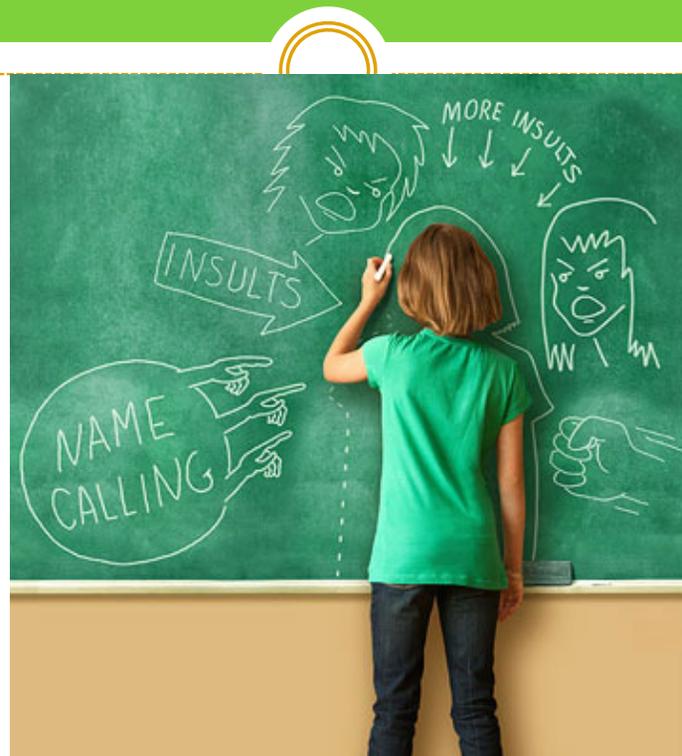


The School Experience: A Risk or Protective Factor for Bullying?



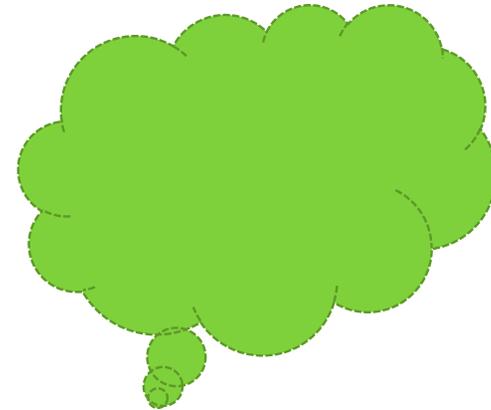
Lucy A. Vezzuto, Ph.D.

Orange County Dept. of Education, Costa Mesa, CA

The School Experience: A Risk or Protective Factor for Bullying?



- 1. What is school climate and how does it impact student behavior?**
- 2. What school factors facilitate bullying behaviors?**
- 3. What school factors decrease bullying?**
- 4. What school-wide practices prevent and reduce bullying?**



Think back on your middle school experience. At the time how did you feel & what did you think about your school experience?

The School Experience



**Perceptions of
Students, Staff,
Community**

**Unwritten
rules and
traditions**

**Norms, beliefs,
expectations**

**Way people
think, act,
dress, treat
each other**



School climate and culture is the glue that holds the school together. It is the context for learning, teaching, and performance.

Positive School Climate



- Norms, values, expectations making students and adults socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe.
- All school community members are engaged and respected.
- Students, families, and educators work together to achieve shared school vision.

Cohen and Elias, 2011

Positive School Climate (2)



- Educators model and nurture an attitude emphasizing the benefits of and satisfaction from learning.
- Each person contributes to school operations and the care of the physical environment.
- Visitors to the school feel welcomed.

Cohen and Elias, 2011

Impacts of a Caring School Community



- Engages students in learning
- Develops and models caring relationships
- Increases prosocial skills
- Decreases aggressive and at-risk behaviors
- Improves academic achievement

Gardner 1991, Noddings 1992, Sergiovanni 1994,
Berkowitz & Bier 2003; and others

School Climate & Safety

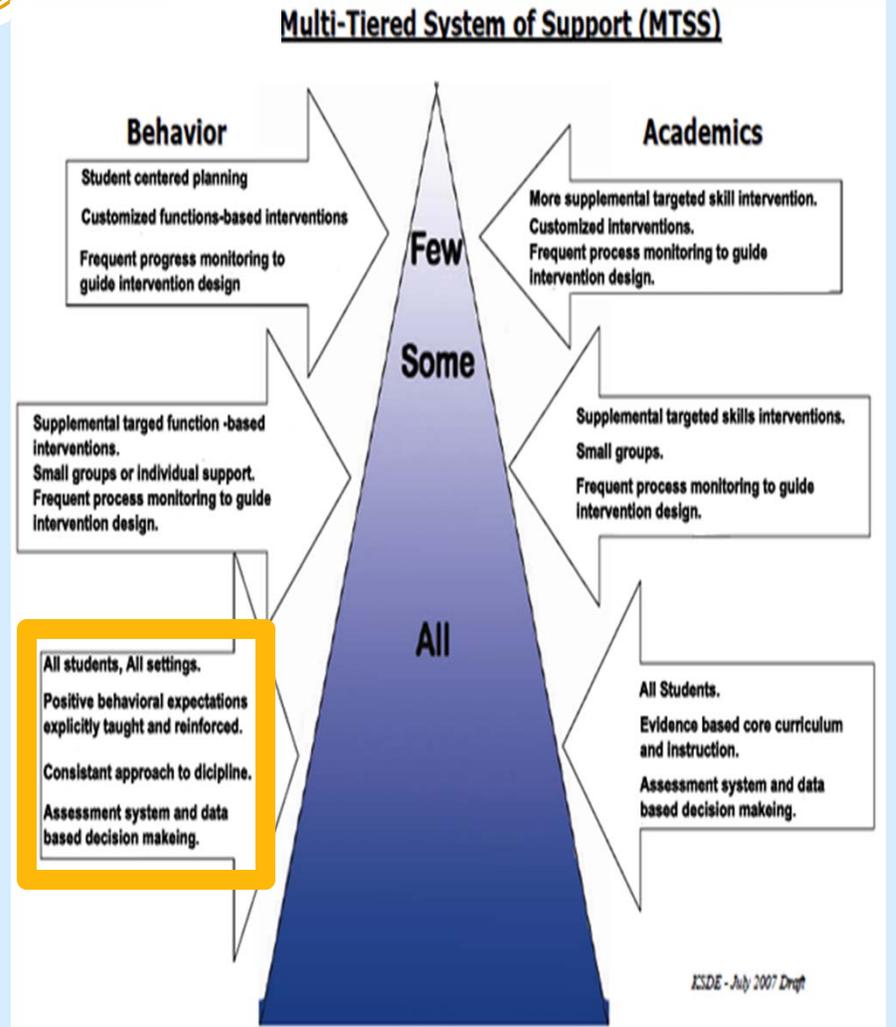


The U.S. Secret Service and Dept. of Justice studies cite positive school climate as an important factor in reducing school shootings and school violence.

(Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Cornell, 2003; Peterson, Larson & Skiba, 2002).

School Climate & Safety

Schools in which rules are effectively enforced (i.e. better discipline management) have lower rates of student victimization and student delinquency (Gottfredson, et al., 2005).



School Climate Dimensions

Safety

- Norms and Rules
- Physical, Social & Emotional Security
- Cyberbullying

Teaching & Learning

- Support For Learning
- Social-Emotional & Civic Learning

Relationships

- Respect For Diversity
- Social Support Student to Adult
- Social Support Student to Student
- Social Support Adult to Adult

Institutional Environment

- School Connectedness
- Physical Surroundings

Mental Health Domains

Stress-Anxiety

- Physical, cognitive, social, emotional & behavioral symptoms

Depression

- Physical, cognitive, emotional & behavioral symptoms

Impacts of School Climate on Students

Motivation to learn

Group cohesion

Learning & academic achievement

Respect and mutual trust

Feelings of safety & threat

Victimization & delinquency



Feelings of connectedness and attachment to school

Absenteeism & suspension

Emotional & mental health

Our Perspective Has Changed

From

Aggression as innate
characteristic in
humans

To

Aggression in
children reflects
complex
interactions
between youth and
their environment

Espelage et al., 2000;
Swearer & Doll 2001

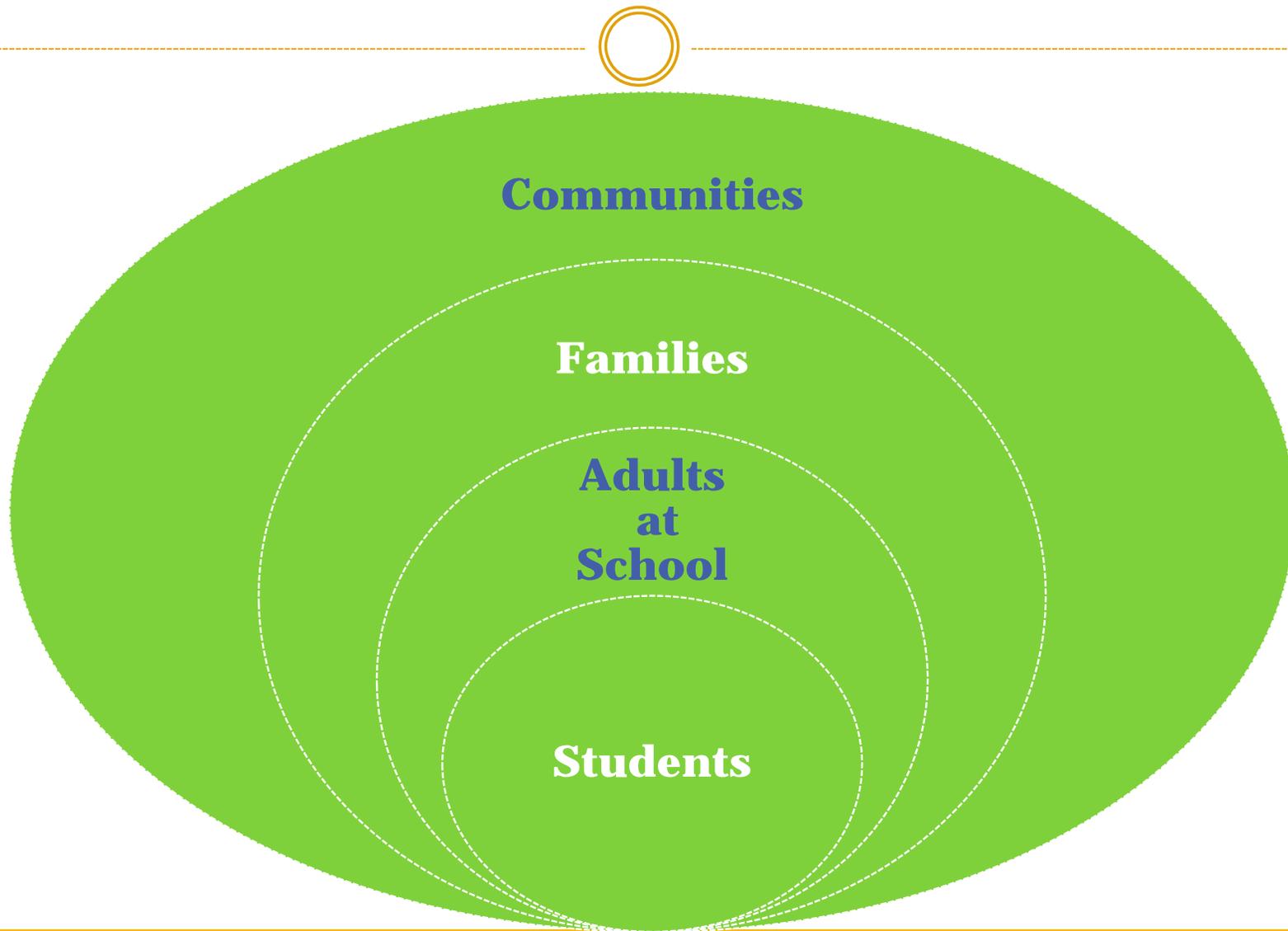
Bullying & School Context



A bullying interaction occurs not only because of individual characteristics of the youth who is bullying, but also because of **actions of peers, teachers, and staff; physical characteristics of the school environment;** and most importantly, of **student perceptions** of these contextual factors.

Pintado, 2006

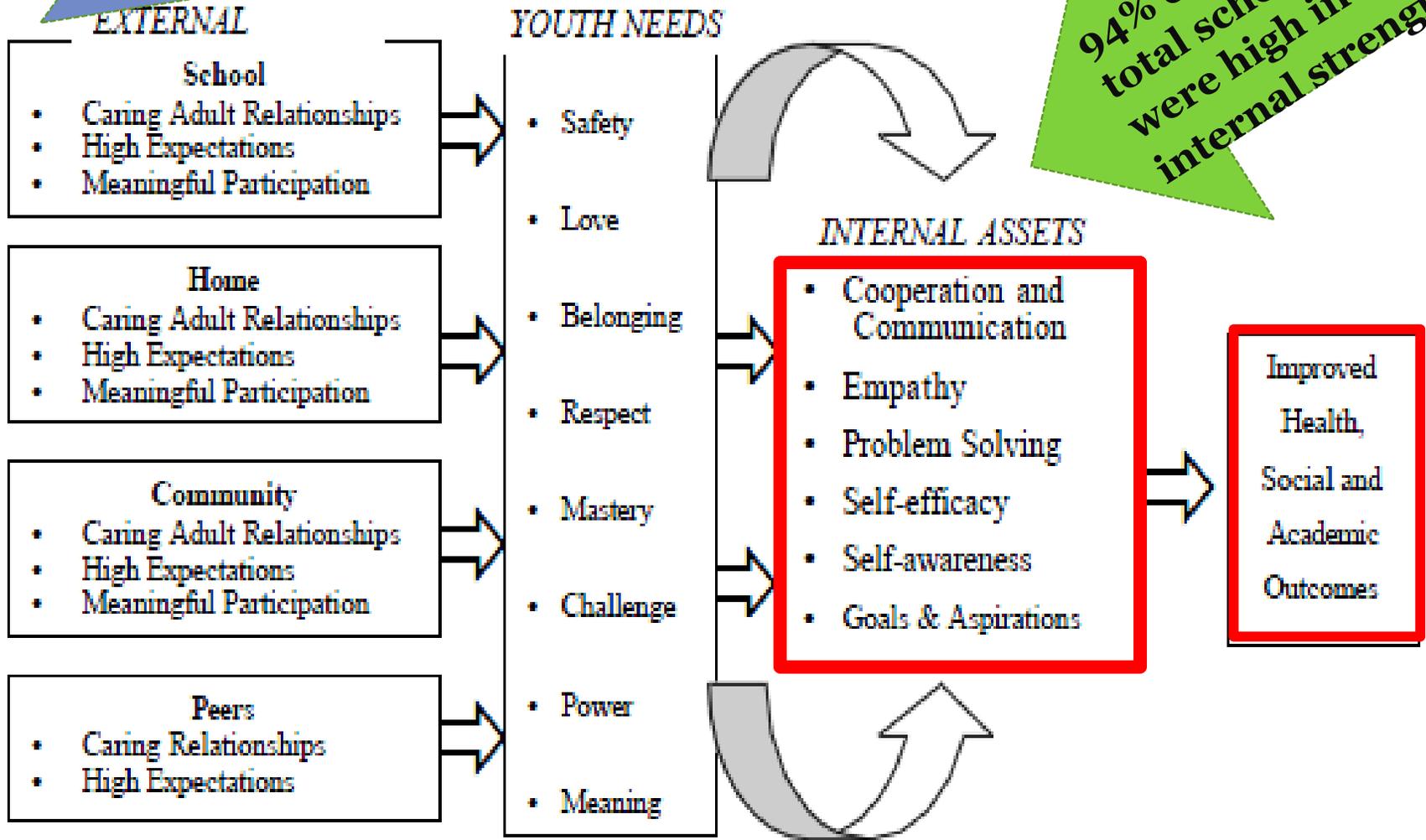
A Social-Ecological Perspective



Protective Factors

Youth Development Conceptual Model

94% of CA kids high in total school supports were high in total internal strengths.





**Students'
beliefs about
violence**

**Role modeling
of adults**

**Personality
characteristics**



The social climate of the school will influence students' engagement in aggressive behaviors. Baker 1998

Is School a Risk or Protective Factor?

A school can contribute to bullying behavior if the school community chooses to ignore obvious signs or is truly naïve about what happens in unsupervised hallways and playgrounds.



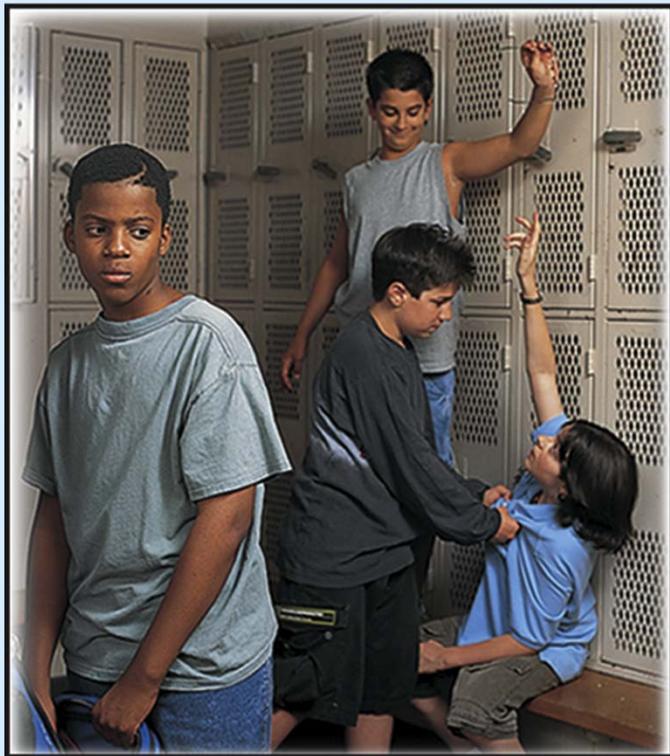
Is School a Risk or Protective Factor?



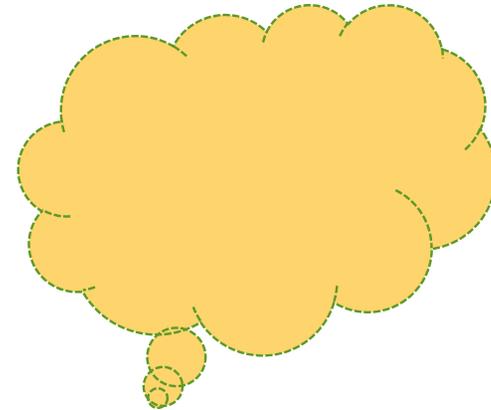
Persistent acts of aggression (physical or relational) between students, when ignored, create a social norm that will eventually undermine the perceived safety and school climate for ALL members of the school community, including children who are not directly involved, as well as staff and family members.

Austin & O'Malley 2012

Is School a Risk or Protective Factor?



Deliberately hurtful actions can easily affect individual students and escalate to serious safety issues on campus.



So what is your view of the school you work in or the school that your children go to? Are there elements that make the school a risk factor for bullying?

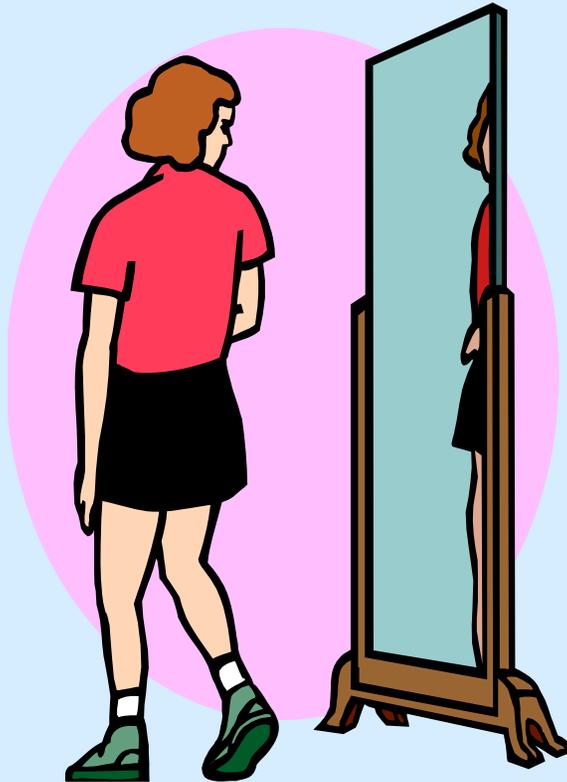
Student Perceptions Matter



Middle school boys with **positive perceptions** of school climate tended to have **fewer aggressive and antisocial behaviors.**

Kuperminic et al. 1997

Student Perceptions Matter



Middle school youth who were highly self-critical did not show expected increases in internalizing and externalizing behaviors **when they perceived their school to be a positive place.**

Kuperminic et al. 2001

Student Perceptions Matter



Students perception of middle school evolves. They start middle school with generally positive perceptions and by the end they perceive school in a negative light.

Students Who Were Targets & Their Relationships at School



Bullied students also are at risk of mental health issues

- Adolescents who reported being bullied also tended to report that they had negative feelings about their relationships with teachers.
- These targets also have more sense of worry and negative feelings toward peer relationships.

(Pintado 2006)

Bullying Involvement & Mental Health



- Bully, target, and bystanders are impacted
- Bystanders can feel helpless and less connected
- Depression, anxiety, substance abuse along with school performance & attendance issues
- Both bully and target increased risk for suicide-related behavior

What Are Student Perceptions about Bullying?



- Teachers mean it when they make a rule.
- Physical fighting between students is a problem at this school.
- I am afraid of being beaten up at this school.
- There are areas of this school where students do not feel physically safe.
- Harassment or bullying among students is a problem at this school.
- It's common for students to tease and insult one another at this school.
- Harassment or bullying towards lesbian or gay students is a problem at this school.
- I worry that someone from this school will spread mean rumors or lies about me on the internet (e.g. Facebook, blog, Twitter, etc.)
- I often have received mean or nasty text messages or emails from other students at this school.
- I often have had mean rumors or lies spread about me on the internet by other students at this school.
- I often have had nasty pictures, photos, or videos sent to others about me.

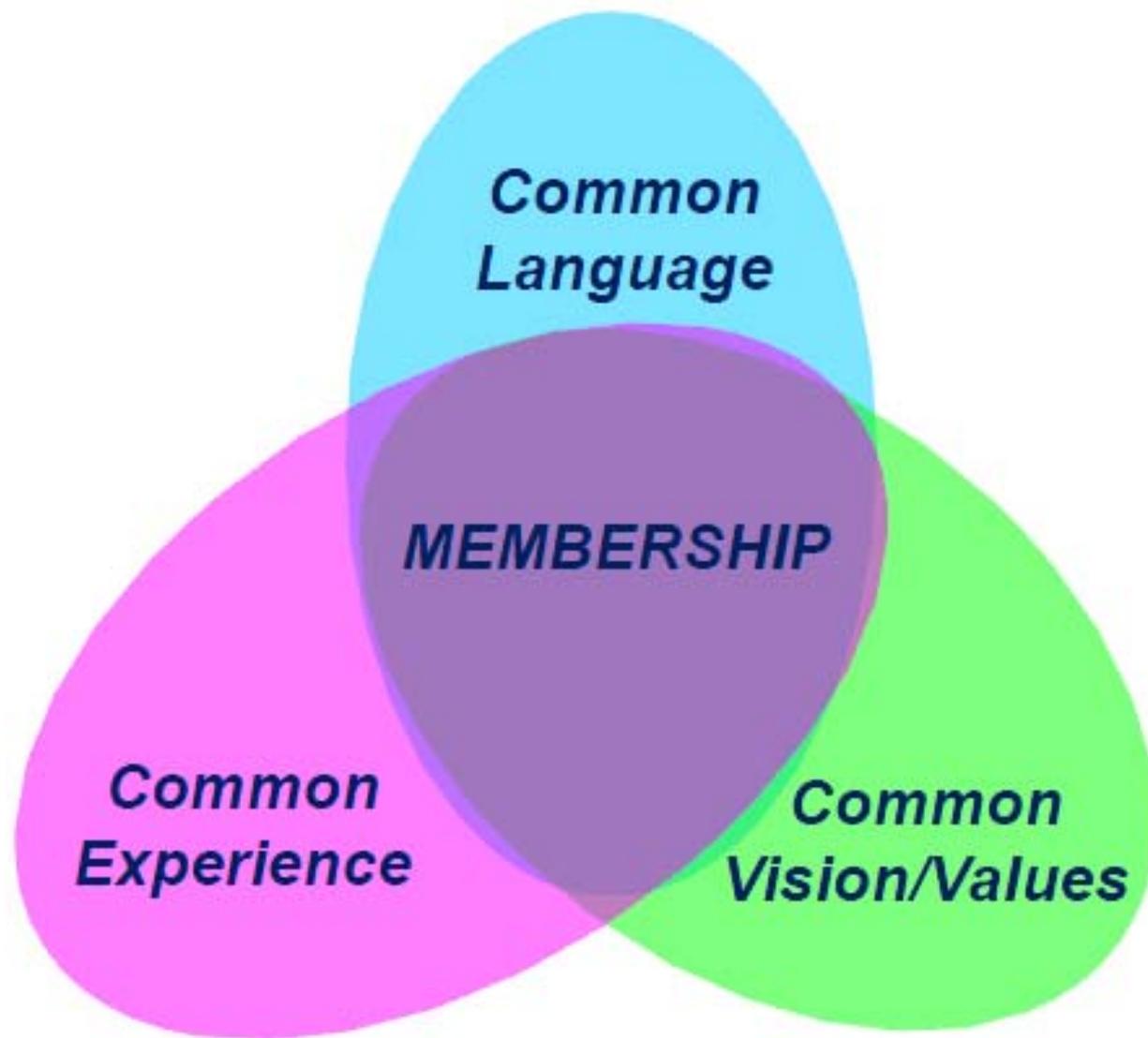
Strengthen School as a Protective Factor



- Create a positive, caring school climate & community.
- Develop youth social-emotional competence skills for engaging in healthy relationships.

Orpinas and Horne 2006

Caring adult relationships, high expectations, meaningful participation



Proactive Systemic Prevention



- Establish school wide positive values (Respect, Responsibility, Civility, Safety...)
- Frame and permeate interactions and interventions with this language of positive social norms
- Teach and reinforce behavior expectations per context
- Clearly define disrespectful behavior

Proactive Systemic Prevention



- Clearly define and teach concept of “being respectful”
- Remove the reinforcers that maintain socially aggressive behaviors
- Utilize student pledges (created by students)
- Include values, expectations, etc. in student planners

Middle Schools with Less Bullying...



- Positive disciplinary actions
- Strong parental involvement
- High academic standards

Ma, 2002

Adult-Student Relationships Matter



About 1/3 of CA secondary students do NOT experience high levels of caring adult relationships or high expectations

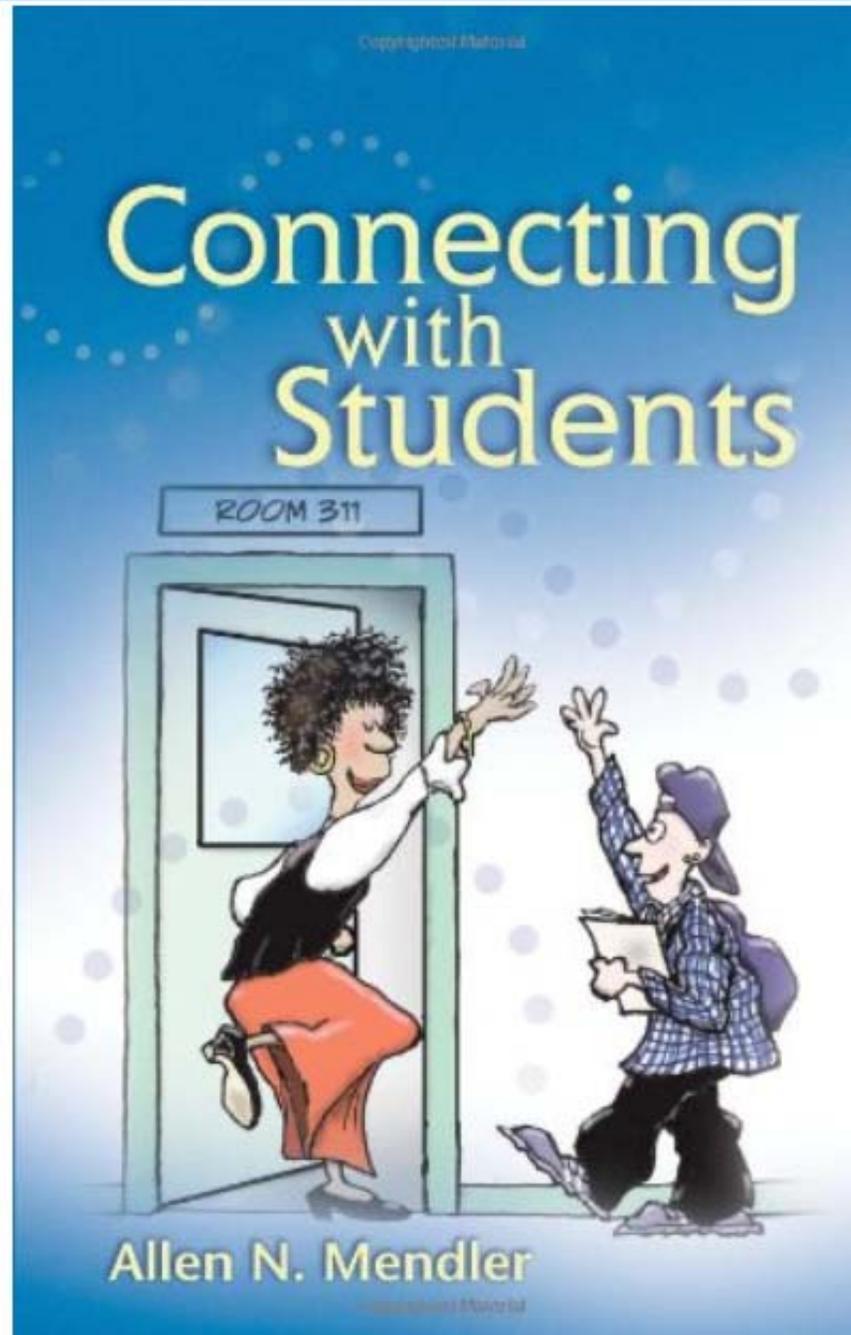
WestEd 2012

Reduced bullying behaviors were linked to positive teacher-student relationships.

Boyce 2004

Ask Students about Their Relationships with Adults

- There is at least one adult at this school who I can go to for help with personal problems.
- There is at least one adult at this school who listens and pays attention to students like me.
- There is at least one adult at this school who tells me when I do a good job.
- There is at least one adult at this school who I trust.
- There is at least one adult at this school who takes a personal interest of me.
- There is at least one adult at this school who believes that I can be a success.
- There is at least one adult at this school who treats me with respect.



Three Types of Connections

- Personal
- Academic
- Social

Staff Professional Learning

Intentionally Teach Students How to Get Along



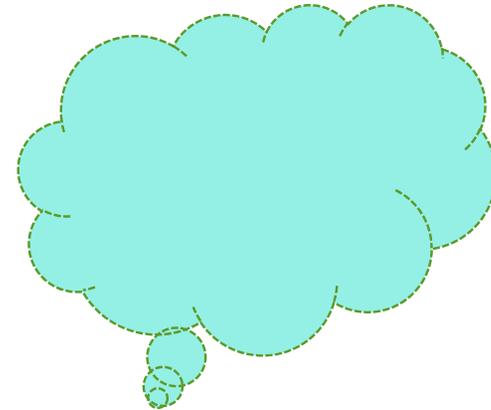
**It's About Social &
Emotional Skill Development**

CASEL - Consortium for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning

What is Social and Emotional Learning?

SEL is a process of acquiring knowledge and skills related to five core competencies:





So how are social and emotional skills intentionally taught at your school? How could they be taught?

Restorative Practices- A Continuum

**Doing things
WITH kids
rather than TO
them or FOR
them**

● Formal restorative conference
Resolve conflicts & harm

- Impromptu conferences
- Problem-solving & intervention specific circles

Community & Relationships

- Community Building Circles (students & staff)
- Affective Questions
- Affective Statements

School Staff Perception



In California about 1/5 of secondary staff practitioners think that their school provides effective confidential support and referral services for students needing help due to substance abuse, violence prevention or other problems. Austin & O'Malley 2012

What Do Staff's Need to Do the Work?



- Positive working environment
- Training and support
- Resources re: behavior management, safety violence and bullying
- Stress management & resilience support
(you can't give what you don't have)

Taking Action



- **Collect data from all stakeholders**
- **Focus on the students' perceptions and insights**
- **Initiate ongoing training for staff and students**
- **Identify your hot spots**
- **Educate parents**
- **Include your community**



Student Mental Health Matters

Orange County Student Mental Health Initiative

Trainings

Resilient Mindful Learner Project

Eliminating Barriers to Learning OC Trainers Network

School Climate Matters

Student Mental Health Resources

Contact Us

OCDE > [Student Mental Health Matters](#) > School Climate Matters

School Climate Matters

"School climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures." (National School Climate Council, 2007, p.4)



What Is a Positive School Climate?

Norms, values, and expectations make students and adults socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe. All school community members are engaged and respected. Students, families, and educators work together to achieve shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude emphasizing the benefits of and satisfaction from learning. Each person contributes to school operations and the care of the physical environment. Visitors to the school feel welcomed. (Cohen and Elias 2011)

Why Should We Care About School Climate?

School climate may be the missing link in promoting school reform and closing the achievement gap (Schindler 2010). Studies have clearly shown that schools with a positive school climate have higher academic achievement (Cohen, 2009; Schindler 2010; NSCC 2012). And when considering the whole learner, school climate impacts a variety of factors that influence learning such as students' emotional health, feelings of safety, attendance, relationships, and motivation. A positive school climate and supportive conditions for learning can:

- Impact learning and boost academic achievement thus closing gaps
- Increase graduation rates
- Decrease teacher turnover
- Increase teacher satisfaction
- Turn around low-performing schools (Osher 2012)

School Climate Resources

- [Articles and Research](#)
- [Presentations](#)
- [Other Tools and Websites](#)

Articles and Research

[2012 School Climate Research Summary](#)
Produced by the National School Climate Center.

[Opportunities for Meaningful Participation in Schools](#)

Students' well being and academic success differs according to the level of opportunities for student participation. Increased



[National School Climate Standards](#)

ocde.us/healthyminds

Resources



The Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning

<http://casel.org>

CalMHSAs-Orange County Dept. of Education School Climate Survey

Contact Dr. Lucy Vezzuto at lvezzuto@ocde.us

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

<http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/index.page>

Second Step: Social Skills for Early Childhood–Grade 8

<http://www.cfchildren.org/second-step.aspx>

Steps to Respect: Bullying Prevention for Elementary School

<http://www.cfchildren.org/steps-to-respect.aspx>

WestEd Calif. School Climate Survey and Healthy Kids Survey

<http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/1010>