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# Middle School Bullying in Oakland County Michigan

The purpose of this paper is to solve the problem of middle school bullying in Oakland County Michigan. My target audience are parents, students, educators, lawmakers, legislators or people who have an interest in welfare of children and bullying prevention.

School bullying in American suburbs are often over looked and swept under the rug. With the help of the internet, social media, and cases gaining national attention this form of abuse is no longer accepted and can't be hidden away. A bully often displays repetitive aggressive behavior toward others, they cause intentional harm to their victims

Oakland County is like many other suburban counties in American, children are often from middle to upper class families and have been afforded many luxuries. These children are often privileged and have a sense of entitlement with regards to socialization, they have no regards or concerns for others. Their parents often take up or defend their children dishonorable behavior. The parents allow rude, selfish, and uncontrollable behavior at home. Many times, wealthy families use their income to as a barrier for discipline.

Bullying is most likely a learned behavior that children often model from adults in their life. If a child witnesses bullying or disrespectful behavior they often try to imitate these actions. Children that feels powerless at home try to gain power by becoming a bully. Children need constant love, care and attention; those that feel forgotten acts out. Voiceless child will channel that anger, resentment and attack others. Spoiled children are not given structure at home and bulldoze their parents feel that they can be in control of others at school. Not all bullies have home issues some children simply lack empathy for others and want to be in control. School boredom in school can also contribute to bullying, students simply have nothing else to do.

## Types of Bullying

There are several ways a child can be bullied in school the most common forms are physical, verbal, social, cyber, sexual and prejudicial. All of these types of bullying can be found in any local middle school.

- Physical bullying involves hurting or harming a victim with force and physical actions to embarrass and show physical strength and power toward the victim.
- Verbal Bullying is putting down, taunting, making fun of a person often in a crowded area or where other children can listen to further torment the victim. Verbal bullying can go unnoticed even done in front of adults, it can be achieved by whispering.
- Social bullying can ruin a person's reputation with lies, spreading rumors or ostracizing victims in social environment by leaving them out. Children that are social bullies are often the most popular kids in schools, with girls being labeled as "mean girls".
- Cyberbullying is using the internet often social media to harass, embarrass or threaten a person. With social media being a huge part of middle school extracurricular activities, bullies be anonymous and "troll" their victim, by posting pictures, creating memes and threaten using social sites and networks.
- Sexual Bullying is often targeted toward girls' lude comments on their appearance,

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unwanted body touching and, sexual advances. When a girl turns down or breaks up with their significant other “revenge porn” is often used to retaliate.

- Prejudicial Bullying is very common in Michigan with numerous backgrounds and cultures children often have a taught or learned prejudice against different races, religions, or sexual orientation. There were several cases of this type of bullying in Royal Oak elementary school lunchrooms after the presidential election.

## **Who are Bullies**

Victims can sometimes become a bully to gain power and show their strength. They often take their pain and aggression out on others. Some popular kids can be bullies as well to hold their position of power and social status. These bullies often run in packs, are on teams together and control the school, they often boast about being a bully and thrive on their control. In suburban schools these kids are placed on a pedestal, and behaviors are overlooked. With my personal experience as a child and parent, if the kids are from an affluent family their behavior is deemed as a normal part of adolescence.

Children who are not directly involved in bullying are often a part of the problem, by speaking up and reach out to authorities. Some children will give the bully an audience and assist the bully by joining in and helping. Many times, children want to fit in with the popular kids, by dressing a certain way, talking and acting like the popular children including bullying. Predators of bullying have a difficult time as an adult adjusting to the real world. They often find themselves in trouble or harder time getting work because of their temper and self-indulged attitudes.

## **Who is at Risk**

Victims of bullying can be any gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or size. However, there are certain types of children that are more prone to get picked on in school such as children that are different from their peers such as weight, wearing glasses, different or less trendy attire or new to the school are at risk of being bullied. Unpopular or smart children are seen as potential victims. Those who are perceived as weak, low self-esteem, less popular, or annoying are often chosen. Boys are mostly likely bullied by those who are not their friends, while girls are bullied by their inner circle. Those that are victims have a hard time trusting others and building relationships during both child and adulthood.

## **Warning Signs for Bullying**

Many children that are bullied often shows signs of this treatment such as, coming home from school with injuries, ripped clothing and broken items. Parents will notice a change in mood, behavior, depression, low self-esteem and or rage. When my son was bullied he would often come home hungry and complain of children destroying his lunch and cry every morning before school. Children that are bullied are under a lot of stress that effects their grades and school attendance, they often fake sick to get out of school. According to the Journal of Psychology bullying goes undetected children may attempt suicide, cutting or harming themselves and others. In recent years the increase in school shooting have occurred because of tormenting in school. The psychological effects of bullying can sometimes travel into adulthood.

## **Locations**

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School bullying often occurs on school grounds and in transit, both physical and nonphysical bullying happen anywhere at school. School bullying takes place in less supervised areas where the adult to student ratio is low, bullies often sought out these locations to commit their acts. These areas include school buses, playground, cafeteria, restrooms, classrooms, hallways and locker rooms. Bully can also occur online and through cellphone. Technology school bullying can occur in emails, social media sites, chat rooms, instant messages and online posts.

## **Laws**

Bullying appears to have become an epidemic it is such a serious hot topic that occurs frequently, many legislators have found it necessary to implement laws and rights for those who are victims of bullying. The handling and prevention of bullying has improved over the years, many bullying cases have been trialed in court resulting in anti-bully bill of rights, civil rights, harassment infringement. Children are often convicted to learn responsibility for their actions.

## **Prevention**

Oakland School district can provide training for administration as well as active shooter training for students by cooperating and requesting help from local law enforcement. Schools can hold townhalls a public conversation where staff, administration, parents and children can express their concerns with school bullying, encouraging openness. Students can seek help from a trusting adult and confronting the tormenting heads on. Creating and enforcing an Oakland County Anti Bullying policy. This policy should be reinforced and encourage several times throughout the year and not just in the beginning of the school year.

Also, listening to parents when they become vocal about school bullying. As a previous parent of Oakland County schools my voice was not heard and I was in many ways called a liar and told that it was normal part of childhood when my son was constantly bullied. Resulting in me withdrawing my son from the school district. Parents and schools should work together to reduce and confront bullying. These are the types of things that go unnoticed in many school districts and should occur. Administration should become open to all parents and children who have claims or concerns of any type of abuse. Parents also need to have open communication with their children to make them aware that they are not invisible and their voices are heard.

Schools can increase the reporting of bullying by creating an anonymous tip hotline or suggestion type boxes that students can use to alert school authority of issues. This number can be a 24-hour toll-free number where students can leave messages regarding bullying. The suggestion boxes can be placed all over schools and checked weekly for any activities that would need monitoring. These things can help create a safer school if children can share information on an event that has happen in present or past, even those that are planned. An implementation of a bullying committee who will be responsible for these allegations are ideal, applying a thoroughly and unbiased investigation.

Reducing the time students spend unsupervised by adding more staff to school grounds. This can be achieved by parent volunteers, retired law enforcement as well as part time staff. Part time staff can be available during drop off and pickups and also lunchroom and recess time. Schools can often request donations from major corporations to help with staff payments. Having more eyes on the children will help eliminate bullying. My high school had retired police

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officers who served as hall monitors and security. They were friendly and wore plain clothes making the children feel comfortable. Parents can create a sense of security by volunteering during school hours. My son's elementary school has a four-hour pledge that each household must sign and fulfill at the beginning of the school year. This should be a very reasonable and cost effective.

They can also add surveillance cameras in schools to protect students. These cameras are often placed in hallways to protect children and schools from robberies. Most schools have these installed and because they are not being publicly shared and are sensible used they don't permission slips from each student. The cost for these cameras can be negotiated with the cost of standard security systems. The school can also hold fundraiser to earn money for these items. These small changes may make a huge difference in school bullying.

Many schools have also place security doors between the hallways where classes are held to protect children from invasions.

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