

Primary Prevention of School Bullying

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*“We don’t have time
to do our [standardized testing] curriculum as it is
and then they throw [bullying prevention
curriculum] in and it’s like okay we got 5 hours to
do this [standardized testing] and you gave us 7
hours of mandatory stuff,
So what’s gonna go?”*

Abstract

Elementary school bullying behavior has become a serious public health concern, affecting youth mentally and physically with poor outcomes extending into adulthood. Programs that are most successful at preventing bullying focus on primary prevention and involve school staff, students and parents. A Bay Area elementary school was selected to assess the existence, implementation and need for primary prevention methods to prevent bullying behavior. This study describes a model of bullying prevention practices that are currently used in Bay Area elementary schools. Twenty-three school administrators and teachers were interviewed using an open-ended questionnaire. Although several prevention techniques exist, implementation is neither consistent nor comprehensive. Only two of 17 teachers utilized bullying prevention curriculum regularly. Staff revealed varying definitions of bullying and the school did not have a standard definition in place. Furthermore, a protocol was non-existent and staff utilized different methods of discipline in response to bullying. Finally, prevention efforts rarely involved parents and children. Hindering bullying prevention practices include lack of time due to preparation for standardized testing, and pre-existing behaviors students learn from outside the classroom. Realistic and conscientious methods for preventing bullying must include a standard definition of bullying and a clear action plan for uniformity in dealing with bullying incidents. Furthermore, community efforts to involve parents and students would create awareness and cohesiveness for shared responsibility. Finally, policy reform to mandate bullying prevention curriculum would emphasize consistent implementation. Additionally, this study calls for exploration of how curricular emphasis on standardized testing limits opportunities for bullying prevention.