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Connecting Bullying and School Drop Out

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Connecting Bullying and School Drop Out

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Local schools mark graduation

BY RICKEY CIAPHA DENNIS JR.
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A handful of middle school students are using physical education, along with other avenues, to create a more inclusive environment at their school.

Berkeley Middle School's Unified program, which started four years ago, pairs special needs children with general population students to engage in physical education, music and art activities. The intent is to create an inclusive learning atmosphere.

"The transformation our school has gone through over the last four years with this program, it's a school where we had special needs kids and general (education) kids — now we have all kids," said Berkeley Middle Assistant Principal Amy Smith. "It's a very different story."
Quick Fact #1

An estimated 160,000 U.S. children miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by other students.
Bullying affects student engagement, behavior, and academic outcomes.

Student dropout has been linked to bullying and the disengagement of students from school.

Gastic, 2008; Morrison, 2002
University of VA Study

Dropout rate was 29% above average in schools with high levels of teasing and bullying.

Dropout rate was 28% below average in school with low levels of teasing and bullying.

Cornell et al., 2012

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Uniform Definition of Bullying

Bullying is any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths...that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated.

Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm.

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Challenge #1: Is the behavior unwanted aggression or is it rough play or teasing?

Unwanted means that the targeted youth wants the aggressive behaviors to stop

Two children may enjoy taunting each other in a playful manner. This should not be considered bullying.

Cues for adults:

| The relationship between the children | Expressions, body language, atmosphere |

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Challenge #2: What constitutes a power imbalance?

Physical characteristics
- Age, size, strength

Popularity or association with popular peers

Background/demographic characteristics
- Member of majority/minority group, socio-economic status

Abilities and skills
- Academic, physical, artistic

Access to money, resources information
- Being outnumbered
- Presence of weapons

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Challenge #3:
What about repeated behavior?

The child must either

• Experience multiple incidents of aggression (pattern of aggression)

OR

• There is a strong concern that a single aggressive behavior has a high likelihood of being followed by more incidents of aggression
Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth...

But, not all bullied youth may be able to identify or express harm or distress that they have experienced from bullying.

Includes a wide range of negative experiences or injuries:
- Physical cuts, bruises or pain
- Psychological consequences
- Social damage to reputation or relationship
- Limits to educational opportunities

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Quick Fact #2

57% of boys and 43% of girls reported being bullied because of religious or cultural differences.
Bullying

Recognized as a pervasive and often neglected problem in schools around the world.
Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010

Approximately 28% of United States adolescents reported bullying victimization at school during the past school year.
Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2012
Effects of Bullying on Victims

Social/Emotional
• Lower self-esteem
• Higher anxiety and depression
• Higher rates of illness
• More suicidal ideation

Academic
• Have higher absenteeism rates
• Avoid going to school
• Say they dislike school
• Receive lower grades

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Perpetrators of Bullying

• Have positive attitudes toward violence
• Be impulsive and have quick tempers
• Show little empathy for victims
• Be aggressive to adults
• Be involved in other antisocial or rule-breaking activities
• Be physically stronger than peers (boys)
Effects of Bullying on School Climate

- Creates a climate of fear and disrespect
- Interferes with learning
- Students may feel insecure and not like school as well
- Students may perceive lack of control and caring

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Quick Fact #3

Nearly 9 out of 10 LGBTQ youth report being verbally harassed at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
Students Involved with Bullying

1. Students who experience bullying are at increased risk for poor school adjustment, sleep difficulties, anxiety, and depression.  
   Center for Disease Control, 2015

2. Students who are both bully others and are bullied themselves are at greater risk for both mental health and behavior problems than students who only bully or are only bullied.  
   Center for Disease Control, 2015

3. Bullied students indicate bullying has a negative effect on how they feel about themselves (19%), relationships with friends and family and on their school work (14%).  

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Bullying can lead to fear of school, absenteeism, and stunted academic progress, which in turn are precursors to dropping out of school.

(Townsend et al., 2008)
Effects of Bullying on Students - Long lasting effects

- Lack of Concentration
- Reduced Motivation
- Less Class Participation
- Less Attendance
- Lower Academic Achievement

Buhs, et al., 2006; Juvonen, et al., 2000; Schwart, et al., 2005

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What could possibly be the cause of our kids dropping out of school?

Let us find out what is missing so that you can succeed in your Journey to adulthood.

Mazlow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- Self-actualization
- Esteem
- Love/belonging
- Safety
- Physiological

- morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts
- self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others
- friendship, family, sexual intimacy
- security of: body, employment, resources, morality, the family, health, property
- breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion

This diagram is not the answer to our problem, but it is an instrument to find a cause to such a high dropout rate.
School Dropout is a Process

- Disengagement from school
- Life events
- Family problems

Jimerson, Reschly, and Hess (2008)
Student Dropouts

- Unemployed
- In poor health
- Live in poverty, be on public assistance
- Become single parents of children who also drop out of school
- Be incarcerated

Balfanz et al., 2010
How valuable is a high school diploma?

- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that dropouts bring in just $20,241 annually, which is $10,000 less than high school graduates and over $36,000 less than a person holding a bachelor’s degree.

- The poverty rate for dropouts is over twice as high as college grads, and the unemployment rate for dropouts is generally 4 percentage points higher than the national average.

- In the end, the lifetime earnings of high school dropouts are $260,000 LESS than peers who earn a diploma.
Student Bullying and Dropout

- Academic failure
- Disciplinary problems
- At risk behaviors
- Social & psychological issues
- Poor attendance
- Disengagement
- School Avoidance
Quick Fact #4

One out of every 10 students who drop out of school does so because of repeated incidents of bullying.

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Youth are embedded in multiple contexts, and each of these contexts interacts with individual characteristics of youth.
Risk Factors

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Individual Factors

**Dropping out**
- Disengaged with school, lack of effort
- Poor attendance
- Low commitment to academics and school
- Lack of participation in extracurriculars

**Bullying**
- Youth who bully - have an active, hot-headed temperament, lack social skills
- Youth who are bullied - have a quiet, passive temperament.
Peer Factors

Dropping out

- Friends interested in sex, drinking, and using drugs
- Low rate of being enrolled in advanced academic programs

Bullying

- Friends with aggressive, violent, or delinquent behaviors
What Roles Do Students Play In Bullying Situations?

- **A**: Students Who Bully
  - Start the bullying and take an active part

- **B**: Followers
  - Take an active part, but do not start the bullying

- **C**: Supporters
  - Support the bullying, but do not take an active part

- **D**: Passive Supporters
  - Like the bullying, but do not display open support

- **E**: Disengaged Onlookers
  - Watch what happens, don’t take a stand

- **F**: Possible Defenders
  - Dislike the bullying and think they ought to help, but don’t do it

- **G**: Defenders
  - Dislike the bullying, help or try to help the bullied student

- **H**: Student Who Is Bullied
  - Take an active part, but do not start the bullying

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Risk and Protective Factors

- Family
- Individual
- School
- Community
- Peer

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Family Factors

**Dropout**
- High family mobility
- Disengaged families
- Low education level of parents
- Family disruption
- Low education expectations

**Bullying**
- Disengaged families
- Parental conflict & domestic violence
- Parental use of drugs & alcohol
- Family incarceration
- Child abuse

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School Factors

Dropout
- Positive and supportive school climate
- Student engagement in the school community
- Students’ sense of belonging to the school
- Awareness and responsiveness of staff

Bullying
- Positive and supportive school climate
- Degree of respect and fair treatment
- Students’ sense of belonging to the school
- Awareness and responsiveness of staff, good supervision

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Quick Fact #5

Six out of 10 teenagers say they witness bullying in school once a day.
Drop out
1. Exposure to violence
2. Unsafe neighborhood
3. Low community expectations for school success

Bullying
1. Cultural norms and beliefs that are anti-social and violent
2. Unsafe neighborhood
3. Lack of connection to adults in neighborhood
Recommended Efforts to Address Student Dropout and Bullying

1. Address school climate
2. Support and encourage student & family engagement
3. Supervise students academically & behaviorally

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Bullying in Schools: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2011

- School engagement protects victims from truancy and low academic achievement.
- When schools provide a safe learning environment in which adults model positive behavior, they can mitigate the negative effects of bullying.
- Any interventions to address bullying or victimization should be intentional, student-focused engagement strategies that fit the context of the school where they are used.

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What Might Help Students Stay in School

More than half (57%) felt their schools did not do enough to help students feel safe from violence.

Seven in ten (71%) said their schools did not do enough to make school interesting.

Build a school climate that fosters academics.

Seven in ten favored increasing supervision in school and more than three in five (62%) felt more classroom discipline was necessary.

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Bridgeland et al., 2006
Quick Fact #6

Nearly 70% of students think schools respond poorly to bullying.

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Ten Practical Strategies from the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

1. Schoolwide effort
2. Assess climate and bullying
3. Form team to coordinate the efforts
4. Train all staff
5. Adopt rules against bullying
6. Involve students in regular discussions
7. Increase adult supervision
8. Intervene appropriately & consistently
9. Engage families
10. Continue efforts over time
In conclusion

Victims of bullying are associated with an increased risk of dropping out of school (Gastic, 2008).

The link between bullying and dropping out requires serious attention (Nansel et al., 2001).
Thank you

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