

Bullying, Harassment and Social Exclusion in Jewish Schools: Unique Opportunities and Challenges to Promote Positive Peer Culture

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Introduction

“Much have I learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but most from my students” *Talmud, Ta’anit 7b*

Educators who speak with students about their school experiences quickly learn that school is as much a social setting as it is an academic one. As such, it can contribute to children’s sense of self and belonging, or it can fuel self-doubt and reinforce loneliness. Schools’ increasing focus on addressing their social climate, and promoting students’ social development has been motivated, in part by the growing body of research demonstrating the clear connection between academic and social-behavioral issues (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith., 2006; Goldberg, 2005) Among the most pressing reasons for schools to address peer culture, however, is the cost of not addressing it. Depression, alienation, and even suicide and violence are possible outcomes for students who cannot find their social niche (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Jewish schools have unique, compelling reasons for addressing peer relationships and social issues. Character education is not an afterthought in religious, value-based education. It is central to Torah living, and to Torah-based education. Jewish educators

therefore, have significant opportunities and avenues to support the development of positive peer culture. Secular educators may bemoan the extent of bullying, peer cruelty, or poor social skills in their schools, blaming inadequate time or the failure of their curriculum to address these critical issues. Jewish educators, however, must explore how and why in settings where the spirit and *halakhot* of *ve-ahavta le-rei`akha kamokha* is regularly and repeatedly taught, these negative peer phenomena persist.

This paper will address the critical issue of developing a positive peer culture in schools. Jewish schools are already investing time and effort in this crucial task. This discussion will focus on the negative phenomenon of bullying as an example of a concrete issue that schools can successfully address. It is sobering to realize that our schools are not all they can be, but it is the author's hope that this paper will uplift rather than depress. If we focus on bully prevention as both an end in itself, and a means to fulfill Jewish schools' larger mission to create socially responsible and responsive *mensch*es and leaders, then addressing bullying becomes a necessity, and a privilege.

Bullying and related social difficulties are complex, and may manifest quite differently at different developmental levels. An exhaustive discussion of social development and bullying is beyond the scope of this paper. The focus, here will be on students of upper elementary and middle school grades, as the research on bully prevention centers on those years when the frequency of bullying is the highest.

This paper follows the sequence required for effective bully prevention. First one must understand the **Rationale for Bully Prevention**. Next, it is critical to explore the **Scope of the Problem and Issues in Definition**. Before beginning bullying programs, schools need accurate information about the **Characteristics of Bullies, Victims and**

Bystanders, and whether there are critical **Gender Issues**. The **Components of Effective Bully Prevention** must be included. Finally, **Practical Recommendations** are often needed to address particular issues.

Rationale for Bully Prevention

There has been considerable debate over whether students' autonomy and self-expression is compromised by moral or social-emotional education. An increasing number of researchers and theorists support the clear imperative for schools to transmit not only knowledge, but values. As reports of school violence and students' cruelty to each other continue to emerge, Sommers cautions:

“Leaving students to discover their own values is a little like putting them in a chemistry lab full of volatile substances and saying, “Discover your own compounds, kids.” We should not be surprised when some blow themselves up and destroy those around them.” (2006, p. 37)

In Jewish educational settings, character education, and focusing on the social-emotional learning of students should be less controversial. Schools wishing to address it, however, feel the burden of completing other curricula and supporting students' academic success. Research on the positive academic benefits of addressing the behavioral, social and emotional world of the student should provide reassurance that it is a worthy investment.

The impact school and class social climate have on academic outcomes has been consistently documented (Fraser, 1998, Moos & Moos, 1978) including the positive impact character education and social emotional learning initiatives have on grades and

test scores. Benninga et al., (2006) cite four character education/social emotional learning programs with documented impact on academics. Schools employing the Peaceful Schools Project or the Responsive Classroom approach reported greater gains on standardized test scores. Similarly, middle school students who attended elementary schools utilizing the Child Development Project fared better both in class grades obtained and on achievement tests, as did students in schools participating in the Seattle Social Development Project.

Concerned that the data represented the relatively limited number of schools utilizing pre-packaged character education programs, Benninga and colleagues undertook an examination of the impact of a wider variety of character education approaches on academic outcome. In a sample of 120 California elementary schools they found a positive relationship between the extent to which character education was implemented and current and future academic achievement in both language and mathematics. They conclude that good quality character education is “positively associated with academic achievement, both across academic domains and over time” (Benninga et al., 2006 p. 2).

Another area of study of school climate supports the rationale for and relevance of character education. School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) requires that schools create clear behavioral expectations for all students, provide necessary instruction to allow students to meet those expectations, and offer incentives for students who demonstrate both effort and success (OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2004). Through this focus on clear behavioral and social expectations, PBIS attempts to impact overall school culture. An approach that is founded on data-driven decision making, data on PBIS schools is collected and analyzed

regularly. Understanding the need to tie behavioral and social improvements to academic achievement, Putnam, Horner, and Algozzine. (2006) summarized data on the academic benefits of effective PBIS implementation. Assuming that time in instruction is an important contributor to academic success, the authors reported gains of the equivalent of 169 days of instruction in a six month period in PBIS schools compared with similar schools in an urban setting. They document a 24% increase in on-task behavior in classrooms using positive behavior support. The authors report significant impact of PBIS on grades and standardized test performance, with reading and math percentile ranks increasing between 18 and 25 percentage points. A review of Illinois PBIS schools found that 62 percent of their students met third grade state reading standards, compared with 47 percent of students in non-PBIS schools, further supporting the connection between behavioral and social environment and academic outcome.

Are there academic benefits to addressing bullying in particular, beyond those demonstrated for character education in general? A large scale study of bullying in the United States documented a significant association between involvement in bullying and student perception of academic achievement (Nansel, et al., 2001). Whether students were bullies, victims, or both, they had significantly lower achievement scores than bystanders. The cross-sectional design of the research did not allow determination of causality; did bullying place students at academic risk or vice versa? Prior research has documented the negative impact being bullied has on concentration, a clear requirement for academic success. The authors caution that since studies of bullying and school outcome focus on achievement scores, a narrow indicator of school success, “a number of important things learned in school such as social skills, ability to collaborate, ability to

accept criticism and learn from it, helping others, persistence when facing problems, ability to pay attention, and a host of other skills” are being ignored (p. 1030). A longitudinal study of over 1,500 students in their first year of middle school confirmed that victimization in the fall predicts poor academic functioning in the spring (Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005). The bullying- academic connection is both strong and pervasive. Nansel and colleagues (Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004) expanded their study of bullying and school adjustment to 25 countries, including the United States and Israel. Significantly worse school adjustment in students involved in bullying, whether as bullies or victims persisted in all but one country.

Dual curriculum schools, challenged with meeting academic standards in reduced time, may fear that focus on social or emotional issues will interfere with meeting curricular goals. Cohen, Kress and Elias (2002) argue that as is true in secular settings, focus on social and affective tone in the learning environment is not only helpful, but “crucial for complete academic, social, emotional and Jewish growth” (p. 22). Jewish schools strive to create graduates with a strong affiliation to Jewish values and practices. Critical goals in their own right, these goals are that much more pressing given the research that failure to create affiliation contributes to a score of other difficulties for Jewish youth. Students who become disenfranchised or alienated are more likely to engage in anti-religious and high-risk behavior such as substance abuse. (Pelcovitz, 2005)

Bullying is a phenomenon that touches every level of school functioning, from the individual student to the classroom to school-wide culture. When a school successfully addresses bullying, it cannot help but create a positive social culture with benefits far and above simply decreasing bullying behavior. Such schools not only see improved grades;

their students exhibit greatly improved behavior and decreased substance abuse in later years (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

Scope of the Problem and Issues in Definition

Research suggests that bullying is a part of the school experience for virtually all students. The National Resource Center for Safe Schools (NRCSS) released estimates in 2001 that suggest 30% of American students are *regularly* involved in bullying, as bullies, victims or both. Advances in technology have increased the spread, frequency and variety of bullying, creating more and different bullies and victims (Smith, et al., 2008). As the US Department of Education argues, others are significantly affected as well: “Children and teens who regularly witness bullying at school suffer from a less secure learning environment, the fear that the bully may target them next, and the knowledge that teachers and other adults are either unable or unwilling to control bullies’ behavior” (1998).

To date, no studies of bullying in American Jewish schools have been published.. International research confirms that Israeli rates of bullying are similar to those in United States public schools (Nansel et al., 2004). Research on the BRAVE bully prevention curriculum has included student surveys of over 2000 middle school students in US co-educational Jewish day schools. Preliminary review of the first year data (approximately 800 students) reveals rates and patterns of bullying similar to those found in public schools in the United States (Novick, Winkler, Czarka, & Isaacs, 2009).

Bullying has been studied from Norway to New Zealand to Japan, and not surprisingly is both experienced and defined in various ways depending on the cultural

context. There is, however, significant consensus on three critical elements of definition: bullying is intentional, involves an imbalance of power, and causes harm. There is less agreement on the fine points of whether bullying requires a chronic, repeated process, and if it involves many against one, or can have a solo perpetrator (Olweus, 1993). For the purposes of this paper, we will define bullying as the deliberate use or abuse of power by one or more students to cause harm to another student. As such, this definition encapsulates the three agreed upon essential elements of bullying as follows:

Bullying is the **deliberate** (intentionality) **use or abuse of power** (power imbalance) **to cause harm** (causes harm) to another student.

There is a variety of ways in which students may attain power. Physical size is the most obvious, but social standing, academic or athletic skill, financial resources, attractiveness, position (i.e. class president), *protectzia* (who you are related to and/or who you know) and even membership in a particular cultural or ethnic group can empower students. In Jewish schools, many of which draw students from multiple segments of a community, power may derive from address (which side of town you inhabit), membership at a particular synagogue, country of origin, and parents' or other family members' positions in community and school organizations. The author has encountered power imbalances in *yeshivot* and day schools based on skin tone, and in immigrant schools, on status in the students' country of origin generations before emigration.

Intentionality, the purposeful nature of bullying is often obscured by perpetrators who excuse their behavior with the statement "I didn't mean to hurt him/her." No one enjoys being ridiculed, harassed or excluded. Typically, bullies explain their continued

cruelty by stating that the victim did not look or act upset. A seasoned eighth grade teacher provided the following example to the bullies in his class: In nature movies, you often see predators, such as lions, stalking a herd of antelope. An antelope that is wounded is compelled to “act” unhurt, to avoid becoming the predator’s next meal. “Is it possible”, this wise teacher asked, “that when classmates are hurt by your words or actions, they act unhurt to avoid additional attack?”

Although the clearest evidence of harm from bullying comes from physical bullying, social and emotional harm are actually more frequent. Emotional bullying involves teasing, name-calling, and other behaviors that damage a student’s self-esteem or mood. Social bullying are those actions which damage a student’s social standing, including social exclusion. This latter form of harm has contributed to the creation of the term relational aggression (Underwood, 2002). Despite researchers’ awareness of these varying forms of bullying, students may need to be educated to broaden their notion of bullying. A study of 14 year old students in England found that while over 90 percent identified verbal teasing and physical aggression as bullying, only 62 percent agreed that social exclusion qualified (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefoghe, 2002).

Characteristics of Bullies, Victims and Bystanders

Children’s literature and popular culture provide stereotyped portrayals of victims and bullies. From classic Disney movies such as 1001 Dalmatians, to modern films such as Toy Story, bullies are recognizable through their dress and obvious cruel behavior, lacking the subtlety seen in real-life situations. Movies and children’s stories may explain a bully’s cruelty as a response to mistreatment the bully experienced, and suggest that

such meanness can be reversed with extra kindness. In *The Berenstain Bears and the Bully* (Berenstain & Berenstain, 1993), a young bully develops when she is mistreated at home. The canine bully in *Martha Walks the Dog* (Maddaugh, 1998), after being mistreated by his owner, is reformed when he is called a “good dog”. Other bullies in literature are given a taste of their own cruelty, as in Caple’s picturebook *The Wimp* (1994). In this story, Arnold and his sister strand bullies who are spray painting the school on the roof, resulting in the bullies receiving punishment for their crimes. The story ends there, whereas one would wonder what retribution real world bullies might deliver to Arnold and family. The recent film *The Ant Bully* illustrated retribution and forced empathy as a boy who bullies ants is made to live among them and experience their struggles.

Bully plots in films (*Mean Girls*, *Radio*), television shows and children’s books often suggest that entrenched and on-going cruelty or social exclusion can be reversed with one dramatic intervention or within a 30 minute episode. The title character in Spinelli’s popular book *Loser* (2002), socially excluded from first through sixth grade, assists in the search for a missing child and is invited to join the popular students’ team. Howe’s *Pinky and Rex and the Bully* (1996) has a bully crumbling in the face of character’s new confidence. In the popular Mercer Mayer series, *Just a Bully* (1999), teachers are portrayed as unhelpful, exacerbating the bullying and recommending physical retaliation that would result in disciplinary action in virtually any school. Unfortunately, these fictional bullies and victims contribute to widely held but largely incorrect notions about bullying and the means necessary to address it.

Research documents the following characteristics of students who are frequently victimized (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Card, 2003):

- Shy
- Reactive, show extreme emotion when victimized
- Anxious
- Depressed
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social skills

The commonly held opinion that children are bullied because they are different in some physical or academic way has been largely proven wrong. Only two specific child characteristics result in victimization, being overweight or being perceived as having an atypical sexual orientation. Children with other physical differences become victims only when they are sufficiently reactive when teased or excluded. This reaction fuels the bullying. It is tempting, therefore, to “blame the victim”, arguing that they bring harassment upon themselves, either by provoking the bully, or by appearing weak and defenseless (Banks, 2000).

Secular settings may attempt to protect students by developing bully free zones, or zero tolerance policies. Torah based educational settings need only invoke the dictum *lifnei ivver lo titen mikshol* (Vayikra, 19:14). Bullying is a major roadblock for victims, and Torah educators and students cannot expect such victims to overcome it alone. The Torah reminds us, *v’ger lo tilhatz ve-atem yeda`tem et nefesh ha-ger ki gerim heyitem be-eretz mitzrayim*” (Shemot, 23:9), that all Jews were once victims, and we should therefore

have clear empathy for the victimized. Jewish educators can understand and teach that *no circumstances make bullying acceptable*.

With victimization comes serious physical, social and emotional sequelae. Depression is common, as is anxiety in students who are frequently bullies (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Victims report frequent somatic complaints, including head and stomach aches. In many cases, victims may experience impaired sleep and even bedwetting, and suicidal ideation is not uncommon (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, & Simons-Morton, 2001).

A great deal of myth and misinformation surrounds bullies. A common misconception is that bullies lash out at others as a result of poor self-esteem. In fact, research provides a very different picture. Persistent bullies are generally aggressive, and have a view of relationships that condones aggression as a means of achieving power and influence (Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004). Bullies have little empathy and desire power and control (National Resource Center for Safe Schools, 1999). A study of over 1,900 students in the Los Angeles area found that bullies were the most psychologically “healthy” students studied, with no evidence of anxiety, depression or poor self-esteem (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003).

Developing a clear picture of bullies and victims is complicated by the fact that some children seem to be at times victim and at times, perpetrator. These bully-victims, or provocative victims are equally likely to respond with aggression as with anxious distress when bullied. They are consistently found to be at highest risk for emotional distress and psychosocial difficulties (Smith et al., 2004). Students with nonverbal learning disorders, social skills deficits, and attention deficit disorder are over-

represented in this group. This group presents a particular challenge for educators, as they may require fairly extensive support and skills training, as well as consequences for their negative behavior.

Victims, bullies and provocative victims actually comprise a relatively small part of a school's culture. The vast majority of students in any school will be bystanders, observers of the bullying that occurs. In fact, 85% of all bullying is witnessed by peers. Almost 30 years ago Olweus' seminal work on decreasing bullying in schools demonstrated the importance of this large group of students (1978). As bullying is about power, bullies gain little in social status or power unless they have an "audience". Rarely evident to adults (Olweus, 1993), the typical audience for bullying consists of peers. How those peers respond provides bullies with critical information; is my cruelty celebrated, does it earn me social status, or does it cost me reputation and standing with my peers?

Understanding Bystander Behavior

Why don't students tell bullies that their behavior is unacceptable, and put an end to school bullying? Student bystanders do not send bullies this clear message because they are afraid they will become the next victim, or suffer other social consequences (Mellor, 1993).

Several well studied social psychology phenomena may help explain why student bystanders do not exert their power. Solomon Asch, interested in understanding how citizens could not only tolerate but support the Nazi rise to power, began studying conformity in the 1950's. In one of his classic studies, eight subjects were seated in a semi-circle and asked to identify which line matches a target line on a card. Seated in

chairs 1-7 are confederates of the experimenter, and each gave the same blatantly wrong answer. In chair 8, the unknowing subject valiantly disagreed, at least initially. When the procedure was repeated subjects became hesitant and appeared depressed, and 35 percent of the time, caved in to peer pressure, conforming despite clear knowledge that what they were doing was wrong (Asch, 1956). Varying the study finds that when one confederate gives the correct answer, the likelihood of blind conformity is markedly reduced.

Repeated with many variations and populations, Asch's work reminds us what a challenging task we present to student bystanders. Since bullying often involves repeated attacks, bystanders may hear that a peer is deficient or defective many times. Even when a bystander knows this is incorrect, what strength of character is required to say differently?

Another social psychology phenomenon to consider is the tendency to dehumanize those we see frequently victimized or degraded. In the classic study conducted at Stanford University by Zimbardo and colleagues (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973), students appointed as "prison guards" monitoring other student "convicts" were so cruel that the planned two week study was ended in half the time. The process of dehumanization has been cited as an explanation for instances in history and in the recent past in which labeling an individual or a group as "victims" led to grossly malevolent and inhuman treatment by those in power. Today's students have seen headlines about the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. In Jewish schools, where the Holocaust is almost uniformly taught, the impact of dehumanization of victims should be readily appreciated.

The failure of bystanders to act in helpful ways raises the question of why individuals who know an ethical or moral imperative do not follow it. The relationship between moral knowledge and moral behavior has been of interest for centuries. Haidt, (2001) arguing for the role of social intuition in moral judgment, summarized two views useful to consider, those of Metcalf and Mischel (1999) and Batson and Thompson (2001). Metcalf and Mischel explain human behavior in the face of moral temptation; two systems, the “hot” (temptation) and “cool” (ability to resist temptation) systems interact to determine the outcome. Metcalf and Mischel further suggested that the cool system relies on hippocampal memory and frontal planning and inhibition centers of the brain. They argued that a child’s ability to demonstrate moral behavior is determined by the strength of the cool system, which increases over development.

Batson and Thompson (2001) offer a different view, with motivational considerations central. Their empathy-altruism hypothesis states that empathy aroused by another’s suffering evokes an altruistic motivation to reduce the victim’s distress. How can we explain the common failure of bystanders to act to ameliorate the suffering of the victims of bullies? Batson and Thompson explain that both *moral hypocrisy*, aiming to appear moral, while, if possible avoiding the cost of being moral, and *overpowered integrity*, being moral only until the costs of moral actions become extreme, are motivational conditions that lead people to act immorally. In the social culture of the elementary or middle school, Mellor (1993) reminds us of the cost of moral behavior bystanders anticipate: social rejection, intimidation and/or personal harm.

The above discussion suggests that shifting bystanders from a passive stance to an active, pro-social one will be challenging and requires specific focus as part of a

comprehensive bully prevention strategy. Jewish educators have a plethora of sources to support the active role bystanders can and should take. We read in *Vayikra* (19:16), “*Lo taamod al dam re-echa*” exhorting us to act, to help, when one among us is hurt. Torah provides examples in the behavior of Torah figures of the responsibility to act when another suffers. Moses can not tolerate the abuse of a slave; Esther risks her own safety on behalf of the Jewish people. Similarly, Torah teaches us the consequences of failing to come forward and act on another’s behalf. The depravity of Sodom which resulted in its destruction, was evidenced in part by the failure of even one of its citizens to stop the attack on Lot and his guests (Bereishit, 19:4-5).

Gender Issues

Researchers are increasingly recognizing that the complex phenomenon of bullying may be quite different for boys and girls. This is of particular interest in Jewish schools where classes and buildings may be single or mixed gender for part or all of the day. Early research focused almost exclusively on boys, and suggested an overwhelming percentage of bullying involving boys as compared to girls (Olweus, 1993). This may have represented sampling biases in that experimenters were more likely to notice boys’ physically aggressive bullying than girls’ more subtle social and emotional aggression (Leckie, 1997).

Cillessen and Mayeux (2004) reviewed existing studies on children’s aggression and completed a longitudinal examination of relational aggression (social bullying) and popularity, following children from grades 5 through 9. Despite the hypothesis that physical *and* relational aggression would result in increased popularity for boys and girls,

their data suggested very different routes to popularity for the genders. High status-boys were able to both achieve and maintain their popularity via friendliness. Popular girls, however, resorted to more negative behaviors, including social aggression and bullying. Their longitudinal design allowed consideration of the chicken/egg question, in that it appeared that “status led to behavior more often than the reverse.”(2004, p.160) This was true especially for girls who were first perceived as popular, then exhibited relational aggression. This is consistent with other research which documents girls’ use of meanness and manipulation to control peers and establish dominance.

The debate over gender differences in aggression and social aggression is far from resolved (Underwood, Galen, & Paquette, 2001). In their thorough review, Merrell, Buchanan, & Tran, (2006) report that girls exhibit relational aggression more frequently than boys, view it as hurtful as physical aggression, and direct their socially aggressive behavior mostly towards other girls. To confuse the issue, there are some studies that find greater relational aggression in boys. These studies, however, focus on younger children, suggesting an interaction of gender and age. The authors conclude that although additional research is necessary, relational aggression occurs in both genders and creates serious psycho-social sequelae for those who experience it.

Unfortunately, research is only beginning to evaluate how gender issues play out in single or mixed gender schools. The majority of research on single versus mixed gender educational settings has been conducted in non-Jewish settings and aims to evaluate academic and vocational impact. The National Association for Single Sex Public Education (2005), summarizing the evidence supporting single-sex education cites the almost exclusive focus on grades and test scores, and urges consideration of breadth of

educational opportunity. They catalog numerous studies which support the notion that boys in single gender schools are more than twice as likely to study foreign languages, art, music and drama. They quote interviews from boys at such schools who report feelings of comfort, and freedom from both bullying and intimidation in their all boy classes. Girls reportedly benefit from increased exposure to math and sciences, and demonstrate academic gains in these areas.

What is the impact of single-gender or coeducational format on the social culture of schools? Anecdotal reports from schools shifting to single gender include marked decreases in discipline referrals. A study of secondary students in both types of schools in Flanders found girls only had a greater sense of belonging in single gender schools (Brutsaert & Van Houtte, 2002). Students in single gender classrooms have reported more order, teacher control, discipline, and organization (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1998). Students in single gender schools perceived less friction, and students in all female schools, the least friction of all (Richardson, 1990). Mael's review of socio-emotional and academic development in single-sex and coed schools revealed increased self-esteem in single-sex settings (1998). In addition, there was a suggestion at the middle school level that the presence of boys affects popularity issues among girls, resulting in an overemphasis on physical appearance that negatively impacts girls' friendships. In contrast there was a trend for girls to have more positive perceptions of class culture when boys are in their class.

Shute, Owens, and Slee (2007) explored the victimization of girls in co-educational settings. In their interviews of students and teachers at a co-ed high school in Australia they discovered that verbal harassment of girls by boys was a daily occurrence,

with the vast majority of such victimization having sexual overtones. The authors state that cross-gender victimization of girls by boys is a well-documented phenomenon, but that its sexual nature has received limited study. Single-gender settings are not without difficulty, in that boys may be subject to significant teasing and harassment if they do not emulate masculine, macho norms of behavior (Frank, Kehler, Lovell, & Davison, 2003).

Does the above research, focusing primarily on academics and non-gender stereotyped learning and course choices or on sexually tinged harassment in co-educational public high schools, have any relevance to Jewish schools? Cohen et al., (2002) reviewed classroom climate in an Orthodox day school. In an earlier study of gender differences in coed, Conservative day schools, girls perceived more equality and fairness, achievement, motivation and parental involvement. In the Orthodox school studied, classes were coed until fourth grade, then separate for all subjects through graduation in eighth grade. Girls in the older grades (in single gender classrooms) reported the lowest levels of friction, compared with girls in the lower grades (mixed gender classrooms).

In Jewish settings, the gender mix of a class or school is correlated with other factors, such as *hashkafah*, curriculum content, and geographic location. Careful and significant research will be required to fully explore and understand how gender and school composition contribute to the school's social culture and bullying in particular. Only after such research can the question of what intervention adaptations are required to maximize success in all settings be addressed.

Components of Effective Bully Prevention

The first successful bully prevention programs grew out of tragedy in suburban Norway. Three students in Bergen committed suicide leaving notes explaining that they could no longer tolerate the teasing and bullying they were experiencing (Olweus, 1993). Supported by the Norwegian government, Olweus began the study of school bullying and the development of methods to address it. Olweus' approach includes education of all members of the school community, including review of a student survey of bullying, empowerment of bystanders and school staff to share responsibility for creating bully-free environments, and policies and procedures for the discipline of bullies. Implementation of his approach yielded highly promising results in Norway, with a 50% reduction of bullying in the first year, and increases to 75% reduction by the second year of the program. In addition, all members of the school community were reportedly happier in the school environment, academic achievement improved and anti-social behavior decreased. Replication in 14 intervention schools in Bergen resulted in reductions of bully/victim problems ranging from 21-38%. An additional study in Oslo found reductions of bullying of 33% for girls and 48% for boys (Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, 2006).

Following Olweus' seminal work, the Department for Education in England supported evaluation of bully prevention programming (Smith & Sharp, 1994). Programs included similar components to those used by Olweus; gathering student information, establishing school-wide rules, training all adults in the school, improving adult supervision and building parental awareness, and were effective in significantly decreasing bullying and increasing students' willingness to report it. The English studies, not surprisingly, found the schools that accomplished the largest reductions in bullying

were those that demonstrated the most thorough and consistent application of bully prevention programming.

In their 2004 review of bully prevention, Smith et al. cite 12 large-scale intervention studies completed internationally, in Germany, Belgium, Spain, Finland, Ireland, Austria, Switzerland, Australia and the United States. While none of the intervention studies have matched the impact of Olweus' original work, reductions of 5-20% in victimization rates are consistently accomplished. Smith argues that no "magic ingredient" has been determined, and the best predictors of outcomes include the extent to which schools take ownership of bully prevention, the length of the interventions, and an earlier (pre-secondary school) start.

The core components of the Olweus approach have been woven into programs world-wide, with attempts to replicate his findings. The American version of the Olweus program, recognized by the Department of Justice as a Blueprint Violence Prevention program (Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999) and operated out of Clemson University in South Carolina (Limber, 2004) has achieved more modest (30-40%) reductions of bullying. Imported in the early 1990's, eighteen participating South Carolina middle schools demonstrated significant decreases in students' reports of bullying others and significant decreases in boy's reports of being bullying and socially isolated (Limber, 2004). Further evaluation of the program in 12 Philadelphia area schools revealed significant reductions in self-reported bullying, and significant decreases in adults' observations of bullying when the program was implemented with moderate or better fidelity (Black, 2003). Reasons for the discrepancy between American and Norwegian

outcomes include differences in educational systems, culture, and the student populations served.

Other programs and approaches have been utilized to ameliorate school bullying. In its 2001 review, the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory highlighted the Steps to Respect program (Committee for Children, 2001), the Maine Project Against Bullying (1997), and the Effective Behavioral Support program (Walker et al., 1996). Vignettes of schools employing these approaches are provided, but formal outcome measures are not offered. Frey et al. (2005) published a controlled study of the *Steps to Respect* program with over 1,000 students in grades 3-6. *Steps to Respect* aims to decrease bullying by building friendship skills, social problem-solving and assertiveness, as well as empowering bystanders to act pro-socially in the face of bullying, and by increasing staff-awareness and responsiveness. Students in the intervention group showed decreases in bullying and argumentative behavior on the playground, had more agreeable interactions, and demonstrated reduced negative bystander behavior. The intervention group also reported increased bystander responsibility, perceived greater adult responsiveness, and decreased acceptance of bullying.

Bully prevention initiatives have broadened to include training in social skills, anger-management and friendship building. Mikami, Boucher & Humphreys, (2005) utilized a classroom-level intervention based on cooperative games and cooperative learning opportunities to decrease peer-rejection, with some success. Salmivalli (2001) trained peer counselors to develop and lead a week-long intervention campaign against bullying. There were strong gender differences, with girls showing decreases in bullying and increased willingness to influence bully problems in their classes. Boys also

decreased their engagement in bullying, but less so than girls, and exhibited an unfortunate increase in bullying attitudes. DeRosier & Marcus (2005) reported on the one-year impact of a social-skills program addressing friendship and bullying. The participating third grade students achieved higher self-esteem and social acceptance, and decreased aggression. Some of these changes were not evident until one year after the training, leading the authors to suggest that children may not be immediately rewarded by their peers with acceptance after improving their social skills. Leff (2006) successfully decreased inner city girls' relational aggression with an intervention combining 20 group and 8 classroom sessions. The sessions included information on anger management, role playing opportunities, and skills training in social-problem solving.

“BRAVE”

Interested in creating a school-wide, user-friendly, evidence based approach, the Alliance for School Mental Health incorporated many Olweus elements into its BRAVE (Bully Prevention/Anti-Violence Education) program (Novick, 2000). BRAVE involves parents, teachers and students in education about bullying, and provides additional components to promote school-wide systems change. In place of a survey to build awareness of bullying, BRAVE employs a mock trial of cartoon bullies. To bolster the relatively weak skills training and rehearsal offered in the Olweus program, BRAVE developed specific instruction in and practice of critical bystander skills. Similar to many evidence-based bully prevention programs, BRAVE includes quality circles, a regular and ongoing mechanism for safe discussion of class social issues. Based on the concept introduced by Olweus, class quality circles are modeled after those used in manufacturing

settings. Assembly line workers participate in quality circles to discuss how well they function as a team to create the best possible product; students in quality circles are given the opportunity to explore how well they work as a team to create a safe, caring classroom and school.

Initial evaluation of the BRAVE program included review of student self-report outcome data from two large suburban middle schools. In one school, participating students were less likely to dislike school (from 12% pre to 9% post). There were marked gender differences, with boys disliking school dropping from 19% at pre- to 13% post-intervention. Collapsing bullying across severity there was no change, but significant differences were found in students subjected to milder bullying. Rates of teasing yielded decreases for both boys and girls (31% pre and 26% post for girls and 33% pre and 28% post for boys). Similar gender differences were apparent in the percentage of students frequently excluded, with girls showing a decrease following the program (from 11% pre to 8% post, and actually increasing for boys (5.9% pre to 10% post). This may be a result of increased awareness that social exclusion qualifies as bullying. Following participation higher percentages of students reported that their teachers are active and effective in addressing bullying, and that they would come forward and tell someone if they were bullied. In one of the schools the percentage of students who felt their teachers do a lot to stop bullying increased from 30% to 59% for girls, and from 31% to 58% for boys over a two year period.

A more elaborate and controlled multi-year study of the BRAVE program is currently underway. In the initial year of the study, three co-educational United States Jewish middle schools were compared with 2 similar wait-list control schools. Students

in those classes that participated in BRAVE demonstrated reductions in aggressive problem solving in the first six months of the program, as compared with non-participating classes in the active schools and control schools. This is a particularly encouraging finding, as students received less than six months of programming. Data from the second year of the research is currently being collected and analyzed and includes four additional active schools (totaling seven) and two additional wait-list controls, as well as continued data collection to track further changes in first year schools.

Are there general principles or components shared by effective bully prevention approaches? Several key ingredients appear in the majority of programs. First, all relevant members of the school community are educated about bullying. Second, the central role of bystanders and the concept of shared responsibility are addressed and opportunities for ongoing social processing are included. Finally, rules and consequences are determined and delivered. These critical components, including a review of the challenges and opportunities for Jewish settings, are discussed below.

Knowledge About Bullying

System-wide education about bullying is accomplished in the Olweus approach by having students complete a bullying questionnaire. The original program involves results of this anonymous survey being reported to the entire student body and faculty during a full-day of programming around the topic of bullying. This has some advantages in that the completion of a survey also provides administrators and faculty with useful information for planning interventions. Not all schools recognize the value of a data-driven approach. A review by the British Department for Education of those schools

utilizing their anti-bullying resource materials revealed that only 1% used the Olweus measure, with 42 percent using their own survey, and other schools using interviews, spot checks or other methods. Overall, only 66% of the schools used any form of survey or data collection (Oliver & Candappa, 2003)..

Tabulating, interpreting, reporting and utilizing data may present challenges for all schools and for Jewish schools in particular. Public schools may have mandated record keeping for discipline referrals, and technical support for testing and survey administration, that private Jewish schools lack. Even the presence of professionally trained counseling staff does not ensure comfort and skill in utilizing data. Wilkerson & Eshbach, (2009) documented the need for specific training in data use, and the relative weakness of counselors' knowledge base in this area. With the availability of *Survey Monkey* and similar tools, Jewish schools may be able, with some guidance and support, to collect and analyze data to increase school wide awareness of bullying.

Knowledge about bullying can be presented in numerous ways, and the laws of pedagogy apply in the case of social-emotional issues exactly as they do for mathematics or reading. That is to say that one-day or large impact events, such as assemblies, serve a purpose in generating excitement and imparting basic knowledge. It would be as foolish to assume that a reading assembly creates readers as it would be to think that a bully prevention assembly creates responsible social citizens.

Exactly what knowledge do students and adults need to successfully address bullying? Most programs include a significant focus on awareness – developing an understanding of what bullying is. Students' definition of bullying is often limited to the physical. Helping students understand that verbal taunting and social character

assassination is equally harmful is critical. Jewish schools have many Torah and Rabbinic sources to support this notion. “Life and death are in the hands of the tongue”, our scholars remind us (Mishlei 18:21). Rambam’s *Hilkhot Teshuvah* cites the three behaviors that, when engaged in regularly, prevent one from a share in the world to come: inventing or using cruel nicknames, publicly shaming others, and disgracing one’s teachers (3:14). Additional Jewish sources that support an expanded conceptualization of bullying are provided at the end of this paper.

Many bully prevention programs teach students to recognize bullying and to share responsibility for addressing it. In limiting the education to this knowledge, however, such programs may place students in an unfair position. Such programs empower students with the responsibility to do something about the bullying in their environment, but often fail to provide instruction and practice in the specific tools or skills that would allow students to do so successfully and safely.

Shared Responsibility

Bully prevention programs generally include direct instruction in areas such as assertiveness, emotion regulation, social problem-solving, and other skills that allow bystanders to act both responsibly and effectively (Committee for Children, 2001; DeRosier & Marcus, 2005, Novick, 2000). Commercial programs to teach social skills, assertiveness, and other pro-social behaviors abound, and a review is beyond the scope of this paper. While the breadth and depth of these programs is, on some level a strength, they often involve dozens of lessons and significant classroom instructional time, making them challenging to implement in secular schools, and quite impractical given time

constraints in Jewish settings. The discussion that follows will therefore be limited to the promotion of concrete bystander strategies that support shared responsibility.

The Positive Behavior Supports technical assistance center launched a bully prevention component to its school-side behavior management approach, that includes three strategies for both victims and bystanders (Ross, Horner & Stiller, 2009). The three strategies are abbreviated as: *Stop, Walk and Talk*. Students are taught the language and means to tell bullies to stop, are encouraged to walk away from situations to avoid reinforcing the bully, and to talk to adults about what happens.

The BRAVE program (Novick, 2000) provides a broader array of bystander behaviors, identifying seven pro-social strategies that allow students to accept shared responsibility and intervene in an appropriate manner when bullying occurs. Using the acronym *LEADERS*, these strategies offer bystanders choices to lead rather than follow before, during and after bullying occurs. Suggested strategies include: using distraction or humor, being socially inclusive, telling adults, standing up to bullies, supporting victims, leaving no one out, and refusing to be involved in spreading rumors.

In dozens of classroom workshops, several patterns have emerged in students' responses to these strategies. Students often give lip service to the notion of **standing up** to bullies, and may even do so in role-plays. In reality, as research attests, (Committee for Children, 2001) few students respond in this manner. Students clearly require practice in delivering assertive responses to bullies before they will confront them. **Distraction** is an indirect means of diverting the bully's or victim's attention, and requires minimal direct confrontation. Many students have not entertained this possibility and welcome it as a doable and "safe" way to intervene. The strategy of **supporting victims** is inherently

appealing to some students, and distressing to others. As a humanitarian act, students understand it is the right thing to do. As the Committee for Children suggests, empathy for bullied peers is more likely to result in a supportive response if “children have a repertoire of assertive response options” (2001, p.14). Students may need to learn to recognize the obvious and subtle ways support can be given, both in the moment and at a later time. Some students may have significant concern that supporting or including a victim, particularly one from an unpopular group will cause negative social contagion – “*uncoolness*” will rub off. Significant opportunities for discussion should be provided to help students understand the difference between being inclusive and being everyone’s best friend. **Humor** and other de-intensifying strategies also require considerable explanation and rehearsal.

Two of the strategies used in many programs present a challenge in that they relate to *leshon ha-ra`*. A critical component of a bully’s power comes from the rumor mill that cements the reputation of both bully and victim. Even when they assume they are being helpful, students who spread rumors warning of a bully’s impending attack, further heighten the bully’s status and highlight the victim’s weakness. Most students accept that such rumors are not helpful and in Jewish schools where the prohibition against *leshon ha-ra`* has been inculcated from an early age, this notion is an easy sell. Since Jewish educators recognize that despite frequent lessons and ongoing *musar*, rumors continue in their settings (Amsel, 1987), this should be revisited and addressed directly in the context of bully prevention.

Central in virtually all bully prevention is the goal of having responsible bystanders **tell adults** when bullying happens. It is only with such open communication

that all members of the school community can share responsibility for creating a caring environment. In secular settings, educators encounter the developmentally appropriate mistrust of adults, and the strong social prohibition against *ratting out* one's peers.

Students have, by late elementary or middle school, been educated to "solve problems on your own" and to avoid "tattle-telling". In addition, it is not uncommon for students to have the experience of informing an adult and receiving no help, or the situation actually being worsened. In the 2003 study of students' views about bullying commissioned by the British Department for Education and Skills, students viewed telling teachers about bullying as accompanied by a "wide range of risks, particularly in relation to possible breaches of confidentiality, failure to act on reported incidents of bullying, and an inability to protect pupils from retaliatory action" (Oliver & Candappa, 2003, p.4). In Jewish schools, where education in avoiding *leshon ha-ra`* is in place, there is often an additional hurdle to overcome in expecting students to tell adults about bullying.

Partnership with the Rabbinic leaders and with classroom Rebbeim may be crucial. It has been the author's experience that it is helpful to draw a parallel between how *piku`ah nefesh* supersedes the *issur* against *leshon ha-ra`* in the case of physical harm, and similar requirements to speak up when non-physical, but significant emotional or social harm is being done.

A word of caution is necessary at this point regarding the assertive strategy of **standing up to bullies**. Schools may discover a Machiavellian phenomenon. Students may feel that the only or best way to be responsible, active, bystanders is to stand up to bullies in powerful, aggressive means. This may include students considering the use of physical or verbal threats to the bully, or socially excluding him or her. Students need

constant reminders that they can stand up to bullies, as well as use other bystander options, without themselves becoming bullies.

Ongoing Social Processing

Research documents that effective bully prevention is possible only when there are ongoing opportunities for student social processing. This usually takes the form of regularly scheduled discussion groups. Olweus' program (1993) adapted the concept of a quality circle and recommended that quality circles occur weekly in each class, and be conducted among staff as well. Many other programs include regular discussions, if not weekly, than on a regular basis.

No research is available on the specific content of on-going discussion groups. Given the focus on shared responsibility, it should not be surprising that the Olweus program's quality circles center on discussions of how students did and could respond to actual instances of bullying in the school setting. The BRAVE program manualized quality circles, providing teachers with cue cards, and training and support on both process and content (Novick, 2000).

A compelling reason to include regular discussion groups in bully prevention programs is the clear message such discussions send students about adults' interest in and concern about the social climate of the school. Students are more likely to report bullying incidents to teachers who are better at listening to pupils, prepared to take them seriously, and known to take firm but fair action (Oliver & Candappa, 2003). What better way for educators to communicate these qualities than by sitting with students on a regular basis and helping them seriously review and address their social concerns.

On-going social processing groups also provide opportunities for additional practice of social problem solving and role-playing of bystander strategies. The BRAVE program uses quality circles to allow students to review and change the messages their behavior sends to bullies or victims, and to generate and practice alternate behaviors (Novick, 2000). Similar to learning the skills of math or Hebrew reading, learning the skills of bully prevention requires ongoing practice. The challenge for Jewish schools in providing such vehicles is the complexity of scheduling in the dual curriculum setting. No research yet exists to inform decisions as to whether such on-going discussions should occur monthly with the same faculty, and therefore be limited to either religious or general studies, whether they should occur in class-sized groups or unite all sections of a grade as a social unit, or be single or mixed gender.

Rules and Consequences

A major component of effective bully prevention in Olweus and other programs is the establishment of rules and consequences both to prevent bullying and to address it when it occurs. In order to create the appropriate school culture, Olweus (1993) suggests the following three rules be established, posted and explained to students:

- We do not bully others.
- We do not stand by when others are being bullied.
- We tell an adult when bullying occurs.

A positive re-wording of these rules yields:

- We treat all students with respect and kindness.
- We do something to help when we see another treated disrespectfully or unkindly.

- We tell adults when we see others treated disrespectfully or unkindly.

There is a strong movement in the public sector to mandate that schools establish formal policies and procedures regarding bullying. As of July 2003, fifteen states had enacted anti-bullying legislation and thirteen additional states had legislation that was related to, although not specifically named as anti-bullying (Furlong, Morrison, & Grief, 2003). As of December 2009, 41 states had some laws in effect, but eight of those were rated with a grade of C or poorer by the watchdog organization Bully Police, USA, and only fifteen states have achieved an A rating or better (Bully Police, 2009). State legislation may require that schools adopt anti-bullying programs, develop procedures for reporting and tracking bullying, provide disciplinary consequences, or offer training to faculty (Limber & Small, 2003). In the best case scenario, such policies are developed through a process that allows input from all members of the school community. The New Jersey Department of Education, recognizing the challenge of creating such policies, developed a website which includes model policy statement components for schools to adapt. The suggested language for the basic policy statement is:

The board of education prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying. The board of education has determined that a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards; harassment, intimidation or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment; and since students learn by example, school

administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers should be commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying. (New Jersey Department of Education, 2002).

In addition, the New Jersey guidelines set the tone for school-wide, on-going and cooperative efforts to address bullying.

The board of education believes that standards for student behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the students, parents and guardians, staff and community members of the school district, producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for district and community property on the part of students, staff and community members.

Policies and rules do not guarantee a bully-free school environment. The most effective bully prevention programs eliminate only 50-75% of bullying. It is critical, therefore, to establish clear procedures to handle bullying when it occurs. Schools typically utilize disciplinary measures that exist for other rule infractions, such as detention, suspension, loss of privileges, and letters or phone calls to parents. In secular settings, formal school discipline plans, written codes of conduct and specific anti-bullying policies are common place, and often mandated (Smith, Smith, Osborn, & Samara, 2008). Jewish schools may not be subject to such mandates, and may opt for more informal approaches to policy and discipline.

Establishing and implementing policies and consequences for bullying and other negative social behaviors can prove extremely challenging. Since many of these peer to peer social problems occur out of adult vision, school administrators are faced with difficult determinations of guilt. For this reason, it is highly recommended that schools keep a log of reported bullying difficulties (National Resource Center for Safe Schools, 1999). While a teacher may witness a single, seemingly unremarkable act, reviewing prior log entries may reveal that the same student has been seen to engage in similar behavior. Equally helpful is a regular forum for faculty to review the social climate of the class, grade and school, and to generate strategies for addressing those students with social difficulties. Such regular discussions are difficult in Yeshiva and Day School settings where *Limudei Kodesh* and general studies teachers often have limited time to co-plan, and may not be in the building at the same time. If face to face meetings are impossible to coordinate, alternate strategies for communicating about students and social climate may be necessary, such as using email and other technology, creating a log or journal system, or having each set of teachers discuss issues with a central staff member.

Jewish school settings face an additional challenge when developing policies and consequences to address bullying, harassment, and social exclusion. Unlike public schools, they are generally governed by or answer to a lay board. In some instances, this board may be comprised of powerful members of the community. Can teachers and administrators feel safe in establishing and enacting policies that may directly affect children of such powerful community members? This presents a significant dilemma for our community, since we are asking children to do the right thing, even when it is difficult and may have consequences, while adults may not feel comfortable doing so.

Practical Recommendations

Given adequate resources, financial and human, the clear choice in addressing bullying is the systematic, evidence-based, school-wide approaches addressed above. Fortunately, even when resources are limited, or schools are not prepared to mount a comprehensive initiative, there is much that can be done to build a caring culture and decrease bullying. The practical suggestions that follow begin with pitfalls to be avoided, and include actions teachers, administrators, and families in Jewish schools can take to make a difference.

Common Pitfalls

Indiscretion: Several years ago a girl in a coed day school complained that she was taunted by boys in surrounding classrooms when she walked towards the resource room. Standing at their classroom doors they would call “retard”, or “there goes dummy”. The third grader rallied her courage and shared her distress with a school administrator. Incensed at this non-appropriate behavior, the administrator promptly visited all the boy’s classes, and delivered a powerful discussion of *mussar* centering on the proper respect due girls and women. The following day, on the bus, at recess and lunch, the girl was routinely berated for “getting us in trouble”. The well-intentioned administrator had never revealed his source. How did the boys know who complained? The administrator did not realize that only one girl used the resource room in that hallway.

Invariably, adults want to fix painful situations, and our tendency is to do so through direct means. In the case of bullying, adults must always ask what the likely consequences of their actions will be. While a *Rebbe* can protect a child teased at recess by having him sit next to him, this may further identify him as different, or weak. When

students do come forward to report bullying, it is critical that we protect both the victim and the informant from any further cruelty or retribution.

Conflict resolution and peer mediation: There are numerous resources and protocols available for engaging students in conflict resolution and peer mediation. Conflict resolution programs generally involve skills training for students on ways to independently solve interpersonal conflicts. Peer mediation programs train student mediators to conduct formal mediation sessions between fellow students who have experienced some conflict. To be done effectively, these approaches require significant on-going adult supervision. In the case of bullying, traditional peer mediation is strongly contra-indicated. Peer mediation assumes a dispute has occurred between equal parties. When bullying occurs, by definition, one party (the bully) is a good deal more powerful than the other (the victim). The most likely outcome of peer mediation applied in bullying instances is that the victim will be re-victimized, but in a sanctioned, public way. This can be more damaging than the original bullying, as it leaves the victim feeling totally unprotected and without recourse.

Bullies as bosses: Schools may attempt to harness the power of bullies by placing them in charge. Bullies are not infrequently appointed bus counselor, hall monitor, etc. There is great danger in this approach, as Machiavelli suggested. Bullies have already experienced the corruption of power. Why would granting them additional power be helpful? Similarly, on occasion, schools have asked bullies to make retribution for their misdeeds in a way that provides them with inordinate power. Consider the Jewish high school that discovered seniors were creating hazing rituals for freshman. These wise seniors convinced the administration that despite the humiliation and

discomfort such rituals involved, they had the best interest of their schoolmates in mind; they wanted to insure the new students bonded with each other. The well-meaning administration, hoping to capitalize on the seniors' reported pro-social intentions, gave them the responsibility to plan all freshman social events. One can see how this might be a bit like asking a fox whose belly is full of chicken to guard the coop.

Expecting resolution and restitution: From their earliest days in school, students are taught to correct their errors. Students are asked to make restitution for their acts, and to offer apologies to those they have hurt. It is not recommended that bullies be made to face their victims and apologize. There is a significant risk that even in the context of an apology, the victim will be further humiliated, traumatized or frightened. It is appropriate, of course, to have the bully express remorse for their behavior. This can be done in writing, or to a school faculty member who can assess the genuineness of the sentiment and whether it can be communicated to the victim. There are similar risks in requiring bullies to make restitution to victims. The bully who torments a peer at lunch, and is made to carry that child's lunch, or clean the lunch table, may develop and express additional antagonism towards his victim.

Staff Attitudes and Behaviors

Since effective bully prevention centers on empowering students as bystanders, it is tempting to assume that staff attitudes and behaviors are of limited importance. In fact, one of the most effective ways to change student behavior is to change the behavior of the adults in the environment (OSEP Center on PBIS, 2004). School staff may need both knowledge and assistance to support bully prevention. Teachers often are inaccurate in identifying bullies (Leff, et al., 1999) and may feel less than confident in their abilities to

deal with the issue (Boulton, 1997). Recent research on teachers in Jewish schools underscores the critical role feeling prepared to address bullying plays in supporting effective teacher efforts (Novick & Isaacs, in press). Often, however, it is not lack of educator knowledge or skill that hampers bully prevention, but the attitudes described below that are less than helpful.

I teach a subject – not friendship: Curricular demands can result in educators becoming overly focused on curriculum content and forget that first and foremost, schools teach *children*. To teach children effectively, educators must attend to all aspects of their development, academic, spiritual, moral, emotional, behavioral, and social. The creative teacher invariably finds a connection between these “non-academic” elements of development and the subject they teach. Recently a middle school science teacher commented that he planned on teaching a lesson on emulsifiers. “After the demonstration, I will tell the students that we all need to be social emulsifiers, to help the different groups in our school mix better”, he remarked.

I do not have time to deal with these issues: Yeshiva and Day school teachers are perennially provided with less on-task and teaching time than they would like or need. It is natural to assume that focusing on behavioral and social-emotional issues will further limit available teaching time. On the contrary, the research on PBIS has documented the gains in academic time with an initial investment in behavioral and school culture issues (Putnam, Horner & Algozzine, 2006). A third grade girl’s teacher discovered this phenomenon when she initiated weekly post-recess discussions. On Friday afternoons she led the students in a discussion of the concerns they had written in a recess “concerns” box. The teacher reported greatly improved concentration and

increased teaching time as girls learned their issues would be addressed at the appropriate time.

Boys will be boys, girls can be mean: Many adults betray their sense of hopelessness and helplessness in statements that underscore the pervasiveness of bullying.

Unfortunately, such statements become excuses for inaction. If bullying is seen as an integral part of growing up, something all children need to tolerate, why address it in schools? If students are certain to act with cruelty, why strive for niceness? Fortunately, forward thinking individuals throughout history have demonstrated that simply because a problem existed in the past, it does not need to remain problematic forever. It is with this attitude that polio has been all but eradicated and new technologies and strategies allow remediation of learning problems that previously were uncorrectable. When a commitment is made to creating safe, socially constructive schools, those schools can become a reality.

Staff attitudes are critical because they shape staff behavior. Educators have a major influence on bullying as role models. If students see teachers treat each other, or treat students disrespectfully, they are likely to behave similarly. Effective bully prevention supports the notion that all people should be treated kindly, and that everyone is valued. Students can not learn this lesson if their teachers or administrators model inequitable treatment, humiliation, or abuse of power. In a presentation at the 2004 Nefesh International Conference in Israel, Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski explained how even simple and subtle inequitable behaviors can send a powerful message. The person who, after grocery shopping, places their shopping cart behind the car next to them sends the message that “I am important, the people in that car don’t matter . . . let them put my

cart away”. Educators need to be particularly aware of the messages about interpersonal equity their behavior sends to students.

Faculty’s largest impact on bullying occurs when they, themselves are bystanders. When students see an adult witness bullying, and that adult does nothing, multiple messages are communicated. Students read such inaction not as neutral, but as support for bullying. Bullies receive a clear signal that their actions will be tolerated, and are likely to continue and perhaps expand their aggression. Victims receive the devastating message that they cannot expect adults to protect them or end their torment.

Addressing the Needs of Victims

Even schools utilizing the most effective bully prevention programs will be confronted with victims who require support and guidance. Students identify counselors and other confidential sources of support as helpful in dealing with victimization (Oliver & Candappa, 2003). Since victims are often selected as targets because of their reactivity, counseling aimed at decreasing their emotionality may be helpful. Reactivity is, however, a temperamental factor, highly influenced by genetics and biology and helping students change it is particularly challenging. Cognitive behavioral strategies that teach both reinterpretation of events (cognitive restructuring) and alternative behaviors (assertiveness training, anger management) may be useful. The author has had some success helping students “act” in a non-reactive way, despite their subjective experiences. Often, such students have been told to “just ignore” bullying, and not to let it “bother you.” For a reactive student, such advice is not only impossible; it indicates a failure of empathy on the part of the advice giver. In asking reactive students to “act” unaffected,

students can feel validated and understood, while being encouraged to develop a temporary “performance” strategy.

Research consistently demonstrates the protective benefit of friendship for victims (Committee on Children, 2001). Parents and educators can greatly help victims by building their friendship skills and creating additional opportunities for developing friendships. Schools that feel friendship building is not their responsibility should recognize that through cooperative learning and other regularly occurring school activities there are numerous opportunities to provide students with this significant buffer against bullying.

Curricular Connections

The ideas and practices of effective bully prevention can be easily supported with standard content from the secular and *Limudei Kodesh* curricula. A few suggestions are offered below.

Limudei Kodesh: *Parashat HaShavua*, *Chumash*, and *Halacha* offer excellent materials for discussing the Torah view of interpersonal relationships. Many schools develop *midot* or *chesed* programs, which dovetail with the values necessary for bully prevention. Such programs are often focused outside the school setting; i.e. assisting the elderly, giving to the needy in other countries. It is critical to bring the lessons into the microcosm of the class and school. Students must be helped to understand *chesed* is as important, and at times more challenging to accomplish, when it is offered to the person next to you.

The Jewish calendar can provide tie-ins to bully prevention. *Rosh Hashana*, *Sefirat HaOmer*, and *Rosh Hodesh*, are times when taking-stock of behavior and

committing to new goals is the norm. Chanukah and Purim provide examples of social responsibility, where an individual or group assisted *K'lal Yisrael* through their brave actions. A *misloach manot* lesson the author observed in a third grade boy's class involved each student receiving blank cut-outs of candy and goodies. On each item the boys wrote a compliment for one of their fellow students. Each boy proudly collected his *misloach manot* compliments and placed them in a construction paper basket! The excitement and genuine sense of community in the room was palpable. *Sukkot, Pesach, Tu B'Shevat, Shavuot*; every festive holiday can be connected to the critical Torah teaching of *v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocho*.

It is hard to imagine how one could teach the *Shoah* without addressing the issues bullying raises; intolerance, peer pressure, social responsibility, bystander apathy. I recently asked 7th grade day school students at a bully prevention workshop whether it is really so terrible to do nothing when bullying happens. A girl called out "I'll explain why in two words: Hitler and Czechoslovakia".

General Studies: Both the content of general studies subjects, and the methods teachers use can support bully prevention. Literature and history offer natural connections to bullying issues. Videos allow teachers to stop the action and discuss social issues and solutions to interpersonal dilemmas. Students are often better able to demonstrate empathy when discussing characters in videos, novels or history than their own classmates. It is also "safer" for students to judge the social interactions of others than to admit their own shortcomings.

All teachers can contribute to bully prevention by developing a positive social climate in the classroom. Teachers influence this when they group students and teach

them to work at cooperative learning tasks and when they help students learn how to respond when peers make errors. In a fourth grade classroom, a teacher underscored respect for peers in a concrete way. Whenever a student was called on to respond, she prompted, “Are we showing respect to our classmate, are we ready to listen?” At this, the students turned their bodies to face the called-on student and waited for his response. After class, when asked if this seemingly time-consuming strategy was worth while she replied: “The students are so much more respectful, and the class runs so smoothly, we’re actually ahead of the other fourth grade classes!”

The Power of Positives

Focus on the positive behaviors that negate bullying can prove as productive as work to eliminate bullying behaviors. Educators do well to find and celebrate instances of kindness, leadership, social responsibility, and empathy in their students. In many cases, personal celebration may mean as much or more than a certificate, or posting on a bulletin board. A word from a teacher or *Rebbe* to a student who asked a socially excluded peer to sit with them can make a strong impression. Several years ago, a 6th grade teacher told of a student who had assisted another in the class for the entire year. She had done so without being asked, and despite the frequent taunts by classmates this slower student endured. Taken by the girl’s kindheartedness, the teacher privately gave her a small gift at the end of the year. If this girl’s acts of kindness were celebrated in a more public way, with genuine warmth and care, it could have served as a wonderful example for others.

Focusing on such moral exemplars, positive examples beyond the school building, can have a powerful impact (Walker, 2006). Current events and people who embody

positive characteristics should be brought to students' attention. Classes may write letters of admiration or support to public figures who demonstrate the characteristics bully prevention strives to build.

Informal Settings – Camps, Community Organizations and Synagogues

Wherever there are children's social groups there can be bullying. In observant Jewish communities such social groups occur in schools, synagogues, youth groups and camps, with many children belonging to overlapping groups. No research has been completed on bullying in these settings, in either the Jewish or secular world, but consideration of their social dynamics may yield some suggestions.

Whether in the form of Shabbat groups or recreational trips and holiday events, synagogue programming for children is generally directed by a lay committee, staffed by one or a small number of paid young adults and teen and/or parent volunteers. Unlike school staff, there are neither requirements nor guarantees that any of those involved have professional training in child development or education. Similarly, in youth groups, primary contact with and responsibility for children is often in the hands of older teens and young adults who themselves, were once members of the youth group. Many local youth groups are branches of national organizations, allowing children to socialize beyond their home community.

Camps, while less formal than schools, have significant structure and considerable paid staff, ranging in age and expertise. Moore, (2001) argues that camps have unstable and seasonal attendance creating temporary relationships and minimal rewards for popularity and social status. In the Jewish world, camps are often an extension of the school community, with fairly stable attendance and fostering significant and long-term,

if long-distance relationships. Camp friendships and experiences may therefore play a significant role in the lives of Jewish children.

While research has yet to determine if bullying in the above settings is different in nature or intensity than that in schools, there is reason to be concerned. In these informal settings staff may not have had the benefit of education about bullying or social relationships. In some cases, staff may be only slightly older than their charges and barely recovered from their own experiences with cliques or bullying. Since many appropriate strategies for managing bullying issues are counterintuitive, it is both possible and likely that without training even well-meaning staff may inadvertently contribute to the problem. Even within the structured environment of school, bullying is most frequent in bathrooms, at recess, and other less structured or supervised venues. Camp and other informal settings offer additional times when children are unstructured and less supervised, perhaps allowing bullying of greater severity and frequency. Expanding the development of positive social environments beyond the school building is clearly necessary, and will require extensive outreach and engagement across the informal education spectrum.

Family Issues

It would seem logical that families contribute to the behavior of bullies, victims and bystanders. A great deal of research on aggression exists, but only a few studies have explored the relationship between families and bullying. Bullies' families are often described as lacking in nurturance, commonly using physical punishment and teaching that physical aggression is an acceptable way to address problems (Merrell et al., 2006; Oregon Resilience Project, 2003). High levels of marital conflict have also been

associated with increased aggression in children. Rodkin & Hodges (2003) discuss parenting practices and victimization. Parenting practices that interfere with the development of children's autonomy may contribute to victimization. For boys, maternal over-protectiveness and intense mother-child closeness has been associated with victimization. Girls who are victims, however, are more likely to come from families that employ coercion and threats of rejection. The authors report an important confound. Whereas early research found a relationship between harsh home environment and victimization, this was only the case for children with few friends. Friendships, and other extra-familial factors can either ameliorate or exacerbate children's victimization.

Educators invested in creating positive social environments and addressing bullying will, undoubtedly confront a variety of parental attitudes. The educator's task, in bully prevention and all areas, would be made easier if families supported them fully. When addressing issues as sensitive as interpersonal relationships, families may have very different ideas than schools. Schools cannot require or expect that families change their parenting styles, or belief systems. A question frequently asked by school administrators and teachers is, therefore, "how can we expect students to follow rules and behave in a certain way, when their families have different expectations?" Children are capable, from quite an early age, to differentiate between divergent expectations in different settings. They know that Grandma gives cookies even if you do not finish your vegetables, but Mommy does not. Students quickly learn all the ways that the rules at school are different from those at home. Schools therefore have both the opportunity *and* the obligation to create expectations for student behavior that will support a positive social climate.

The fact that schools *can* create their social climate independent of family input does not mean that they *should* do so. Schools should make every attempt to engage families in bully prevention much as they engage them in supporting academic programs. For families to become involved, they must be kept informed. Newsletters and written information can be combined with workshops. Some schools have scheduled parent-child programs to boost attendance, or invited parents to bully-themed performances by their children. However it is accomplished, as is true with academic achievement, children benefit when parent-school partnerships are established and nourished.

Techno-bullying

As this article goes to print, it is likely that students are commandeering new technologies to build their social networks. The New York Times, reporting a Pew Internet and American Life study reports that 87% of children aged 12 to 17 are regularly online, 11 million at least once each day! Eighty-four percent own cellphones and portable mp3 players, laptops and BlackBerrys. Unfortunately, in addition to the many social benefits technology offers, it also allows the anonymous, rapid, and widespread dissemination of social aggression. Many agencies and publications discuss cyberbullying, but current technology allows bullying to go beyond the computer. Smith, et al.. (2008) identify 7 types of technological bullying including text message, picture/video clip via cell phone, email, chat-room, instant message and website bullying. Techno-bullying presents a number of challenges. Children are often more knowledgeable than adults about the latest technology, making supervision difficult. The vast majority of techno-bullying is accomplished outside the school building and after school hours, also complicating issues of supervision and jurisdiction.

There are a wide range of attitudes across Jewish educational settings regarding computer and technology usage. Restriction on technology is unlikely to eliminate techno-bullying. As students increasingly develop social relationships supported by technology, schools will be called upon to educate students about appropriate social behaviors for in-person and technological relationships.

Conclusion

Bullying is a complex social phenomenon that exists as part of the even more complex school social culture unique to each educational setting. Schools wishing to address this challenging issue require specific knowledge, since the most effective strategies are, at times, counterintuitive. Numerous areas of research including exploration of moral development, social development, group dynamics, peer relationships, and aggression contribute to our knowledge base in addressing bullying. Literature on bully prevention, in particular, offers educators a straight-forward, if challenging formula for effecting social change in the school setting.

Increasingly, state and federal mandates are requiring schools to devote the time and energy necessary to create physically and emotionally safe environments for all students. Jewish schools do not require a government mandate to invest in the values that support bully prevention. Compelled to impart to students the Torah imperative: *Do not stand by while your brother bleeds*, day schools and Yeshivot cannot stand idle when bullying occurs in their midst. The significant body of literature and evidence based programs complement Torah teachings and should inform efforts in this area. But bully prevention in Jewish schools can and should be about more. It should be a means to a rather compelling end; an opportunity to fulfill the grandest mission of *Chinuch*. When

Jewish schools teach students the concepts behind bullying, they teach them the central precepts of the Torah. When Jewish schools teach students the skills to be socially responsible peer leaders, as opposed to inactive followers, they contribute to the creation of a generation of *B'nei Torah* prepared to support *K'lal Yisrael* in the years to come.

Additional Torah/Rabbinic citations to support bully prevention:

Pirkei Avot, (2:10): “Your friend’s dignity should be as precious to you as your own”

Pirkei Avot (4:12): “Let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own.

Shulchan Aruch and Orach Chayim (339:4) Avoidance of humiliating others can, in certain cases, take precedence over observance of halachot. The Ramah ruled that a wedding can be performed on Shabbat to avoid public shame or humiliation.

Bereishit (45:1) – When Yosef is about to reveal his identity and confront his brothers, he asks all others to leave the room because he could not bear to let his brothers be embarrassed in front of bystanders (Rashi).

Megillat Esther (2:21-23) – Mordechai overhears officers plotting to kill King Ahasverus. It is not considered Lashon Hara to act as he did and immediately have the information brought to the King.

Sanhedrin 11a: The story of Rabbi Judah who, while giving a lecture was annoyed by the smell of garlic. “Let the one who has eaten garlic go out” he announced. The great sage Rabbi Chiyya immediately stood and left. Rabbi Chiyya was not the one who ate garlic, but rather wanted to avoid the humiliation of a person who was not a renowned scholar and who would surely be embarrassed.

Moed Katan 27a: The practice was for rich people to bring food to the house of a mourner in silver *kelim*. Poor people brought their contributions in straw baskets. The Rabbis ruled that all should bring their contributions in straw baskets so as not to embarrass the poor.

Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5: “Let not a man say to his fellow, my father was greater than your father”.

Rambam, Laws of Character Development (6:8): Do not humiliate your fellow in public, whether he is a minor or adult.

Sharei Teshuvah, Rabbi Jonah Gerondi (3:221): We are obligated to relate *Lashon Hara* if an innocent victim will suffer if you don’t speak.

Taanit (20 a-b): This includes the story of Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon and the ugly man. The scholar asks an ugly person if everyone from his town is as ugly as him. The man replies “tell the craftsman that made me, how ugly is the vessel that you made”. The story ends with Rabbi Elazar begging for forgiveness.

Yiddish saying: What is a hero? One who suppresses a wisecrack.

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