

Safe, Accepting, and Fair Education (SAFE) Schools



Provide Minnesota's public school students a healthy and safe learning environment that will produce healthy adults who are prepared to succeed in all aspects of life.

Final Portfolio
PubH 6634: Advocacy & Children's Rights
Raymond Schneider
May 8, 2013

Memorandum

To: Chuck Oberg
From: Raymond Schneider
Date: 8/1/2013
Re: SAFE Schools Final Portfolio

Introduction:

Bullying is a topic that touches the lives of many students, with recent national and state surveys showing at least one out of five students on the receiving end of bullying every year. This is all the more tragic because we have the tools to drastically reduce bullying.

I find the topic personally relevant, because as a youth, I was frequently bullied in multiple schools, often in front of teachers, and nothing was done to stop these events. I am stubborn, and have never suffered from a lack of ego, and my response to bullies was to use humor or force, depending on the type of bully I encountered. This ended with varying and predictable results. However, many students are not willing or able to bounce back from the experience of being bullied.

Events such as the ones I experienced cost students and schools. Students suffer from a variety of mental and behavioral risks, and lowered academic performance. Schools lose time to educate students, and lose funding due to administrative and lost reimbursement costs. We have the tools to avoid many of these costs, we simply are not using them.

Vision:

Provide Minnesota school students a safe and healthy learning environment that will produce healthy adults who are prepared to succeed in all aspects of life.

Goals:

- Support schools by giving staff the tools they need to effectively reduce bullying behaviors.
- Provide students the support and resources they need to prevent bullying behaviors.
- Support victims of bullying to prevent physical and psychological harm.

Objectives:

- Establish adequate funding of proven anti-bullying programs within the next two years.
- Implement evidence based anti-bullying programs and policies in public schools within the next five years.
- Reduce reported bullying and victimization rates of all forms of bullying by 50% within the next ten years.

Recommendation for Change:

In order give our schools the tools they need to successfully reduce bullying, Minnesota needs to implement comprehensive anti-bullying programs. Multiple existing programs have been adapted for use in public schools, such at the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, and the KiVa Schools program. Both of the programs are tested an effective, train staff to help students learn healthy and empathetic ways to interact, and reduce bullying by 30% to 50%.

Implementing one of these programs will not only improve the learning environment for students. Anti-bullying programs also save money. Implementing an anti-bullying programs breaks even by the end of the second year, and save school districts money after the second year. Long term, these programs increase academic performance, reduce administrative costs, and prepare students to achieve and earn more after they graduate.

Implementing anti-bullying programs will benefit Minnesota’s school children, school staff, and the community at large.

Take Away Point:

Anti-bullying programs work. They improve every aspect of our schools and provide a safe and healthy environment for our school children. The impact of these programs is long reaching, extending over the entire lives of those the programs reach.

Note: Throughout this document, www.safeschools.org is referenced multiple times. I choose to use this “fictional” web address due to convenience. This website actually exists, and is used by a real organization. This document is in no way affiliated with the real www.safeschools.org.

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Letter to an Elected Official

State Representative Paul Thissen
463 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Rep. Thissen,

I am Minnesota resident, public health student at the University of Minnesota, and a worker in the public health community in the Twin Cities. I am writing to you because of your history of vocally supporting health care and education, regarding an issue that stands with one leg in each of those vital endeavors. Bullying is a problem that has caused real harms to students in Minnesota. Bullying has a significant impact on both bullies and their targets' academic success. Simple programs can help give our children the tools to prevent the harms of bullying for themselves, and to protect others.

In the last year 20% of high school students have been the target of bullying, and 16% have been bullied electronically¹. The impact of bullying can be far reaching. Targets of bullying have higher risks of physical injury, depression, anxiety, and poor school performance. Children who engage in bullying are at higher risk for substance abuse, academic troubles and violence later in life. Perhaps most worrying is the risk for students who are driven to bully others after being bullied themselves. These children suffer from both the increased risks of the bully and the target.

You can help Minnesota change. Focusing on the bully and the target has been the traditional approach to combating bullying in schools. This approach can work, but we can also focus on the other students who play a key role in the bullying equation, the bystanders. Bullying rarely happens without an audience, and the reaction of those bystanders has a powerful effect on the success or failure of the bully. We need to teach our children to stand against bullying, and remove the social rewards bullies receive when they get support. Many groups in the Twin Cities are working to teach

¹ Centers for Disease Control. 2012. Understanding Bullying Fact Sheet. (Control, 2012)

schoolchildren these skills. BULLY, Inc., the Pacer Center, and groups in Anoka and Hennepin county have developed and delivered bystander empowerment and anti-bullying programs.

Your position as Speaker in the Minnesota House of Representatives gives you a powerful platform to advocate for integrating these anti-bullying programs into our educational system, instead of depending on grant funding and donations. I urge you to follow your campaign promises of fighting for education and health, and help our children make our schools a safe environment for learning. Support legislation implementing comprehensive anti-bullying programs.

Sincerely,

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Community Health Promotion
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Letter to an Editor

Opinion Editor
Star Tribune
405 Portland Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55488

Dear Editor,

In the last year 20% of high school students have been the target of bullying, and 16% have been bullied electronically². Minnesota schoolchildren are no exception to this trend as the recent national spotlight on Anoka has demonstrated. As parents and community members, we must take action.

The impact of bullying can be far reaching. Targets of bullying have higher risks of physical injury, depression, anxiety, and poor school performance. Children who engage in bullying are at higher risk for substance abuse, academic troubles and violence later in life. Perhaps most worrying is the risk for students who are driven to bully others after being bullied themselves. These children suffer from both the increased risks of the bully and the target.

The good news is that we can do something about this. Focusing on the bully and the target has been the traditional approach to combating bullying in schools. This approach can work, but we can also focus on the other students who play a key role in the bullying equation, the bystanders.

Bullying rarely happens without an audience, and the reaction of those bystanders has a powerful effect on the success or failure of the bully. We need to teach our children to stand against bullying, and remove the social rewards bullies receive when they get support. Many groups in the Twin Cities are working to teach schoolchildren these skills. BULLY, Inc., the Pacer Center, and groups in Anoka and Hennepin county have developed and delivered bystander empowerment and anti-bullying programs. We need to increase our support of these organizations. It is not enough to respond to tragic events. We need to proactively teach our children how to stop bullying before it can start.

² Centers for Disease Control. 2012. Understanding Bullying Fact Sheet. (Control, 2012)

Sincerely,

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Policy Brief – Anti-Bullying Programs in Public Schools

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Bullying affects more than one fifth of students in the public school system. Bullying also leads to lifetime challenges for both bullies and victims, and can lead to suicide and violence in extreme cases. Anti-bullying research over the few decades has created and refined tools that we can use now to protecting both bullies and their victims from.

2. BACKGROUND

I. What is bullying?

The definition of bullying has varied through time, but a few standard concepts are currently agreed upon. Bullying is any form of physical or psychological attack or action that is meant to cause fear or to intimidate (Farrington, 1993). Bullying is also often characterized by repeated events of bullying behavior (CDC, 2012). With the advent of adolescents having access to social media and cellular phones, bullying can also be conducted electronically through a variety of means. The fundamental concept of bullying is one person exploiting a power imbalance to harm another.

II. Why is it a problem?

Both bullies and their victims experience a wide range of negative outcomes and risk factors. Bullies often have or develop substance abuse problems (Kaltiala-Heino, 2000). They also tend to have or develop a variety of mental health issues (Kumpulainen, 2001). Bullies also face problems later in life, including poor academic performance (Carney, 2001), increased criminal activity (Roberts, 2000), and continuing to use aggressive physical and psychological behaviors with family members (Roberts, 2000). Based on these trends, bullying may perpetuate through families if left unaddressed (Smokowski, 2005).

Victims of bullying suffer from a variety of problems. Victimization has been found to lead to anxiety and depression (Brockenbrough, 2002). Studies have also found links between victimization and eating disorders (Bond, 2001), and attention deficit disorders (Kumpulainen, 2001). In the long term victims also suffer from poor academic performance (McNamara, 1997), problems in interpersonal and sexual relationships (Gilmartin, 1987), and in teaching their own children how to respond to conflict situations (McNamara, 1997). Poor self-esteem and depression are also possible outcomes (Olweus, 1993). Compounding the problem, some children are both bullies and victims, and share the problems of both.

III. Why do something?

According to the CDC and the National Center for Education Statistics:

During the 2009-2010 school year, 23% of public schools reported that bullying occurred among students on a daily or weekly basis. A higher percentage of middle school students reported being bullying than high school students (Robers, 2020)³.

In a 2011 nationwide survey, 20% of high school students reported being bullied on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey (CDC, 2012).

These numbers only indicate students who report being bullied, and do not include the numbers of bullies. By comparison 4.4% of children are abused or neglected each year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010), and 1.4% are the victim of a reported violent crime each year (White, 2012). Bullying is a problem than reaches the lives of more children than most realize. Given the wealth of research illustrating the negatives effects bully has on all those involved, urgent action is needed.

³ Spelling is not corrected in this quote.

3. MISSION & GOALS

Mission:

Provide public school students a healthy and safe learning environment that will produce healthy adults who are prepared to succeed in all aspects of life.

Goals:

- Create safe school environments for all students.
- Provide students the support and resources they need to prevent bullying behaviors.
- Support victims of bullying to prevent physical and psychological harm.

Objectives

- Establish adequate funding of proven anti-bullying programs within the next two years.
- Implement evidence based anti-bullying programs and policies in public schools within the next five years.
- Reduce reported bullying and victimization rates of all forms of bullying by 50% within the next ten years.

4. POLICY APPROACHES

Bullying is often viewed as an event between two individuals. However, there are many factors that influence the potential for bullying. These include the location of the events, the children involved, the adults in proximity to the events (often teachers and school staff) and the families of the children involved. The results of past interventions have shown that each of these factors can be influenced by various methods that could be implemented through policy action.

This brief focuses on the school setting, as this location provides existing tools, infrastructure and roles that are amenable to policy alterations. A facet of anti-bullying programs is that the various components of a program tend to be layered, with each layer impacting the effectiveness of the overall program. Three increasingly effective levels of programs will be examined.

I. Default Level Policy

Schools could continue to use current approaches to anti-bullying. In many cases this approach consists of basic rules or possibly school or district-wide anti-bullying policies that essentially add language to existing rules but provide little in the way of providing substantive efforts to reduce bullying events beyond punitive measures after-the-fact.

II. Student Level Policy

The next layer of anti-bullying programs consists of the student-focused portions of programs. These programs are concerned with individual bully and victim interventions, peer-group roles, and the social dynamics between students that can influence bullying. Model programs at this level, such as the student portions of KiVa program from Finland (Kärnä, 2011) and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) from Norway (Olweus, 2004), provide adaptable curriculums that have seen success across large school systems.

III. School Staff Level

Comprehensive anti-bullying programs involve the staff and teachers in the school in addition to targeting students. On the school administration level there is a correlation between the amount of structure and support a school provides students and the level of bullying victimizations. The concept of school structure can be viewed as how consistently and fairly schools enforce rules (Gregory, 2010). The same author defines support as the degree to which students feel cared about

and respected by adults in the school setting. Gregory's research in the Virginia public school system found that high levels of both support and structure were associated with lower levels of victimization.

On a disciplinary level, multiple interventions have approached disciplinary responses from both a punitive and restorative level (Farrington D. T., 2009). Both methods have seen success in reducing bullying, reducing rates of bullying by 30% to 50% in Norway and Finland (Kärnä, 2011) (Olweus, 1993). Both the KiVa and OBPP programs described previously have school-level components that can be modified, and U.S. implementations exist (Limber, 2004).

IV. Intensity of Program

The intensity of an anti-bullying program is a combination of the number of times an intervention holds meetings, classes, or other events, and the duration of those events. Meta-analysis of interventions has shown that increased intensity is correlated with better outcomes from anti-bullying programs (Farrington D. T., 2009). It is important to consider the intensity at which various levels of anti-bullying programs can be implemented, as greater levels of intensity will show greater improvements in outcomes.

V. Budgetary Considerations

At this time, no cost benefit analysis of anti-bullying programs has ever been conducted (Farrington D. T., 2009). For this reason it hard to present budgetary policy considerations, but we will assume increasing the number of components and intensity of any anti-bullying program will increase the costs associated. This is due to increased training, potential increases in time for students and staff to be at school or school events, and increased costs of materials and ancillary costs incurred by adding activities and events that would not otherwise occur in the absence of an anti-bullying program.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The three levels of policy implementation will be reviewed under four criteria on a three point scale, and weighted on a three-point scale based on the reasoning given below.

- A. Cost:** The relative costs of implementing the level of intervention and policy recommended. Cost is weighted as important (2), as any-school based program or policy often comes at the cost of other programs.
- B. Feasibility:** How difficult each level of implementation will be to put into practice. Feasibility is weighted as least important (1), as schools are prepared to implement programs targeting students by nature, and policy is a well-established tool for influencing educational systems.
- C. Effectiveness:** How effective each increasing level of policy will be at reducing bullying and victimization. Effectiveness is rated as most important (3), as the ultimate goal of any anti-bullying policy is most fundamentally designed to reduce victimization.
- D. Equity:** How fair the program is to the students at each level of anti-bullying program implementation. Equity is rated as important (2), as all students should be treated fairly.

1. Default Level

The cost and feasibility of default level of anti-bullying programs and policy is the cheapest, requiring little to no additional cost to schools, and receives the highest score (3) in both categories. Effectiveness receives the lowest score (1). Failing to change of policy will correspondingly fail to reduce victimization. Equity also receives the lowest score (1), as failing to implement any policy will not address bullies or victims.

2. Student Level

Implementing only the student level policy and interventions will increase the cost of programs from the default state, and therefore receives a score of 2. Outside staff will need to be hired to conduct programs, but costs will not reach the expense of training teachers and administrators. Feasibility also receives a score of 2 to reflect the increased complexity of adding student targeted events to the school year. Effectiveness is scored at the middle level (2), as any intervention will likely improve outcomes over the default level. Equity also scores at the middle level (2), as some concerns of bullies and victims will be addressed.

3. School Level

Implementing entire school staff level policy will be the most expensive policy options, and receives a correspondingly low score (1). Staff training and additional integration of anti-bullying programs will add cost to that of hiring outside program facilitators. Feasibility remains scored at the middle level (2), as schools often must adapt to policy shifts, and implementing comprehensive anti-bullying programs will either be integrated alongside other policy requirements or replace other programs. Effectiveness receives the highest rating (3), as comprehensive anti-bullying programs and policy provide the greatest benefits. Equity also receives the highest rating (3), as staff will be trained to help respond to the needs of all students and will provide additional resources to prevent bullying.

Factors	Weight	Default Level	Weighted Score	Student Level	Weighted Score	School Level	Weighted Score
Cost	2	3	6	2	4	1	2
Feasibility	1	3	3	2	2	2	2
Effectiveness	3	1	3	2	6	3	9
Equity	2	1	2	2	4	3	6
Final Score			14		16		19

Factors are weighted 1 = Less important, 2 = Important, 3 = Very Important.

4. FINAL RECOMMENDATION

As shown in the figure above, the comprehensive school-level anti-bullying approach receives the highest weighted score. Comprehensive anti-bullying programs have been proven to be effective consistently, as opposed to other approaches. This approach is recommended for implementation with one caveat.

Given the costs associated with each level, it is important that any policy implementation adequately provides for each level of anti-bullying programs. If policy makers must choose between partially attempting both the student and school-level components, it may be most effective to focus on student level interventions to ensure that unintended consequences of poor funding, staffing, or training do not undermine any individual component.

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Benefit Cost Analysis

Figure 1: Cost-Benefit Table

Benefits	Year 1	Ongoing	25 Years
Truancy Reduction	\$ 103,241.00	\$ 103,241.00	\$ 2,581,025.00
Suspension Reduction	\$ 161,534.00	\$ 161,534.00	\$ 4,038,350.00
Expulsion/Transfer Reduction	\$ 9,078.00	\$ 9,078.00	\$ 226,950.00
Lawsuit Rammifications		\$ 17,600.40	\$ 440,010.00
Mental Health		\$ 396,502.80	\$ 9,912,570.00
Social Bully Reduction			\$ 5,564,578.32
Social Victim Reduction			\$ 1,157,594.76
	\$ 273,853.00	\$ 687,956.20	\$ 23,921,078.08

Costs	Year 1	Ongoing	25 Years
Program Director	\$ 58,680.00	\$ 58,680.00	\$ 1,467,000.00
Curriculum Specialist	\$ 52,160.00	\$ -	\$ -
OBPP Trainer Certification	\$ 6,200.00	\$ -	\$ -
OBPP Materials	\$ 3,200.00	\$ -	\$ -
OBPP Questionnaire	\$ 250.00	\$ -	\$ -
Teacher Training (reduced to 10% after first year)	\$ 1,983,960.00	\$ 198,396.00	\$ 4,959,900.00
Print	\$ 48,394.50	\$ 48,394.50	\$ 1,209,862.50
Miscellaneous	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 1,250,000.00
Totals	\$ 2,202,844.50	\$ 355,470.50	\$ 8,886,762.50

Figure 2: Cost Benefits Ratios

Benefit-Cost Ratio	
Year 1	\$ 0.12
Ongoing	\$ 1.94
25 Years	\$ 2.69

Benefit-Cost Justifications

Benefits

Reduced Truancy

$$32236 \text{ Students} \times 8\% \text{ Truancy Rate} \times \$40 = \$103,241$$

Based on research, roughly 8% of students miss at least one day of school per year due to skipping school to avoid bullying (Perkins, 2009). Many schools receive a Average Daily Attendance reimbursement of \$40 per student, per day (Phillips, 2008). Multiplying these figures by the population of the MSD provides the above numbers.

Reduced Suspensions

$$4151 \text{ Suspensions} \times 20\% \text{ Bully Factor} \times \$170 \text{ Admin cost} \times \$140 \text{ ADA cost} = \$161,534$$

By multiplying the number of MPS students suspended in 2009-10 (Hawkins, 2011) by a bullying factor, here assumed at 20%, by the administrative cost of a suspension (Phillips R. , 2013), and the ADA cost of the average 3 day suspension, the above figure is provided.

Expulsion/Administrative Transfers

$$267 \text{ Transfers/year} \times \$170 \times 20\% \text{ bully factor} = \$9078$$

MPS does not often expel students, and instead transfers students. This costs roughly the same as a suspension. Multiplying the transfers (Hawmikns, 2011) by the administrative cost, and again reducing by 80% to account for non-bullying related transfers, the above figure is provided.

Lawsuits

$$\text{One-time Costs} = \$770,000$$

$$\text{Ongoing Staff} = 3 \text{ staff} \times \$45,000 \times 30.4\% \text{ fringe} = \$176,000.40$$

The Anoka-Hennepin School District recently settled a lawsuit regarding bullying for \$770,000, and required 3 new staff members to be hired (Post, 2012). A quick Google search of “cost of bullying lawsuits” shows that the amounts of lawsuits and settlements vary, but multiple school districts across the country have settled for varying amounts. Similar occurrences are likely now that precedence has been set in the state legal system. Assuming ongoing cost of such staff will cost \$45,000 per year plus benefits, and Minnesota suits will follow the Anoka-Hennepin case, the above figure is provided.

School Mental Health and Related Costs

$$\$12.30 \text{ per student} \times 32236 \text{ students} = \$396,502.80 \text{ per year}$$

Cost Benefit analysis by the Highmark foundation found that the savings of the OBPP in regards to overall mental and physical health costs came to \$12.30 per student per year (Highmark Foundation, 2013).

Social Costs

$$\text{Bully} = \$2.73 \times 21\% \times 33236 \text{ students} \times 25 \text{ years} = \$5,564,578.32$$

$$\text{Victim} = \$1.33 \times 9\% \times 33236 \text{ students} \times 25 \text{ years} = \$1,157,594.76$$

The Highmark foundation also found that being bullied or being a bully has long term economic impacts on students. Using cohort figures provided by the Highmark Foundation, their estimates, and multiplying rates times the number of times students reported bullying or being bullied at least

once per week (Minnesota Student Survey Intragency Team, 2010), the figure above is provided. Based on this methodology, it is likely an underestimate as the method of calculating the per individual costs were not provided by the Highmark Foundation.

Costs

1 Program Director

\$45000 with 30.4% Fringe = \$58,680

The program director will work as a full time contact to help implement the program and provide assistance to the MSD throughout the design and implementation of the adapted program.

1 Curriculum Specialist

\$40,000 with 30.4% fringe = \$52,160

The curriculum specialist will be a full time employee hired to adapt the OBPP and KiVa programs, and develop the additional materials required for the program. The curriculum specialist will not be required after the initial program is developed.

OBPP Trainer Certification

1 position @ \$4,200, + \$2,000 travel expenses = \$6,200.

At least one staff member on the Minneapolis school district will be trained as an OBPP certified trainer in order to reduce long term training costs of program implementation, by ensuring outside consultants are not required to conduct ongoing training. This certification costs \$4200 and includes two two-day training and certification courses (Hazelden Publishing, 2013). Travel is included as a separate, additional \$2000.

OBPP Materials

1 Teacher Guide & 1 School Guide @ \$3,200

These materials are a one-time purchase from Hazelden Publishing in order to provide the core portions of the OBPP to the school system. Additional Purchases should not be required, unless the program is significantly changed.

OBPP Questionnaire

1 Questionnaire Book @ \$250

This provides OBPP questionnaires and evaluation guidelines to facilitate evaluation of the program.

KiVa Schools Training and Materials

Estimate equivalent to OBPP training and materials costs = \$9,650.

The KiVa Schools program does provide costs for their material and training at this time on their website, so similar costs to the OBPP will be assumed.

Teacher Training

5511 MSD Staff x 2 Days In-service Training @\$360 = \$1,983,960

This represents the up-front cost of training all MSD staff in a two day program along the lines of the OBPP recommended training. After the first year, costs will be significantly reduced, as only new staff will require the full in-service training. The CBA reflects this by reducing costs to a 10%

new hire/retraining rate after the first year. Please note the calculation used to determine this after the summary of this section.

Print Costs

50 pages x 32263 Students x \$0.03 per page = \$48,394.50

Costs for printing 50 pages per year of program materials for students, including questionnaires and other materials.

Miscellaneous Costs

Estimate = \$50,000

This includes costs for posters, school promotion of the program, and a general excess to account for needed expenditures as the program is developed and implemented.

Summary

Initial startup costs of a bullying prevention program outweigh the benefits in the first year, by a ratio of 8.04:1. After the first year, the cost benefit ratio adjusts to 0.52, indicating roughly twice the money spent on the program is saved via program implementation. Over 25 years, including societal benefits of reduced bullying and victimization further reduces the cost-benefit ratio to 0.37, indicating that nearly \$3 dollars in savings are gained for every dollar spent on bullying prevention. On an ongoing yearly analysis, anti-bullying programs will save Minneapolis Public Schools \$332,485.70. Based on this analysis, anti-bullying programs are a fiscally sound investment for Minneapolis Public Schools.

Teacher Training Cost Calculations

Per the MSD Teachers' Contract, "To compute the Hourly Pro-rate Rate, divide the teacher's current annual salary by the teacher duty days (192); that result is further divided by the hours in the teachers' defined duty day less 30 minute duty free lunch (7.25 hr.)." (Teachers, 2013) Given an annual budget for salary of \$431 m (Minneapolis Public Schools, 2011), reduced by the proportion of non-student facing staff (11.5%), divided by 192 days, the average daily prorated pay for inservice costs \$361 per staff member. This is likely an overestimation.*

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Coalition Strategy

Safe, Accepting, and Fair Education (SAFE) Schools



Provide Minnesota's public school students a healthy and safe learning environment that will produce healthy adults who are prepared to succeed in all aspects of life.

Our community consists of parents, educators, students and anyone concerned about a safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment for Minnesota’s school children.

Organizations Supporting SAFE Schools

Organizations	Agenda	Assets	Limitation
AMAZE	End bias and bullying through skill-building exercises and community engagement.	Credibility through both public recognition of their work by Rainbow Families and the Minnesota Council of Non-profits and grant funding.	Small organization focused on small scale projects.
Rainbow Families (Family Equality Council)	Represents LGBTQ parents in a variety of policy areas to ensure equal rights for LGBTQ families.	Established as a member in anti-bullying coalitions in many states, and has experience in anti-bullying campaigns.	Will not appeal to religious conservatives, and will likely court some negative opinion amongst such groups.
OutFront Minnesota	Supports Minnesota's LGBT and allied communities in the areas of community organizing, public policy, anti-violence, law, education and training.	One of Minnesota’s largest LGBTQ rights organizations, Recent successes in other issues provide a strong base, and can help mount a solid campaign supporting.	Will not appeal to religious conservatives, and will likely court some negative opinion amongst such groups.
Jewish Community Action	The pursuit of racial, social, and economic justice for all people.	Experience in a variety of political campaigns, large and diverse Board of Directors with many fields of experience and connections.	Appeals mostly to Jewish community members, although they are active in issues that are not religious in nature.

Minnesota Medical Association	Support the character of the medical profession, promote and protect the health and lives of the community.	Established in 1853, one of the oldest active groups working to promote health and health policies in Minnesota.	May not be able to engage in some aspects of the coalition given the broad interests of the organization.
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Additional Recruitment

SAFE Schools will reach out to existing organizations that focus on anti-bullying efforts in Minnesota schools. Given recent media attention given to the problem of bullying, and the national spotlight thrust upon the Anoka-Hennepin School District, many organizations are already active in promoting anti-bullying policy. These efforts will be conducted by:

1. Direct contact with organizations through published available contact points.
2. Attending meetings of organizations already active in anti-bullying and pro-LGBTQ efforts to provide in-person contact with both organization members and their supporters.
3. Attending and canvassing or tabling at anti-bullying and GLBTQ events and demonstrations in the Minneapolis area to raise awareness of the SAFE Schools coalition, and to build contacts with local supporters and organizers.

Opposition Organizations

Organization	Agenda	Strength	Influence
Minnesota Family Council	To strengthen the families of Minnesota by advancing biblical principles in the public arena. Currently consider anti-bullying as a part of the “pro-gay” agenda.	Able to rally supporters and raise money to run media campaigns. Already involved in opposing anti-bullying campaigns.	Moderate. Have suffered recent defeats in other issues, but likely able to mount considerable opposition.
Taxpayer’s League of Minnesota	Opposes any increase in taxation, often opposes increases in budgetary spending. Will likely oppose any increase in costs based on principles	Able to garner press coverage and influence some conservative politicians. Provides annual scorecards influencing voter decisions.	Moderate. Likely to overlap with conservative voters who are already opposed to anti-bullying based on religious grounds

Environmental Assessment

In the last decade bullying has received increased national attention due to more news coverage reporting of cases of students committing suicide due to being bullied. However, bullying is not a new problem. The CDC has reported that 23% of public schools report bullying occurring on a daily or weekly basis, and 20% of high school students report being bullied at school at least once in the last year. Bullying leads to a variety of mental health and substance abuse problems for both bullies and victims. In the context of this data, efforts to reduce bullying have begun to reach a critical point where many States are considering legislation to confront the problem of bullying in the school system

These efforts have taken varying forms. All 50 states have anti-bullying laws. 42 states have also adopted anti-bullying policies. A small but growing number of school systems have implemented anti-bullying programs that attempt to address the complicated and multi-faceted problem of bullying. The most successful of these programs have been comprehensive anti-bully programs based on a growing body of research and successful interventions. Minnesota and the Minneapolis school district sit at a crossroads of these various levels of anti-bullying measures. While Minnesota does not have a state level anti-bullying policy the Minneapolis Public School district does. However there is no comprehensive anti-bullying program despite the large proportion of immigrant, minority, and LGBTQ students in Minneapolis.

Anti-bullying policies and programs are increasingly being characterized as pro-LGBTQ efforts by conservative and religious groups that opposed efforts aimed at providing equal protection for LGBTQ individuals. Additionally, Minnesota has had recent political campaigns attempting to ban gay marriage, which failed, and a current legislative attempt to legalize gay marriage, which appears to have a fair chance at passing. These political events, along with the national spotlight brought on the Anoka Hennepin School District in the aftermath of multiple LGBTQ suicides connected to bullying provide a chance for anti-bullying advocates to seized on the political advances the LGBTQ community has made.

Religious groups will provide one manageable opponent to SAFE Schools. A second pressing concern is the current fiscal climate in both the Minnesota school systems and the state legislature.

Although recovering from the economic downturn, Minnesota still has projected shortfalls in the state budget. Combined with a deferred education budget for K-12 education from the previous fiscal year, SAFE Schools will need to strategically present the mid-term and long-term fiscal benefits of anti-bullying programs in order to address concerns from taxpayer organizations such as the Taxpayer's League of Minnesota.

Although bullying is not only an LGBTQ issue, the SAFE Schools Coalition can capitalize on the political organization of the pro-LGBTQ rights movement in Minnesota to push for comprehensive anti-bullying program adoption. Pro-LGBTQ rights groups have a history of strongly supporting anti-bullying efforts because these programs and policies provide direct benefit to their community. By partnering with these groups SAFE Schools can not only help those groups achieve success, we can also provide the same anti-bullying protections for the significant minority and immigrant communities in the Minneapolis school system.

Politically, there is already a large amount of support for the general topic of anti-bullying. HF-826, which strengthens anti-bullying laws in Minnesota, has passed the House, appears to be on track to pass the Senate, and Governor Dayton appears ready to sign the bill into law assuming it passes. Funding anti-bullying programs is the next logical step for political escalation of the topic, however there is a danger that passage of HF-826 may make many in the legislature consider the matter closed.

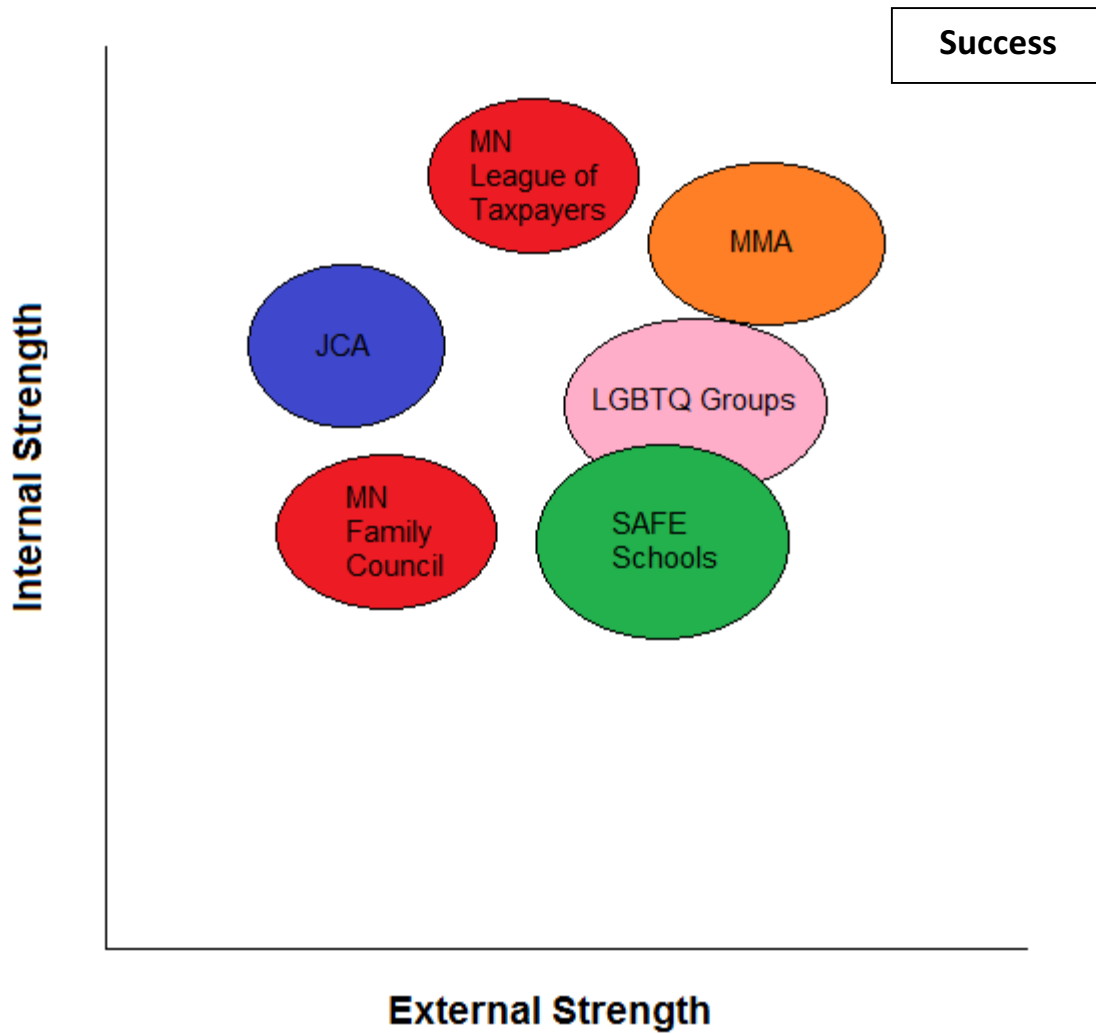
In terms of funding for anti-bullying programs, the climate is much less optimistic. The State, and the Nation, are undergoing a protracted budget crisis which shows no signs of abating in the near term. Convincing the State Legislature of the mid-term and long-term budgetary benefits of comprehensive anti-bullying programs will be crucial to the success of any action. Compounding this is the fact that the State did not fund schools last year. If this year's budgetary crisis manages to remedy the funding of public schools, that step will go a long way towards providing an opening to fund anti-bullying programs. The coalition will need to work with legislators to include the anti-bullying in measures paying back or restructuring financial support for public school funding. It may not be possible to enact anti-bullying programs in this session, but the coalition should begin discussions with legislators as soon as possible. It cannot be understated how important framing anti-bullying campaigns as cost savings measures will be.

The following S.W.O.T. analysis will show how the current political climate in Minnesota can be used to accomplish these goals.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many members of the coalition are prepared and willing to engage in a campaign to promote anti-bullying efforts. • Many coalition members are already involved in reducing school violence and promoting anti-bullying topics.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some groups have broader focuses that just the topic of bullying, and may only be able to devote a fraction of their effort and supporters to the coalition. • Recent passage of stronger anti-bullying laws in Minnesota may be enough for some coalition members to consider their goals met.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative religious groups recently lost on key issues related to LGBTQ rights and equal protections. • Anti-bullying efforts can capitalize on the infrastructure of other advocacy organizations. • Anti-bullying can also be framed as a larger issue affecting minority and immigrant rights in Minneapolis.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and school district funding is under intense scrutiny. • Anti-tax organizations will oppose increased spending based on fiscal grounds. • School boards and superintendents are wary of additional costs if funding is not provided.

The Competitive Landscape



Internal Factors

The SAFE Schools Coalition has support from numerous organizations that have recent political success and the ability to mobilize behind efforts to enact change. These efforts should allow SAFE Schools to engage a wide coalition base to enact anti-bullying programs.

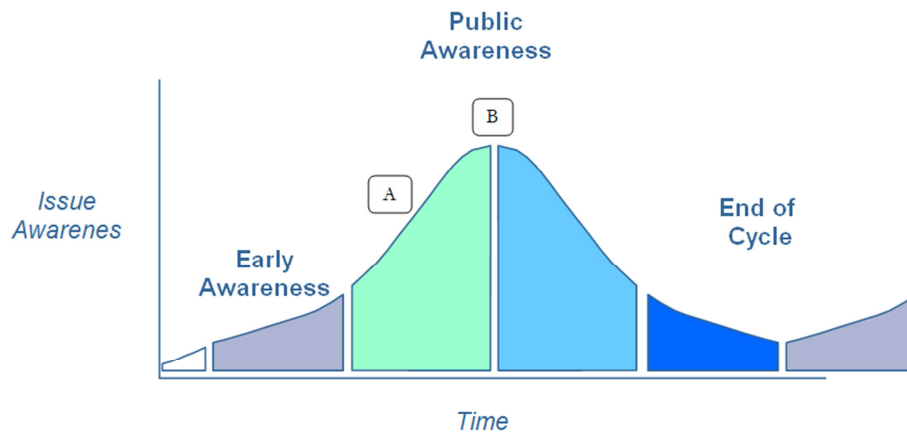
External Factors

Recent failures regarding anti-LGBTQ rights groups provide an opportunity for SAFE Schools. However the budgetary climate provides considerable challenges.

Action Plan

Provide public school students a healthy and safe learning environment that will produce healthy adults who are prepared to succeed in all aspects of life.

Assessing Public Awareness



A. Today

Currently bullying awareness is in a bit of a lull in Minnesota. Two years ago, much of the Media fallout from suicides and lawsuits was prominently displayed on national and local news outlets. In the intervening time, other political issues, such as the Presidential campaigns and gay marriage issues took over much of the news cycle. Now there are activist groups working on various anti-bullying measures, and both pro-and anti-bullying groups have begun to state their cases. Essentially niche groups are aware of the issue, and the general public has been primed on the topic, but the issue of bullying has not risen to a full-fledged issue at this time.

B. 12 Month Projection

In 12 months the issue of bullying should become a full issue to be discussed in election and funding cycles. By focusing efforts on building coalition support and increasing media awareness of anti-bullying programing, SAFE Schools should be able to make anti-bullying programing a ballot issue, or a topic that becomes part of the consideration voters make when. A coordinated media strategy amongst coalition members should be able to raise awareness among the general public over a 12 months period.

12 Month Time Table

<p>Coalition Leadership & Spokesperson</p>	<p>Spokesperson – Seek out and develop media connections in order to increase the media share comprehensive anti-bullying programs receive. This may take many forms, and include MPR interviews, local news media, and attempting to publish op-ed pieces.</p> <p>Leadership – Build ties to already existing organizations. The main goal will be to first build relationships, and then coordinate activities to raise awareness regarding anti-bullying, and coordinate efforts and implementing anti-bullying programs.</p>
<p>Grassroots</p>	<p>Grassroots engagement should be focused on having members of the coalition attend school board and PTA meetings to raise awareness of the need for anti-bullying topics, and prime the topic in the school system. A send focus will be sending willing members into community and religious organizations to build support for anti-bullying programs in non-school areas, or to at least provide feedback regarding possible opposition groups.</p>

Measures of Success

The primary measure of success in these efforts will be increased media exposure of anti-bullying topics. This includes any sort of media coverage, such as newspaper articles, radio spots, interviews, letters to the editor, and op-eds.

Once media coverage has begun, the measure of success will shift to legislative and school board support for comprehensive anti-bullying programs.

The final measure of success will be implementation of anti-bullying programs in school districts in the state of Minnesota.

Additional Goals, Objectives, and Measures:

Goal	Measure
Create safe school environments for all students.	Evidence based anti-bullying programs in at least one major school district in Minnesota, reported rates of bullying on Minnesota Student Survey.
Provide students the support and resources they need to prevent bullying behaviors.	Evidence based anti-bullying programs in at least one major school district in Minnesota.
Support victims of bullying to prevent physical and psychological harm.	Evidence based anti-bullying programs in at least one major school district in Minnesota.
Objective	Measure
Establish adequate funding of proven anti-bullying programs within the next two years.	Passage of funding supporting anti-bullying programs.
Implement evidence based anti-bullying programs and policies in public schools within the next five years.	Evidence based anti-bullying programs in at least one major school district in Minnesota.
Reduce reported bullying and victimization rates of all forms of bullying by 50% within the next ten years.	Reported rates of bullying on Minnesota Student Survey.

Ethical Consideration of Means

Means Willing to Use	Means Unwilling to Use
<p>Given the mission of SAFE Schools, anti-bullying promotion, any means used must never exceed the point of “pointed criticism”. This is criticism that seeks to inform and educate opposition groups, but does not criticize or target individuals or groups in a negative way.</p>	<p>SAFE Schools activities must never cross the line of being construed as antagonistic, or in any way hostile. We are organizing and advocating for safer, friendly schools, and so our actions must embody this spirit of engagement, openness, and understanding. This is especially true when communicating with those who may disagree with anti-bullying programing and messaging.</p>

Press Release

For Immediate Release: May 1, 2013

Safe, Accepting and Fair Education (SAFE) Schools

Providing SAFE Schools for all Minneapolis Students

Contact:

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Saint Paul, MN 55105

SAFE Schools Coalition Launches Campaign to Reduce Bullying in Minneapolis Schools

Minneapolis, MN (May 1, 2012)

Today the SAFE Schools Coalition is proud to announce the launch of the SAFE Schools Campaign. The campaign aims to first build public awareness of the problems Minneapolis school children are exposed to via bullying in public schools, and use that awareness to drive implementation of comprehensive anti-bullying programs in the Minneapolis School District. Although Minnesota activists have done tremendous working in pushing for state level anti-bullying rules and policies, the next step of providing in-school programs to prevent bullying is needed.

Bullying touches the lives of at least one in five school children every year, and our schools report that bullying occurs at least once a week in 23% of our schools. These events have immediate and long lasting effects on children. Victims of bullying suffer from depression, anxiety, and in severe cases resort to self-harm or suicide. Bullies themselves suffer from disciplinary action, and are at higher risk of carrying aggressive and violent traits into adulthood. Evidence also points to higher risks of criminal troubles and domestic abuse later in life for bullies. Both groups suffer from lower academic achievement, and the life-long results of being less prepared to succeed in life.

The SAFE Schools coalition is calling on parents, educators and community organizations to stand up against bullying. Tell your friends and neighbors about the impact bullying has on our school children. Go to your school board and PTA meetings and let our schools know what we have tools to prevent bullying. Work with local organizations to let the media and the public know that now is the time to provide our schools with proven tools to reduce bullying. Your voice can help make sure our schools implement cost-effective programs that reduce bullying and provide a safe, fair and accepting educational setting for our students.

The SAFE Schools Coalition will be reaching out to media outlets to help educate the public regarding the costs of bullying and the proven tools that exist to reduce bullying in our schools. If you are interested in helping the SAFE Schools coalition, or any of our member organizations, please go to www.safeschools.org to find out how you can get involved. Your support will help make the difference in providing SAFE schools for all the schoolchildren in Minneapolis!

For more information, or media inquiries, please go to www.safeschools.org, or contact Raymond Schneider, Director of Communications, at 920-256-6985 or communications@safeschools.org.

Testimony

Before the Minnesota House of Representatives
Committee on Health and Human Services

Title: In Support of Comprehensive Anti-Bullying
Programs

Presented By:
Raymond Schneider

Affiliation: SAFE Schools

May 2, 2013

I'd like to thank the Chair, and the entire committee for allowing the opportunity to present this testimony. I am a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, in the School of Public Health. I have also spent the last year working with anti-bullying interventions in Minnesota. I am here today as a concerned citizen who has some experience investigating and evaluating the challenges bullying presents in our schools.

I'd like to share two stories with you.

On a spring day in Island Lake Township, the families of two 8th grade girls found the bodies of their middle school children after a sleepover. The two girls had hung themselves. The note they left behind told their families that they took their lives because of consistent bullying in their middle school.

In Anoka, over a two year period, eight students committed suicide. Some of these students claimed they took their lives because they could no longer deal with the harassment they received at school.

These are extreme cases, but they are becoming more common.

I do not want to bore you with facts and statistics, but two numbers are important. At least 20% of our high school students report being bullied each year. At least 23% of our public schools report bullying every week.

We have tools that reduce bullying. We have tools that reduce the depression, disconnection from school, and long term mental health impacts that many victims suffer. We have tools that can prevent the substance abuse, interpersonal violence, and criminal troubles that many bullies suffer. We just don't use them.

Multiple programs work to reduce bullying. Two marquee programs, KiVa schools, and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, have been tested and proven in public schools across the country.

Both programs have shown reductions in bullying rates of 30% to 50%.

Training is brief, requiring two or three days for school staff members.

These programs are not based on any ideological underpinnings or any political agenda.

Both programs are based on the principles that teaching children to have empathy and to care about those around them reduces violence and increases the positive power of relationships in our communities.

To those who are concerned about the costs of comprehensive bullying programs, Such programs flat out save money. Both bullies and victims require administrative attention. Suspensions, transfers and missed classes all take money away from education.

Both bullies and victims also draw funds from our healthcare and social services budgets, in the form of school counseling, mental health services, and other associated costs.

In the long term, the effects of bullying can significantly reduce academic and career achievement. This directly reduces the how much bullies and victims earn, which hurts both the individuals themselves, and their families, by removing opportunities. In the worst cases, some victims remove themselves from society, and some bullies end up in the criminal justice system.

Ignoring bullying increases spending in our schools and in our local and state budgets to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

Training the entire Minneapolis School District in comprehensive anti-bullying programs would cost about the same as buying and maintaining two fire engines.

If comprehensive bullying intervention programs were implemented this year, it would save twice the ongoing cost of the program by the second year. Ignoring bullying in the long term creates costs that are impossible to quantify, but that far outweigh any cost of preventing bullying.

We have the tools to reduce bullying. We owe it to our children, our communities, and ourselves to use these tools. I doubt any of you would agree that the cost of the fire department outweighs the

lives saved and injuries prevented when a fire engine is dispatched. For the price of a few fire engines, we can provide the same safety to our children.

Thank you.

Anticipated Questions:

Isn't "anti-bullying" just another way of promoting the pro-gay rights agenda?

In short, it is not. While some religious groups have used the fact that a few high profile cases have involved LGBTQ students, bullying affects students of every race, creed, and orientation. Bullying often targets overweight children, immigrant children, or even just those who are unpopular. Anti-bullying policies protect all our children, regardless of why they are being bullied.

Won't these programs just be another money sink when our schools cannot afford to spend more?

It is true there will be an up-front cost to start training our schools to provide comprehensive anti-bullying programs. However, after only a few years, two or three in most cases, four or five in some, the costs of anti-bullying programs are recuperated, and the programs begin saving money in lowered costs from lost school-time reimbursements, lower rates of expulsion and suspension, and reduced costs in counseling and treatment for both bullies and victims.

Bullying may be a nasty problem, but we all went through it. Why do kids now need programs when we all turned out just fine?

First, although your experience may not have had a lasting impact, for many students the results of bullying are much more severe, leading to depression, social alienation, and poor academic performance. Bullies show higher rates of substance abuse, physical and social aggression, and often have issues with the criminal justice system later in life. Our children now also face the challenges of online bullying, which can reach into students' lives in ways we never encountered ourselves. Anti-bullying programs address and reduce these problems.

