

Bullying in Schools

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English 1010

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Introduction

Bullying may give certain students self-confidence, and the lack of response from school administrators an easier day, but school bullying must be stopped because the hurt, anger, and unspeakable consequences of it are all undeniably severe and frightful. I am going to discuss the misconceptions of bullying as well as the vast reasons why more action needs to be taken to stop it.

Bullying is a tragedy that has devastated many of our younger generation. Although there are laws in place and strict anti-bullying policies in each district, It is incredibly sad that it is not acted on more and that there are so many misconceptions to what bullying really is. Many teachers and other school administrators tend to look the other way considering it to be just a minor issue, but is it? So I ask to resolve the question, what is bullying? Why is it so misunderstood? It is important that we obtain this information, and act on the problem because the tragic and at times, fatal consequences are many. The fact is those that are put in place to protect our children are failing, and many wonder why. "The answers to that basic question are many. But they start, and end, with the fact that the problem of bullying has been shrouded in myth and misunderstanding for far too many years. As educators, as state and local officials and yes, absolutely at the federal level we simply have not taken the problem of bullying seriously enough. Too often, bullying gets shrugged off." (*The Myths about Bullying: Secretary Arne Duncan's Remarks at the Bullying Prevention Summit August 11, 2010*). The Summit is the very first federal summit on bullying. They have an extraordinary range of NGOs, corporate leaders, state and local officials on hand, as well as the members of the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Working Group.

Here you will be provided with some information regarding the causes and effects of bullying in the school system, and this will be demonstrated with information provided to me while conducting a private interview with a 14 year old female, home school student in Davis County, Utah whom has been dealing with severe and possibly life altering bullying in at least 7 different schools since the third grade. All schools reside within Salt Lake, Granite, and Davis county school districts. I will than demonstrate the short term effects, and long term effects with information provided to me while conducting an interview with a home school teacher, who has been dealing with the school system here in Utah due to her experiences on the topic of bullying for over 18 years now. You will be provided the statistics here in Utah and the National statistics on bullying, crime, and violence in schools.

Main points; The controversy, "What Is Bullying?" "What are the 4 types of Aggression?" Statistics of Bullying in our schools, Interview's from an Adolescent's perspective, and the perspective of a Home School Teacher. This will include their personal experiences with the

School Administrators dealing with the issue of Bullying. Full Interviews will be attached if desired.

There is a large controversy on the actual meaning of the term “bullying”, a shameful crisis that takes place more often than recognized on both the part of parents and school administrators. “You have heard all the excuses. You have heard the lineup of reasons to minimize the gravity of bullying and to dismiss the potential of effective programs to reduce it. Common statements regarding the issue would be, “What can you do,” people say, “bullying has been going on forever, kids are just mean.” Or “she just made a bad joke.” “He didn’t mean to hurt anyone.” “It was just a one-time thing.” “Bullying may be wrong. But it really isn’t an educational issue.” “At the heart of this minimization of bullying, is a core belief that bullying is an elusive concept that can’t really be defined”. (*The Myths about Bullying: Secretary Arne Duncan’s Remarks at the Bullying Prevention Summit August 11, 2010*). Recently there has been an increase in violence in our schools and on the buses. It at times happens right in front of those that are put in place to protect our children. Many people question why the school districts have strict policies in regards to their tolerance to bullying and violence but it is still an overwhelming problem.

A division of the Utah department of Education has set up The “Craft Anti-Bullying policies” In their School Law News 2011 addition they had an adapted and condensed version of their policies on Bullying. This is a copy of what I was able to locate in regards to the federal laws on the zero tolerance for those in public and in charter schools.

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Craft Anti-Bullying Policies that Comply with Federal Disability Laws

1. “Districts must identify whether a reported bullying incident, no matter how it is labeled, amounts to unlawful disability discrimination and, if so, respond in a manner that accords with Section 504 and Title II of the ADA.”

Dear Colleague Letter, 55 IDELR 174 (OCR 10/26/10).

2. To be in compliance, District/Charter schools, should examine bullying conduct to determine if it also constitutes a disability discrimination complaint. Be aware that such conduct may require a more comprehensive response than what is outlined in your district/charter school policies.

3. Train your staff to recognize and report “**red flags**” of disability harassment and to report incidents to their appropriate supervisors.

4. Districts/Charter schools **MUST HAVE A ZERO TOLERANCE** for harassment. Harassment not only creates a hostile environment but it can have a lifetime impact on students.

5. Districts/Charter schools are responsible to take **PREVENTIVE** steps to decrease the possibility of these issues arising in the first place.

6. Hold annual trainings on the global issues of disability discrimination and harassment and cover:

Craft anti-bullying policies that comply with federal civil rights laws.

Incorporate references to the regulatory language of Section 504, such as those pertaining to grievance procedures, in your anti-bullying policies and practices.

Recognize signs of harassment, such as:

a. Avoidance, withdrawal from outside activities, friends, and family members, self-harm and/or socially isolated.

Dig Deeper into allegations of bullying

a. Don't stop investigating just because the alleged bully says that they did not bully anyone.

Report bullying behavior and complaints to supervisors.

a. Train cafeteria workers, janitors, teachers, principals, etc. to

“Report Up” to a supervisor because the supervisor may be better-versed in the civil rights laws. Regardless of the whether the student is the bully or the victim; involve the student's child student team.

a. The team is often most knowledgeable about the child and their specific disability issues.

b. These professionals are often experience in having difficult

Conversations with parents of students with disabilities.”

(Adapted and condensed from: School Law News, January 2011, a division of the Utah Department of Education)

It was incredibly interesting to me to find this kind of information out there because it does not demonstrate the types of disciplinary actions that are taken when a child is a repeat offender, and or the kind of discipline that is required by law when a teacher or a school administrator is negligent when it comes to reporting such behavior. This condensed version of the code of conduct under the anti-bullying act specifies that a teacher is required to “Report Up” Report up to who is one of my questions still un-answered. It states that the teams that work on this issue are very familiar dealing with a *student* and their parents, and having difficult conversations about a student's disabilities. What about the student that is the *bully* and the reasons they are so? What about the other areas in which it is *not* a disability that instigates such harm? Also another would be my concern with the “Team's” proficiency in dealing with the parents of a child that is the bully, and their parent's lax attitudes to the seriousness of the situation. In most but not all occasions their attitudes are that of “Kids will be Kids” or “They will work it out” and “He just made a poor choice, it's a onetime thing” Statistics show more often than not that when children are victims of bullying, they do not work it out, and rather there is life altering effects that take place because of the lack of response from authority figures.

Members of the community that have children in public school need to be more hands on when dealing with the school systems policies for bullying and the consequences thereof, also do the research necessary to discover why it is their child has become a bully and or why their child is a victim of it. If we seek out the information needed to assess this issue we can help the school districts and their Super-Intendants better organize their policies and make them more proficient so that the knowledge is well rounded for the entire issue, not just the student that was the victim because in many eyes, the *Bully* is a victim as well.

The fact is Bullying is intentional aggressive behavior that consists of verbal and physical intimidation. It is an imbalance of power. In “Invitation to the Life Span by Kathleen Berger” it

demonstrates the four forms of aggression, statistics, and comments that are associated with each form.

- “The Four Forms of Aggression

- Instrumental aggression

- Reactive aggression

- Relational aggression

- Bullying aggression

- Often increases from age 2 to 6; involves objects more than people; quite normal; more egocentric than antisocial. Indicates a lack of emotional regulation, characteristic of 2-year-olds. A 5-year-old can usually stop and think before reacting. Involves a personal attack and thus is directly antisocial; can be very hurtful; more common as children become socially aware. In bullies, and victims, a sign of poor emotional regulation; adults should intervene before the school years.
- Type of Aggression Definition Comments
- Hurtful behavior that is aimed at gaining something (such as a toy, a place in line, or a turn on the swing) that someone else has An impulsive retaliation for a hurt (intentional or accidental) that can be verbal or physical Nonphysical acts, such as insults or social rejection, aimed at harming the social connections between the victim and others Unprovoked, repeated physical or verbal attack, especially on victims who are unlikely to defend themselves”(*Invitation to the Life Span by Kathleen Stassen Berger*)

One thing we must ask ourselves as parents. Could my child be capable of committing an act of violence? What causes a child to become a bully? “Typically a child does not become violent overnight. There are signs given along the way. Sometimes it starts with an aggression towards animals”. (*Michelle Basile*) These are just a few things to look for when it comes to looking at the causes and signs that your child may become a target in an overwhelming population of children that are either a bully or a victim of bullying.

“Maybe you are getting calls from the school that your child is having difficulty getting along with other children or is constantly in trouble for hitting and acting out. If a child is brought up in a home where there is abuse of any kind they are going to repeat what they are living. An example of abuse is being verbally abusive to one another. Calling each other names, putting each other down, making fun of each other for whatever reason, it has now spilled over onto the Internet as well with cyber harassment. Another way violence is encouraged is by humiliation and embarrassment of a child. Falling short of perfect on a test, not winning at a game, making a big deal out of failures and reminding them of an embarrassing situation are also examples of such.” (*Michelle Basile, Cause and effects of bullying Nov 28, 2009*)

These are just a few of the many reasons that I have located that lead children to become violent abusive or a bully. I often thought that it may not be the parents at all but now that I have learned more about the problematic outcome of home life it is clearer to me that a child’s home life good or bad can lead to such a thing, it in the rearing of the child. These are only a few examples of what some parents or caregivers are guilty of doing to their child. Most don’t realize that a child’s home life spills over into our classrooms and can lead to fatal consequences. Children take their pain to school with them and then do it to other children because they see it as acceptable in their own home.

In 2009–10, the national statistic on violence/bullying looked like this.

- 74 percent of public schools recorded one or more violent incidents.
- 16 percent recorded one or more serious violent incidents.
- 44 percent recorded one or more thefts.

So 74 % of our schools have reported to the police at least 1 or more violent incidents. This is a very frightful number, not to mention the other statistics surrounding bullying.

- “In all survey years the percentage of public schools that recorded incidents of crime was between 85 and 86 percent, with the exception of school year 2003–04.
- In 2003–04, the percentages of “Violent incidents” include rape, sexual battery other than rape, physical attack or fight with or without a weapon, threat of physical attack with or without a weapon, and robbery with or without a weapon”.

Within this data there are four categories of crime that are reported they go as follows;

- “Serious violent incidents” include rape, sexual battery other than rape, physical attack or fight with a weapon, threat of physical attack with a weapon, and robbery with or without a weapon.
- “Other incidents” include possession of a firearm or explosive device; possession of a knife or sharp object; distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs or alcohol; vandalism; and inappropriate distribution, possession, or use of prescription drugs.” (National Center for Education Statistics, IES Institute of Education Sciences, BJS Bureau of Justice Statistics).
- “At school” was defined for respondents to include activities that happen in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at places that hold school-sponsored events or activities. Respondents were instructed to include incidents that occurred before, during, or after normal school hours, or when school activities or events were in session.
- Public schools that recorded incidents of crime were 89 percent. Similarly, the percentage of public schools that reported incidents of crime to the police was between 60 and 62 percent in all survey years with the exception of 2003–04, when 65 percent of public schools reported one or more incidents to the police”. (National Center for Education Statistics, IES Institute of Education Sciences, BJS Bureau of Justice Statistics).

I wanted to get some personal insight on this topic, from the eyes of a teen who has suffered tremendously from bullying. After doing some research I was able to locate a home-schooled student that transferred out of public school and gone into home-schooling 5 years ago due to her history as a victim of bullying. I conducted an interview with this student in Davis County, and asked some very important questions that shed some light on the actual outcomes. Due to the nature and content of my questions my source requested that she remain anonymous. I had several questions as there is a great demand of individuals that would like to know real outcomes and overall consequences of bullying. I felt it important to obtain a real life perspective from the eyes of someone that has suffered from it.

Here you will find a few questions I asked her. (*A full Transcript of the interview is attached if desired.*) I hoped that would give us some light on the issue at hand. First I will provide you with a little background on her as I asked her to tell me a little about herself and the living conditions she grew up in, this was to determine whether her past has had an effect on the *causes* leading up to her experiences of being bullied.

She is 14 years of age and was born and raised in Salt Lake County, Utah. She had a tremendously difficult childhood as her mother was frequently gone and her father was not in the picture due to a severe drug addiction. The person she was staying with at the time was also abusing drugs and had random men/friends in their home a great deal of the time. She informed me that she felt she was verbally abused at home because she was seen as an outcast and never felt like she belonged.

We will call her student, I asked student what made her family decide to start home schooling she responded "I moved to Davis County 3 years ago and had been to 3 different schools and had really hard times with other kids teasing me and spreading rumors about me, so my mom sat down with my Aunt and they decided that my aunt would home-school me for a while" I was interested to know what age she started to feel as though she was being bullied in school. "I have been made fun for several different reasons, but the first time I remember was in second grade in Granite School District" I was interested to know what kind of bullying she had endured, if she ever felt the teachers resolved the issue or supported her, and if she felt supported at home. I also asked her how she felt about herself as a person due to the rapidly growing rate of childhood depression, and if she felt like she had value. This was her response to my previous questions,

"I have been bullied verbally by other kids, and physically from other kids" to my next question, did she ever feel like she had support from resolution from the administrators and did she feel like she was supported at home, she replied, "Most of the time I just feel like I don't belong here, anywhere, I'm not sure if I have value, no one really tells me that I do, but I don't really know what that means. I think I feel that way because of everything that I went through, and some other things but mostly that. It's just really hard because I just feel like I am always different than other people my age. I really started to not like school in third grade, I didn't have friends and people would make fun of me because my hair was really long, so they would cut pieces off, I don't really understand that but I think it was mostly because they were jealous. They would make fun of me for a lot of reasons; I think they were just trying to find something they could use like because I have to wear glasses. I have a really bad eye disease and eventually I will go blind so my glasses were really thick. They would also make fun of me because I didn't have any friends." In regards to the teachers support while this was occurring, "Not really ever, I remember one time another student through a rock at my head and a teacher helped stop the bleeding and pick the pieces out of my head. I don't remember if anything was done about it."

Cont. "I still remember back to 2nd grade and my principle pulling me into school because I didn't want to go, I have felt like teachers don't believe me when I tell them things, They have called me a liar many times. When I started my period I was 9 and I had to go the bathroom to change my pad and my teacher at the time did not believe that, that was why I was going to bathroom so she said if I wanted to go I had to change it in front of her." This is not only against the law but it is a violation of one's right to personal privacy. "The principle at Layton Elementary told me that I act like a "Satanist" I don't know what that means but she would yell at me in front of the same kids that would cut my hair and steal my purse with my pads in it. I feel like they didn't ever care. I had to change schools so much I was always the new person so when I would say something about what was happening with someone they would not believe me and not do anything about it. I have told almost every teach and principle about the problems I was having and they turn it around on me being the problem. I don't understand why they would never believe me because I didn't think I had done anything to make them not trust me, I

don't even talk to anyone. I told my teachers more than once about things and they still did not do anything. My mom and my aunt were in the Principles office at least 1 time a month because they were not doing anything about it until they went to the guy at the school district and told him and he said that I was the problem so they took me out of school." These are some serious examples of blatant disregard for one's safety, care and wellbeing.

Student continues, "I had a couple teacher at William Penn Elementary that would talk to me about things that were going on at home but I have been to a lot of schools because of my problems, I don't really feel like I was ever important to them, other than those couple of teachers I don't remember anyone every asking me how I was personally or what was going on at home. I have really bad Asthma and I was sick a lot and so they thought that I just was missing school because I was lazy and didn't want to go, or because my mom didn't want to take me but for a lot of years I was in the hospital for at least a month every year. They never let me keep my inhaler in my desk; I would have to ask if I was having an asthma attack. I never thought that they cared about me." This was absolutely devastating, my heart sunk when she said these words. Our children should feel safe and protected when we send them off for the day to gain an education and in some cases they are coming home with thoughts and feelings like this and at times much worse.

I asked her some questions in regards to her family and her support system there, and if she felt as if she had someone looking out for her best interests when it comes to her education she replied. "Yes very, they were very supportive. My mom always would talk to the teachers and the principles and my aunt has even met with my mom and the Super-Intendant of the School District to try to get the bullying to stop but it seems like everything they did never really worked because it just kept happening. But my family was always really helpful getting me through it when I was upset. My cousin Tiffany helps me with homework, my aunt does my home-schooling and pushes me even when I don't really want to do my work and my Mom always tells me that it's important to go to school so that I can get a good job."

I wanted to know from her personal experience if what she had went through had made an impression to how she felt about her future in the education system, as frequently children who suffer abuse and bulling generally do not finish school, become troubled teens and often have no plans for higher education. I also asked some very personal questions about her self-esteem, and wondered if because of the abuse she suffered she had ever thought about hurting herself and or someone else, If she had ever thought about dying, and also if at the age of 14 she was dating, sexually active, and have every thought about having a child of her own at this age. This was her response, "These are scary questions to ask. Can I keep my name out?" I assured her that her answers would remain anonymous.

"I have many times, but it just depends on what was going on. I don't really anymore but I still feel sad sometimes and time about it. I have because I have been sick a lot in my life, but if you mean have I ever thought about killing myself the answer is yes to that to, I never told anyone about it though and I don't think about it anymore, It's just I use to get really depressed and sad and I would hate going because I knew what was going to happen every day. They would kick me and beat me up all the time and I just didn't want to go through it anymore. I only made a plan once, but I didn't think about it long before I changed my mind. Ya, I don't like to talk about it but sometimes when I was younger when I would get home from school I would go into the bathroom and bite myself or cut my legs so that I could try to get some of the pain out I guess. And it's really hard not to get frustrated with my brother. No, I don't want to date. I went through changes really early and I have been teased for a really long time because I have really

large breasts and I am tall and thin, I have recently been teased horribly because of it over the last couple of years. I have been called a lesbian, dike, slut, whore, and a bitch because girls are jealous and boys spread rumors about me to get attention. I have been asked out several times but I just don't want to date because of all of the gossip all the time, it has made me really insecure. I don't know that I will ever want to have kids. Pretty much all of my friends are sexually active and talk about wanting to have a baby they are all my age and I am 17, I am not though.”
(*Student, Home-schooled in Davis County, Interviewed on 07/13/2012*)

This interview gave me some very interesting insights to the mind of a 14 year old who has suffered tremendously at the hands of other children and the lack of respect, and support from school leaders and teacher. I was saddened by her answers but they answer my questions to the causes and effects of bullying, and what her experience was with the solution to the problem. I was shocked that she stated that she finally gave up and had to do home schooling because she could not take it anymore. There was enough in her life and in school that her family decided that public school was hopeless. They were not taking appropriate actions to resolving the issues, making her safe and allowing her the opportunity to gain a full and optimal education because from school to school her stigmas would follow her as did the type of bullying and the lack of response to the issues that are at hand for her. The fact that at 14, she has thought much about suicide and the different ways to do it, and also her attempts to hurt herself so that she could “Take the Pain away” is scary and something that is huge disgrace on the part of a legal profession and the education system. (*Interview with home-school student in Davis County, Age, 14 female*)(*Full interview will be attached if desired.*)

- “Over all available survey years, the percentage of youth homicides occurring at school remained at less than 2 percent of the total number of youth homicides, and the percentage of youth suicides occurring at school remained at less than 1 percent of the total number of youth suicides.”
- “In the School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey, students ages 12–18 were asked how often³⁶ they had been afraid of attack or harm “at school or on the way to and from school” as well as “away from school.”³⁷ In 2009, a higher percentage of students ages 12–18 reported that they were afraid of attack or harm at school (4 percent) than away from school (3 percent) during the school year.”
- “In 2009, about 28 percent of 12- to 18-year-old students reported having been bullied at school during the school year and 6 percent reported having been cyber-bullied.”
- “During the 2009–10 school year, 39 percent of public schools took at least one serious disciplinary action against a student for specific offenses. A total of 433,800 serious disciplinary actions were taken by public schools during this period.”
- Schools use a variety of measures to promote the safety of students, ranging from codes of student conduct to metal detectors. In the School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey, students ages 12–18 were asked whether their schools used certain security measures.⁴³ Security measures include metal detectors, locker checks, security cameras, security guards or police officers, adult supervision in hallways, badges or picture identification for students, a code of student conduct, locked entrance or exit doors during the day,

and a requirement that visitors sign in. In 2009, nearly all students (99 percent) ages 12–18 reported that they observed the use of at least one of the selected security measures at their schools.”(*National Center for Education Statistics, IES Institute of Education Sciences, BJS Bureau of Justice Statistics*
<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/iscs11.pdf>)

As I was doing my research on the topic I decided to interview a home-school teacher who has been dealing with the issue of bullying and the school boards for over 18 years now. She had some very interesting things to say about her experiences, that I feel shed a little light on the actual of events that have taken place while she has been involved. She has met with the school board several times and has had many meetings with teachers, students and their parents, as well as when needed due to issues not being escalated the Super-Intendant of the Granite School District, Salt Lake School District and Davis County School District. I was appalled that she on numerous occasions has to resort to such lengths because things were not being taken care of on the part of the school administrators. I was very interested to find out some of the things she had learned about the education system and their policies and procedures. Attached you will find my dictation from my interview with (Traci Chidester), you will find her words shocking and at times unbelievable but she is a trustworthy source and I valued her time. She provided valuable information to both her personal opinion regarding the school system and actual events that have taken place right here where our children attend school. (*Traci Chidester, Davis County Utah Home-School Teacher, long time parent, and advocate to the anti-bullying campaign*).

In conclusion, bullying is a terrible act committed not only by students but by teachers and administrators as well. Children who bully are often victims of a form of abuse as well. It is a shame that although statistic show that schools are taking measurable steps to report instance’s that take place, the pain and trauma continues in most cases. Bullying may give certain students self-confidence at the time but when you look at the big picture, the the lack of response from school administrators when repeat offenses take place, should tell you that the child they are responsible to care for and protect is being violated by the one they call the bully. Also with the gravity of the situation securely documented, our children’s administrators should be able to see that the “Bully” is crying out and needs attention to the real reason behind the aggression. School bullying must be stopped and education for teachers and parents must be put in place and acted on, because the hurt, anger, and unspeakable consequences of it are all undeniably severe and frightful.

With the information provided, there leaves no room for argument that the school system needs to do more to protect our children. They must discipline the students involved with appropriate action and stop turning the other cheek. There should also be policies put in place so the administrators have a strict disciplinary system, to ensure that proper education is given to continue to prevent further attacks towards our children. Not every attack can be avoided, but the statistics demonstrate, much room for growth. Parents need to educate themselves about the issue, weather they feel their child is a victim or a perpetrator. They need to be able to identify the problem so they are prepared, if it does come up they know exactly what it is they need to do to stop it and prevent it from happening again.

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<http://www.schools.utah.gov/equity/Civil-Rights-Information/Section-504/Executive-Summaries/craftAnti-BullyingPolicies.aspx>
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IES Institute of Education Sciences
BJS Bureau of Justice Statistics
<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/iscs11.pdf>
- Interview with home school student Age 14 female. Student requested to remain nameless. Attached is a PDF of the full interview that took place on 7/13/12 at 2:15 PM
- Interview with home school teacher in Davis County School District. Traci Chidester Phone (801) 686-5059 7/14/12 3:35 PM Attached is a PDF of the full dictation by Traci Chidester