

part, she thinks, because students better able to focus on their studies.

At Central York Middle School in Pennsylvania, incidents of fistfights have also declined—to four so far this school year, compared with 17 last year—after students in Grades 6 through 8 signed anti-teasing pledges and were instructed how to manage their anger. Bullies were required to make “active apologies,” detailing how they would modify their behavior.

Testifying last week before a Colorado legislative committee on education, Sherry Workman, principal of Laurel Elementary in Fort Collins, noted that behavior infractions fell 66% after she implemented various “bullyproofing” initiatives at school. The younger children, for instance, are coached in how to walk confidently past older kids who are talking aggressively. Grades 2 through 4 undergo “Be Cool” training, in which counselors present provocative scenarios and ask students to decide between a “hot response” and a “cool response.” The latter choice wins praise for the kids.

Bullying is often performance art. Loretta Fonagy, a psychologist who helped develop an antibullying model popular in Top of the Rock schools, believes that bullies and their victims usually make up no more than 10% to 20% of any school population. The whole drama is supported by the bystander,” says Fonagy. “The theater takes place if there’s no audience.” Susan University Elementary School in Los Angeles uses “equity guidelines” to target bullies and bystanders. Parents and students sign contracts at the beginning of the year stipulating that no child may be teased down for academic performance, appearance, family composition or gender, among other things. When an incident occurs, for example, some boys tried to pull down another boy’s pants—bystanders are also required to after-school mediation.

While the Seeds program involves parents, many others don’t. “Research suggests that the success of any program is grounded in whether the same kind of approaches are used at home,” says Lack. Sometimes parents need to be educated. When Debora Smith discovered that her two boys at Wolfpit Elementary School in Norwalk, Conn., were being bullied, she took action—by arming them with a hammer and screwdriver. Luckily, the school principal found the weapons in the kids’ knapsacks before any harm was done.

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