



Bullying in Our Nation's Schools: Where Do We Go from Here?

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The Problem:

Bullying is a widespread social problem affecting young people in schools. Approximately 1 in 5 elementary school students and 1 in 10 middle school students in the United States are bullied regularly. Estimates suggest that 1.6 million students are bullied at least weekly, causing psychosocial harm and impairing the educational mission of our schools.

Research Evidence:

- Approximately 30 percent of school children within a given semester in the United States, or roughly 5.7 million students, are involved in bullying incidents as either a bully or a victim.
- Children from families with low socioeconomic status, divorce or separation, harsh home environments, or child abuse may be at higher risk for both bullying and victimization.
- Bullying and victimization are not exclusive categories, and many students are both victim and bully.
- Boys more often engage in direct bullying, whereas girls more often engage in indirect methods.
- Eighty-eight percent of junior high and high school students have witnessed bullying in their schools.
- Twenty-four percent of GLBTQ students under the age of 18 have been physically attacked by peers, 44 percent have been verbally attacked by peers, and 40 percent of these attacks have taken place in schools.
- Bullying is often cloaked in fear and secrecy, so it remains unknown to parents, teachers, and other adults.

Proposed Solutions:

- Lawmakers should implement federal legislation identifying bullying as a social problem, defining bullying behaviors, and obligating individual schools and teachers to enforce this policy.
- School administrators should foster the sense of a caring majority and appreciation for diversity.
- Classrooms should establish clear rules against bullying and identify the mechanisms for filing complaints.
- Individual educators should engage in serious talks about diversity and bullying with students as part of curriculum and informal discussions.

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