules and sanctions (staff consensus) (well-known to students, staff, parents, community)
- Involve parents
- Activate peer bystanders

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9

**Classroom**

- Clear, consistent rules
- Regular meetings
- Collaborative learning
- Curriculum integration
- Proactive work on relationships
- Parent involvement

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Slide  
10

**Individual**

- Proactive information-gathering on vulnerability and relations
- Meeting with each child who was bullied and call/see parent (apologize, take responsibility, absolve)
- Meeting with each child who bullied and call parent
- Consequences for the bullying child (reasonable, invariable, escalating), then (post-incident) reflection/empathy
- Assure and arrange increased support for the bullied child.
- Active monitoring after incidents.

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Slide  
11

**Staff Responses to Negative Behaviors** (Stan Davis)

- **Behaviors that violate law** - Report/follow policy
- **Severe risk of harm** - Report/follow rubric
- **Moderate severity** - Intervene and track behavior
- **Unacceptable** - Intervene, using own approaches (e.g., "That behavior is not allowed here because...", discuss why the behavior is not allowed: "Why do you think we don't allow those words?"; use immediate micro-consequences: "Sit there to help you remember not to say (or do) that again.", encourage students to reflect: "What did you do? What was wrong with that?"; signal the student the action is unacceptable via a look, a signal, a short whispered conversation, or a brief talk after class is over)
- **Negative but acceptable** - Use discretion (e.g., ignore, advise, use mediation strategies if both students have done something wrong, or use small, in-the- moment consequences)

Ref: Stan Davis, [www.stopbullyingnow.com](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com)

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Slide  
12

**Seven Measures Which Positively Impact Bullying**

1. collaborative learning models
2. friendship circles
3. mentoring to strengthen school engagement
4. diverse clubs/activities
5. proactive diversity education
6. staff-student positive relations
7. staff-staff positive relations

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Slide  
13

**What Can Parents Do About Bullying? (1)**

- Good relations/communication with children.
- Inform yourself.
- Expect/ ask/ demand adequate school action.
- Expect/ ask/ demand that owners of social organizations, including networking sites and internet providers, address bullying.
- Ask your child how children treat other children at school (and how your child is treated); listening is more important than advice.

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Slide  
14

**What Can Parents Do About Bullying? (2)**

- When you hear children speak badly of another child, *gently* express discomfort, and empathy for the scorned child.
- Be present at your child's school; don't wait to be invited, ask to volunteer.
- Take action with other concerned parents. Meet (as a group) with school leaders; ask specifically about the school's approach.

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15

**What Can Parents Do About Bullying? (3)**

- *Never* ignore bullying, don't walk by; if you can't intervene directly, report it.
- Support bullied kids in every possible way.
- Seek legal advice and government support.
- Don't accept leaders who bully, including teachers; speak out, insist on change.
- Consider changing schools, if possible, as a last resort.

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Slide  
16

**What Can Teachers Do (1)**

- Proactively identify all incidents/relationships
- Actively scan for bullying involvement, consider bullying as a factor or even cause of problems/behavioral changes
- Actively identify/track at-risk children
- Anticipatory education/support when students likely to be targeted
- Intensify/focus on (creative) support for at-risk children through activities, relationship-building, collaboration with counseling resources

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17

**What Can Teachers Do (2)**

- Have a bullying-aware classroom (materials, meetings)
- Address/engage negative peer 'leaders'
- Be clear about what works and doesn't work
- Model positive relations with other teachers/staff
- Increase positive staff (teachers, aides, any adults in classroom) and student interactions

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18

**What Can Teachers Do (3)**

- Self-aware of biases and compensate
- Pay as much positive attention to improvement as to achievement
- Emphasize/support/value diversity (even more so if low staff-student matching)
- Use character education /social-emotional learning /'universal' social skills approaches
- Clear (ideally consensus) expectations ('how we do things here')

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19

**What Can Teachers Do (4)**

- Consistent rules/sanctions (well-known to students, staff, parents, community)
- Be part of coordinating group/staff discussions/training
- Help monitor/survey/data-collect on bullying
- Let students provide anonymous data (to you, and to pass along to admin)
- Actively supervise high-risk areas/activities

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20

**What Can Teachers Do (5)**

- Collaborative learning ('jigsaw' – Aronson)
- Curriculum integration (all subjects)
- Parent involvement
- Normative attitude that bullying is wrong
- An atmosphere of warmth, acceptance and support

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Slide  
21

**What Can Professionals Do?**

- Screen for bullying involvement, consider bullying as a factor or even a cause of presenting problems
- Proactive identification of at-risk children, creative support through school action and/or preventive counseling
- Have a bullying-aware office
- Challenge negative leaders
- As a community leader, expect schools to address bullying, raise parental expectations
- Be clear about what works and doesn't work
- Advocate for stronger law

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22

### Systemic Approach Works

- shown to reduce bullying in intervention studies in multiple countries, including the U.S., with improvements in subsequent years ... if\*
  - if administrative commitment and support
  - if staff 'buy-in'
  - if ongoing

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Slide  
23

### Be Clear About What Doesn't Work

- Zero tolerance or '3 strikes'
- Social skills training/psychotherapy as *primary* modalities and only directed at those bullying or those bullied when incidents have occurred
- Peer mediation and conflict resolution
- One-shot (e.g., assemblies) or short-term interventions.

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Slide  
24

### OLWEUS

Our moral obligation to help bullied children.

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**RESOURCES**

NJ Coalition for Bullying Awareness and Prevention  
[www.njbullying.org](http://www.njbullying.org), (908) 522-2581

Stan Davis' *Schools Where Everyone Belongs*  
[www.stopbullyingnow.com](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com)

National School Climate Center  
[www.schoolclimate.org](http://www.schoolclimate.org)

[www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)

[www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)

[www.bullyinginfo.gov](http://www.bullyinginfo.gov)

[www.csriu.org](http://www.csriu.org)

[www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org)

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