Capturing School Data on Bullying and Harassment is Just the Beginning of the Story, Using the Data Can Provide Us With an Ending.

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Abstract

This article argues that collecting school data on bullying and harassment must be paired with transparent analysis and targeted interventions. It outlines governance, feedback loops, and practical steps to translate data into safer environments.

Introduction

Bullying is a comprehensive issue across schools and remains a crisis. If victims do not receive intervention, long- term effects on the emotional well-being of these children are imminent.

In New York City, all schools are expected to follow SSEC School Safety and Educational Climate Regulations, which include guidelines for investigating incidents and require schools to enter a report on each incident and notify parents and/or guardians of students involved. In addition, schools must maintain records and have an effective anti- bullying policy in place.

Collecting data for all incidents is a mandate and helps schools develop effective anti-bullying policies, enabling them to identify where bullying is taking place, spot trends in bullying and classify schools as persistently dangerous if they have a high number of reported incidents. This article sheds light on how incident data can be analyzed and used to prevent and address the long-term effects of bullying and harassment.

For me, the fifth grade lives in my mind as the year I wish I had never gone to school. During fifth grade, I was bullied daily and chose not to tell my parents. I was a target of bullying and harassment, which put me in a state of isolation. My story may be different from that of other children who struggle with bullies because many children share their incidents with school officials who are mandated to report the incidents.

The Washington Post reported that the gunman, a sixteen-year-old named Ramos who was charged in an elementary school massacre was bullied over a childhood speech impediment, suffered from a distressed life and had lashed out violently against peers and strangers recently and over the years. Ramos's cousin Mia said she saw students mock his speech impediment when they attended middle school together. He would brush it off in the moment, Mia said, then complain later to his

grandmother that he didn't want to return to school (Klemko, 2022). The question to be answered is this: aside from Ramos's grandmother knowing he did not want to return to school, was this situation addressed while Ramos was in middle school?

In Ramos's case, when he was bullied in middle school, he was between the ages of 11 and 13. During these years, children build healthy friendships that are very important to their development, but peer pressure can increase during this time. Children who have established self-confidence are typically more able to resist negative peer pressure and make better choices for themselves. This is an important time for children to gain a sense of responsibility as they learn to develop independence. These years of adolescence include the importance of being accepted.

I feel it necessary to mention the work of Father Brian from a Long Island church, who delivers mass to his community on the beach during the summer months. The venue is entrancing, and when Father Brian delivers his homily, he often touches on topics that impact the community. Father Brian delivered a homily that focused on the Texas shooting and how a sixteen-year-old, who we now know as Ramos, was a victim of bullying during middle school. Father Brian encouraged his community to monitor their children. The homily inspired me to reflect on my years as a school administrator and what we can do as educators to prevent such a tragic event. If we are able to identify and track from the volume of incident data, the victims of bullying, there is the potential to monitor those with poor social and behavioral skills. The schools can offer programs that focus on building children's social skills which is considered to be a strong bullying prevention measure. With the volume of school data that schools compile, what can we do to save a child?

The following information can be found in the SSEC regulations, which include all reports of violent incidents and infractions. The SSEC data collection reports are submitted to NYSED with action plans to eliminate unsafe and/or hostile environments and investigative notes. These documents must be maintained at the school/district until the youngest person involved in the incident is 27 years old and should not be sent to the next school/district or to NYSED. These reports are not part of the student's educational record and therefore should not be kept in the student's cumulative folder but instead should be kept in a separate location or filing system.

I am uncertain whether other states follow the regulations for bullying that New York has in place. If so, how are the data used to track students as they transition from middle school to high school? How are data used to track students who have been bullied in elementary school and transition to middle school? NYSED's School Safety and Educational Climate report states that violent and disruptive incident reports, reports of DASA infractions, investigation notes, and IIRs must be maintained at the school until the youngest person involved in an incident reaches the age of 27 and must be made available for review upon request by SED and/or auditors. We have the incident data. For instance, if we are able to identify through the reported incident data students who were noted as victims of bullying or harassment, Strike "from an elementary school"

In New York, the commissioner's regulations state that each school district must establish procedures for the reporting of violent or disruptive incidents in each building. These procedures ensure that copies of each violent or disruptive incident report at the building or program level are retained for a period prescribed by the commissioner in the applicable records retention schedule. A New York Times article by E. Harris addressed the NYC Vadir system, which monitors student incidents and generates reports on unsafe schools. Schools were also given guidance on how to report disruptive

behavior. Schools maintained regular contact with the state, Ms. Rider said, and some 70 sessions were offered last year to teachers, principals and district staff members on interventions, investigations and reporting.

New York Education Law Sec. 2802 notes that the commissioner established a statewide uniform violent incident reporting system that public-school districts must follow. Data on incidents including bullying and harassment are stored and kept confidential but are accessible.

If Ramos transitioned from middle school to high school and there was a system in place in his new environment to follow up with a social worker and/or remediation program, there was a chance that this tragedy could have been avoided. Bullying and harassment regulations are clear about protocols to be followed when investigating bullying incidents and writing up the findings as well as the levels of consequences for the bully. There must be clearer guidelines for the victim. More importantly, it is necessary to develop a system using this bank of data to track victims who were bullied as children and may seek revenge as adolescents. For instance, if we are able to identify through the reported incident data from an elementary school student who were noted as victims of bullying or harassment, we could develop a software program to identify bullied students and track them as they transition into the next level of education. This list of students can be shared with school administrators, who can arrange to have them participate in the many mental health programs that schools have been required to have in place since COVID- 19

References

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