

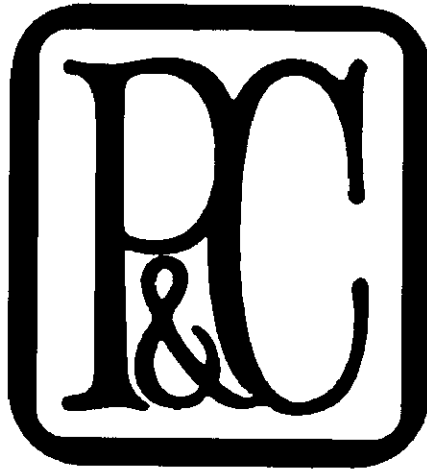
**Submission
No 54**

INQUIRY INTO BULLYING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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Date received: 2/04/2009

**Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations
of New South Wales**

SUBMISSION



**NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING
COMMITTEE NO. 2**

Inquiry into the bullying of children and young people

March 2009

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PREAMBLE¹

The Federation is committed to a free public education system which is open to all people, irrespective of culture, gender, academic ability and socio-economic class and empowers students to control their own lives and be contributing members of society.

This commitment is based on the belief that:

- All students have the capacity to learn;
- The Government has prime responsibility to provide an education system open to all, which is free and secular;
- Schools should be structured to meet the needs of individual students and should respect the knowledge those students bring to school and build on that knowledge to foster their understanding about the world.

Parents as partners in the education process, have a right and a responsibility to play an active role in the education of the children.

P&C Federation and its representatives share a responsibility of ensuring representative decision making for the benefit of all students.

INTRODUCTION

'Around 50 per cent of children are bullied at some time during their school life, and approximately 10 per cent are bullied on a regular basis. In 2000, Kids Helpline received almost 7000 calls about bullying, making it one of the top three concerns for children between the ages of 5 and 14.' (Meerlinga Young Children's Foundation, 2001)

The Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales is the peak representative body of NSW public school parents - a community group that most definitely has the best interests of our nations children at heart. As such the Federation welcomes this opportunity to convey its opinions, priorities and recommendations to the New South Wales Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 in regard to the Inquiry into the bullying of children and young people.

The Federation believes that education should be free of all forms of sexual, religious and racial discrimination, as well as discrimination on the basis of disabilities or socio-economic circumstances. This lack of discrimination should be clearly reflected in school organisation, teaching programs and materials, and interpersonal relationships within the school community.²

RESPONSES TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

- | |
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| 1. The nature, level and impact of bullying among school age children and young people under the age of 18, including apprentices and trainees |
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¹ Preamble of Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW. 2008 P&C Handbook (6)

² Premise 2.1F Freedom from discrimination P&C Handbook 2008 (73)

What is Bullying?

Bullying can generally be defined primarily in terms of the bully as a person: "when a more powerful person hurts, frightens, or intimidates a weaker person on a continual and deliberate basis."³

There are different types of bullying that the victim can experience consisting of:

Physical bullying:

Physical bullying consist of actions such as 'hitting; slapping, kicking; pushing; shoving; poking, tripping stealing, hiding, or ruining someone's things and making somebody do things he/she doesn't want to do.'⁴

Verbal bullying:

Name calling; teasing, making insulting, deriding remarks, making racist remarks⁵

Relational/social bullying.

Refusing to talk to someone, persuading others to exclude or reject someone, spreading lies or rumours about someone, making someone do things he/she does not want to do.⁶

There are usually three participants in the bullying process consisting of the Bully, the target (victim) and the bystander.

Bully: is usually a person who likes to feel strong and superior who uses what power they can muster over others to hurt.

The Victim(target): Usually stands out to the bully as different in some way which the bully perceives as a weakness and the bully appears to despise.

Bystander. Bystanders are usually the people who are around when the bullying incident occurs and may connect with the bully, thinking that the bully is cool or entertaining. Or the bystander could be afraid that the bully would turn on him/her.

The increasing use of technology has seen the rise of bullies invading the "personal safe space" of young people at home and at school. This has occurred through social sites such as Myspace, Facebook and via SMS. Young people can be bullied through instant messaging, social networking sites such as Facebook, text messaging, e-mail and interactive games. These invade their safe haven of the home unless the victim is willing to cut all ties with technology.

Impact of Bullying on young people under the age of 18, including apprentices and trainees.

³ McNamee A & Mercurio M, (2008) School-wide Intervention in the Childhood Bullying triangle; Childhood Education; 2008; 84; 6 p370

⁴ McNamee A & Mercurio M, (2008) School-wide Intervention in the Childhood Bullying triangle; Childhood Education; 2008; 84; 6 p370

⁵ McNamee A & Mercurio M, (2008) School-wide Intervention in the Childhood Bullying triangle; Childhood Education; 2008; 84; 6 p370

⁶ Bullies: Innocent bystanders. Retrieved 6th March 2009, from <http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/friends/bullies/article5.html>

There are both psychological and physical outcomes of bullying. The tendency to be victimized by bullies has been commonly associated with low self-esteem, shyness, and feelings of isolation.⁷ A relationship has also been observed between the tendency to bully and depression in both males and females. Increased fear and anxiety may become an everyday part of the lives of the students who are bullied, as they go to great lengths to avoid bullies and the places they frequent. Victims of bullying also had lower scores on social acceptance, scholastic competence, and global self-worth than non-bullied students.⁸

Bullies were three to four times more likely to experience health issues such as headaches, gastric distress, and insomnia.⁹ Many studies supported the view that both bullies and their victims are at risk for psychological and physical problems, and that these problems can have long-lasting consequences.¹⁰

Recent events in the news have showed us that bullying when young people have experienced bullying and it escalates to a point where they can no longer cope it can result in suicide.

2. Factors contributing to bullying

There are many factors which contribute to bullying consisting of and have been characterized by many researchers to relate to the profiles of the Bullies and Targets.

A study by Beaty and Alexeyev found that the motivation for bullying for boys consisted of: didn't fit in, physically weak, short-tempered, who their friends were, and the clothes they wore.¹¹

For girls, didn't fit in, facial appearance, cried/was emotional, overweight and good grades.¹²

The most popular reason for students bullying others was the desire to feel powerful, followed by a desire for attention. Many bullies may have experienced one of the following environmental factors:

- Poor attachment relationships
- Insufficient positive attention
- Distressed family situations
- Aggressive treatment
- Negative role models
- Being rewarded for aggressive behaviour
- Problems in school
- Exposure to a lot of media violence
- Few and poor friendships

⁷ McNamee A & Mercurio M, (2008) School-wide Intervention in the Childhood Bullying triangle; Childhood Education; 2008; 84; 6 p370

⁸ McNamee A & Mercurio M, (2008) School-wide Intervention in the Childhood Bullying triangle; Childhood Education; 2008; 84; 6 p370

⁹ Beaty L A, Alexeyev E.B (2008) The problem of school bullies: what the research tells us; Adolescence; Spring 2008;43; 169

¹⁰ Harvey . M, Treadway D, Heames. J, Duke. A, (2009) Bullying in the 21st Century Global Organisation: An Ethical Perspective, Journal of Business Ethics 85:27 – 40

¹¹ Beaty L A, Alexeyev E.B (2008) The problem of school bullies: what the research tells us; Adolescence; Spring 2008;43; 169

¹² Beaty L A, Alexeyev E.B (2008) The problem of school bullies: what the research tells us; Adolescence; Spring 2008;43; 169

- Absence of being taught about or accepting a value system for caring for and not hurting others.

The Federation of Parents and citizens perceives that these factors can cause frustration, angst, jealousy, pecking order, financial, socio-economic situations which may result in bullying of students who seem to be weaker or 'different' to what the bully is use to and aware of.

3. Prevention and early intervention approached to address bullying, including 'cyber-bullying'

Prevention measures and Early intervention

Many resources which are presently available focused on the after effects of bullying, once somebody has realised that bullying is occurring and how to deal with the issue. However, like all problems there are ways to prevent the issue from arising.

The Federation of Parents and citizen's Association believes that the following prevention measures can be used to address the bullying issues from the position of the various parties involved consisting of the target, bully and bystander.

- Teachers having regular discussions with student about their social relationships with other children at school.
- Limiting exposure of young people to violence and bullying portrayed in the media through Video games and TV Shows.
- Educating children about the role of bystanders who witness others being bullied. Many adults and young people are afraid to stand up for the victim in bullying situations fearing that they may be the next victim. Young people need to be assured that help is available if required and that they shouldn't tolerate bullying.
- Introducing an award system to encourage great behaviour with a gold star next to their name. 10 stars may mean a early mark for lunch whereas those who have upset another student could be asked to write an apology letter or to pick up rubbish at lunch time.
- Parents of the bully and target are informed of the incident so that further incidents don't occur and the both the bully and person who has been bullied can receive the required assistance.

4. Co-ordination and co-operation between relevant government agencies to address bullying

Federation believes that bullying is a social issue in today's society which needs to be addressed. Co-ordination and co-operation is required between relevant government agencies in order to address the bullying issues. With the rise of technologies such as social networks online and use of computers at schools extensive research is required into monitoring and preventing actions like bullying in schools and in trainee workplaces.

Many schools have anti bullying policies already in place however, these policies need constant review and development. Information may be sent to schools and in many cases the information may sit in the schools office and may not be used or applied.

Communication needs to be made and information shared across relevant government agencies and schools in regards to effective anti -bullying intervention and programs that can be shared across the state

and can be monitored. Government agencies may need to assist schools with training up staff to implement anti bullying programs where required and provide staff where sufficient staff are not available.

Despite having the necessary tools and ability to disseminate the information many schools and society don't deal with the bullying issue well. People tend to avoid conflict and situations that they see could have a negative effect on future activities such as parents not sending children to a certain school because of previous issues of bullying. Co-ordination and co-operation between relevant government agencies needs to occur to get a positive message out to schools and to the general public about anti-bullying and way to prevent these negative effects from occurring.

The recent launch of the Bullying: No way site is a perfect example of coordination and co-operation. This site provides information about bullying and resources to help to prevent or intervene with the issues. Schools and other organisations who work or educate young people where bullying may occur can share information programs or ideas that researchers, teachers, parents and young people themselves have found to be effective.¹³

5. The evidence-base for effective anti-bullying approaches

Various intervention methods have been recommended by various parties in regards to addressing bullying. The *Immediate Intervention by adults*¹⁴ has been found to be quite useful by many researchers as "Bullying is most likely to occur whenever adult intervention is unlikely."¹⁵

This method consist of:

Immediate Intervention by Adults

Intervention needs to focus on each participant involved in the bullying situation. Immediate intervention involves immediately stopping the bullying when this seems possible. It depends on the adult being present and requires the adult to act quickly and understand when immediate physical intervention will not provoke violence. Intervention may be in the form of referring to relevant school rules against bullying or supporting the victim. A follow up meeting will be required for the bully and target to show that an adult is closely watching them to ensure there is no repetition of events.

Intervention with the Bully

Adults can defuse bullying behaviour and help a child who is a bully, Children who are bullies have either grown up being bullied at some point in their life, or are in need of some type of caring.

Intervention with the target

Children who are bullied often do not wish to involve adults in the school for fear of worse retaliation from the bully. The first step is creating a schools environment in which targeted children feel safe enough to tell an adult about their problems.

¹³ Bullying. No way. (2009) Retrieved 7th March from <http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/>

¹⁴ McNamee A & Mercurio M, (2008) School-wide Intervention in the Childhood Bullying triangle; *Childhood Education*; 2008; 84; 6 p370

¹⁵ Flynt & Morton (2004) Bullying and children with disabilities, *Journal of instructional psychology* 31 (4), 330 – 333

Intervention with bystanders

Young people who are bystanders in the bullying process make up the majority of the school's population. The majority, if taught correctly, could have the most power. If teachers, parents and administrators can teach the bystanders what to do to stop the bullying, fewer episodes may take place.

Australia was one of the first countries to launch national bullying prevention programs in 1999.¹⁶ However, the problem still seems to persist. Most schools in NSW have an anti-bullying policy implemented into their schools policies. Anti bullying plans for schools provided by the Department of Education and Training NSW has been provided for all government schools across NSW .

International anti bullying approaches.

Other programs that have been reported as "programs that work" overseas consist of:

- **The Olweus Bullying Prevention program**

This program was created by Dan Olweus who was considered a pioneer in bully research. Developed in the 1970's this program is a school based program designed for students ages 6-15 years old. This bullying prevention program has schoolwide components including training for the staff, a bullying prevention committee, a school wide kick off event, parental involvement, and staff discussion groups. Classroom components include holding regular class meetings and consistent reinforcement of school rules against bullying.¹⁷

- **Bullying proofing your school**

A program implemented in Colorado in 1996 intended for elementary and middle school students. It is a comprehensive school-wide program designed to create a safe and caring school environment by taking the power out of the hands of the bullies and placing it into the hands of a caring community. School-wide components include staff training, student instructions, support for the victims, parent support, and the development of caring communities.¹⁸

- **Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies**

This curriculum program promotes social and emotional strategies and helps to reduce aggression in elementary children. It is designed to be used by teachers and counsellors in a multi-year format and is effective with children in both general and special education classrooms. The PATHS program focuses on: identifying, labelling, expressing, managing and assessing feelings; understanding the differences between feelings and behaviours; learning to control impulses; stress reduction and reading and interpreting social cues.¹⁹

- **Steps to Respect Program.**

This bullying prevention curriculum is designed to decrease bullying at school and help students create positive relationships with their peers. The program is based on research showing that friendship can help protect children from being bullied. The program concentrates on elementary-age children in grades 3-5

¹⁶ Department of Education and training;(2008) Supporting students Anti bullying: retrieved on March 8th 2009 from <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/behaviourpgms/antibullying/index.php>

¹⁷ Olweus Bullying prevention program retrieved 6th March 2009, from www.clemson.edu/olweus/.

¹⁸ Bully-proofing your school. Retrieved 10th March 2009, from www.creatingcaringcommunities.org

¹⁹ Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS). Retrieved February 22nd 2009 from www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/programs/PATHS.html

who learn such skills as: coping with bullying, general friendship skills, emotion management and bystander intervention. The staff and parents are taught how to report acts of bullying, how to respond to children who bully, and how to help the targets of the bully.²⁰

6. Approaches to address bullying in Australian and overseas jurisdictions

The Federation of parents and citizens Associations recommends the following:

- Resilience training for students
- Rock and Water or similar programs (Research into the societal problems of bullying culture and that this is replicated by students from the examples they see in society.) - Rock and Water offers teachers a new way to interact with boys through physical-social teaching (though the program can also be taught to girls). Physical exercises are constantly linked with mental and social skills. The program leads from simple self-defence, on to boundary and communication exercises, and then to a strong notion of self-confidence. The program offers a framework of exercises and ideas about boys and manhood to assist boys to become aware of purpose and motivation in their life. Topics include: intuition, body language, mental strength, empathic feeling, positive thinking and positive visualising. Discussion topics include bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, life goals, desires and following an inner compass.)²¹
- Staffing funding so that schools can implement programs correctly and on a regular basis
- There are good programs which have been provided to schools but often end up in the Principal's office or the storeroom – these should be taken out and used within the school as they are often good programs and inexpensive to implement.
- Need programs that are evidenced based such as problem-based learning instead of ones that people are trying to sell with very little evidence of success. With proven programs, they should be publicised to other schools. PBL projects are carefully designed by experts to expose participants to the information and skills that they are required to learn. When assigned a project, participants are given:
 - A statement of the problem
 - Questions to consider when solving the problem;
 - A framework for the time and effort you should spend on the project;
 - Support from the school.²²
- Continuity of program that are working well within schools and regions. Sometimes program funding is removed (maybe part of a three year cycle for example) just when outcomes are beginning to look really good.
- Parent/student education on bullying types e.g. exclusion, gossiping
- Continuity of personnel who initiated, implemented and ran programs is assured. Cross training of other personnel when programs are in place.

²⁰ Steps to Respect Program. Retrieved 8th march 2009 from www.cfchildren.org

²¹ Ykema, F, (2006) The Family Action Centre proudly presents Gadaku Institute - rock and water program - a professional development course presented by *freerk ykema* teaching boys - self confidence self control and self respect, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle pamphlet.

²² Interactive SBL Problem based learning retrieved on 11th March 2009 from <http://www.pblinteractive.org/Scenarios/ProblemBasedLearning/tabid/331/Default.aspx>

- Support systems for staff with early recognition and monitoring of difficult areas. Unrealistic workplace demands produce stress and can assist with situations conducive to bullying opportunities.
- A curriculum that allows for engagement of students, relevance. If not stimulated, student become bored and then poor behaviour and bullying occurs.
- Support for parents to assist with parenting skills – Early intervention – parents as Teacher, burnside and similar good beginning/better Future programs.

Conclusion

The Federation views that it is important to emphasize that schools are the living world of students the place where young people spend majority of their time and forms the foundation of their education. It is important that young people feel safe and comfortable. Bullying is a major issue affecting the lives of many young people not only at school but with easy access to social networks online bullying invades the 'safe' and personal space of many young people's lives. Schools, parents and institutions working with young people need to ensure that prevention and intervention measures are in place.

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