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## **thrive report**

Vol 5, Number 1, May 2011

### May 2011 Issue: Bullying

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**thrive by the  
numbers**

**Did you know?**

**56** Percent of students have personally witnessed some type of bullying at school.

**88** Percent of children with autism have been bullied at school according to the MA Advocates for Children.

**58** Percent of RI heterosexual high school students reported being bullied.

### **May 2011 Focus: Bullying Prevention**

Rhode Island is in the forefront of anti-bullying efforts and continues to promote public awareness, support legislation and develop policies to ensure safe schools for all students.

Bullying frequently involves:

- **Imbalance of Power:** people who bully use their power to control or harm and the people being bullied may have a hard time defending themselves
- **Intent to Cause Harm:** the person bullying has a goal to cause harm; actions done by accident are not bullying
- **Repetition:** incidents of bullying often happen to the same person over and over by the same person or group

According to Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) SurveyWorks!, RI high school and middle school students report being bullied on a regular basis.

RIDE wants to ensure that schools have the tools and resources necessary to prevent bullying and create safe learning environments for all children and youth. Safe schools positively impact academic performance. A safe school environment:

- increases attendance
- increases class participation
- increases school engagement

Some students are at increased risk of bullying and other risk behaviors. In RI, we know that students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or unsure (LGBU) are 3 times more likely to stay home from school because they don't feel safe at school. LGBU youth are 4 times more likely to have attempted suicide than their heterosexual peers. We also know that in RI, about 9% of high

**77** Percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual or unsure RI high school students reported being bullied.

**90** Percent of *middle school students* have posted mean or threatening statements about another student online.

**84** Percent of *high school students* have posted mean or threatening statements about another student online.

Sources:

[Rhode Island Department of Education - SurveyWorks!](#),  
[Rhode Island Department of Health. Bullying Statistics.](#)  
[Johnson and Wales University Study](#)

### **RIDE Bullying and Safe School Links**

[Stop Bullying Now! RI.](#)

[Youth Pride, Inc](#)

[StopBullying.gov](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[National Crime Prevention Council](#)

[Partnership to Address Violence through Education](#)

[US Department of Education](#)

Rhode Island Department of

school students identify as LGBU - that is 2-3 youth in any given classroom in each of our high schools.

Bullying can be related to many different issues including religion, race, disability, looks, or sexual orientation. Bullying is bullying - it's wrong; it's bad for kids; it's bad for adults; it's bad for schools. Bullying creates environments of mistrust and fear that prohibit teachers and students from participating fully in teaching and learning.

*As of May 12, 2011, the RI legislature introduced the Safe School Act legislation that is expected to be voted on in the House and Senate during this legislative session.*

**References:**

[StopBullying.gov](#)

## **May 2011 Core Issue: Bullying Basics**

### **5 Easy Steps to a Safe School**

1. **Awareness - *Learn the signs that someone is being bullied.*** Are some students chronically absent? Be aware when a student's grades and abilities don't align. Do some students appear sad, depressed, anxious or angry? Post school rules against bullying; Display school policy on bullying in prominent places; and ensure access to school bullying policy by students, parents, educators and staff.
2. **Education - *Learn about youth development issues.*** Conduct staff trainings and hold staff discussion sessions on bullying. Assess your own attitudes towards bullying behaviors. Learn about available school and community resources to support your students.
3. **Support - *Show that you care. Ask and listen. Ask*** the students if they feel safe in school. Help students find a trusted adult to talk to. ***Listen.*** Spend time with students. Learn about what's been going on. Provide a safe place for students who feel threatened. Display safe school posters or 'safe space' stickers.
4. **Step In - *Intervene and model.*** Ensure that all staff intervene on the spot when bullying occurs. Speak up at staff meetings about school climate issues. Refer "bullies" for counseling, disciplinary action or other appropriate interventions. Refer students who are the targets of bullies to counseling, support groups or other interventions. Have meetings with students and parents of involved students. Report bullying to appropriate school authority.
5. **Step Up - *Advocate for safe schools.*** Advocate for policies that protect all students. Establish a school culture of acceptance, tolerance and respect. Engage parents in efforts to create a safe school for all students. Create a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) in your school (studies show that students, gay and straight, in schools that have GSAs

Elementary and Secondary  
Education

255 Westminster St.  
Providence, RI 02903

Lincoln D. Chafee  
Governor

Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner Department of  
Education

Michael Fine, MD  
Interim Director Department  
of Health

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report feeling safer).

## ***Fresh from the Field: RI Student Praised by President Obama for Anti-Bullying Efforts***

**A Better Community Committee: Burrillville School District**  
*by: Brandon Greene, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Committee Founder and President*



When I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade I had a project on reducing bullying in my school. My project focused on creating a Student Action Group called the Anti-Bullying Committee. The group met after school with 10 members. During our first year, we did some basic fundraising and surveying to see how bad bullying was in *our* school. The results from the survey *opened our eyes* to how bad bullying really was. We also made 2,000 buttons to publicize that we need to be bully free.

During our second and third year, we made some major changes to the atmosphere in our school. Our first major change was our committee's name. Instead of focusing only on bullying, we wanted to work more with our community. We decided to change our name to A Better Community, or ABC.

Our second change was throwing a party! In June, we invited all middle school students and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students up to our tennis courts to throw a huge party! We had food, games, and a talent show. Instead of paying for all of the supplies, we went to local businesses to ask for donations of food or other things we needed. At the end of the party, we had fed 500 kids and 40 adults with 100% donated food. This proves that anyone can start a committee, even if no funds are available.

Our last and biggest event that we did took place in the weeks prior to Christmas. We held a 14-day Coat Drive in our community. At the end of two weeks, we collected a total of 112 coats that would soon be helping keep others warm. For our generosity and dedication to bettering our community, we received recognition and citations from the Rhode Island State Senate, the Rhode Island State House of Representatives, the Burrillville Town Council, the Burrillville School Committee, and the Burrillville Lyons Club (which was where the coats were donated to).

According to the data in surveys that we created, (one survey at the beginning of the year and one near the end), there was a 15-20% decrease in the bullying in our schools.

As Committee President, I was invited to the First White House Conference on Bullying Prevention. This was a six hour conference with people from all over the country including; Timothy Schriver with the Special Olympics, the President of MTV, the President of Cartoon Network, and many other people. The President and First Lady selected five people from around the country who have tried different things to end bullying. I was selected to attend this meeting in the Oval Office because I created A Better Community. While at the conference, I received a lot of material to help me expand my committee, and help other schools create a similar one. For more information about me or my committee, visit [www.bettercommunity.yolasite.com](http://www.bettercommunity.yolasite.com).

As always, we welcome and encourage your feedback about **thrive**, Rhode Island's Coordinated School Health model. Please email us at [midge.sabatini@ride.ri.gov](mailto:midge.sabatini@ride.ri.gov) or [rosemary.reilly-chammat@health.ri.gov](mailto:rosemary.reilly-chammat@health.ri.gov).

Sincerely,

**Midge Sabatini, Ed.D.**  
RI Department of Education  
401.222.8952

**Rosemary Reilly-Chammat, Ed.D.**  
RI Department of Health  
401.222.5922