

Survey Finds Students Less Likely To See Bullying Problem in L.I. Middle Schools

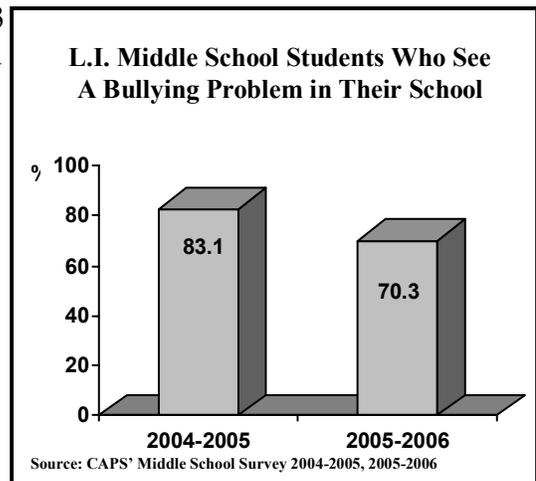
*“Culture of Meanness” May Be Turning to “Culture of Apathy,”
As More Students “Do Nothing” If They See Bullying Incidents*

LONG ISLAND, NY; September 7, 2006 – Bullying remains widespread in Long Island’s middle schools, but the number of students who say their school has a bullying problem has dropped more than 15 percent according to a new survey from Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS).

“Any reduction in bullying is something to be celebrated,” said Alane Fagin, executive director of CAPS, “but no one who cares about children should be happy knowing that seven of every 10 middle school students on Long Island go to a school where they see bullying as a part of life.”

CAPS’ 2005-2006 Middle School Bullying Survey questioned 1,307 6th and 7th grade students in public and private schools from across Long Island (margin of error +/- 2.8 percent¹). Among the key findings:

- Seven out of 10 students (70.3 percent) say their school has a bullying problem, down more than 15 percent from 2004-2005 (83.1 percent);
- One out of three students (34 percent) say the bullying problem in their school is at least “medium-sized,” down more than 24 percent from 2004-2005 (44.9 percent);



- Half of all students (48.9 percent) said they see a kid being bullied at school at least some of the time²; and
- Words remain the primary weapons of bullies, with half of all students (51.1 percent) saying bullies use “gossiping/rumors” all or most of the time and more than one in three students (37.2 percent) saying bullies use “teasing” that often.³

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¹ Margin of error is for overall survey; margin may vary slightly for individual questions as noted.

² Margin of error for students answering this question is +/- 3.3 percent.

³ Ibid.

“Clearly, when it comes to eliminating the unwanted and counter-productive behavior of bullying there is still a great deal of work to be done,” Fagin said.

“A Culture of Apathy”

Notably, Fagin said CAPS’ Survey shows more efforts are needed to encourage students who do witness bullying incidents to do something about it. According to the Survey:

- Two out of five students (39.6 percent) said they did “nothing” the last time they saw someone being bullied in school⁴, up 32 percent from 2004-2005 (30 percent); and
- Of the students who said they did nothing, half (49.4 percent) said it was because it “wasn’t my business.”⁵

According to Fagin, “If there’s anything worse than a culture of meanness, it may be a culture of apathy. Children – and adults for that matter – must understand that unacceptable behavior directed toward any member of the community is everybody’s business.

“Educators, parents and all concerned members of the community must continue working first to prevent bullying incidents from occurring, and second to encourage children to safely intervene when they do see bullying incidents taking place,” she said. “A failure to invest in such efforts is nothing less than a breach of the trust Long Island’s children place in those who claim to care about them.”

Cyber-bullying Also A Problem on Long Island

The Survey also queried students about the extent of cyber-bullying they have been involved in. Cyber-bullying is the use of the Internet or any of a variety of electronic communications devices to engage in bullying behavior against an individual.

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⁴ Margin of error for students answering this question is +/- 3.4 percent.

⁵ Margin of error for students answering this question is +/- 5.5 percent.

According to CAPS' Survey, nearly one out of every four students (24.8 percent) said they had been cyber-bullied – and nearly one in 10 (9.3 percent) admitted they had used the Internet or wireless communications devices such as cellular phones to bully someone else. Of the students who admitted to being the victims of cyber-bullies, half (49.7 percent) said they “ignored or blocked” the bully, but nearly one in five (17.2 percent) acknowledged engaging in cyber-bullying in return.⁶

“Once children could find a safe haven at home,” Fagin said, “but bullies today can pursue their victims anyplace the Internet or other electronic communications devices can reach. This is something adults must take into account when working to help keep kids safe from bullies.”

Thanks to the financial support of concerned members of the general, legislative and corporate communities, CAPS offers bully prevention and Internet safety programs to Long Island schools free-of-charge. During each of the last three school years, volunteers from CAPS presented programs designed to prevent child abuse and neglect in all of its forms to students in more than 1,000 Nassau and Suffolk county classrooms.

Founded in 1982, the Roslyn-based Child Abuse Prevention Services is Long Island's comprehensive resource center for the prevention of child abuse, bullying and peer harassment. It is a non-profit organization underwritten by private donations, grants and legislative appropriations. Information about programs, educational materials and volunteer opportunities can be obtained by visiting the Child Abuse Prevention Services Web site at www.capsli.org, or by calling (516) 621-0552.

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⁶ Margin of error for students answering this question is +/- 5.1 percent.