



Creating Respectful Climates and Diminishing Bullying Behaviors: Best Practices

Community Schools: Creating The Conditions
For Learning Conference
Baltimore, Maryland
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Expectations?

- What brought you here today?
- What would you like to know about?



The Bottom Line: Making It Happen

- Focusing on “climate”
- Appreciating the “continuum of violence”
- Understanding “respect”
- Reassessing goals: Exiting **Good People**
 - Creating the conditions for learning
 - Hierarchy of children’s needs
 - Product goals: Outcomes/Goals
 - Process goals: “How” we teach/mentor
- Developing a common language



Title IV: 21st Century Schools

Sec. 4002. Purpose

“The purpose of this part is to support programs that prevent violence in and around schools; ...that involve parents and communities; and that are coordinated with related Federal, State, school, and community efforts and resources to foster a safe and drug-free learning environment that supports academic achievement...”



Building School, Family & Community Partnerships

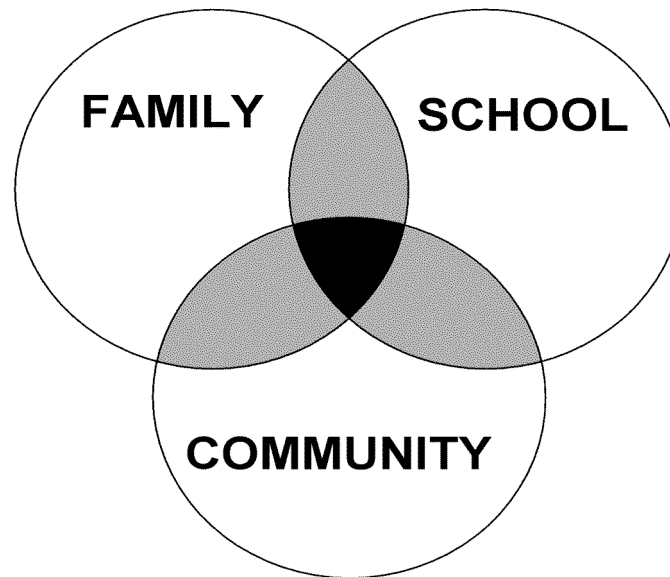
“What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children.”

- John Dewey, *The School and Society*

School-Family-Community Partnerships

“Schools, families and communities all contribute to student success, and the best results come when all three work together.”

CSBE Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships





The Nature of Respect

- Respect is an *earned quality*:
 - *First*, Adult toward Adult
 - *Second*, Adult toward Child
 - *Third*, Child toward Adult
 - *Finally*, Child toward Child



The Elements of Respect

Respect entails . . .

- Common courtesy
- Using given or chosen names
- Real listening
- Willingness to address, rather than ignore, difficult issues
- Capacity for empathy/compassion/caring
- Treating others fairly and appropriately
- Being honest, forthright and trustworthy
- Understanding and accepting of differences
- Recognizing that adults are fallible
- Learning to apologize



Mentors, Not Friends

- Must be friendly and compassionate
- Youth have friends
- Youth want and need adults to be:
 - Adults
 - Mentors
 - Guides
 - Parents
 - Teachers

A Call to Action:

Creating Climates of Respect

Creating respectful climates are among the most effective ways of improving the lives of children and creating positive learning environments



Levels of Climate

- Personal
 - Adult
 - Youth
- Small Group/Classroom
- School/Organization
- Community



Why “Climate” ?

- Issues with Nomenclature
 - Character Education
 - Values Clarification Education
 - Moral Education
 - Citizenship and Religion
- Politically Correct: Everyone is supportive
- No one questions the “content” of lessons
- Not a separate subject – integrated into all lessons and activities



The Continuum of Violence

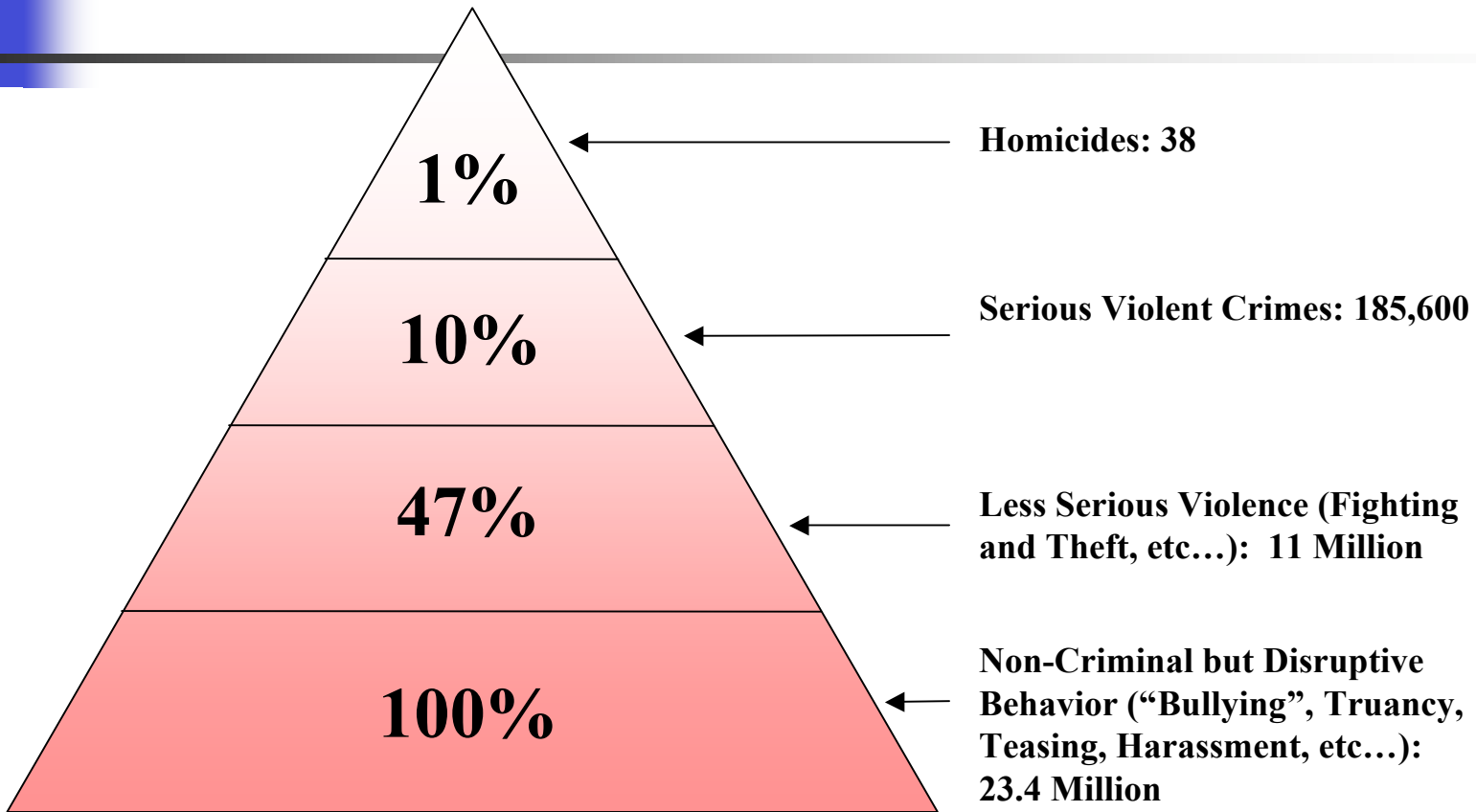
- Early manifestations
 - Exclusion
 - Teasing
 - Name-calling
- Threatening and/or “Real” bullying behavior
- Extreme physical violence
 - Homicide
 - Suicide



The “Bullying Phenomenon”

- “Bullying”: Misdiagnosing the Problem
 - Pre-School through Adulthood
- Definition of “Bullying”
 - 5-30% of the Population
 - Alienating Term
 - Label that sticks throughout childhood
 - Common Definition: Describes acts of harassment or intimidation that continue with regularity over a period of time (usually 6 months or more)
 - Mid-point in the continuum of violence

How Students Are Affected By Acts Of Violence In School



Percentages of Children Affected by the Spectrum of Violence in Schools



School Shooters: What They All Share

- Five necessary (not sufficient conditions)
 - Marginalized by their peers
 - Teased, ridiculed, excluded, etc.
 - Subjected to homophobic slurs
 - Under the “radar screen”
 - Marginalized by the adults who could have helped them
 - No caring adult they could count on
 - Personal problems
 - Mental health conditions
 - Family instability
 - Very rigid parameters for being acceptable
 - Being “different” is not acceptable
 - Easy access to guns



“Mean” Is A Better Way To Go

Any act of aggression by peers [or adults] that compromises the safety of the person being targeted for that aggression in any way has a tremendous and long-lasting negative impact on a student [or adult].

In various studies, 80-90% of youth claim to have been harassed or abused by peers.

Fun is only fun if everybody involved agrees that it's fun. Even without malicious intent, if it hurts, if it's mean, if it excludes, if it frightens, it will impact a person's sense of safety.



Recent Brain Research and the Effects of Stress

- Hierarchy of Needs
 - Food
 - Shelter
 - Clothing
 - Emotional safety
- Fright or Flight situation
 - Deer in the road example
- Chemical changes
 - PET scans
- Long term memory affected
 - Cortex changes



The Origins and Etiology of Violent/Aggressive Behavior

- Such behaviors begin early in the child's life.
 - Experiences yield behavior which matches what they see as "normal"
- Such behaviors are nurtured and supported by adults.
 - Children need to learn limits about when and where to be aggressive
- Adults overlook the signs and symptoms of problematic and violent behavior.
 - Aggressive behaviors are often seen as "normal"
- Such behavior tends to grow and develop.
- Often, there are mental health issues that are ignored or overlooked.



Changing Social Norms

- Children who come from aggressive environments predicts what they see as *normal* behavior
- Altering what kids experience as being normal behavior
 - Modeling
 - Life experiences in home/school/community environments
 - Media
- Altering what what older children believe is normal behavior
 - Not “cool” to fight, smoke, drink, do drugs, etc.
- Long term and never ending effort



Diminishing Violence/Aggression

- Violence is a complex puzzle
- We must employ comprehensive, multi-dimensional strategies
- Long-term
- Never ending (analogies with smoking & litter)



Solutions Through Conventional Wisdom: Intervention Without Prevention

- Peer mediation
 - Perpetrator relishes the attention
 - Victim fears retaliation
- Interventions with victims
 - Build confidence
 - Walk away
 - Be more assertive
 - Build self-esteem
- Interventions with perpetrators
 - Explain and chastise
 - Discipline
- Ignore the majority of the middle: the bystanders
 - Feel “stuck” and powerless



“Empathy” As Antidote For Aggression

- Having compassion for others
- Being able to perceive the feelings of others
- Learning to be empathic diminishes levels of aggression



Deal With the Aggressor

- Isolate the *aggressive* individual
- Must earn the right to rejoin the social group



Interventions with Target

- Help them to develop positive social behaviors
 - Usually excluded and/or teased because of irritating habits and behaviors
- Help them achieve a strong circle of real friends
 - Those with a strong support system are far less likely to be targets of aggression



Prevention as well as Intervention

Simultaneous with appropriate interventions with aggressors and those they target ***must*** be a focus on the overall climate in which these behaviors are allowed to happen. Without such a multi-level approach, no real progress will be achieved.



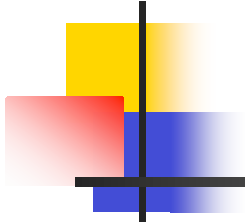
Language that Works:

*“We don’t do that
in our school.”*



Toward a New “Zero Tolerance” Attitude

- Zero tolerance for:
 - Name-calling
 - Teasing
 - Exclusion
 - Ridicule
 - Hazing
 - Harassing
 - Threatening
 - Bullying
 - Put-downs



This new kind of “Zero
Tolerance”

will help to develop and maintain
climates of respect wherever
youth learn and socialize



A Familiar Nursery Rhyme: Unfortunate Myth...And Reality

“Sticks and stones can break your bones, but names will never hurt you.”

“Sticks and stones will break my bones...And Words CAN Hurt Forever.”

Words **DO** hurt



The Nature of Teasing

- Good Teasing
 - Where everyone involved feels respected
- Unintentional Bad Teasing
 - Where the teaser doesn't intend to hurt the other's feelings
- Intentional Bad Teasing
 - Where the teasing is used to put the person down and/or silence the target
 - Vehicle of social climbing

Popularity: Two Sides Of The Coin



- Good Popularity
 - When a student is genuinely liked because she/he is nice to everyone
 - The legacy of Alex
- Bad/"Evil" Popularity
 - "She/he is the meanest to everyone"
 - "People live in fear of her/him"
 - "She/he has all the power and she/he will crush you"

Are Bad Words A Big Deal?



- Yes, they are!
- Rude
- Uneducated communication
- Words have power; especially those that become ordinary language
- Words are truly “deadly weapons” that enter our schools and community settings on a daily basis

Respect Revisited



The “Golden Rule” as the
ultimate measure:

*Treat others the way in
which you would wish
to be treated*



Even Better...

The *Platinum* Rule:
Treat others the way
they wish you would
treat them



The Role of the Bystander

- An “innocent bystander” is an oxymoron
- If a person is not an active part of the solution, she or he is affected by the problem, and helps to perpetuate the problem
- Bystanders must become *allies*



Tattling and Telling . . .

- Tattling
 - getting someone *in* trouble
 - a form of teasing
- Telling
 - dangerous
 - hurtful
 - getting someone *out of* trouble
 - adults must listen
 - children must be heard



Breaking The Student “Code Of Silence”

- Many problems are not reported
- Adult reception is cold - discourage further student reporting
- “Telling” makes the situation worse
- Penalty for going public
- Fear of retribution
- Double violation: for initial pain and then for the aftermath of telling



Ethical Communication Methods

- The “Platinum Rule” as the measure for all we do:
 - Talking with colleagues
 - Talking with parents
 - Talking with youth
 - Requests that we make
 - Discipline and reminders



Adult Modeling: We are all Models...We might as well be Good Ones

- Language Use
- Moral Behavior
- Demonstrating Compassion
- Elements of Respect
- Listening
- Mentorship, not Friendship
- Conflict Resolution
- Display of Common Courtesy



Important Measures

- Everyone should arrive with a smile on their face and end the day the same way
- Look around the school or organization and notice any positive-affirmation slogans and posters that are posted on the walls.
 - Ask the question:
 - If I were a student on the lowest rung of my school's/ organization's pecking order, would these posters reflect my experience at this school/ organization?



Achieving Real Change

- Programs as tools
- Change does not happen through programmatic or curricular additions
- What is being taught through the hidden curriculum: when the books are closed...
- Creating true collaborative partnerships among schools and families and communities
 - Understanding and appreciating different expertise
- Common standards and expectations for youth and adults

“It’s just about impossible to conquer any problem if it is never discussed.”

William Pollack, Real Boys

Youth do not learn to solve these kinds of problems and get along by themselves. We need to teach and work with them.



Creating a Caring Majority

- 20% of the population begins change
- Shared primary goal: 100 % of school
- Give youth permission to stand up for each other
- Adult modeling
- Adults cannot do it alone



Modeling Behavior

The role of adults as moral agents and exemplars:

- Parents
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Support Staff
- Other School/After School Personnel
- Community Members



The Responsibility for the Safety of Children: A Metaphor For All

- Adults must accept responsibility not just for their own classes and groups, but for the entire school community:
 - Buses
 - Halls and stairwells
 - Cafeterias
 - Bathrooms
 - Locker rooms
 - Playgrounds
 - Community



Creating A Learning Community Of Respect: Action Planning

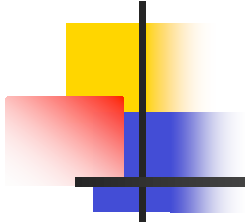
- What actions address **individual** needs?
- What actions focus on the **classroom**?
- What actions embrace the **school** as a whole?
- What actions reach into the greater **community**?

Climates of Respect: Schools, Families and Communities Working Together



Not an add-on: a necessity

Schools and community organizations
should be modeling the best and
working collaboratively together to make
progress



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