

Stop bullying

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Children, parents, and even teachers are aware of how much bullying occurs in an average school day, though the majority of us do nothing to stop it. Bullying affects one in three U. S students in 6th through 10th grades (Wasley, 2005).

A “ zero tolerance policy for bullying” could be the little push of encouragement that we need to really make a difference. The New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights is a brilliant new law and is 100% necessary, considering how serious and endless bullying has become in the school setting. This law “ is considered the toughest legislation against bullying in the nation” (Hu 1). This “ zero tolerance” policy for bullying can decrease school violence, firmly punish bullies, and create and promote a more peaceful and productive learning environment. First of all, we all know that anger can lead to violence – for some people, more than others. School violence in the past years has increased by a lot, just as bullying has.

There have been countless numbers of violent threats, some of which were actually carried out, which have harmed many teachers and students in the process. The 1999 attack at Colorado’s Columbine High School changed our ideas of schools, school safety, and bullying forever. Both of the student shooters were themselves victims of bullying that had gone on unstopped for years. A study by the US Secret Service found that revenge for bullying played a major role in more than two-thirds of the 37 shootings that occurred that day (“ Columbine High School Massacre”, 2012). Bullying has been a factor in every other school shooting too (Wasley, 2005). After the Columbine incident, schools began to initiate zero tolerance policies for

violence, and “ the numbers show that school violence is on the wane” (Hymowitz 1).

But only recently have schools begun to look at zero tolerance for bullying in particular. Without a school bullying policy that sends a clear message to bullies that their offensive actions will have strong consequences, a bully’s actions toward a victim can increase in severity over a period of time. A perfect example of this increase in bullying can be seen in the case of Phoebe Prince, a Massachusetts high school student who committed suicide after months of being bullied, harassed and tormented by fellow classmates. Her bullies began with verbal insults and ethnic slurs, then escalated to physical threats, and then physical actions such as knocking books out of her hands, and throwing a can at her head (Mitchell, 2010). If her school administration had intervened sooner, she might be alive today.

The NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights was in fact “ propelled by public outcry over the suicide of a Rutgers University freshman, Tyler Clementi” (Hu 1) after he was bullied and teased by his college roommate. An effective “ zero tolerance” for bullying policy does more than stop bullying. It actually prevents it before it even starts. Programs that teach students to speak up when they witness bullying have been found to reduce bullying by 50% within two years (Paulus and Wendling, 2008). The NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights requires that schools empower children to stand up for themselves and others, and teach them how to learn to deal better with conflict.

Children will learn where they can report bullying incidents too (Hu, 2011). “ Children go to school to learn, and they need to be in a safe environment in

order to do so. All kids deserve protection at school. Therefore, it is every school's responsibility to make sure that their students are safe and protected" (Paulus and Wendling 1). Bullying is a serious epidemic in the school setting.

But just like other large spread problems, there are ways to stop it. A " zero tolerance" policy for bullying that combines swift action against bullies, with an environment that teaches students about what bullying is, how to speak up about it, and how to resolve problems peacefully will ultimately " cure" the bullying epidemic. New Jersey is taking a step in a great direction with its Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights.