

JEWISH BULLIES: THE DYNAMICS OF BULLYING, PREVENTION AND
INTERVENTION AT TWO JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS

By

Shira Tal Landau

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Approved By:

Advisor(s)

Director, SJNM

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ABSTRACT

There is widespread agreement that there are significant short-term and long-term psychological effects of being involved in bullying as either the target or aggressor. Sadly, our Jewish days schools are not immune to this serious problem. This paper uses a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach to explore the prevalence, nature and attitudes towards bullying at two Jewish private schools in the Los Angeles area. It also analyzes the measures that the administration, at both schools, has put in place to prevent and intervene with bullying and victimization. The research reveals a complicated picture. Administrators, at both schools, are seriously committed to preventing bullying and taking measures that are in line with best practices in bullying research. There are also some gaps in their approach, and these are addressed in the recommendation sections of this paper. The survey of the students revealed that bullying is in fact taking place at both schools. The number of self-identified targets hovers just under fifty percent, while the number of students who report witnessing bullying is much greater. The bullying, however, is relatively moderate and there appears to be a significant base of students that empathize with the targets of bullying and disapprove of bullying behavior. The picture is complicated by the fact that the bullies at both schools are considered “popular” and that the students perceive the teachers as being unaware of most of the bullying that takes place. This paper concludes with a set of recommendations for Jewish days schools interested in addressing the problem of bullying as well Jewish organizations and foundations invested in supporting Jewish days schools in this important task.

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INTRODUCTION

“I think teachers assume that since we are in high school, especially when we are seniors, that bullying dose not happen but it does.”

- 12th grader at Kramer High School

“I just shrugged it off because I did not care what that person thought of me.”

- 9th grader at Kramer High School

“They think I am fat”

- 8th grader at Tal Middle School

“I made the person being bullied feel better.”

- 7th grader at Tal Middle School

The quotes above provide a small glimpse into the worlds of four students enrolled in Jewish private schools within the greater Los Angeles region. The quotes were gathered through a survey in which students at a Jewish middle school and Jewish high school answered a series of questions about their experiences with bullying behavior and victimization. The results of the survey, as well as the information gleaned from interviews with administrators at both schools, are compelling and will be explored, with great detail, in the pages to come.

The decision to conduct research into the experience of bullying, victimization, prevention and intervention in Jewish schools was a deeply personal one. In other words, I come to the subject of bullying in Jewish schools with memories of being the target of bullying as a seventh grader at a well-respected Jewish private school. I come to this topic with personal knowledge of the lasting impact of bullying on a young woman’s psychological and emotional growth and with a desire to give a voice to the those students who continue to suffer in this way. Finally, I come to this topic with the understanding that much has changed in the field of

bullying research, the general public's perception of bullying, and the approach of schools to bullying in the last eighteen years. Over the course of these eighteen years, two boys went on a shooting rampage at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and the entire country seemed to awaken, for the first time, to the notion that bullying could no longer be viewed as a right of passage, but should be understood as a serious risk factor to the well being and safety of all students. It was at this point, or soon after, that research into bullying and bullying related issues began to proliferate. According to Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano, "Since 1997, a 200% increase in research on bullying behaviors has occurred" (2009, p. 5). There has also been a large increase in the number of curricula, specialized trainers, and websites all dealing with the issue of bullying. In addition to this, numerous states, *not including* California, now have laws that require schools to adopt antibullying policies.

In the winter and summer of 2010, I was gearing up to make a decision on what area of the Jewish community I would research for my master's thesis. During this time, one could not read a newspaper, listen to the radio or watch television without being bombarded by images and stories of teenagers who resorted to suicide after being bullied. On January 14th, 2010, 15-year-old Phoebe Prince committed suicide following months of relentless bullying, much of which took place on line, through the social network Facebook. On September 22, 2010, Tyler Clementi, a Rutgers University Freshman, committed suicide after his roommate posted pictures of him on the Internet having a sexual encounter with another male student. The cruelty and callous nature of these stories depicted a generation of youth growing up in a cold world. These were youth struggling to protect themselves against rage hidden behind computer screens and sick prejudice broadcast for the world to see.

As a Jewish woman, I take enormous pride in the history of the Jewish people's

contribution to this world. I also have an ever-deepening desire—and maybe even need—to see the light of the Jewish people continue into the future. Where, I wondered, in the face of all of this pain, were the Jewish people? It was at this point that I decided to focus my master’s thesis on the topic of bullying. More specifically, and in relation to my own experience with bullying in that elite Jewish private school so many years ago, I wanted to better understand the prevalence of bullying in Jewish days schools and how these schools were working to prevent and intervene with bullying.

As I began my research, I soon discovered that there is currently no published literature on the prevalence of bullying in Jewish private schools or the ways in which Jewish private schools are trying to prevent, assess, and respond to bullying and victimization. This does not mean, however that there is no work being done on the subject of Jews and bullying or bullying in Jewish schools. In fact, Dr. Rhonda Novick, Director of the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Doctoral Program at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education, has published extensive material on bullying behavior, written about the intersection of bullying and Jewish day schools, and has created a bullying prevention curriculum called BRAVE, which is currently being used in Jewish schools. During my preliminary research, it was especially intriguing to learn that according to Novick’s research on her curriculum, which included surveys of at least 800 middle school students in Jewish day schools, the rates and patterns of bullying in Jewish schools are similar to those found in larger public schools. The published results of Dr. Novick’s research at these schools, is forthcoming this year. Dr. Ron Astor, the Richard M. and Ann L. Thor Professor of Urban Social Development at the University of Southern California, has written and published extensively on the phenomena of bullying within schools in Israel (Benbenishty, Khoury-Kassabri and Astor, 2007). While this data obviously provides insight on the relationship

between Jewish youth and bullying behavior, it does not necessarily reflect the experience of American Jews. Lastly, there is extensive work being done in Jewish day schools and within the research arena on Jewish values education and, more recently, social and emotional learning (Novick, Kress, and Elias, 2002). While both of these areas obviously relate to bullying, they do not deal directly with the prevalence and response to bullying behavior in Jewish settings.

The dearth of research I found relating specifically to the issue of bullying within Jewish schools was fascinating, if not a bit disturbing. In an article published in the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Astor (2010) provides an interesting theory as to why Jewish private schools are not represented in the published literature on bullying in schools: at one point in the not so distant past, the Jewish community was committed to the ideal that violence was a problem for other people and did not affect the network of Jewish schools, even in the absence of any data that supported this conclusion. Dr. Astor hypothesized that because one can essentially choose to be Jewish in twenty-first century America, it was thought to be in the interest of the Jewish leadership to convince Jews to “choose Judaism” by creating an image of a model minority. According to Dr. Astor, at one point in Jewish communal history in the United States, “there were almost no nationally representative studies of Jews (other than those in Israel that framed the subjects as Israelis) as child abusers, perpetrators of family violence, drug addicts, cult members, mentally ill, or suffering from problems such as bullying or school violence” (2010, p. 220). While Dr. Astor recognizes that a great deal has shifted in Jewish communities, attitudes and approach towards these evaded topics, at the time of the article’s publication, it was his understanding that the issue of bullying in Jewish schools was still taboo. Apparently, Dr. Astor was approached, in the past, by American Jewish educators interested in conducting studies of their schools “but only under the condition that the results remain private (only for the

principals) and not released to the overall Jewish community, general media, or the parents or teachers of their communities” (2010, p. 225).

Interestingly, Dr. Astor’s current perception, based on a phone interview in November, 2010, is that there is a shift taking place in the Jewish community: Jewish schools are now more willing than ever to begin to talk about the harder issues. As an example, Dr. Astor related a story about a prestigious private Jewish high school in Los Angeles that recently held a town hall meeting, with parents and teens, to openly discuss the results of a survey on the prevalence of drug use within the high school community. “Perhaps,” Dr. Astor proposed, “we are moving away from the desire to portray ourselves as a model community, in order to attract members, and are becoming more comfortable with the truth of who we as a Jewish community truly are.”

METHODOLOGY

Recognizing that I might be met with resistance and suspicion, I was concerned about approaching Jewish middle and high schools to conduct research about the state of bullying behavior in their schools. I initially approached five non-Orthodox middle schools and high schools in the Los Angeles area. The principal of one of the schools that I contacted was immediately forthcoming about not wanting the school to be the subject of research at that time. Apparently, according to the principal, the school was struggling with how to handle bullying, especially cyber-bullying and bullying taking place at Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. Two other schools initially communicated interest but eventually reported that they did not have the time to participate in a survey of their students or make time for interviews with their administration. At the end, I was able to secure one Jewish middle school and one Jewish high school in the greater Los Angeles region to be part of this research study: *Tal Middle School* and *Kramer High School*

(pseudonyms).

In order to assess the prevalence, nature and attitudes towards bullying amongst the student body at both schools, a mixed method qualitative and quantitative survey was conducted. The survey was created by Dr. Susan Swearer, Associate Professor of School Psychology at the University of Nebraska and the founder of Target Bullying, a research-based training and consultation organization for schools struggling with bullying. The decision to use Dr. Swearer's survey was based on the fact that she was often cited in the literature and it was clear that other schools throughout the United States had used her survey. The utilization of this survey was free of charge for students conducting research on bullying. There are no reliability tests conducted on this survey.

A letter was sent home to parents at both Tal and Kramer that explained the purpose of the survey and requested written permission for their children to participate. I administered the survey for the seventh graders at Tal Middle School, while the school counselors administered the survey for the eighth graders. Students were given the option to participate in the survey, and all students agreed to participate. Students were asked to fill out the surveys anonymously and place them in a secure envelope upon completion. At Kramer High School, teachers administered the survey for ninth- and twelfth-grade students. Again, students were given the option to participate in the survey and were asked to complete the surveys anonymously. All surveys were placed in a secure envelope and delivered to the researcher.

The paper-based version of the survey was utilized at both schools. Using online software, data analysis was conducted. All of the surveys from seventh and eighth graders at Tal Middle School were included in the data analysis. Due to time constraints, I randomly

selected about half of the Kramer High School ninth- and twelfth-grade surveys.

Table 1: Surveys Collected vs. Surveys Analyzed

	# Of Students In Grade	Surveys Collected	Surveys Analyzed
7th Grade Tal	39	39	39
8th Grade Tal	31	31	31
9th Grade Tal	83	77	49
12th Grade Tal	107	84	51

In order to understand how the administration at Tal and Kramer are approaching and thinking about the problem of bullying, qualitative data was collected through interviews with administrators. The interviews were conducted one-on-one, and questions were tailored to each individual to ensure ease and flow of conversation. At Tal Middle School, I interviewed the Head of School, the Principal of the Middle School and the School Counselor/Human Development Specialist. At Kramer High School, I interviewed the Head of School, the Dean of Students and the School Counselor. Each interview was audio-recorded with the interviewee's consent and lasted thirty to sixty minutes. In addition to interviews, I analyzed the mission statements and websites of both schools.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW AND FINDINGS

DEFINITIONS

According to Limber and Olweus, the phenomenon of bullying can best be described as “intentional harm that is carried out repeatedly and over time in an interpersonal relationship characterized by an actual or perceived imbalance of power or strength” (2010, p. 125). Novick (n.d.) agrees that bullying involves intentionality and an imbalance of power, but writes that there is ongoing debate as to whether this type of aggressive behavior must in fact be repetitive in nature in order to qualify as bullying. Bauman (2008) argues that the common definitions of bullying, like the one cited above, do not account for the critical role that bystanders play in silently condoning bullying behavior. Bauman writes that Twemlow, Fongay and Sacco’s definition of bullying addresses this gap:

Bullying is the repeated exposure of an individual to negative interactions directly or indirectly inflicted by one or more dominant persons. The harm may be caused by direct physical or psychological means, and/or indirectly, through encouragement of the process or avoidance by the bystander (Bauman, 2008, p. 363).

This definition also points to the fact that bullying can be both direct and indirect in nature. Direct bullying includes physical violence (hitting and kicking) and verbal violence (cursing and calling names) (Attar-Schwartz and Khoury-Kassabri, 2008). Indirect bullying involves relational aggression and social aggression. According to Crick and Gropter, “Relational aggression includes behaviors that are intended to significantly damage another child’s friendships or feelings of inclusion by the peer group” (1995, p. 711). According to Espelage, Mebane and Swearer, “Social aggression consists of behaviors that are directed

towards causing harm to another person's self-esteem and or social status" (2004, p. 23).

These include "spreading rumors, excluding peers from social groups, and withdrawing friendships and acceptance" (Espelage, Mebane and Swearer, 2004, p. 23).

Cyber-bullying, like traditional bullying, is also intentionally harmful, based on a real or perceived imbalance of power, is witnessed by bystanders and can be repetitive in nature. It differs only in the tools of aggression that are utilized. More specifically, Hinduja and Patchin define cyber-bullying as the "intentional and repeated harm of others through the use of computers, cell phones and other electronic devices" (2009, p. 5). Gardner explains that cyber-bullying can take a range of different forms, including "threats and intimidation," cyber-stalking, "repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages, vilification, defamation, hacking and impersonation, unauthorized publication of private information or images, and manipulation" (2010, p. 273).

The survey conducted on students at Tal and Kramer defined bullying in the following way:

Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose, and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Usually bullying happens over and over. Bullying includes: punching, shoving, and other acts that hurt people physically; spreading bad rumors about people; keeping certain people out of a group; teasing people in a mean way; getting certain people to 'gang up' on others (Swearer, 2001).

PREVALENCE

It appears that bullying is prevalent among school children of all ages, genders, socioeconomic statuses and geographic locations. However, the actual prevalence rates of bullying among American youth is difficult to pinpoint, due to differences in how researchers

choose to define, measure, and assess involvement in bullying. To date, the most comprehensive survey on the bullying experience of American youth was conducted in 1998 by researchers from The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. This was a nationally representative survey of 15,686 sixth- through tenth-grade students in public, Catholic, and other private, non-religious schools. The survey assessed for involvement in bullying using a self-report measure and defined bullying in the following way: “A student is being bullied when another student, or a group of students, say or do nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a way he or she doesn’t like. But it is not bullying when two students of about the same strength quarrel or fight” (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simon-Morton and Scheidt, 2001, Abstract). Thirteen percent of the students surveyed said they had engaged in moderate or frequent bullying of others, while around eleven percent said they had been bullied either moderately or frequently. Some students—six percent—had both bullied others and been bullied themselves. In all, twenty-nine percent of the students who responded to the survey had been involved in some aspect of bullying, either as a bully, as the target of bullying, or both (Nansel, et al., 2001, Abstract). According to Kowalski and Limber (2008), among 3,767 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students, eighteen percent reported being targets of cyber-bullying within the previous two months, and eleven percent said they had cyber-bullied someone at least once within the previous two months. It appears that a follow-up study with 931 students, in grades six through twelve, revealed similar rates of cyber bullying.

A greater percentage of students at both Tal Middle School and Kramer High School, report being bullied as compared to the national average cited above. It is critical to note, however, that while the national survey made specific mention of an imbalance of power in the definition of bullying, the survey conducted at both Tal and Kramer did not make such a

distinction. Instead, the survey used at Tal and Kramer merely said that a target of bullying might find it difficult to defend him or herself. Therefore, in some cases the bullying reported by students at Tal and Kramer could actually be a reflection of conflict between peers of equal power.

Table 2: Frequency of bullying (No students reported being bullied one or more times a day)

	% Students who report being bullied	% One or more times a month	% One or more times a week
7th grade Tal (N=39)	44	82	18
8th grade Tal (N=31)	36	78	22
9th grade Kramer (N=49)	43	70	30
12th grade Kramer (N=48)	25	75	25

The higher rates of reported involvement in bullying among seventh graders is in line with the research that cites bullying behavior as peaking in middle school (Nansel et al., 2001, Abstract). In addition to this, the survey conducted with seventh graders at Tal took place after a month long period where the students were studying bullying behavior as part of their weekly life skills class. The seventh grade students also organized a campaign for “No Name Calling Week,” where they raised awareness about issues related to bullying for younger students in the school. It is possible that the higher rates of reported bullying by students can be linked to increased awareness among these students about bullying behaviors. While the eighth-grade students participated in a similar life skills class in seventh grade, it is possible that after a year they are not as sensitive to their bullying behavior towards one another.

The prevalence rates of involvement in bullying reported by students at Kramer High School was also intriguing and very much in line with what we know about patterns of bullying behavior among age demographics. Involvement in bullying seemed to reach a relatively high rate in ninth grade and then dropped dramatically in twelfth grade. The higher rate of bullying in ninth grade, as compared to eighth or twelfth grade, can also be linked to the research, which finds that bullying among students increases during transition periods (Pepler, Craig, Connolly, Yuile, McMaster and Jiang, 2006). This is mainly linked to the theory that students are trying to create and decipher their place during times of transitions. Bullying can result from the anxiety associated with this task or the desire to assert dominance among some students over others (Swearer, Espelage, Napolitano, 2009). The fact that the majority of the bullying taking place at both Tal and Kramer occurs one or more times a month and can thus be categorized as moderate is reassuring. However, at least fourteen students among the students surveyed at the two schools, identify themselves as being bullied one or more times a week.

The survey also assessed types of bullying. In seventh grade, there appeared to be an equal amount of direct bullying and social aggression. The direct bullying mainly took the form of “made fun of me” and “called me names,” while the social aggression was mainly in the form of “said mean things behind my back” and “wouldn’t let me be part of the group.” Only three seventh grade students reported that the bullying took the form of “nobody talking to me” or “threatening me by saying they would do bad things.” No students reported being attacked. Eighth grade bullying looked very similar to seventh grade.

Among ninth grade students at Kramer High School, the bullying most frequently took the form of “making fun of me,” and “calling me names.” However, ninth graders had the highest percentage of students who identified that the bullying took the form of someone “saying mean

things behind my back.” Thirty-six percent of ninth graders reported that they were bullied online or through texting. At least two students reported that they sometimes or often get attacked.

Again, in twelfth grade, there appeared to be a balanced combination of non-physical overt aggression and social aggression. The most frequent type of bullying was again someone calling another person names, making fun of another person, not allowing someone into a group, talking behind someone’s back, and writing bad things about someone. One twelfth grade student at Kramer chose to write the following at the end of his survey: “It is not so much the physical bullying that you can see in public schools. At this school it is much more subtle.” Fifty percent of the twelfth graders who were bullied said that it took place online or through texting. This was the greatest percentage of students reporting online/texting-related bullying as compared to other grades. One twelfth grader at Kramer wrote “In today’s world, bullying occurs through text, phones and Internet more than physically.” It is interesting to note, however, that while fewer students are reporting bullying in twelfth grade as opposed to ninth grade, the students in twelfth grade were more likely to respond that the bullying “always happens.” The data suggest that the bullying gets targeted on fewer students by twelfth grade, but it feels more severe for those students. There were at least four twelfth graders who reported that they were always excluded from a group and three twelfth graders who reported “always being made fun of.”

Table 3 Ways In Which Students Were Bullied

	Wrote mean things about me (online/texting) %Sometimes/Often/Always Happens	Made fun of me %Sometimes/Often /Always Happens	Said mean things behind my back %Sometimes/Often/Always Happens
7th Grade Tal (N= 16)	29	56	69
8th Grade Tal (N=11)	27	64	45
9th Grade Kramer (N=22)	36	68	68
12th Grade Kramer (N=14)	50	79	64

EFFECTS OF BULLYING

While the suicides of youth victimized by bullies are tragic, it is important to recognize that the vast majority of students who are bullied do not commit suicide. This does not mean, however, that there are not severe repercussions that can result from being involved, over time, as the victim, bully or bully-victim. Bully-victims are, as the term connotes, individuals that bully others and are also victimized. According to Swearer, Grills and Tam Cary, “Research suggests that all participants in the bully/victim cycle regardless of status (victim, bully-victim, or bully) are likely to display symptoms of depression, with bully-victims displaying the highest levels of depression” (2001, p. 65). According to Espelage and Swearer being a target of relational aggression, specifically, can sometimes be “related to, loneliness, isolation, depression, and negative self-perception, independent of overt (physical/name calling) aggression” (2001, p.

22). Kumpulainen and Rasanen write, “Children are especially vulnerable in early adolescence to the psychological harm of bullying, and it is during that period that bullying is particularly common and intense” (1998, p. 1568). In the long term, “Children who were victimized by bullying in early teens were more prone than others to have psychiatric symptoms in later years” (ibid., Abstract). According to Olweus (1996), individuals formerly bullied were found to have higher levels of depression and poorer self-esteem at the age of twenty-three years, despite the fact that they had not been targets of bullying since middle school.

The survey at Tal and Kramer did not investigate, extensively, for psychosocial effects of being a target of bullying. However, two questions on the survey can help glean information on how the targets at both Tal and Kramer experience the bullying. The first question asks the students, “How much of a problem was the bullying for you?” In each grade, there were students who reported that because of the bullying it was often or always difficult for them to learn and to come school. The most prevalent psychological response among students at all grade levels was that the bullying made them “feel bad or sad.” Eight students in seventh grade and seven students in ninth grade identified that being a target of bullying often makes them “feel bad or sad,” while at least two students in all grades and five students in twelfth grade identified that being a target of bullying always made them “feel bad or sad.” The data suggests that while bullying is not pervasive among the majority of students at Tal and Kramer, there are enough students in both schools that report feeling bad and sad on a regular basis because of the bullying that goes on within the school community. One student, from Kramer, chose to write in the following remark on the survey: “Sometimes we may not see it, but there are long-term effect to being bullied. A person always remembers it—what happened to them. It hurts. They might not be as successful.” Another student from Kramer wrote, “Bullying makes it hard to go to school.”

CHAPTER II: CONCEPTUALIZING THE PROBLEM OF BULLYING

SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

There appears to be growing consensus, within the literature, that the most comprehensive way to conceptualize the problem of bullying in schools is through an ecological framework.

According to Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman, within an ecological model, “human beings are viewed as developing and adapting through transactions with all elements of their environments” (2010, p. 49). If applied to bullying, this ecological model draws attention to all the elements of a child or adolescent’s environment that might influence his or her experience with bullying. According to Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt and Hymel, these elements or systems include “peers groups, teacher-student relationships, parent-child relationships, parent-school relationships, neighborhood and cultural expectations” (2010, p. 42). In addition to this, according to Swearer, Espelage and Naolitano (2009) the school’s environment or school’s climate also plays a critical role in protecting against bullying and victimization. According to Dr. Gerald Walton, Assistant Professor of Education at Lakehead University it is important to recognize cultural influences on student bullying behavior in schools. He is quoted as saying, “Bullying often reflects larger social and political battles, moral panics and collective anxieties” (Bloom, p. 30). From this vantage point, homophobic or racial bullying could be the result of our culture’s unspoken anxiety around homosexuality, immigration, etc. It might also be a reflection of our culture’s passivity when it comes to the exploitation of the weak. In other words, the phenomenon of bullying, while related, is not limited to individual or interpersonal factors inherent in the bully or the target. Rather, this relationship takes place and is influenced by a context, which includes other people, environments and culture. The following sections provide further information

about the various systems that make up the ecology of bullying, victimization, prevention, and intervention at Tal Middle School and Kramer High School.

THE BULLY

As noted above, there are complex dynamics that promote or deter bullying behavior. However, the literature also provides information on individual characteristics that might lead a student to engage in bullying. Understanding these individual characteristics can, and should, influence bullying prevention and intervention strategies within a school. In the past there was a commonly held myth that bullies resorted to aggressive behavior because they were not socially adept. According to this theory, a child or adolescent becomes a bully because he or she is not skilled enough to make friends any other way (Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano, 2009).

Recently, however, researchers have provided a more strengths based approach for understanding why some students become involved in bullying behavior. Sutton, Peter, Smith, and Swettenham propose that children who bully might actually be very adept at reading social situations and using this information to manipulate other students to their favor (1999). Swearer, Espelage and Napolitan write that in some cases, research indicates that bullying is related to “increased dominance in peer groups, increased popularity among peers and increased popularity of dating among middle school students” (2009, p. 33).

In the survey conducted at Tal and Kramer, students who had witnessed bullying were asked to identify the bully using a set of descriptive features. A significant percentage of students in each grade level identified the bully as someone who is “popular” and “has many friends.” Some students also assessed the bully as someone who is “powerful” and “smart.” In general the bullying was taking place by students in the same grade.

Table 4: Perceptions of Bullies by Students Who Witness Bullying

	%Identify bully as someone who is popular	%Identify bully as someone who has many friends	%Identify bully as someone who is smart	%Identify bully as someone who is powerful
7th Grade Tal (N=34)	41	35	3	12
8th Grade Tal (N=24)	50	50	21	13
9th Grade Kramer (N=32)	31	31	9	13
12th Grade Kramer (N=30)	47	60	30	27

These results appear to reinforce the proposition that bullying behavior might actually be a socially adaptive maneuver among students as it is often associated with popularity. According to Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano, one of the reasons why so many bully prevention programs are not effective is that they ignore the reality that bullying is sometimes “adaptive and plays an important role in improving the social status of children” (2009, p. 33). Twemlow and Sacco agree that in order to prevent bullying in schools, “the status gained by being mean needs to be addressed” (2008, p. 16).

While bullies might appear to their peers to be socially adept and popular, they may in fact lack empathy for those students that they victimize. According to Swearer, Espelage and

Napolitano, “Research has consistently found a negative association between empathy and aggression and positive correlation between empathy and pro-social skills” (2009, p. 28). At Tal and Kramer, the majority of self-identified bullies, agreed with the statement: “Bullies make kids feel bad.” In this way, the data suggests that the bullies at these schools understand, at least cognitively, that what they are doing could make another student feel bad. In seventh and ninth grade, the seemingly contradictory message of students who self-identify as bullying someone while expressing empathy for targets of bullying could be attributed to the fact that the majority of students in these grades fall into the category of bully-victims. These are students who have been both the target and the aggressor in the bully/victim continuum.

The literature on bullying has also found a strong correlation between the values one holds towards aggression and bullying behavior. According to Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano, “Aggressive individuals tend to hold the belief that aggression is a socially acceptable behavior” (2009, p. 31). However, again, across the board, the majority of self-identified bullies at both Tal and Kramer reported they agreed that, “bullies should be punished.” In this way, it is clear that students at Tal and Kramer do not see bullying as “socially acceptable.” However, about half of the students who bullied agreed with the statement: “I can understand why someone would bully another kid.” In other words, what appears to be taking place is some sort of mental justification for the bullying, even if these same students know objectively or have learned that “bullies should be punished.” It could be that students who bully act aggressively to serve an important need that overrides their objective thoughts or attitudes towards bullying. Twemlow and Sacco (2008) propose that some students see the school as their most predictable environment, as opposed to a home that might be fractured and unstable. For these students, controlling the environment of the school and maintaining the structure becomes

very important, maybe even all-consuming. Some of these students will engage in aggressive behavior in order to maintain the desired structure, even if they are troubled by their own behavior.

THE TARGET

According to Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt and Hymel (2010), there are several risk factors that make certain students more susceptible to being the target of bullying. These include “personality traits that make it difficult to fit in with the peer group, obesity, being enrolled in remedial education, having a developmental disability, being viewed as insecure or anxious or quieter than his/her peers” (p. 40). Students who identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender also find themselves to be the target of bullying more frequently than their heterosexual peers. According to Graybill and Morillas, “In a nationally representative sample of students ages thirteen-eighteen, LGBT students were three times more likely to have felt unsafe at school than heterosexual students” (2009, p. 2). According to Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt and Hymel, quoting Kosciw (2008), “In a recent survey of LGBT youth, approximately 85% reported experiencing some form of bullying or harassment while at school” (2008, p. 40). Lastly, according to Unnever and Cornell, “Middle-school students who reported taking medication for ADHD were both more likely to report bullying others and being victimized by bullies” (2003, p. 141). These authors hypothesize several reasons for this correlation. First, impulsivity is an important psychological correlate of both ADHD and bullying. Second, students who are frequently impulsive might become the target of aggression. Lastly, “Teachers might treat ADHD children with less respect, inadvertently encouraging similar behavior by their classmates” (Unnever and Cornell, 2003, p. 141).

At Tal and Kramer, at least one self-identified victim of bullying in each grade attributed the bullying to the following factors: “I am in special education,” “They think I am gay,” “I get angry a lot,” “I am fat.” In fact, thirty-two percent of the ninth-grade students who were bullied at Kramer said it was because “I am fat.” This data reinforces how critical it is that teachers and administrators realize that being in special education, being overweight, LGBT, or prone to angry outbursts are serious risk factors for students becoming targets of bullying; they should pay particular attention to these students during regular school climate assessments.

Additionally, all students should undergo sensitivity training around these issues. The greatest number of students in each grade simply responded that they get bullied because “other people think I am different.” Interestingly, several students in each grade also responded that the bullying is the result of other people’s jealousy, but it’s difficult to determine whether this is bravado or a true statement. It is obvious, however, that students who are able to attribute the bullying to deficits within the bully and avoid self-blame are far more resilient over time. Lastly, at least five self-identified victims of bullying in twelfth grade attributed the bullying to the fact that “I get good grades.” It is interesting to note that in a study conducted by Peterson and Ray (2005), the majority of students who were classified as gifted, across several schools, were bullied at some point during the past school year.

The students at Tal and Kramer were invited to also “free-write” the reasons why they think they were bullied this past year. The following is their list:

- “They think I am a wimp.”
- “I am loud.”
- “The country I am from.”
- “I don’t really know...”
- “Just because.”
- “I’m too Jewish...too religious.”
- “I am Orthodox.”
- “I am confident and independent”

“I do not conform to the norm.”
“The color of my skin.”
“Because I hooked up with people.”
“Hooking up with a lot of people”
“Because I used to be a shlubby kid. My clothes are not cool. I am from Israel.”
“The way I communicate with others.”
“Having an opinion and asking questions in class.”
“My family is poor.”

Beyond what was previously mentioned, this list also points to the bullying that is currently taking place at both Tal and Kramer around sexual activity, students’ level of observance, country of origin, socio-economic status and skin color. It is particularly interesting that students in a Jewish school would identify being bullied because they are more observant than their peers or because they are from Israel.

THE WITNESS

According to Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt and Hymel (2009), “One observational study of students found that peers were involved in eighty-five percent of bullying episodes, usually as either providing attention to the bully or actually joining in on the aggression” (p. 18). Within the literature, peers that witness bullying are referred to as bystanders. There appears to be a consensus that bullying is not a dyadic process and is, at the very least, triadic—always involving a bystander, or multiple bystanders. According to Greene (2003), bystanders will sometimes choose to support the bully by overtly encouraging this behavior. However, much more common is the bystander who merely looks on and remains silent. Silent bystanders actually work to encourage the perpetuation of bullying behavior, as both the victim and the bully tend to see them as supporting the bullying (Twemlow and Sacco, 2008; Greene, 2003).

There are various reasons why bystanders of bullying choose not to become involved.

According to Greene (2003), some children fear repercussions from the bully, while others blame the victim and believe that he/she deserves the bullying. Novick argues that bystanders fear “social rejection, intimidation and/or personal harm” if they choose to become involved on behalf of the target (n.d, p. 5).

When students do decide to get involved they do so for several reasons. In a study of children age ten-fourteen, some students explained their decision to get involved as an objective choice to “do the right thing” (Rigby, 2008, p. 85). Other students, however, were apparently moved to action because they felt empathy for the victim. Rigby points out that bystanders of bullying behavior are highly influenced by what they think their peers would do in similar situations.

Table 5: Students Who Witness Bullying

	% of Students who report witnessing bullying	% Witness bullying one or more times a month	% Witness bullying one or more times a week	% Witness bullying one or more times a day	% feel “bad or sad” “often” or “always” after witnessing bullying
7th grade Tal	87	24	42	33	53
8th grade Tal	81	26	39	35	33
9th grade Kramer	65	52	33	15	57
12th grade Kramer	63	27	58	15	45

The survey offered the students the opportunity to write in answers to the following question: “Tell us what you did about the bullying.” The responses, across all grades, reflect the

complex feelings and experiences of students who witness bullying. In general, the responses appear to fall into various categories. The first is best described as students who seem to have some degree of empathy towards the target of bullying but are conflicted about how much they are willing to risk on the target's behalf. Some statements in this category include: "I talked to the bullies but I did not do enough." "Nothing, just felt bad." "Nothing, and I'm sorry I didn't." The level of inner conflict, sadness and even guilt is palpable in all three of these bystander statements. There were other students who chose to write in examples of the negative consequences they had endured as a result of becoming involved on behalf of the target. These include: "I told him to stop and they all called me a nerd," and "Bullies just tell you to shut up." Another set of students appeared to feel fairly accomplished in their ability to become an "ally" of the target. An "ally" is a term used in the bully literature that connotes someone who moves beyond the role of bystander and actually intervenes on the target's behalf. Students in this category related the following comments: "I told them how mean it was and I made the person being bullied feel better." "Stood up for her." Finally, there was a category of students who appeared to recognize that they chose not to become involved because they actually agreed with the bullying behavior. Students in this category provided the following statements: "I didn't do anything, because I hate her too, but I don't say anything," and "Played along because the person bothered me a lot." It appears that the seventh graders at Tal middle school were more likely to write in that they tried to help the target of bullying and they disagreed with the bullying. This is most likely due, in part, to the month long bullying education program that the seventh graders participated in prior to the implementation of this survey. As part of their education, the students learned about the critical role of the bystander in bullying dynamics and how even passive peer acceptance of bullying can contribute to aggression in schools. The data suggests that across all

grades the majority of students who witness bullying are either directly trying to intervene in the bullying or are choosing to be nice to the target in order to help compensate for the bullying that is taking place. According to Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano, “Peers are integral in supporting and maintaining bullying victimization and perpetration in our schools” (2009, p. 17). At both Tal and Kramer, there appears to be a strong foundation for empowering students to continue to intervene in and not participate with the bullying. Complicating this image is the data which suggests that students at Tal and Kramer who witness bullying by and large see the bully as “someone who is popular” and “has many friends.” Finally, the majority of students who witness bullying at Tal and Kramer agree with the statement: “I can understand why someone would bully other kids.” All three of these appraisals might, in some cases, deter students from becoming involved to help a target of bullying. Education about the role of bystanders at these schools, should pay special attention to the very real challenge of going up against a bully who is not popular and has many friends

THE TEACHER

According to Novick and Issacs, “Teachers play a significant role as front-line responders to students’ peer conflicts and social interactions” (2010, p. 284). This is because teachers are usually in close proximity to the bully and in good positions to help students learn from bullying situations (Novick and Isaacs, 2010). The role of teachers becomes especially important in light of the fact that all students at both Tal and Kramer report bullying taking place in the classroom. In fact, the seventh graders at Tal report this as the place where the bullying happens the most. At least nine ninth graders and five twelfth graders report that they were bullied in the classroom. According to Novick and Issacs (2010) when teachers fail to intervene, it can reinforce students’

bullying behavior. Atlas and Pepler (1998) suggest that one of the major reasons that teachers fail to intervene in bullying is because they are not aware of it. According to a study conducted by these authors, “Teachers were aware of bullying incidents only 50% of the time when they were in close proximity to the interactions” (Atlas and Pepler, 1998, p. 92). These authors suggest that the lack of awareness is due in large part to the covert nature of many bullying incidents and that teachers often lack the knowledge necessary to know this type of covert bullying when they see it (Atlas and Pepler, 1998). According to Newman-Carlson and Horne, many teachers will actively try and ignore the bullying that they *do* see take place because many teachers “believe they lack the adequate skills and training to intervene” (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004, p. 260).

The problem of teacher involvement in bullying is compounded by the fact that overall, student targets of bullying are reluctant to report the victimization. According to Newman-Carlson and Horne, “The most common reasons students give for not seeking help involved potential costs (e.g., being perceived by peers as socially incompetent or weak)” (2004, p. 260). According to Atlas and Pepler, “Students often do not tell teachers or other adults about bullying because they blame themselves” (1998, p.88). According to Hinduja and Patchin (2009), students are especially reluctant to report bullying that takes place on-line or through mobile phones. These authors contend that this is because targets of cyber bullying often fear that parents will simply take away their phones or computers in order to protect them from the abuse. These authors quote one thirteen-year old girl as saying: “I wanted to tell my parents but I was afraid that they would never let me chat again and I know that’s how a lot of other kids feel” (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009, p. 61)

At both Tal and Kramer, the majority of students reported that teachers and school staff either did not know about the bullying or they were unsure if they knew. The only difference was among the eighth graders at Tal who were split between the number of students who believed the teacher and school staff did know and those who believed that the teachers did not know. Fifty-nine percent of the ninth-grade students who were bullied at Kramer did not think that the teachers or school staff knew about the bullying. Students acknowledged in the survey, through write-in responses, that much of the bullying is covert in nature or takes place online. At least one-ninth grader at Kramer requested, however, that the “teachers become more aware of student interactions.

Table 6 : Student-Targets’ Reports on Teacher Knowledge of Bullying

	% Students who report being bullied	% Student-targets who report that the teacher knew about the bullying	% Student-targets who report that the teacher did not know about the bullying	% Student-targets who were unsure if the teachers knew about the bullying
7th grade Tal	44	12	35	53
8th grade Tal	36	46	45	9
9th grade Kramer	44	14	59	27
12th grade Kramer	25	22	36	43

It appears that when teachers and school staff do notice and become involved in the bullying, the majority of the self-identified victims at both Tal and Kramer report that the teachers handle the bullying “well” or “okay.” This data should further reinforce the important

role that teachers and school staff do and could potentially play in supporting victims of bullying at both Tal and Kramer.

CHAPTER III: ASSESSMENT, PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

According to Kasen, Berenson, Cohen and Johnson (2004), “The school setting is the primary context in which most childhood bullying and victimization by peers takes place” (p. 187). According to Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano the factors that contribute to a healthy school climate are vital to preventing bullying problems in schools (2009). There is much interest in trying to determine what types of schools, or what elements within a school, perpetuate or prevent bullying behavior and victimization. Kasen et al. argue that, among other things, school ethos determines the “social, emotional and motivational climate of the school” (2004, p. 191) and, in turn, affect bullying behavior. While a school’s ethos can be difficult to pinpoint, it can often be gleaned by what the administration and teachers purport to value and if these values are perceived within the day-to-day interactions and general functioning of the school (Kasen et al., 2004). Twemlow and Sacco (2008) outline additional key feature of schools that are better prepared to prevent and intervene in bullying and victimization. These include clearly outlined roles and responsibilities within the school, non-punitive discipline procedures, and an open exploration of difficult emotions and tensions. Rigby (2008) adds to this the importance of having a clearly articulated anti-bullying policy within the school. Finally, according to the recommendations found on the U.S. government’s bullying-prevention website, it is critical that schools have the ability to broadly assess for bullying on a regular basis.

CULTURE AND VALUES

What a school values, as indicated through its language, structure, and actions, can have a

large impact on the degree of bullying taking place within the school. As an example, Twemlow and Sacco (2008) argue that equating success within a school with academic or athletic achievement puts the whole school at high risk for unhealthy power dynamics and aggression. While it seems obvious that Jewish day schools would emphasize “Jewish values,” it is important to keep in mind that they are also elite private schools working within a very competitive system. In other words, all Jewish private schools, in order to stay relevant, must be able to maintain a level of academic excellence on par with the best private schools in the nation. Therefore, there is an inherent value placed on academic excellence and achievement in many Jewish private schools. The following section explores the very intentional ways in which administrators at both Tal and Kramer try and create a school based on values, and Jewish values specifically.

According to the Head of School at Kramer, he makes it very clear to the staff, parents, and students that Kramer values Jewish ethics directly on par with academic achievement. The school’s mission statement reinforces this message: “Our mission is to raise up a new generation of leaders for whom Jewish values and tradition shape and guide their vision, and for whom knowledge creates possibilities for moral action, good character, and shalom.” The Head of School speaks and writes frequently about transforming the language that the students use in order to shift their perceptions about the world around them. These language transformations are part of what he refers to as the “Jewish Values Matrix.” According to the Head of School, “This encompasses a long list of widely accepted core values that undergo radical shifts in meaning and action when carefully disaggregated within the prism of Jewish thinking and ideals.” He speaks, for instance of transforming the American cultural idiom “knowledge is power” to the Jewish value of “knowledge is wisdom.” He tries to communicate to the students at Kramer that

through a Jewish Values Matrix, knowledge is no longer about becoming powerful, monetarily wealthy, and in charge. Rather, knowledge is about something deeper, and its purpose is about something deeper.

He also instructs the students to shift their language from notions of “rights” to that of “obligations.” For instance, in the context of bullying, he will juxtapose the American “right to free speech” against the Jewish obligation for “kind speech.” He challenges the students at Kramer to interpret and manifest the difference. In addition, popular ideas of beauty that are pervasive in America culture are transformed, through the Jewish Values Matrix, into “beauty as the inner spirit of every human being.” The Head of School also regularly uses the term “‘A’ Human Being,” which implies that Kramer is interested in having students strive beyond being “A” students. Among other things, an “A” human being does not gossip and “forms circles of friends, not cliques.” According to the Head of School, he consistently uses this term and the Jewish Values Matrix, during the ninth-grade orientation, back-to-school nights, assemblies, and in conversations with parents and kids. He says, “It is all about creating a culture of kindness. At this school we say, stop, slow down, it is all about the values. It is all about character.”

The mission statement at Tal Middle School also reflects the school’s focus on creating a culture of values and goes a step further by focusing on the social and emotional growth of the student. It reads: “We encourage the balanced development of the whole person, valuing both intellectual growth and social and emotional development.” To accomplish this, Tal Middle School has invested considerable resources into having a full-time school counselor/human development specialist, who works one-on-one and in small groups with students on a regular basis to develop their social and emotional abilities. The full details of this program will be discussed in a later section.

Jewish values are only sometimes used explicitly in the programs run by the school counselor. The school counselor identified that this is in part because she is not trained as a Jewish educator and therefore must rely on others to help her. She also said she was hesitant to bring Judaism into the group sessions she has with students, because she didn't want the students to see this as another academic Bible or Jewish history class. She really wants the students to feel like it is their time, so too much instruction around Jewish values might detract from this goal. The school counselor explains, however, that she is now, more than ever, likely to throw out a sentence like, "Well what does Judaism have to say about this?" in the middle of group session. The school counselor at Tal explained that she sees Judaism like another voice that can potentially influence the students in a positive way. "They have the voice of their teachers, their parents, their friends, and then the voice of Judaism. Ultimately, they decide whom they want to follow, but they should have a chance to hear all of the relevant voices."

The Head of School at Tal agreed that it is not necessary to constantly reinforce Jewish values, but the discussion of Jewish values in the context of bullying can sometimes be very effective. According to the Head of School at Tal, when Jewish text is used in conversations about bullying, the message carries a certain gravitas that it would not have otherwise. If, for instance, they would normally just say, "Bullying is bad," being able to pull from a piece of text that supports this perspective makes the conversation more powerful for the students.

CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Twemlow and Sacco (2008) argue for the importance of ensuring that there are clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the school in relation to bullying. Calabrese agrees when he writes, "Many schools that are at risk for violent behaviors, including bullying, exhibit a high

level of ambiguity related to delineated roles and responsibilities among school administrators” (2008, p. 112). Analysis of the interviews with administrators at both Tal and Kramer revealed a consistent understanding, among all administrators, regarding who is responsible for addressing bullying behavior and the particular roles that each member of the administrative team is expected to play. It is important to note that teachers were not interviewed as part of this research, so their understanding of their particular roles are left out of this study.

The Head of School at Kramer made it clear that it is not his responsibility to assess for bullying behavior at the school or necessarily get involved with bullying unless it was determined a child should be suspended. Instead, the Head of School explained that his role was to put into place a “capable student service team made up of the grade level deans, the deans of students and the school counselor, whose job it is to listen and get a feel for the climate of the school at any one moment.” As previously discussed, he also assumes and takes very seriously his responsibility, as Head of School, for creating a pervasive values system that all students, parents and teachers understand.

According to the Dean of Students at Kramer, it is the responsibility of the “student support team” to intervene when an incident takes place that falls outside of the value system of the school. The Dean of Students describes herself as the disciplinarian. The details of how the Dean of Student and her team actually “discipline” students will be discussed later. One member of the student support team is at Kramer High School is the counselor. It appears, however, that the school counselor plays a minimal role with regards to bullying behavior. She explains that of the four hundred students at the school, she estimates seeing around one hundred and thirty-seven students, and during her time at the school, it is very rare that she will meet with a student because of a bullying incident. When asked why this is, she replied that she thinks bullying is

rare at the school. It is assumed that another factor might be that she is only there part-time.

The Head of School at Tal described his role as setting forth and maintaining the educational vision for the school, which “includes the social and emotional development of every student.” According to Tal’s Head of School, the “social and emotional curriculum for the school pays particular attention to the role of bullying and teasing in kid culture.” The school counselor at Tal plays a significant role in relation to bullying. The fact that her title is not just “school counselor” but also “human development specialist” hints to the distinctive role she plays within the school in relation to bullying and other challenges that might be connected to child and adolescent development. The specific details of her role will be discussed in the following sections. The Middle School Principal at Tal, describes herself as the disciplinarian within the school and the one who determines consequences. She said she is motivated by her commitment to ensuring that every kid who enters into her school feels safe. She made it a point to add, however, that she works in close concert with the Middle School Counselor on all issues related to bullying so that discipline and counseling go hand and hand at Tal.

Both schools appear to place a great deal of responsibility for modeling and teaching pro-social behavior onto the teachers. Tal’s Head of School said, “The main responsibility of the teacher is to be involved in the teaching and learning going on in the classroom. However, since in our school we are interested in both the social-emotional development and academic rigor, the teachers, by definition, have to deal with bullying behavior.” The Counselor at Tal describes consistently trying to brainstorm with the teachers on ways to address bullying behavior, especially in less structured settings like the lunchroom. The Principal at Tal encourages the teachers to become involved with bullying when they see it, but also always to tell the Principal and Counselor in order to get further support. Tal’s principal seemed to think that most teachers

know how to handle bullying while some of the newer teachers are still struggling in this area.

The Head of School at Kramer speaks about the teachers as role models of certain values to the students and therefore promoting pro-social behavior. “I hire people who believe in the values of this school. My opinion is that you can be a fabulous math teacher, but if you don’t respect, believe in, and want to implement our values, then you shouldn’t be here as a teacher.” The Dean of Students at Kramer explained that it is always best if a teacher is able to identify aggressive behavior and approach the bully or the target directly instead of having to involve an outside party. Sometimes if the Dean of Students becomes aware of bullying behavior from a student-witness, she will request that the teacher begin to proactively focus on the students involved. In this way, the teacher can witness the bullying and the student who reported does not need to be involved. Once the teachers has witnessed the bullying, the expectation is that he/she will either directly intervene or report back to the Dean of Students so that the administration can become involved. This tactic, of making teachers responsible for intervening in the bullying, can potentially work well to mitigate the bystander’s fears that there will be social repercussions if he/she chooses to intervene. This is, of course, contingent on students making the administration aware of the bullying that is taking place.

NON-PUNITIVE INTERVENTIONS

According to Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2009), because bullying is a social-relationship problem, it should be addressed through focusing on helping students—bullies and targets of bullying—to develop “healthy social relations.” They write that it is necessary to assess how psychological issues are contributing to the bullying in order to determine how to

effectively intervene. They say, “Often by treating the underlying problem (depression, anxiety, aggression, distorted thinking, and skills deficits) the bullying and victimization dynamic can be thwarted” (2009, p. 96). On the other extreme is a reactionary approach where the school immediately punishes a bully either through out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano argue against this approach, as it communicates to the aggressor that they are “being rejected from the very institution that is supposed to teach them” (2009, p. 40). According to Twemlow and Sacco, “immediate punishment for bullying drives it underground and avoids dealing with the more complex reasons why coercive energy exists in the system” (2008, p. 15). In general, the literature appears to support a nuanced approach to bullying that takes into account the “age and maturity of the student involved, the type of behaviors, the frequency and patterns of behavior, the context in which the incident occurred and other relevant circumstances.” The consequences for bullying should take all of these factors into account (Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano, 2009, p. 47). Once these factors have been assessed it should be clear whether the student requires further counseling or more goal-oriented behavior modification modes of intervention. Either way, the teacher or administrator should be assessing for a change in behavior. Beyond this, Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2009) argue for ongoing group sessions for all students related to managing anger and anxiety and openly discussing why and how aggression is used in social situations. Both Tal and Kramer attempt to strike a delicate and challenging balance between disciplining the student who engaged in bullying behavior and educating and/or counseling this same student. According to the Middle School Principal at Tal, a student was recently sent to her office for “being mean” to another student. During her meeting with the student, she explained the following: “Yes I am the principal, and I am here to discipline you. There will be consequences to your behavior. At the

same time, I am here to support you. If you are having issues with a teacher or any other circumstance, I will also get you the support that you need.” The Middle School Principal went on to explain:

I will meet with the child and determine some consequences, but if I think something bigger is going on I will inform the school counselor and explain to the child that in addition to the consequences, I want the student to meet with the school counselor. I am not going to necessarily discipline a child in isolation without have the rest of the picture there.

According to the School Counselor at Tal, her main work with a student who has bullied someone is “unpacking, unpacking, unpacking.” In other words, she will try to get to the core of what is going on with the student. At the same time, as a school counselor, and not an individual therapist, she does not have the time to get to all of the deeper issues. Instead, she will often engage the student on his/her level and put bullying behavior within the context of the middle school hierarchy. She uses a narrative approach to counseling in order to achieve this. She might ask questions like, “How do you want to be known here? What do you want your reputation to be? You are the author. You are going to write the book of your life. Who is going to feature in your book? Why is he/she (the target of bullying) featuring in your book?”

The Middle School Counselor explained that with some students this counseling approach does not work because their emotional intelligence is not yet developed enough. With such kids, very clear limits and consequences work better. Regardless of which approach is used, the Counselor said, “At the end of the day, it is about whether or not there is a shift in behavior.”

The administration at Kramer appears concerned with trying to strike a balance between taking into account the individual needs of the child and the desire to modify the behavior in order to protect the community. In describing how they intervene with bullying behavior when

they see it taking place, the Dean of Students at Kramer, said “A lot of what we do in terms of our discipline is that we talk. We look at whatever has happened and try to figure out what lesson this particular student needs to learn.”

While this person-centered approach is an aspect of the bullying intervention work at Kramer, it is sometimes balanced by a desire to protect the culture of the community and therefore sometimes includes disciplinary measures. As an example, the Dean of Kramer related a story of a student who was suspended for some time because of bullying behavior. The student was bullying another student via Facebook. Another student brought this to the attention of one of the deans. The Dean requested and reviewed a transcript of what was written on Facebook before speaking to the alleged aggressor. At this point in the retelling of the incident, the Dean interrupted herself to explain the background of this student: “He was new to the school. He had never been in Jewish school before. At the public school he was at, he needed to assert himself as an alpha male in order to not get picked on. This was his survival strategy.” This segue is telling, as it speaks to the Dean’s person centered approach to bullying intervention, even amidst disciplinary actions. Once the student appeared in the Dean’s office, the Dean explained that the student’s parents would be called and that the student was to erase the messages on Facebook immediately. The Dean stopped herself again, explaining, this time, “The administration always informs students before parents are called out of respect for the students.” According to the Dean, a conference with the parents, the student, and the Dean was convened, at which the Dean explained to the parents the school had determined that the student needed outside counseling. The Dean provided the parents with a school-approved list of therapists and explained the student must attend a counseling session before being admitted back into the school. The Dean also made it clear that she would like to be able to follow up with the therapist to make sure that

the student was making progress. After the student had attended a few therapy sessions, the Dean convened another meeting with the parents and the student. According to the Dean, “We asked him what he had learned and reiterated to him that our school is different from the one you came from. We do things differently here. Do you get that now? ... We felt that he understood this and so we allowed him back into the school.” In summing up their attempt at a balanced approach to bullying, the Dean of students at Kramer explained, “Sometimes bullying behavior is just about trying to figure out high school. In this case, we will get students the resources they need. However if the lesson isn’t learned and it happens again, then we might say something like, ‘It doesn’t seem like this school is right for you. It doesn’t seem like you get us.’” The implication: the student would be asked to leave the school.

These incidents tell the story of administrators, at both schools, taking a very person-centered, largely non-punitive approach to discipline. At Kramer, the story is also of one where a school requested that a student seek help with the problem outside of school.

Lastly, these and other incidents discussed during the interviews relate directly to the role of the school with regard to cyber-bullying. It appears that while cyber-bullying happens beyond the walls of the schools, the administrators at both schools take it very seriously and see it as their responsibility to deal with it. The Dean of Students at Kramer explained, however, that they do not go as far as disciplining for incidents that happen off campus, but they do deal with the students involved directly and try to get both the target and the aggressor help. At Tal, they go a step further and contact parents to remind them to monitor their children’s online activity. As students get into high school and acquire mobile phones and personal computers, it becomes that much more challenging for parents to monitor their children’s online activities.

EXPLORING DIFFICULT EMOTIONS AND TENSIONS

Tal Middle School, in particular, pays special attention to ensure that tension and difficult emotions between students and within the school are recognized and not avoided. They do this, in large measure, through a program they call Keshet (Hebrew for “connection”). Keshet was established nine years ago and is modeled after the Council process popularized by the Ojai Foundation in Ojai, California, but has its roots in Native American tradition. There are several basic features of the Council method, and therefore Keshet. Participants sit in a circle so that all are on equal ground. Participants use a talking piece, such as a wooden stick that is supposed to encourage both expression and listening. There are four principles or intentions of the Council process: speaking from the heart, listening from the heart, being of lean expression (being mindful of making sure everyone receives their fair share of council attention), and spontaneity (do not rehearse what you choose to say) (Zimmerman and Coyle, 1996). Lastly, Keshet is totally confidential within the limits of what the facilitator must share as a mandated reporter. Keshet is co-facilitated by the school counselor and an expert in the Council process, on a weekly basis for each class of sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students. According to the School Counselor at Tal, “Keshet encourages and facilitates the emotional, physical, intellectual and social transitions of Tal students from elementary into middle school.” There is a set curriculum for each grade level, and each year the subject matters discussed build upon the previous year. At each grade level, the facilitators try to guide an exploration of the student’s feelings towards and experiences with bullying. The school counselor explains that during Keshet, she has the opportunity to educate students about issues related to bullying so they understand the dynamics and how to intervene when they witness bullying.

There does not appear to be a comparable program at Kramer. However, the Dean of Students regularly brings in guest speakers and programs in order to address difficult issues that teenagers might face. These include programs related to stress, health and drug use. To what extent this becomes a safe and open forum for the expression of difficult emotions at Kramer is unknown. Kramer does have in place a “save a life form.” The administration in the school has a drop box in place so that students can fill out a form if they know of someone within the school community who is cause for worry, either because they are engaging in dangerous behavior or the victim of aggressive behavior. The school mandates that students put their names on the slips that they fill out. They do this in order to prevent the “save a life” system from becoming a breeding ground for rumors. This appears to be an effective and commendable effort for ensuring that difficult emotions and tensions are expressed and dealt with within the framework of the school.

ANTIBULLYING POLICIES

Closely related to the issue of taking a nuanced approach to bullying intervention is the importance of having a clearly outlined anti-bullying policy. According to Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano well conceived antibullying policies communicate “expectations for appropriate behavior and consequences for bullying behavior” (2008, p. 39). Rigby (2008) outlines some core features of effective anti-bullying policies. These include:

- A recognition that bullying takes place at the school and is a major issue for kids who are involved.
- An affirmation that there is no justification for bullying and the school can and should take action to prevent and address bullying.
- A clear and broad definition of bullying based on researched definitions that take into

account emerging technologies.

- An outline of what the school does to prevent and assess for bullying.
- An outline for how the school will communicate this assessment.
- An outline of parent expectations.
- A nuanced outline of the actions that the school will take to intervene in bullying that occurs on and off campus.
- The use of language that is appropriate for the school (in the case of Jewish schools, they might want to use Jewish values).

In addition to all of this, Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2008) warn against the creation of an antibullying policy that conflates bullying with harassment. They also propose clearly outlining the services that a target of bullying can expect to receive and a description of ways in which administration and staff is trained regarding bullying.

Lastly, both Rigby (2008) and Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2008) contend that the process by which an antibullying policy is developed is just as important as the content of the policy. One of the main features often left out of bullying policies that fail to include all relevant stake holders is the mention of bullying that occurs between staff members, especially those of different status within an organization and between teachers and parents. Failure to include this may corrode any attempt at creating a safe school for students. Additionally, if all stakeholders are included in the creation of the policy, then the whole schools feels “that they own the policy and feel committed to implementing it” (Rigby, 2008 p. 157).

At the time of the interviews, neither Tal nor Kramer had a working antibullying policy in place. Tal is in the midst of reformulating a policy they viewed as outdated, while the administration at Kramer does not view a formal policy as being in line with school’s culture.

According to the School Counselor at Tal, it is important for the school to have a bullying policy in place “so that everyone—students, teachers, parents and the staff—are clear about how we define bullying and the measures we take with regards to bullying: educative, preventative and disciplinary.” The Head of School at Tal reiterated the importance of having a common definition between the administration and parent with regards to bullying. According to him, one of the byproducts of the hyper-media focus on bullying is that some parents are very quick to label any type of behavior bullying and expect the administration to act accordingly. A common, agreed-upon definition would help to stave off such conflicts.

According to the School Counselor at Tal, one of the problems with the policy that they once had was the inclusion of the misleading phrase “zero tolerance for bullying.” According to her, “To include the phrase zero tolerance in a bullying policy is misleading. It is making the claim that bullying does not exist within the school. We can’t say this, because we know it does.” According to Twemlow and Sacco, a zero tolerance antibullying policy “leaves the school and the community little room in which to be creative and to sustain policies that prevent bullying and reward pro-social behavior” (2008, p. 12). Apparently the revised antibullying policy is intended to reflect the reality of the school with regards to bullying and to allow for creative responses. The School Counselor at Tal explained that through the antibullying policy they hope to communicate: “We know bullying is going to happen, we try and prevent it by teaching your child, and we hope you are having those same conversations at home. When bullying does happen, we don’t immediately expel. There are consequences, but we try and counsel your child.”

According to the Dean of Students at Kramer, the culture of the school is not one where it makes sense to have a policy on bullying because it is too formulaic and does not allow for the

type of creative response necessary when dealing with bullying. The Dean of Students at Kramer explained:

It never made sense to me to have a cookie cutter response to bullying. In fact, this is not the type of school where we have a knee jerk reaction to anything. It is not the type of school where we look up something in a handbook and figure out what to. That doesn't work for us. We treat each case of bullying differently.

Creating a nuanced approach to bullying is critical to the success of bullying prevention and intervention at any school. However, a school without some sort of antibullying policy or formal approach to bullying leaves many unanswered questions which is a risk factor for teachers, parent and student confusion with regard to bullying. Furthermore, it appears that the process of creating a bullying policy could prove beneficial for any school looking to truly get *all* stakeholders to agree and buy into what bullying and victimization is and how it is handled in the particular context of the school. *Please see Appendix 1 for a sample Antibullying Policy.*

REGULAR ASSESSMENT

According to Espelage and Swearer (2004) teachers and administrators often cite that bullying is not a problem at their school. While these authors admit that this is sometimes the case, it is often less rosy than teachers and administrators assume. According to Colvin, Tobin, Beard and Hagan (1998) it is not always successful to try and ascertain the prevalence of bullying in a school through direct observation. This is because a lot of bullying behavior is covert in nature. Colvin et al. assert that the most successful measure of bullying behavior is surveys. Within the literature it appears that there is consensus that surveys should be conducted anonymously and should garner information from not only students but parents and teachers as

well. There are many different survey options that a school can choose from and each survey can offer a slightly different perspective on the problem of bullying and victimization within a school. As an example questions on surveys can assess for the following: prevalence of bullying, severity, bully's attitudes towards aggression, information on the ways that victims are targeted, to assess whether the staff knows that a problem exists in the school, to determine if the staff feels equipped to deal with the problem of bullying. According to Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2008), surveys and regular assessments are the basis upon which all decisions about addressing bullying should be made. *Please find a list of recommended tools for assessment in Appendix 1.*

Neither Tal nor Kramer has an evidenced-based system in place for assessing bullying within the school, though each has tailor-made systems. Their decision to participate in this study, however, speaks to their interest in gathering this type of data. As previously noted, the main avenues for assessing bullying at Kramer high school are to "listen for it" and encourage students to report it. The Dean of Students at Kramer said, however, that many students might feel hesitant to report bullying when they see it because they don't want to seem like a tattletale. "We try to figure out ways we can deal with the problem, after hearing about it, without pointing the finger at the person who has related the information to us." This is where they try and alert the teacher to the problem so that he/she can witness the bullying and intervene directly. It is also important to note that the Dean of Students continuously emphasized how important it is for the administration at Kramer to build close relationships with the students so that the lines of communication are open.

Tal also has a significant focus on trying to maintain open lines of communication, and the Kesher program is intended to do just that. Both Tal and Kramer were able to provide

examples of students who have utilized these open lines of communication to report bullying behavior and victimization. The School Counselor at Tal pointed out how critical it is that she and other staff praise students for bringing information about bullying to their attention.

CHAPTER IV: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TAL AND KRAMER

It appears that the administration at both Tal Middle School and Kramer High School continuously strive to create safe, Jewish-values-based and growth-promoting learning environments for their students. More specifically, the administration at Kramer consciously uses and tries to practice Jewish values in order to create a “culture of kindness” at the school. This focus on trying to create a culture that values friendship circles over cliques and “A” human beings over “A” students reflects best practices in bullying prevention literature. Tal’s focus on creating a space for social and emotional growth and the exploration of difficult emotions and tensions is critical to their success. Instead of turning away from challenging issues, Tal Middle School uses the role of the school counselor as someone who proactively helps the students plug into these issues before they become too troublesome. This turning into tension, instead of away from it, also reflects best practices in bullying prevention.

While the specific roles of the administration with regard to bullying is clearly articulated at both schools, this study did not explore the role of teachers in great detail. The administrations identified the teachers as responsible for intervening in bullying and acting as role models. Questions remain as to when a teacher is expected to report a bullying incident to someone in the administration or just deal with it directly. It is unclear if the teachers receive specific training in the area of bully prevention and intervention. The fact that several students in each grade reported that the teachers did not know about the bullying that was taking place in the academic classroom is telling. Perhaps more focused knowledge and skills-based training for the teachers on how to spot and intervene with bullying could be beneficial.

This type of training will, however, only solve some of the problem. For instance, ninth graders at Kramer were very forthcoming that the predominant reason the teachers do not know about the bullying is that it takes place through text messages, online (Facebook, Formspring) or during weekend gatherings. The literature points to the fact that students are reticent, for a variety of reasons, to tell teachers about bullying taking place. Therefore, at a place like Kramer, it might be beneficial to take the model of Tal Middle School and try and proactively engage the students, on a regular basis, in group sessions about experiences with bullying. This type of proactive exploration of difficult emotions and tensions appears to be missing at Kramer, and it could help to strengthen the relationship between the students and administration around bullying.

In line with best practices in bullying intervention, both schools maintain a non-punitive and person-centered approach to bullying. Both schools try and “get to the bottom of why” the student engaged in bullying behavior, but are ultimately interested in seeing behavioral change. Both schools also readily admit that bullying takes place and that the practice of immediate expulsion — zero tolerance — does not work with their person-centered approach. However, the fact that neither school had, at the time of the study, a clearly articulated antibullying policy is troublesome. It could be that without such a policy, too many students are left wondering if what they are experiencing is worthy of adult involvement, and what the consequences will be for themselves and/or the bully if they choose to tell a teacher or staff member. Teachers, too, might be left questioning when specifically to intervene. The process of creating an antibullying policy by consulting teachers, parents, and, especially, students could help define and communicate the schools’ approach to bullying and give all members of the community clear guidelines for reporting and intervention. It would be interesting to note if engaging in the process of eliciting

student buy-in in the creation of an antibullying policy would raise the percentage of students at both schools who assess that their teachers and administrators deal well with the bullying.

There is a strong base at both schools of students who either tried to intervene on behalf of the target, tried to be nice to the target, or felt guilty that they did not intervene further. In this way, the students at Tal and Kramer are concerned about the bullying that they witness and have the potential to be further mobilized against the bullying. The complicating factor at both schools is that the majority of students identified the person who bullied as someone who is popular. Therefore, the students who bully others, at both Tal and Kramer, hold a certain degree of social status within the peer group. This element of the bully-victim continuum could be explored explicitly at these schools through something along the avenue of the Council (Keshet) method used at Tal Middle School.

Finally, the students at both schools provided a list of reasons they think they are bullied. In each grade, someone in the school said that he/she was bullied because of enrollment in special education, getting angry a lot (perhaps attached to ADHD), being assumed to be gay, or being fat. Again, thirty-two percent of the ninth- grade self-identified targets attributed the bullying to being fat. In addition to all of these reasons, students attributed the bullying to country of origin, socio-economic status and skin color. More than anything, students identified being bullied because they are “different.” It could benefit both schools to proactively explore with their students their thoughts and feelings surrounding special education, ADHD, weight, socio-economic status and homosexuality. Additionally, an open dialogue with students about the pros and cons of being in a community where people are different from one another could also be beneficial.

At this point the bullying that is taking place at Kramer hovers under fifty percent, mostly takes place one or more times a month, and is not physical in nature. The moderate level of bullying is a tribute to the hard work being done by the administration, students and perhaps even parents at both schools. However, the covert nature of the bullying does pose a particular challenges, as it makes it more challenging to notice and to intervene. While the statistics paint an overall positive picture, there are still students in every grade that are getting bullied one or more times a week, and the majority of the targets report that it makes them feel sad sometimes, often or always. The specific information gleaned from this survey about where the bullying takes place, why the bullying takes place, and how the bullying takes place provides both Tal and Kramer with very concrete data that they can use during open and frank conversations with their students about bullying. It is recommended that both schools continue to engage in ongoing assessment in order to ascertain if their efforts to further stem the tide of bullying are successful.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS

If there is one thing that the data at Tal and Kramer make clear, it is that our Jewish schools are not immune to bullying. In other words, it is likely that students enrolled in Jewish schools across North America are participating as either the aggressor and/or the target of bullying on a regular basis. It is also likely that the *majority* of Jewish students at Jewish schools are witnessing bullying on a fairly regular basis. The literature on bullying provides evidence for the short- and long-term detrimental effects of being involved in the bullying-victim continuum — bystanders included. However, as someone who strongly believes that the Jewish future is dependent, in large measure, on the success of our Jewish day schools, I believe that the bullying at our Jewish schools becomes even more troublesome. Put bluntly, unless this issue of

aggression in our schools is approached with the same degree of seriousness with which we approach teaching math or Torah, we are doing a large disservice to the future of the Jewish people. In essence, we will be acquiescing to raising children and then members of the Jewish community who are depressed and anxious. We will be turning the other cheek while we give the message that aggression and victimization is okay in the Jewish school, and then, one day, in the Jewish home. Finally, we will be sending a message to the larger community that we are able to produce a generation of top bankers, politicians, accountants and lawyers, graduates from the best schools, but individuals who never quite overcame the use of bullying tactics. Based on the time I spent researching both Tal and Kramer, it is my hope that the administration, students and parents at other Jewish schools are also thinking seriously about the issue of bullying and being reflective about their bullying prevention and intervention. In the section below I offer a series of recommendations for Jewish schools looking to explore and address the issues of bullying.

Commit to Regular Assessment: Systematically assess the prevalence and nature of bullying at your school on a regular basis. Please do not assume that you know what is going on with your students. Small school size and low teacher-to-student ratio increase the likelihood that you will know about bullying, but not by much. Too many students will not report a covert or cyber-bullying incident to an adult and choose, instead, to suffer in silence. Through regular systematic assessment, you send the message to all students and parents that you are serious about the issue of bullying. Assessment also provides the data you will need in order to determine the appropriate area for intervention. For instance, at Tal and Kramer we learned that a majority of the self-identified bullies also reported being targets at one point. Sharing this information with the entire student body can help the students to see and understand the culture of bullying in a

new light. Assessment can also determine if individuals with certain character traits or qualities are more frequently subject to bullying at a particular school. For instance, as was the case at Tal and Kramer, students in special education might feel particularly vulnerable. If so, an intervention can include sensitivity training for the entire student body around this issue. Lastly, assessment can look specifically at the thoughts and behaviors of students who witness the bullying at a school. As an example the students should speak openly about the finding that the majority of the bullies are viewed as being popular. Research indicates that transforming students from mere bystanders to people capable and willing to intervene can transform a school culture. Through a systematic assessment, a school can determine what attitudes, beliefs or prejudices prevent students from becoming involved as allies. *Please find a list of recommended tools for assessment in Appendix I.*

Provide Teacher Training: Create opportunities for ongoing teacher training. There are numerous individuals who will sell themselves as offering effective bully-prevention training for teachers, so it is important to be discriminating when choosing a training program. The training program should be evidenced-based and pay specific attention to equipping the teachers with the skills necessary to notice and intervene with bullying. The training should explore teachers' thoughts and attitudes towards bullying or specific types of kids, which could prevent effective intervention in bullying. The literature also points to the critical role of collegial support groups throughout the year so teachers have space and time to discuss and reflect on the bullying taking place. Teachers and administrators are overloaded, and so the only way these types of conversations are going to happen is if there is specific time dedicated. *Please find a teacher training program recommendation in Appendix I.*

Proactively Engage Students in Challenging Discussions: Since we know that students are reticent to seek out assistance for issues related to bullying, Jewish schools should proactively engage students in these types of conversations. It is recommended that Jewish schools adopt a program similar to the Council (Keshet) program provided at Tal Middle School. In this way students are proactively given the opportunity to openly and confidentially discuss difficult issues and tensions. Specific elements must be in place to create a safe space for students to discuss these issues, and any school interested in this program should seek out further guidance. *Please see Appendix 1 for contact information on the Council program.*

Develop and Implement an Antibullying Policy: Essentially, an antibullying policy puts everyone concerned with the community of the school on the same page. An effectively developed and communicated antibullying policy will ensure that administrators, teachers, students and parents all understand how the school defines bullying, what the school does to prevent bullying and to intervene when it takes place. Teachers and administrators understand where their roles begin and end. Parents understand the expectations placed on them and what to expect from the school. Finally, students know to whom to go in case of bullying and are given enough information about the process so that they will be less likely to fear retaliation. The literature on bullying is emphatic that the process of creating an antibullying policy is just as important as the actual content of the policy. During the process of creation, all members of the school community, including students, should be invited to review and comment on the policy. Including the teachers and parents in this process will ensure that the policy covers aggression between teachers, between teachers and administrators, and between school staff and parents.

Failure to include any one of these facets could corrode the effectiveness of the policy.

Furthermore, maintaining an inclusive policy development process ensures better buy-in within the community. Buy-in is the key to successful implementation. *Please see Appendix 2 for a model antibullying policy.*

Communicate with the Families: Bullying literature supports a link between children who witness aggression at home and their use of aggression at school. While this is important to keep in mind when assessing and counseling the student bully, it also speaks to the critical role of the family in either promoting or deterring bullying and, for that matter, victimization. Schools could invite parents to reflect on their own attitudes towards aggression and what they model for their children. This should be conducted separately from the students to encourage frank discussion. Perhaps the students could be invited in at a later point in the evening so that a dialogue between parents and students around bullying can ensue. The issue with this, of course, is to get those parents in the room that are reticent to be involved in such a dialogue, but who would likely benefit the most from being reflective.

Facilitate Social and Emotional Growth for Students: It is not enough to instruct the students about what not to do when they feel aggressive, annoyed or victimized. It is our obligation to also teach them the skills necessary to help protect against involvement in bullying and to remain resilient in the face of bullying. According to Cohen (n.d.), schools, Jewish schools included, should help students to build basic social and emotional skills. Social and emotional skill level has not only been linked to an ability to peacefully solve problems, but is also predicative of success in core relationship and work-related areas later in life. Cohen (n.d.) writes of eight

social-emotional competencies that are important to teach students. These include:

- Awareness of self and others (reflective and empathic abilities);
- Flexibility and creativity in problem solving and decision making;
- The ability to regulate impulses;
- The capacity to cooperate;
- Skills in communicating clearly;
- Learning to be self-motivating;
- Forming and maintaining friendships.

Please find information on promoting social and emotional learning in your school in Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS THAT SUPPORT JEWISH

SCHOOLS

As a Jewish community, we entrust our Jewish schools with building up the next generation of Jews. It is also our obligation, as a community to ensure that these schools have the resources available to create a generation that is not only knowledgeable, but also kind, secure, empathetic and able to regulate its aggression. With this in mind I offer suggestions for how agencies that support day schools, BJE's and foundations, can help schools to address the problem of bullying in Jewish schools.

- Make resources, in the form of actual surveys, available for schools that want to systematically assess for prevalence, nature of and attitude towards bullying.
- Provide evidence-based teacher training around bullying prevention and intervention, within a Jewish context.
- Provide expert consultation for schools to help them think about the most appropriate way to improve the situation of bullying at their school.

- Create a model antibullying policy that Jewish schools can choose to adopt or alter according to their specific preferences.
- Ensure the creation of a skills- and knowledge-based unit on bullying in all master degree programs in Jewish education.
- Create a website with Jewish and secular resources to aid Jewish schools that are looking to develop the social and emotional growth of their students and to curb anti-social behavior like bullying and drug use.
- Create a Wiki or Facebook page with resources and links to Jewish texts, Jewish conferences and Jewish writings related to issues of bullying and social-emotional learning. Build a community of Jewish educators and Jewish school counselors interested in this topic.
- Encourage and support all Jewish schools to hire a full-time school counselor and human development specialist. In so doing, we will ensure that there is one person at every school whose sole purpose is to look after the social and emotional health of the students.

CONCLUSION

One of the greatest strengths of the Jewish people has been our ability to continuously provide quality Jewish education. The number of students graduating from our Jewish day schools who enter into top universities with a strong basis of Jewish knowledge is testament to our continued success. However, at this juncture, the world we live in is deeply troubled by excessive greed, unregulated aggression, anxiety and fear. As a people, we must also ensure that we are graduating Jewish students from day schools who can work effectively within these complexities and lead up into a brighter tomorrow. It is my belief that all nations can be “a light onto nations.” However, because the Jewish people is my nation, it is my deep hope that we will find it within ourselves to do what is necessary so that we can continue to be a source of light onto this world.

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APPENDIX 1

TOOLS FOR ASSESSMENT

- **The following link offers a compendium of the most recent bullying assessment tools and best practices for bullying assessment:**
http://www.stopbullying.gov/community/tip_sheets/assessment_tools.pdf
- **The *Olweus Bullying Questionnaire* (Olweus, 2007) is perhaps the most widely used bullying assessment tool across the world:** <http://www.olweus.org/>
- **The *Bully Survey- Student Version* (Swearer, 2001) was the assessment tool used in this research. It can be found on the following website:**
http://www.targetbully.com/Bully_Survey.php

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

- **Bully Busters: A Teacher's Manual for Helping Bullies:**
<http://www.nprinc.com/bully/bbat.htm>
- **The Teaching Tolerance website offers classroom teachers and administrators information on how to build respect for differences in the school:**
www.teachingtolerance.org
- **The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network offers resources for helping schools to develop into safe and accepting space for LGBTQ students. Their online campaign www.ThinkB4YouSpeak.com provides a technology rich medium for challenging students to stop using the term “that’s so gay”:** www.glsen.org
- **Keshet is a national organization that offers support, training, and resources to create a Jewish community that welcomes and affirms GLBT Jews:**
www.keshetonline.org
- ***Love Your Neighbor, Love Yourself* is an interactive sourcebook that uses Jewish texts and activities to discuss different components of building healthy relationships between self, friends and family. It is published by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism Book Service:** <https://secure.uscj.org/bookservice/>

THE COUNCIL PROGRAM

- <http://www.ojaifoundation.org>
- Zimmerman, J., and Coyle, V. (1996). *The Way of Council*. California, USA: Bramble Books.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- **The Yeshiva University's Institute for University-School Partnerships offers resources for schools in the area of social and emotional development:**
<http://www.yuschoolpartnership.org/student-support/social-emotional>
- **The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning is a non-profit that conducts and disseminates research on how to teach social and emotional skills in school settings:** <http://casel.org/>
- **A comprehensive list of evidenced based bullying prevention and social/emotional learning tools is available from the Ontario Ministry of Education:**
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/registry.htm>

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE POLICY FOR BULLYING PREVENTION

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/se/samplepolicy.asp>

The _____ School District believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. The district, schools, and community have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance.

The _____ School District will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any student. A student shall not intimidate or harass another student through words or actions. Such behavior includes: direct physical contact, such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults, such as teasing or name-calling; and social isolation or manipulation.

The _____ School District expects students and/or staff to immediately report incidents of bullying to the principal or designee. Staff are expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur. Each complaint of bullying should be promptly investigated. This policy applies to students on school grounds, while traveling to and from school or a school-sponsored activity, during the lunch period, whether on or off campus, and during a school-sponsored activity.

To ensure bullying does not occur on school campuses, the _____ School District will provide staff development training in bullying prevention and cultivate acceptance and understanding in all students and staff to build each school's capacity to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment

Teachers should discuss this policy with their students in age-appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of bullying. Students who bully are in violation of this policy and are subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Each school will adopt a Student Code of Conduct to be followed by every student while on school grounds, or when traveling to and from school or a school-sponsored activity, and during lunch period, whether on or off campus.

The Student Code of Conduct includes, but is not limited to:

** Any student who engages in bullying may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.*

** Students are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to the principal or designee.*

** Students can rely on staff to promptly investigate each complaint of bullying in a thorough and confidential manner.*

** If the complainant student or the parent of the student feels that appropriate resolution of the investigation or complaint has not been reached, the student or the parent of the student*

should contact the principal or the Office of Student Services. The school system prohibits retaliatory behavior against any complainant or any participant in the complaint process.

The procedures for intervening in bullying behavior include, but are not limited, to the following:

** All staff, students and their parents will receive a summary of this policy prohibiting bullying: at the beginning of the school year, as part of the student handbook and/or information packet, as part of new student orientation, and as part of the school system's notification to parents.*

** The school will make reasonable efforts to keep a report of bullying and the results of investigation confidential.*

** Staff are expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur.*

** People witnessing or experiencing bullying are encouraged to report the incident; such reporting will not reflect on the victim or witnesses in any way.*

Sample Policy for Conflict Resolution

The _____ School District believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. Part of a healthy environment is the freedom to openly disagree. With this freedom comes the responsibility to discuss and resolve disagreements with respect for the rights and opinions of others.

To prevent conflict, each school within the _____ School District will incorporate conflict resolution education and problem solving techniques into the curriculum and campus programs. This is an important step in promoting respect and acceptance, developing new ways of communicating, understanding, and accepting differing values and cultures within the school community and helps ensure a safe and healthy learning environment

The _____ School District will provide training to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills students need to choose alternatives to self-destructive, violent behavior and dissolve interpersonal and intergroup conflict. Each school will adopt a Student Code of Conduct to be followed by every student while on school grounds, when traveling to and from school or a school-sponsored activity, and during lunch period, whether on or off campus.

The Student Code of Conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

** Students are to resolve their disputes without resorting to violence.*

** Students, especially those trained in conflict resolution and peer mediation, are encouraged to help fellow students resolve problems peaceably.*

** Students can rely on staff trained in conflict resolution and peer mediation strategies to intervene in any dispute likely to result in violence.*

** Students needing help in resolving a disagreement, or students observing conflict may contact an adult or peer mediators (give location where listing of designated staff and students is posted).*

** Students involved in a dispute will be referred to a conflict resolution or peer mediation session with trained adult or peer mediators. Staff and mediators will keep the discussions confidential.*

** Conflict resolution procedures shall not supplant the authority of staff to act to prevent violence, ensure campus safety, maintain order, and discipline students.*