Bullying Prevention: Best Practices and Opportunities for Integration with Suicide Prevention Efforts

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Topics to Be Covered

- Overview of bullying
  - Definition
  - Prevalence
  - Characteristics and forms
  - Effects

- Prevention efforts
  - Common elements of effective school-based bullying prevention programs
  - Risk and protective factors addressed by both bullying and suicide prevention programs
  - Ways to integrate bullying and suicide prevention into a comprehensive school violence prevention initiative

Defining Bullying

- Aggressive behavior that *__Intends__* to cause harm or distress

- Usually is *__Repeated__* over time

- Occurs in a relationship where there is an imbalance of *__Power__* or strength

(HRSA, 2006; Limber & Alley, 2006; Olweus, 1993)

Why Focus on Bullying?

Growing National & Local Concerns

- High profile cases and specific incidents (Leary et al., 2003; Verlinden et al., 2000)

- Increased awareness of negative effects
  - Social-emotional & mental health (Nansel et al., 2001)
  - Academic performance (Glew et al., 2005)
  - Health (Fekkes et al., 2006)

- 50 states have passed legislation related to bullying (Limber & Alley, 2006; USDOE, 2011)
  - SD was most recent
  - Many emphasize reporting
  - Most outline a model policy
  - Less emphasis on training and evidence-based prevention
  - 80% address cyberbullying

Prevalence of Bullying

- Being bullied 1 or more times *in the last month*
  - Elementary – 48%
  - Middle – 47%
  - High – 39%
- Frequent involvement in bullying (2+ in last month)
  - Elementary – 31%
  - Middle – 31%
  - High – 26%

- *Ever* bully someone else
  - Elementary – 24%
  - Middle – 45%
  - High – 54%

- Witnessing bullying *during the last month*
  - Elementary – 58%
  - Middle – 74%
  - High – 79%

N=25,119 (Students grades 4-12; December 2005). Also see: Bradshaw et al., 2007, 2008; Nansel et al., 2001; O'Brennan, Bradshaw & Sawyer, 2009; Spriggs et al., 2007; Finkelhor et al., 2010.
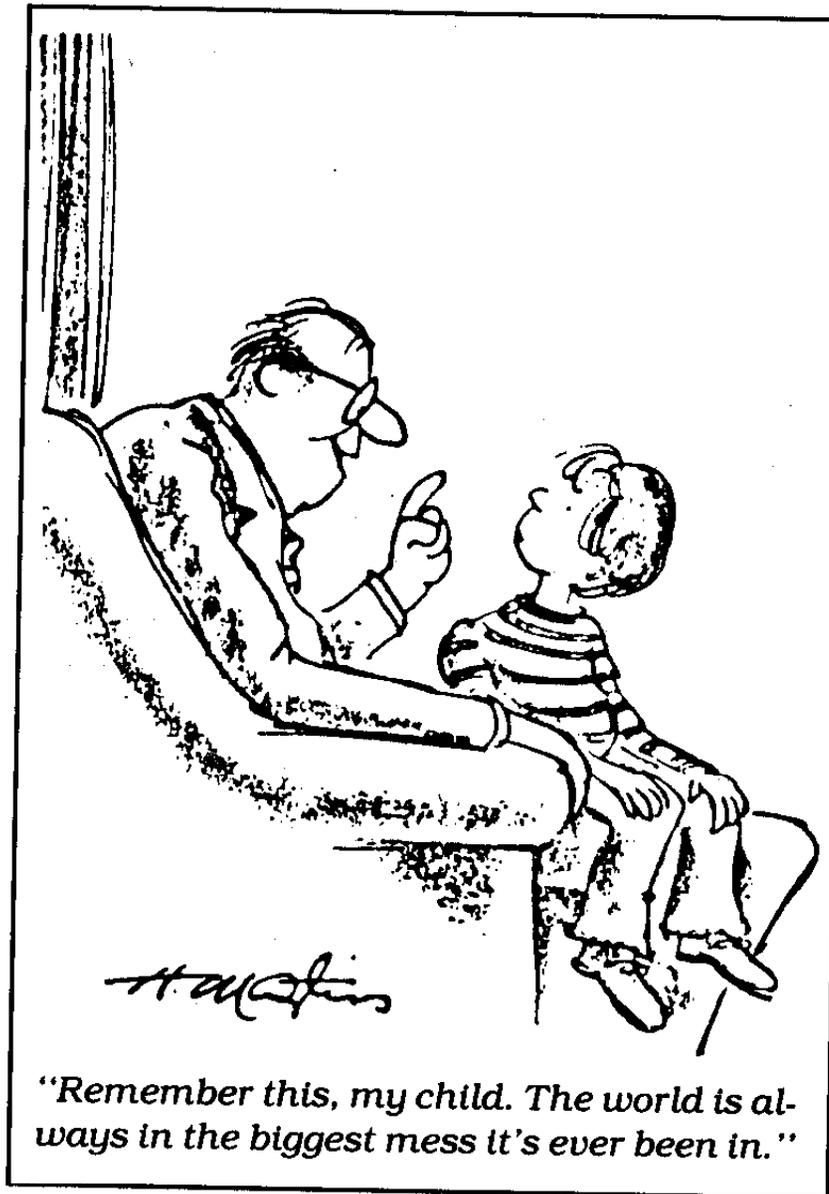
Personal Experiences with Bullying

Think back ...

Were you (or someone you care about) ever a:

30% {
➢ Bully (13%)

➢ Victim (target) (11%)

➢ Bully-victim (6%)

➢ Bystander (85%)

(Nansel et al., 2001; 15,686 grades 6-10)

"Remember this, my child. The world is always in the biggest mess it's ever been in."
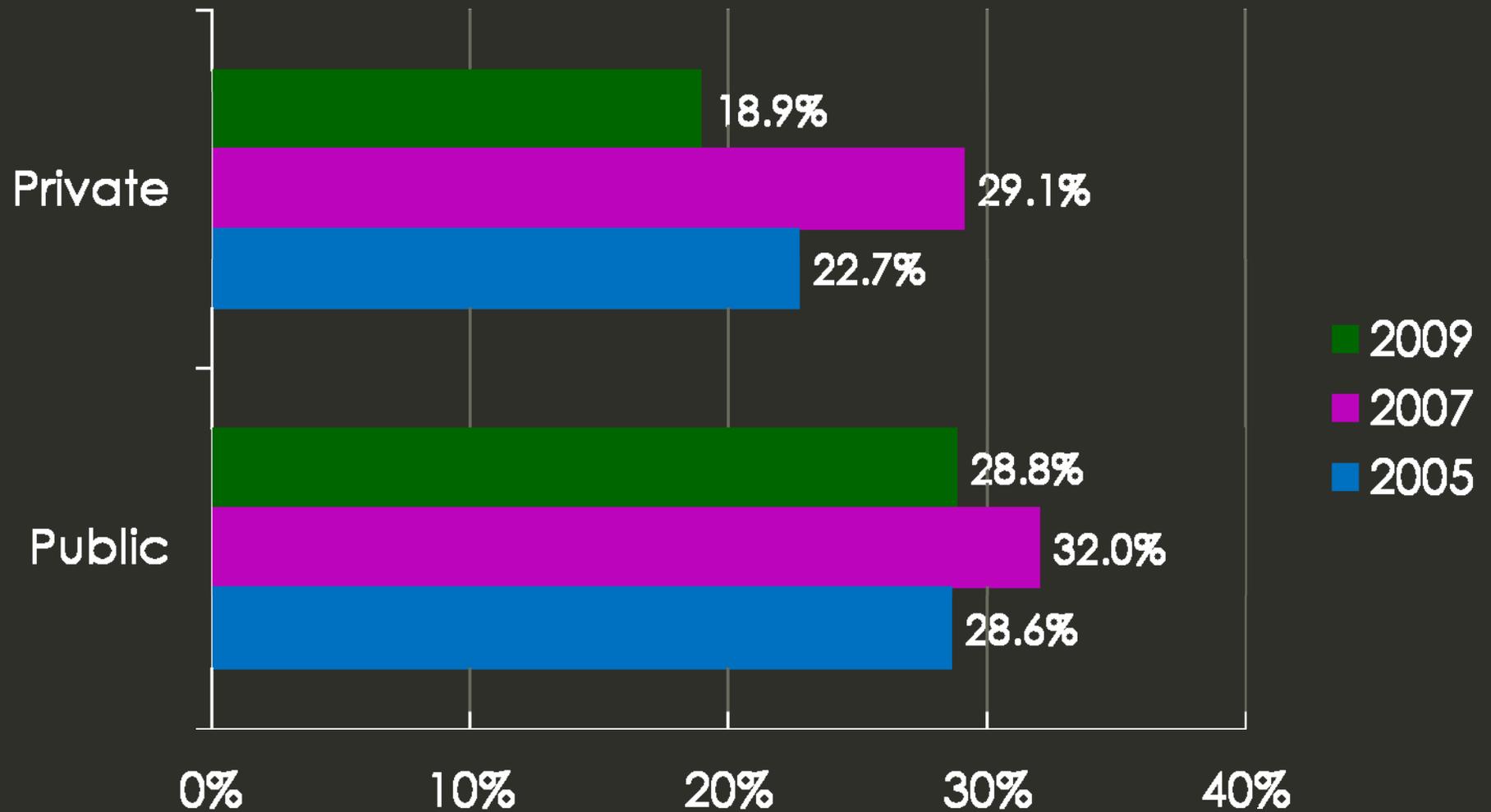
Is Bullying on the Increase?

- Some recent national data suggest a slight decrease in bullying (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2010; Spriggs et al., 2007, IES, 2012; CDC, 2012)

- However, cyberbullying may be on the increase
  - May be due to greater access to technology (phones, Internet)
  - Issues related to 'sexting' also appear to be on the increase (Mitchell et al., 2012)

Percent of Students Ages 12-18 Bullied at School
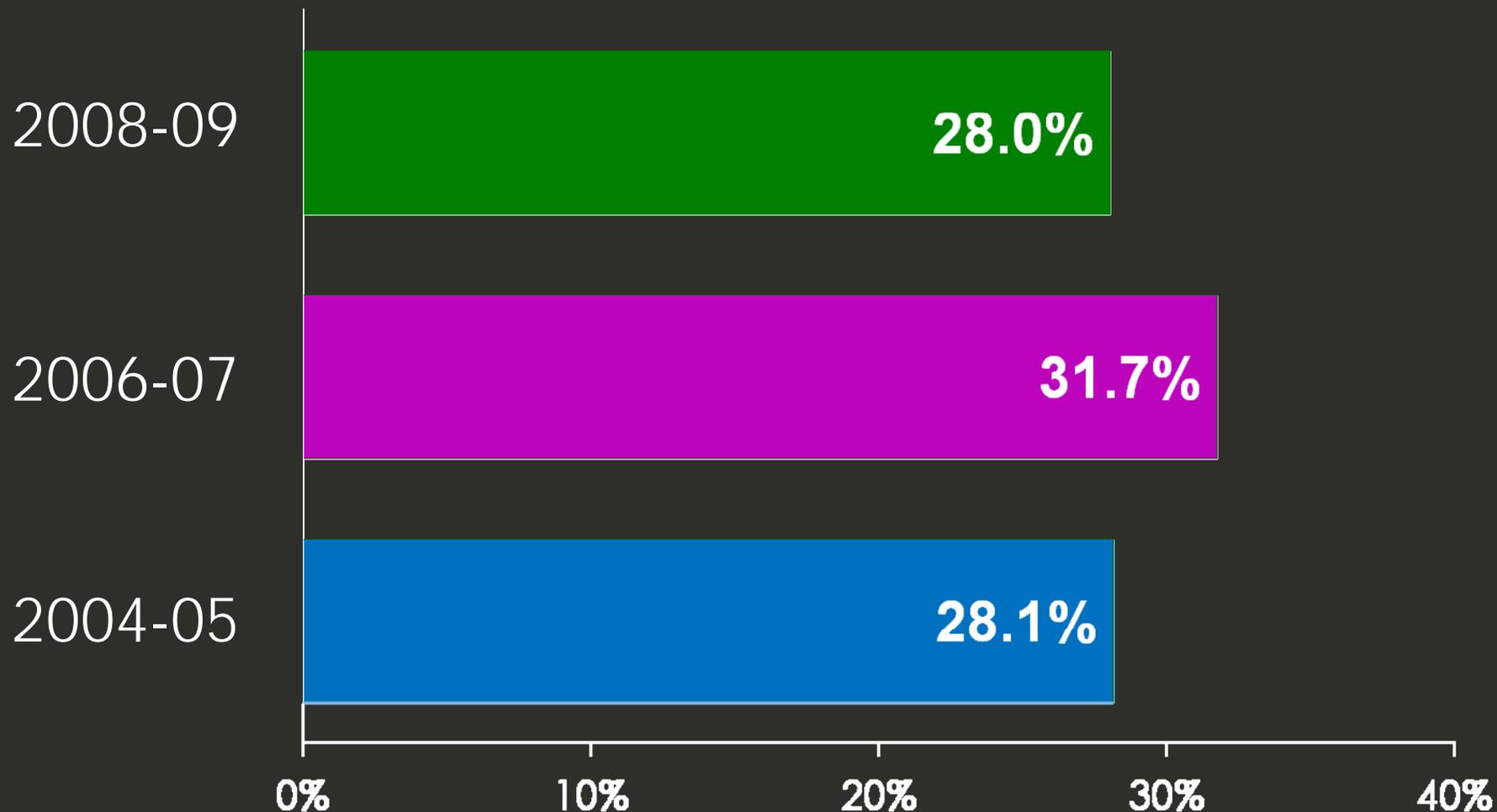
Year	Percent
2008-09	28.0%
2006-07	31.7%
2004-05	28.1%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%

Percent of Students Ages 12-18 Bullied, by School Type

Private
- 18.9%
- 29.1%
- 22.7%

Public
- 28.8%
- 32.0%
- 28.6%

Legend:
- 2009
- 2007
- 2005

X-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40%

Location of Bullying

Where were you bullied within the last month?
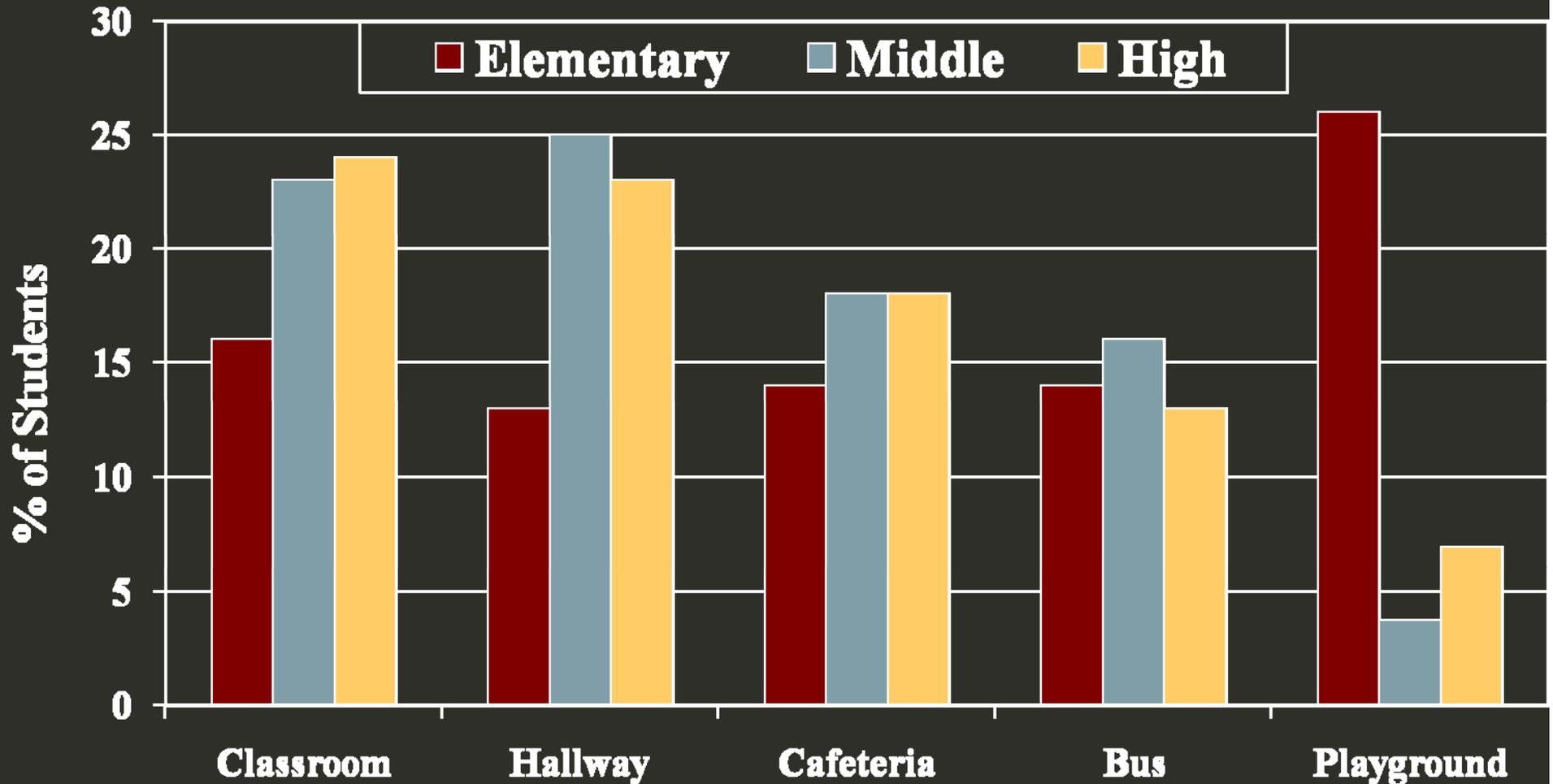
N=25,119 (Students grades 4-12; December 2005)

Forms of Bullying

How were you bullied within the last month?

(*N*=25,119 students grades 4-12)

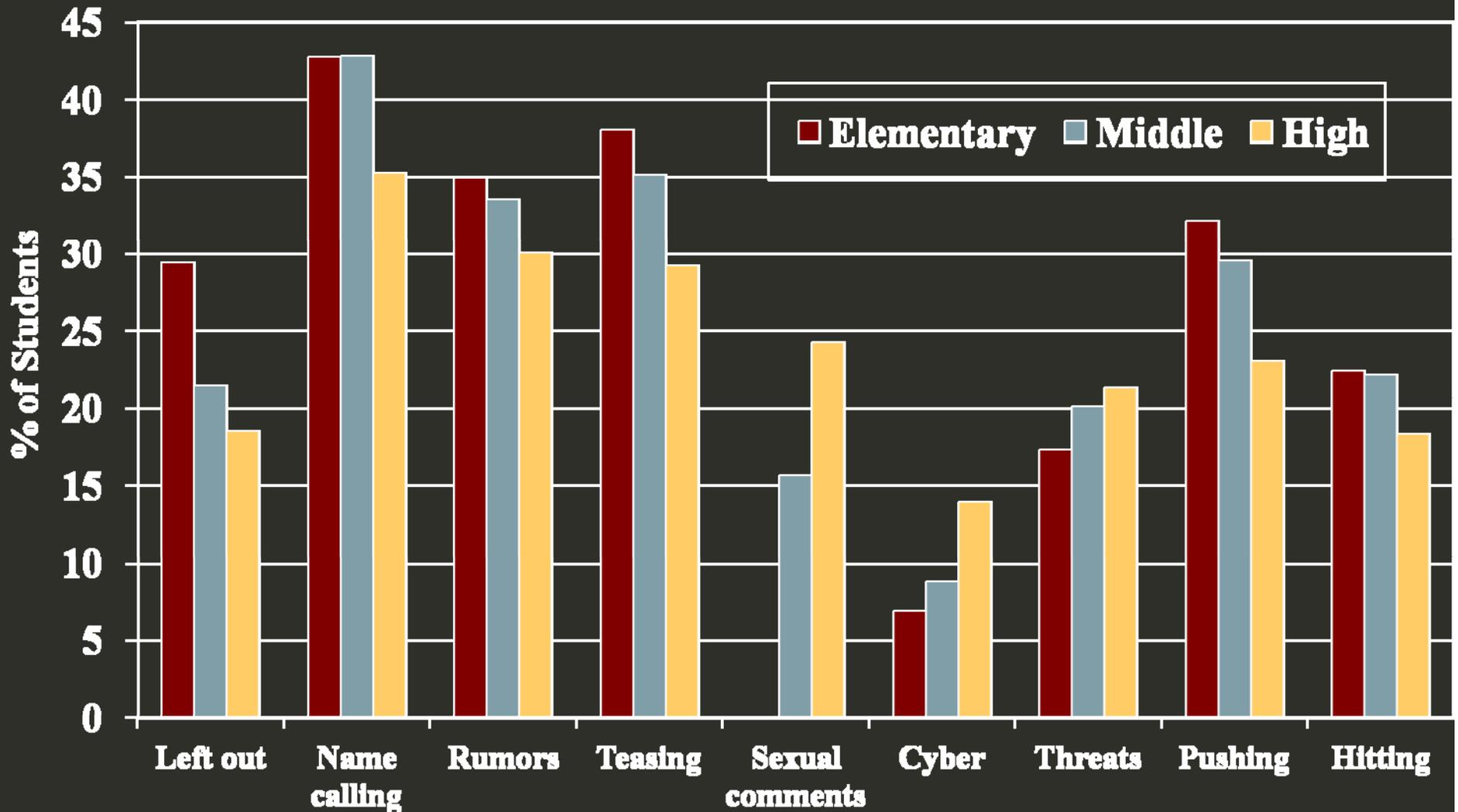# Cyberbullying/ Electronic Aggression

- "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices"
- Less common than other forms of bullying
  - 15-35% of youth have ever been victims of cyberbullying
  - 10-20% admit ever cyberbullying others
- Most know, or think they know who the perpetrator is
- 28-33% of victims of cyberbullying tell no one about it (NCH, 2005; Smith et al. 2006)
  - Similar rates of disclosure to traditional bullying

(Kowalski et al., 2007; Spriggs et al., 2010)

Types of Cyberbullying

- **Flaming**: online fights with angry language
- **Harassment**: repeatedly sending mean or insulting messages
- **Denigration**: sending gossip, rumors
- **Outing**: sharing secrets or embarrassing information
- **Trickery**: tricking someone to sharing secrets
- **Impersonation**: pretending to be someone else, while posting damaging material
- **Exclusion**: cruelly excluding someone
- **Cyberstalking**: intense harassment that includes threats and creates fear

Cyberbullying/ Electronic Aggression (cont)

- Immediate impact for victims
  - 33% felt very or *extremely upset* (Ybarra & Mitchell (2004)
  - 38% felt *distress* (Ybarra et al., 2006)
- Compared to traditional bullying (Smith et al., 2006)
  - Picture/video clip and phone call bullying were perceived as more hurtful
  - Text message roughly equal
  - Email bullying less hurtful
- About 50% of cyberbully victims and offenders experience bullying off-line

Development Differences

- Tends to peak in middle school
  - Except cyberbullying, which appears to increase through high school
  - Relational may persist beyond physical
- Little research on younger children
  - Poorer social-emotional skills
  - Higher base rates of aggressive behavior and 'rough and tumble play'

(Nansel et al. JAMA, 2001; Rigby, 2008)

Gender Differences
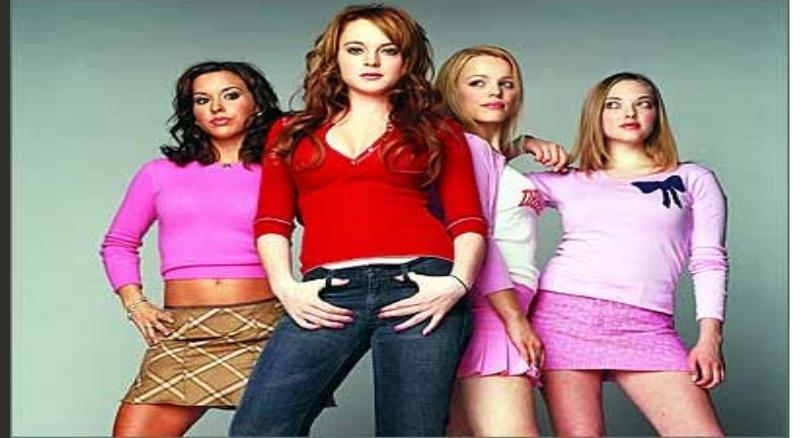
- Males generally more likely than females to be both perpetrators and victims
    - Except cyberbullying, which may be more common among girls
    - Physical forms more common among boys
    - Indirect (relational) about equal for males and females
        - Girls more sensitive to relational forms of bullying
        - Boys more sensitive to physical forms of bullying

(Card et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2011; Crick et al., 2004 Nansel et al. JAMA, 2001)
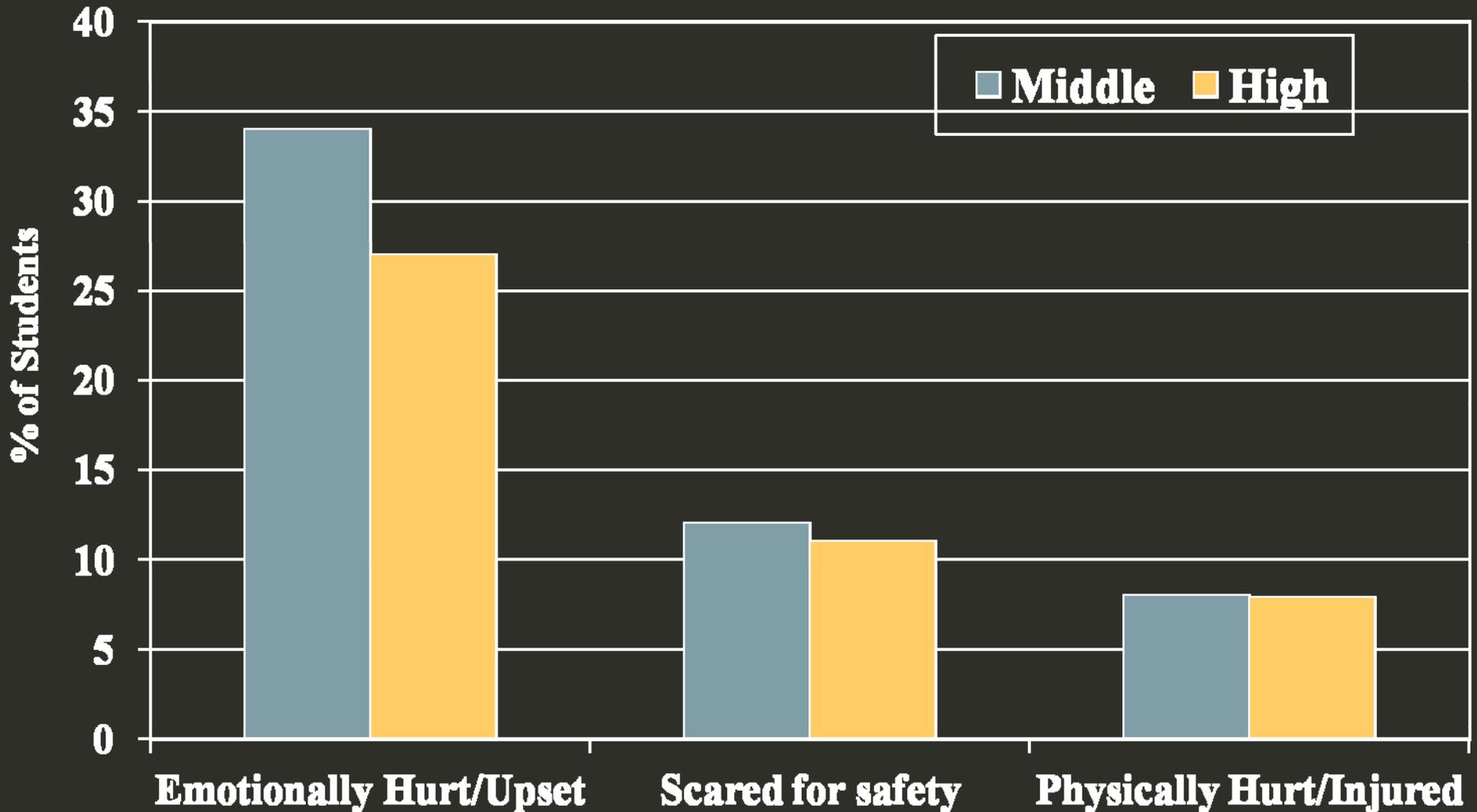
USDOE's Dear Colleague Letter Harassment and Bullying (October 26, 2010)

- Clarifies the relationship between **bullying** and **discriminatory harassment** under the civil rights laws enforced by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

- Explains how student misconduct that falls under an anti-bullying policy also may trigger responsibilities under one or more of the **anti-discrimination statutes enforced by OCR**.

- Reminds schools that failure to recognize discriminatory harassment when addressing student misconduct may lead to inadequate or inappropriate responses that fail to remedy **violations of students' civil rights**.

- Discusses racial and national origin harassment, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, and disability harassment and **illustrates how a school should respond in each case**.

  http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.html

Effects of Bullying for Victims & Perpetrators

Academic Performance & Engagement

- V&P - Absenteeism, avoidance of school, dropout (Smith et al., 2004; Rigby, 1996)

- V&P - Dislike school, feel less connected to others at school, & lower grades (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Eisenberg et al., 2003)

- V&P - Perceive climate to be less favorable & feel unsafe at school (Bradshaw et al., 2008)

- V&P - Lower class participation - leads to lower achievement (Buhs et al., 2006)

(Note. V = Victim, P = Perpetrator)

Effects of Bullying for Victims & Perpetrators

Physical Illness (Fekkes et al., 2003)

- V - Headaches (3 times as likely)
- V - Problems sleeping (twice as likely)
- V - Abdominal pain (twice as likely)

Social-Emotional Problems

- V - Anxiety & Depression (Eagan & Perry, 1998)
- P - Aggressive behavior & attitudes supporting retaliation (Bradshaw et al., 2008)
- P(&V) - Suicidal ideation (Rigby, 1996; van der Wal et al., 2003)

(Note. V = Victim, P = Perpetrator)

Perceptions of Safety By Frequency of Involvement in Bullying
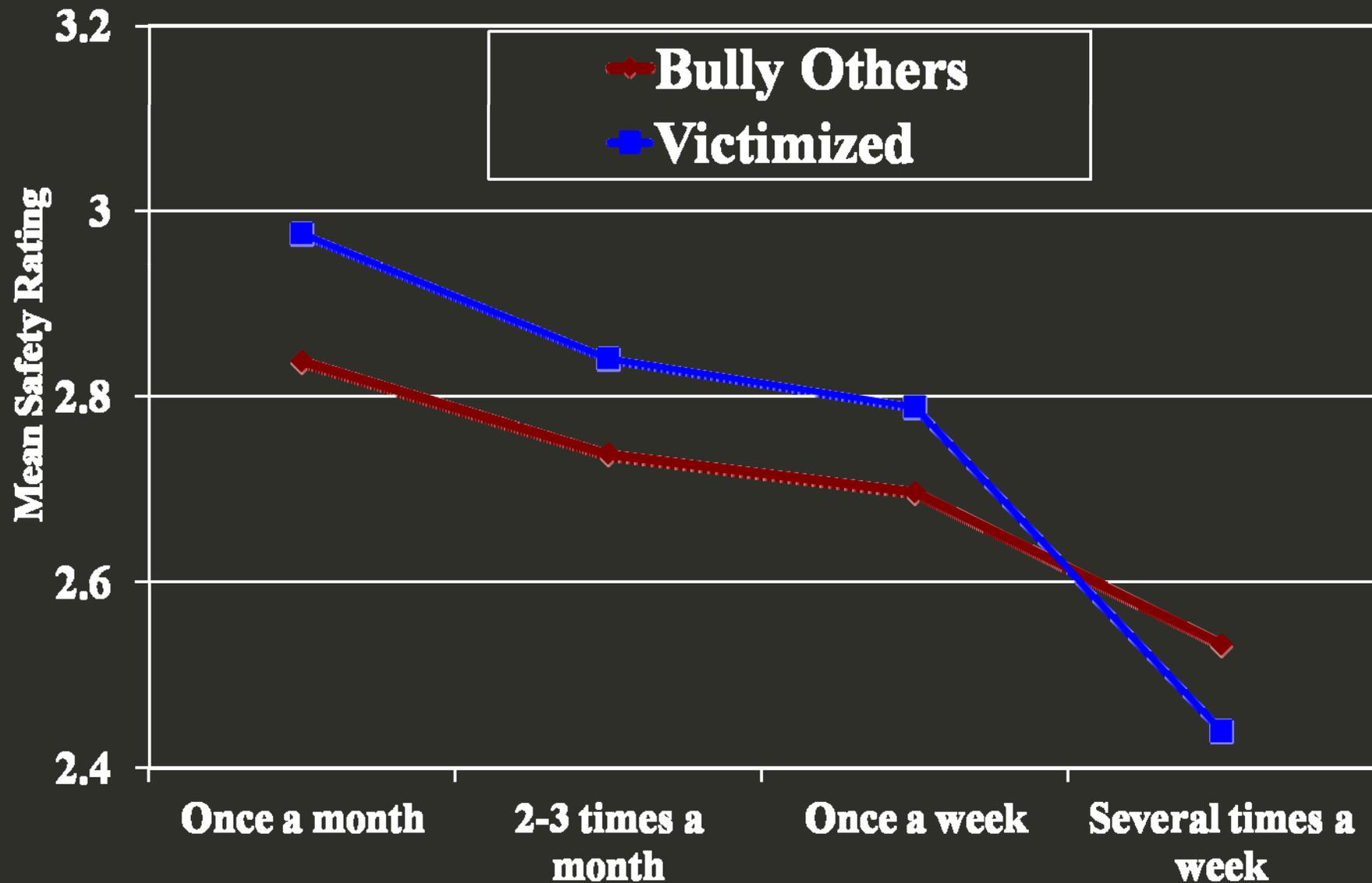
Response to Bullying

When you were bullied, what did you do?
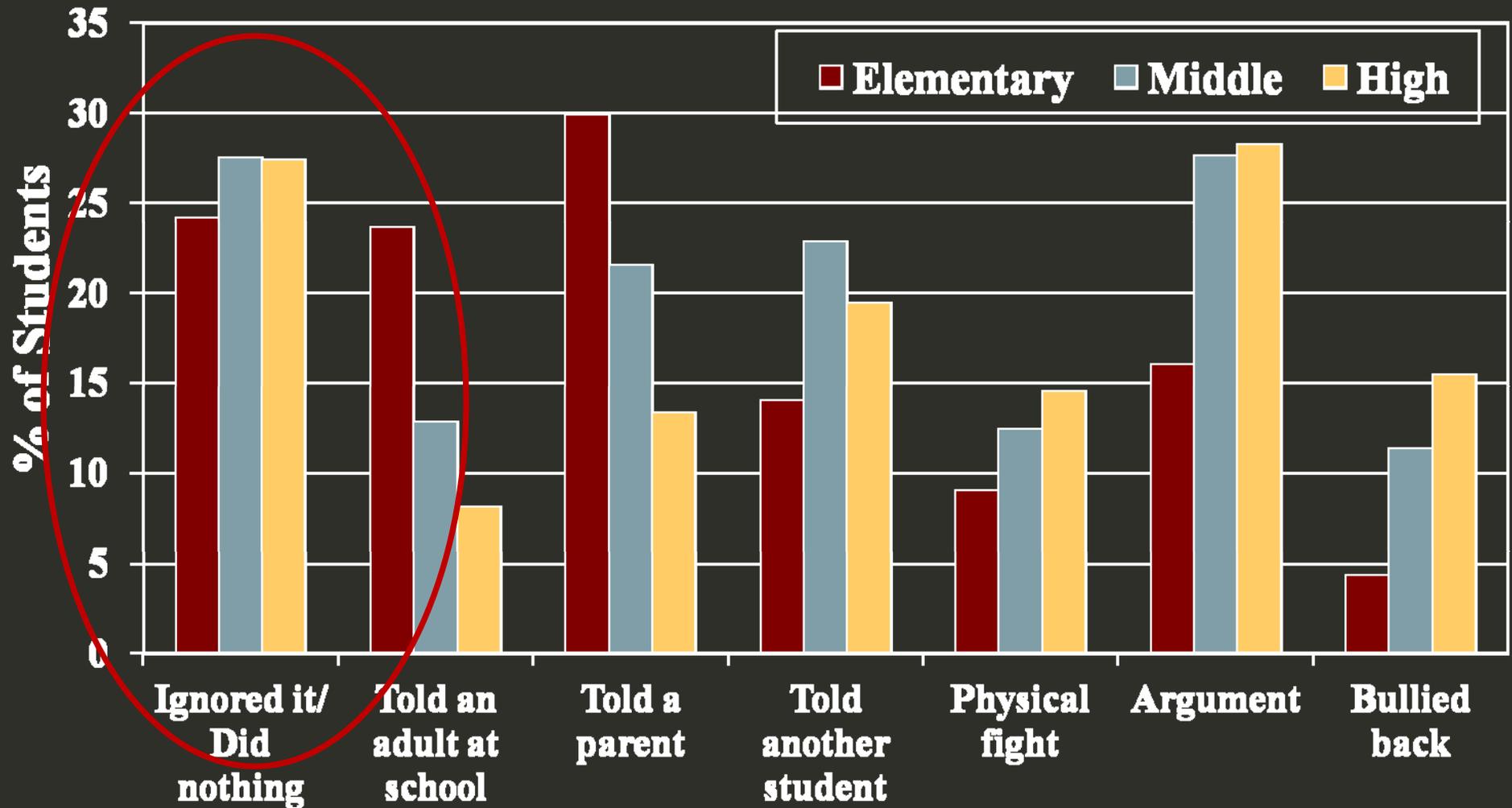
N=25,119 (Students grades 4-12; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2011)

The Bullying Circle: Students' Reactions/Roles in a Bullying Situation (Olweus)

Start the bullying and take an active part

A — Students who bully

Take an active part, but do not start the bullying

B — Followers

Defenders of bullied child

G

Dislike the bullying, helps or try to help the bullied child

Victim

H

The one who is exposed

Support the bullying, but do not take an active part

C — Supporters

Possible Defenders

F

Passive Supporters

D

Like the bullying, but do not display open support

Disengaged Onlookers

Dislike the bullying and think they ought to help, but don't do it

E

Watches what happens. Doesn't take a stand.

High School Students' Responses to Bullying

- When students see bullying they are most likely to
  - stay out of the bullying
  - try to stop the bullying
  - ignore the bullying
  - comfort the victim
- 31.7% of students believe that <u>students</u> in their school try to stop bullying

(MDS3 Spring 2011 Sample: 21,189 Students)

Effective Approaches to Bullying Prevention
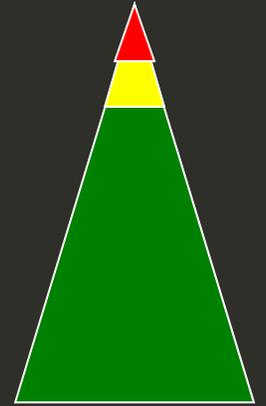
- Multi-tiered public health prevention approaches
  - *Universal* system of support, geared towards all students in the school
  - *Selected* interventions to support at-risk students (10-15%)
  - *Indicated* interventions for students already involved in bullying (5-10%)

(Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994; O'Connell et al., 2009; Walker et al., 1996; also see www.PBIS.org)

School-wide Prevention Activities

- Establish common set of *expectations* for positive behavior across all school contexts

- Establish and implement clear *anti-bullying policies*

- Involve *all school staff* in prevention activities

- Train teachers to implement effective *classroom management* strategies and how to respond to bullying

- Collect *data* to inform prevention programming and surveillance

- Provide high-levels of *supervision* in bullying "hot spots" (e.g., playgrounds, hallways, cafeteria)

(Stopbullying.gov; Olweus, 1993; Olweus et al., 2007)

Involving Families And Communities

- Training for parents
  - How to talk with their children about bullying
  - How to communicate concerns about bullying to the school
  - How to get actively involved in school-based prevention efforts

- Bullying prevention activities for the community
  - Awareness and social marketing campaigns
  - Messages tailored for specific groups of adults (e.g., doctors, police officers)
  - Opportunities to become involved in prevention activities

(Stopbullying.gov; Lindstrom Johnson et al., in press; Olweus, 1993; Olweus et al., 2007; Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Duong, 2011)

Non-Recommended Approaches To Bullying Prevention

- Peer mediation, peer-led conflict resolution, and peer mentoring (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011)
  - Suggests a disagreement, rather than peer abuse
  - May increase bullying and victimization

- Brief assemblies or one-day awareness raising events
  - Insufficient for changing a climate of bullying or producing sustainable effects

- Zero tolerance policies that mandate suspensions (APA, 2008)
  - May lead to under-reporting
  - Little evidence of effectiveness
  - Does not provide intervention to change behaviors

(also see Bradshaw & Waasdorp, 2011; Stopbullying.gov)

Comments on Evidence-based Programs

- Meta-analysis found that school-based, anti-bullying prevention programs reduced bullying and victimization by an average of 20-23% (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011)

- Challenges
  - Many programs exist, but we need more research on what works for whom and under what conditions
  - No single program will meet all schools' needs
  - Fidelity of implementation
  - Commitment to sustainability

Examples of Evidence-based Programs

- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus et al., 2007)
  - Multi-component, school-wide intervention
    - Classroom activities and meetings
    - Targeted interventions for students involved in bullying
    - Activities to increase community involvement
  - Studies in Norway and some in the U.S. show positive effects (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011)

Examples of Evidence-based Programs (cont)

- Steps to Respect
  - Multi-component, school-wide prevention program
    - Parent activities and classroom-focused lessons
    - Targeted interventions for students involved in bullying facilitated by counselors
  - Studies show positive effects (Frey et al., 2005; 2009)

Examples of Evidence-based Programs (cont)

- Violence prevention approaches and social-emotional learning curricula may also impact bullying
  - Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)
  - Second Step
  - Coping Power
  - Good Behavior Game
  - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

    (See Bradshaw & Waasdorp, 2011; NREPP; Blueprints for Violence Prevention)

Integration of Bullying and Suicide Prevention Efforts

- Integration of school-based programs and initiatives is critical
  - Schools on average are using about 14 different violence prevention programs or strategies (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001)
    - Can lead to 'program fatigue'
    - Overwhelming for school staff, making it difficult to implement programs with fidelity
    - Results in poor sustainability
  - Create a coordinated, long-term integrated prevention plan to promote a safe and supportive learning environment and healthy students

        (Domitrovich, Bradshaw et al., 2010)

Common Prevention Strategies

- Bullying and suicide prevention share common strategies:
  - Focus on the school environment
  - Family outreach
  - Identification of students in need of mental and behavioral health services
  - Helping students and their families find appropriate services

Overlap in Risk and Protective Factors for Bullying & Suicide

- Overlapping risk and protective factors
  - Risks
    - Depression, anxiety, poor emotion regulation, and impulse control problems
  - Protective
    - Connectedness, social support, and integration to reduce social isolation

(CDC, nd; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Lambert et al., 2008; O'Brennan et al., Zenere & Lazarus, 2009)

Targeting Common Risk Factors

- Develop strategies for identifying students at risk for a range of behavioral health problems
  - Including suicidal behavior and conduct problems
- Both suicide and bullying may be prevented using strategies to identify and treat students with these risk factors
  - Classroom-based prevention program (Good Behavior Game) focused on impulse control and group cohesion reduced suicide ideation and bullying (Ialongo et al., 1999; Wilcox et al., 2008)
  - Additional research is needed in this area

Shared Features of Suicide and Bullying Prevention Efforts

- Policies and procedures for identifying and responding to students at risk for bullying and/or suicide
  - Staff training
  - Linkages with community mental health centers

- Creating a school culture that promotes connectedness
  - Discourages bullying
  - Students support each other emotionally

- Educating parents
  - Identify risk factors for bullying and suicide
  - What to do when a child is involved or at risk

- Increasing adult supervision

(CDC, n.d.; Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; SAMHSA, in press; Speaker & Petersen, 2000)

Action Steps: Creating Synergy in Addressing Both Suicide and Bullying

- Start prevention early
  - Bullying begins at an age before many of the warning signs of suicide are evident
  - Prevent bullying among younger children
    - May have significant benefits as children enter the developmental stage when suicide risk begins to rise and bullying peaks
  - Assess both perpetrators and victims of bullying for risk factors associated with suicide

Action Steps: Creating Synergy in Addressing Both Suicide and Bullying (cont)

- Use a comprehensive approach that addresses
  - Youth, especially those at risk for or experiencing mental health problems (e.g., depression)
  - School context
  - Family
  - Community

Action Steps: Creating Synergy in Addressing Both Suicide and Bullying (cont)

- Engage the bystander
  - Bullying often takes place in areas hidden from adults
  - Often a disconnect between what youth see and what adults see
  - Peers often first aware
  - Encourage the bystander to tell adults about concerns they may have about their peers
  - Safe and structured manner to involve youth in preventing both bullying and suicide

(Bradshaw et al., 2007)

Action Steps: Creating Synergy in Addressing Both Suicide and Bullying (cont)

- Keep up with technology
  - Increasing trend in use of technology in bullying
  - Youth may use social media and new technologies to express suicidal thoughts
  - Adults need to learn how to navigate this new world (e.g., supervision)
  - Programs should incorporate technology in screening, prevention, and intervention

Resources on Suicide Prevention

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center
  - Information and best practices registry
    - www.SPRC.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
  - Media Guidelines
    - www.afsp.org/media

INSTEAD OF THIS: ❌

- Big or sensationalistic headlines, or prominent placement (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Used Shotgun to Commit Suicide").

- Including photos/videos of the location or method of death, grieving family, friends, memorials or funerals.

- Describing recent suicides as an "epidemic," "skyrocketing," or other strong terms.

- Describing a suicide as inexplicable or "without warning."

- "John Doe left a suicide note saying...".

- Investigating and reporting on suicide similar to reporting on crimes.

- Quoting/interviewing police or first responders about the causes of suicide.

- Referring to suicide as "successful," "unsuccessful" or a "failed attempt."

DO THIS: ✅

- Inform the audience without sensationalizing the suicide and minimize prominence (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Dead at 27").

- Use school/work or family photo; include hotline logo or local crisis phone numbers.

- Carefully investigate the most recent CDC data and use non-sensational words like "rise" or "higher."

- Most, but not all, people who die by suicide exhibit warning signs. Include the "Warning Signs" and "What to Do" sidebar (from p. 2) in your article if possible.

- "A note from the deceased was found and is being reviewed by the medical examiner."

- Report on suicide as a public health issue.

- Seek advice from suicide prevention experts.

- Describe as "died by suicide" or "completed" or "killed him/herself."

Resources on Bullying Prevention

- StopBullying.gov
  – Tip sheets and other resources for multiple audiences
- FindYouthInfo.gov
  – Interagency resources on range of youth-related topics
- National Registry of Evidence-based Practices and Programs
  – http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/
- Blueprints for Violence Prevention
  – http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/

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