## Anti-bullying and harassment efforts:

As schools begin to review their policies and practices with regard to anti-bullying and harassment issues, some staff may begin to ask about the need to implement new strategies and programs.  As we already know, implementing new policies alone won't make a difference.  Using strategies that target a few students will have little impact.  And, isolated programs simply cannot ensure the desired result of a "bully-free environment."   Bullying and harassment behaviors impact many facets of the school community and can be difficult to address comprehensively.

The following are excerpts from the Iowa Department of Education's manual, "Preventing Bullying and Harassment: A Support Manual for Iowa's Sample District Harassment and Bullying Policy."  These excerpts are intended as a starting point to sort those programs that hold the greatest potential for success from those that have the best marketing strategy.  This is only a starting point.   Schools interested in implementing a new program or strategy to improve their learning environment and reduce bullying and harassment are encouraged to review the manual to get a better overall understanding of current research (as of 2005).

| Moving from Reaction to Prevention | |
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| The most effective prevention programs are _comprehensive_ | Programs should address behavior at all levels:<br>▪ School-wide (e.g., formulating and publicizing new school policy, school assemblies)<br>▪ Classroom (e.g., class discussion, enforcing classroom rules against bullying)<br>▪ Individual (e.g., individual and family counseling)<br>▪ Family and Community involvement |
| | Other promising _interventions_ include:<br>▪ Assertiveness training for targets<br>▪ Activities designed to teach students how to behave when they observe bullying or are targets of bullying behavior<br>▪ Family counseling for the bully's family, if it is clear that the behavior is being learned or reinforced at home |
| _Two key components_ required for success in implementation | ▪ Activities are designed to create awareness of the problem (with staff and parents)<br>▪ Adult engagement.  Reducing peer harassment requires a commitment on the part of _all_ adults in the school community that bullying is unacceptable. |
| What do the data tell us about student needs?<br>_(Constant Conversation Question #1 – Iowa School Improvement Process)_ | |
| _Assess_ the extent of the problem | Gather anonymous, age-appropriate student data on the topic of bullying (Iowa Youth Survey or surveys available as part of most bullying prevention programs). |
| | Consult data sources that report and verify the number of students who are being bullied/harassed or who report bullying others, the types of bullying that occur, the locations in which bullying occurs, and the frequency with which others have attempted to intervene to stop bullying behaviors. |
| | Data motivate teachers, administrators, parents, and students to take further steps to address the problem.  Share it – often! |

| What does the research say? | |
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| Focus on the environment | Provide consistent anti-bullying messages and foster a safe learning environment through:<br>• Improved supervision<br>• Establishment and enforcement of school rules and policies<br>• Consistent and appropriate intervention<br>• Classroom time spent on prevention<br>• Supplementing curriculum with relevant literature on the topic<br>• Regular classroom meetings |
| **What will we do to meet student needs?**<br>*(Constant Conversation Question #2 – Iowa School Improvement Process)* | |
| What is already being done? | Look at current practice, programs, and services to see what is already in place, what could be improved, and what is not working.  Are these efforts research-based/evidence-based? |
| All prevention programs require _coordination_ | Most quality programs suggest convening a *building level committee* consisting of teachers, administrators, students, and parents.  (Use an existing committee or build on an existing program if at all possible.) |
| | Coordinate with *existing policy*.  Be certain to clarify legal regulations concerning harassment in general, or sexual harassment in particular with all staff. |
| **Training** | |
| _Quality_ implementation | Expectations of staff and students, definitions of bullying and harassment, and responsibilities of staff for reporting and intervening should be presented as part of staff training to ensure consistency in responding to harassment and enforcing district policy. |
| | Brief follow-up meetings throughout the year are important in addressing difficulties that may emerge in implementing a program/policy. |
| | The amount of training time necessary for school staff to implement a new program depends on the scope of the program.  (One-shot events create awareness.  Meaningful change is comes with improvements made over time includes _ALL_ staff and _volunteers._) |
| **How will we evaluate our programs and services to ensure student learning?**<br>*(Constant Conversation Question #4 – Iowa School Improvement Process)* | |
| Did it make a difference?! | • Questionnaires, checklists, and surveys (such as the Iowa Youth Survey) can be used to measure the effectiveness of the program, identify problem areas, and fine-tune policies, practice, and procedures.<br>• Other methods of evaluation include open-ended interviews with students, analyzing attendance records, and tracking documented incidents and behavioral reports. |
| | Collecting and sharing ongoing data with teachers and students encourages staff to continue to follow through on policies and procedures.  Taking these steps do not mean you are "done."  Next year there will be new students, new parents, and new staff.  This is part of "continuous" school improvement. |

An Iowa Youth Survey toolkit has been created to help schools analyze existing data on bullying.  Go to: http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/503/919/1/2 and scroll down to find "Risky Behavior and Bullying" Toolkit and Excel data sheet.

For more information on anti-bullying in your area, contact your AEA.