



THE
COLORADO
TRUST



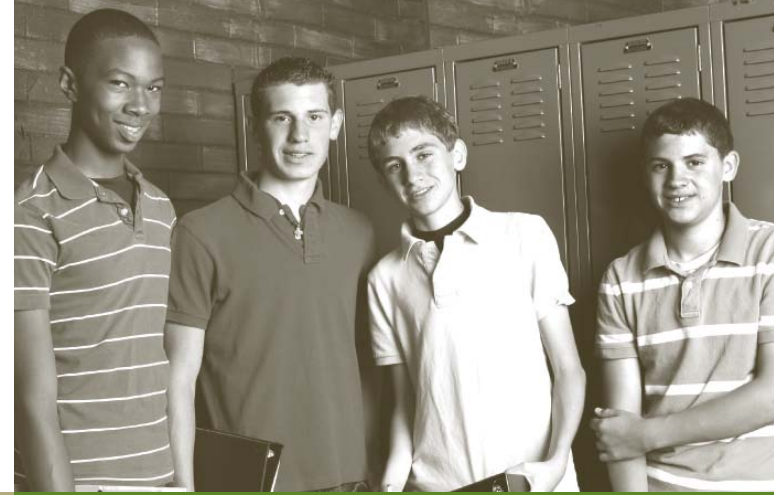
**BUILD TRUST,
END BULLYING,**
Improve Learning

HIGHLIGHTS

*Evaluation of The
Colorado Trust's
Bullying Prevention
Initiative*



**THE
COLORADO
TRUST**



ABOUT THE COLORADO TRUST

The Colorado Trust has worked closely with nonprofit organizations in every county across the state to improve health and well-being. To build on these efforts and address growing needs to expand health coverage and care, The Colorado Trust committed to a 10-year goal to achieve access to health for all Coloradans by 2018.

ABOUT THE BULLYING PREVENTION INITIATIVE

The Colorado Trust's \$9 million Bullying Prevention Initiative has helped school districts, schools and community-based organizations to prevent and intervene in bullying statewide. The 45 grantees in this 2005-2008 initiative estimate they have reached 50,000 young people and adults in 40 counties.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Colorado Trust wishes to acknowledge Cadre Colorado, LLC; JVA Consulting, LLC; The Partnership for Families and Children; Colorado Springs Assets for Youth; and Schoolhouse Communications for their contributions to this initiative and report.

"The Colorado Trust" is registered as a trademark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Copyright December 2008. The Colorado Trust. All rights reserved.

The Colorado Trust is pleased to have organizations or individuals share its materials with others. To request permission to excerpt from this publication, either in print or electronically, please contact Christie McElhinney, Director of Communications, at christie@coloradotrust.org.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is the intentional exclusion of targeted youths in activities or social events, gossiping meanly about others, unprovoked physical and verbal attacks, or using the Internet to anonymously and repeatedly harass and verbally attack others.

Reflecting an imbalance of power, the bully can be older, bigger, more verbally adept, higher up on the social ladder, of a different race or of the opposite sex. Sheer numbers of kids banded together to bully also can create this imbalance.



FOR MORE ABOUT BULLYING PREVENTION

visit www.bullyingprevention.org.

**“THERE IS A LITTLE BIT
of a bully in everyone.” – Student**

» INTRODUCTION

A scrap in the schoolyard. A girl making fun of another’s looks. A website spreading lies about a classmate.

Kids will be kids. They will get over it, right?

Wrong.

Left unaddressed, bullying can leave children and teenagers feeling depressed and alone. For some, the effects of bullying can last a lifetime. Victims have an increased chance of academic failure, low self-esteem and inability to connect socially.

There are long-term implications for the bullies, too. Research shows that youths who bully typically have a criminal record by age 24. Bullying has become such a serious problem that at least 19 states, including Colorado, have anti-bullying laws.

In 2005, The Colorado Trust launched the \$9 million Bullying Prevention Initiative to help youths and adults in school districts, schools and community-based organizations intervene in and prevent bullying through training, networking, practice sessions and other strategies.

Although bullying was prevalent in schools that were evaluated during the initiative’s first year, findings from an independent evaluation show the initiative had a positive impact over time.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE STUDY INCLUDE:

- A reduction in bullying occurred in schools where teachers and students are willing to intervene, treat each other fairly and demonstrate that they care.
- Adult and student intervention in bullying is critical from elementary through high school.
- A positive relationship with adults and students at school and a school culture of trust and fairness are key to reducing bullying.
- Schools with lower levels of bullying report higher scores on statewide tests.

This report is for educators, policymakers, parents and youth advocates who want to better understand the initiative’s impact and how these findings may apply to their work.

“BULLYING AND TEASING ARE DIFFERENT.

If you are doing it in fun without hurting someone’s feelings, it’s teasing. Bullying is when a joke isn’t funny anymore.” – Student



» MAJOR FINDINGS

The Colorado Trust asked Cadre Colorado, in collaboration with JVA Consulting, to find out whether beliefs and behavior about bullying changed over time in schools and community-based organizations that participated in the Bullying Prevention Initiative.

Evaluators began by examining the relationships among students and adults. Did students feel a sense of belonging at school? Did students think teachers treated them fairly? Evaluators also explored beliefs about bullying and bystander behavior – those who witness and may even encourage bullying but do not step in to stop it.

The evaluation consisted of surveys, in-depth case studies, focus groups, and the analysis of demographic and school achievement data. Surveys were conducted twice annually with more than 3,000 students in fifth, eighth and 11th grades in 75 schools and community centers across Colorado. Surveys of 1,500 adults offered insights into the perspectives of teachers, counselors, bus drivers and others.

TYPES OF BULLYING

- *Physical – pushing, shoving, tripping*
- *Internet/cyberbullying – telling lies or rumors by email or instant messaging, or on websites*
- *Verbal – aggressive teasing, rumors or lies*



“THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CLIMATE IS MORE DIFFICULT.

There are many social cliques. Substance abuse is earlier. Sexual activity is earlier. It's difficult to create positive values.”
– School bullying prevention coordinator

FINDING ONE:

During the initiative's first year, bullying was prevalent in the participating schools – particularly middle schools – and community-based organizations.

The findings in year one show that the majority of students in fifth through 12th grades said they had experienced some form of bullying.

Students from elementary through high school also reported that they had bullied others in the last 12 months:

- 57 percent reported verbal bullying
- 33 percent reported physical bullying
- 10 percent reported Internet bullying

However, the frequency of bullying was low. Students reported bullying others once or twice over a year.

Who bullies? Boys were 75 percent more likely to use physical bullying than girls and 22 percent more likely to bully others verbally. But evaluators found no difference

between boys and girls for cyberbullying. Bullying incidents did appear to be higher in rural than in urban areas.

The degree and types of bullying varied from middle school to high school. Physical and Internet bullying increased in middle school, but dropped off in high school. Verbal bullying rose significantly in middle school and remained elevated in high school. Almost 80 percent of middle and high school youths reported that they had verbally bullied others.

These findings suggest bullying prevention programs should begin during elementary school when behavior is emerging. Bullying prevention and intervention efforts should be stepped up in middle and high school, with extra emphasis on verbal bullying.

FINDING TWO:

Over time, beliefs and behaviors about bullying changed for the better.

The findings show that bullying declined over the three years of the Bullying Prevention Initiative. The percentage of students reporting that they continued to bully others fell by 12 percent. Physical bullying dropped by 9 percent and verbal bullying, which included cyberbullying, decreased by 5 percent.

Evaluators found that bullying can be reduced over time in schools where teachers and students are willing to intervene, treat each other fairly and demonstrate that they care. Students told evaluators that adult intervention in bullying is critical from elementary through middle school. High school, however, grows more complex because bullying occurs below the adult radar – such as cyberbullying. Students also are less likely to ask adults to intervene unless they have trusted adults to help them.

Adults underscored students' views on intervention – 95 percent of those surveyed felt it was their responsibility to intervene in bullying, and 60 percent considered bullying the single most important problem – or among the top five problems – facing their school.

“BULLYING IS EVERYWHERE – FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, EVEN CHURCHES.

We can't really expect children to change until we as adults truly embrace our role as models for bullying prevention.”

– School bullying prevention coordinator





A STUDENT'S CONNECTION
to the adults in school matters.

FINDING THREE:

Key factors such as positive relationships among adults and youths at school, and a school culture of trust and fairness had a direct impact on reducing bullying.

A student's connection to the adults in school matters. Students who had a sense of belonging in school and said the school staff treated them fairly and with respect were significantly less likely to report bullying others. They also told evaluators that bullying occurred less when students trusted teachers and other adults, and felt that the school was responsive to their needs.

Students also take cues from adults in the school. For example, is school staff sending a clear message to students that it is not okay to tease, hurt and spread rumors about other students? The school's culture is a factor in bullying prevention.

However, youths who approved of bullying were significantly more likely to report bullying others and were less likely to seek adult help or think that others would prevent bullying. This pattern did not differ much by types of bullying, gender, ethnicity or geographic location.

Just the opposite was true for youths who reported their school's adults treated them fairly and had built relationships based on trust. These students were more likely to expect – and to seek – an adult's help from elementary school through high school. As students grew older, however, they were less likely to report asking an adult for help.



A RURAL TALE

Brush, Colorado

When Brush Middle School began its prevention efforts, the rate of bullying among the school's eighth-graders was among the highest in the state for middle schools. These rates dropped dramatically – by 56 percent – when the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program was put in place schoolwide.

Everyone on staff made bullying prevention a priority, and they paid close attention to what students told evaluators:

- Students said adults were generally unaware of the extent of bullying and its consequences for students such as not wanting to come to school and feeling lonely.
- Bullying was seen as “entertainment.” Students were drawn to watch and not intervene unless the person being bullied was a good friend or the bullying was very serious.
- For girls, most bullying involved spreading rumors, gossiping or excluding other students. For boys, bullying was more likely to begin with words but end with fists.
- In middle school, bullying was largely related to boy-girl relationships.

The school has followed through on students' recommendations for more adult supervision during free time and for anonymous reporting, including giving higher risk students the cell phone number of the bullying prevention coordinator.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,

visit www.brushschools.org.

FINDING FOUR:

Schools with lower levels of bullying reported higher CSAP scores.

Evaluators explored the connection between bullying and school performance using results from the Colorado Student Assessment Program. Fifty-four schools participating in all three years of the initiative and evaluation were sorted according to those above or below the average frequency of bullying. Evaluators then looked at whether those same schools were above or below the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the CSAP in reading, writing and math combined during years one and two of the Bullying Prevention Initiative.

Almost 33 percent of schools below the average frequency of bullying in the first year of the initiative were above the average CSAP score, while only 14 percent of schools reporting a higher frequency of bullying were above the average CSAP score.

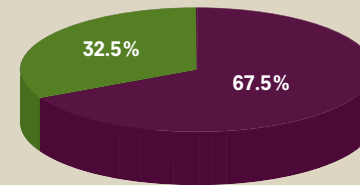
The gap widened in the second year. About 47 percent of the schools experiencing less bullying showed higher-than-average CSAP scores, but only about 6 percent of schools with more bullying were above this indicator of academic achievement.

While the findings show an association between bullying and overall school performance, the data did not reveal whether low-achieving schools provided a favorable environment for bullying or whether bullying in schools interfered with learning and achievement.

The implications, say evaluators, are that both are likely true. Schools with low academic achievement scores often struggle to nurture caring relationships between adults and youths. If children are afraid to come to school because they are bullied regularly, it is unlikely that they will start each day ready to learn.

YEAR 1

Below average bullying frequency (N=40)

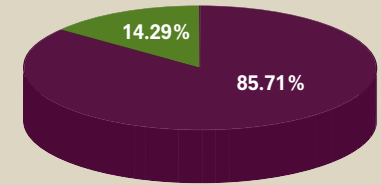


■ % below average CSAP score

■ % above average CSAP score

Graphs by 0=below 1=above on phy or verb

Above average bullying frequency (N=14)

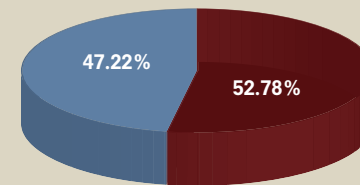


■ % below average CSAP score

■ % above average CSAP score

YEAR 2

Below average bullying frequency (N=36)

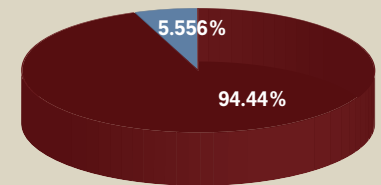


■ % below average CSAP score

■ % above average CSAP score

Graphs by 0=below 1=above on phy or verb

Above average bullying frequency (N=18)



■ % below average CSAP score

■ % above average CSAP score

IF CHILDREN ARE AFRAID TO COME TO SCHOOL

because they are bullied regularly, it is unlikely that they will start each day ready to learn.





» CONCLUSION

The independent evaluation commissioned by The Colorado Trust offers important insights into bullying in Colorado, and how bullying can be prevented. It reveals a connection between higher CSAP scores and less bullying in schools. It also demonstrates that students are less likely to bully when they experience caring and trusting relationships with adults in their schools, and feel that they are treated fairly. These findings matter for all of us because the negative effects of bullying and the positive effects of preventing bullying can last a lifetime.

**FOR A FULL LIST OF PARTICIPATING
*school districts, schools and community-based
organizations, visit www.coloradotrust.org.***



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT STRATEGIES

to prevent bullying, visit www.bullyingprevention.org.

» A CALL TO ACTION

Bullying prevention is most effective when adults understand the extent of the bullying problem in a school; emphasis is placed on a positive school climate and culture; bystanders step in to stop bullying; and there is complete buy-in for prevention programs among all school staff.

How can you help prevent bullying? Consider these key questions:

- **Educators:** Do the adults in the school understand the extent of the bullying problem? Can they distinguish bullying from normal conflict? Has the school created an environment that promotes care and concern for others? Has all staff bought in to bullying prevention? Are these prevention strategies embedded schoolwide?
- **Parents:** Does your child feel safe in school? Does your child's school have an anti-bullying program in place? Is

it effective, and how does the school know? Does the school ask parents and students for their input on how to prevent bullying?

- **Policymakers:** Have policymakers passed legislation or local policies that define and prohibit bullying? Have school districts been encouraged to identify methods to decrease and document bullying? Are these local- and state-level policies effective? Have the voices of educators, students and parents been part of the discussion?

The answers to these questions can help educators, parents and policymakers be more successful in efforts to prevent bullying. Successful schools and community-based organizations told evaluators how critical it is to be proactive to make bullying prevention a priority; to integrate bullying prevention strategies with academic and social programs schoolwide; and to seek proven programs.



THE
COLORADO
TRUST

The Colorado Trust
1600 Sherman Street
Denver, Colorado 80203
303-837-1200

www.coloradotrust.org