

Bullying Bulletin

January 2014
Northwood-Kensett Schools

Miss Renwick
7th & 8th Counselor

Bullying in the State of Iowa: Plans for 2014

The *Des Moines Register* recently published Governor Branstad's goals for 2014. Branstad proposed the "Bully Free Iowa Act of 2014," which he claims should allow Iowans to take further steps to eradicate bullying in the state.

The act should give bullied students and their parents more power over their situation. Additionally, schools will have more power to address cyberbullying, and educators will have the opportunity to receive training in response to bullying.

In the past few years, Iowa school districts like South O'Brien and Southeast Polk have received negative attention for suicides of students that have largely been attributed to bullying. 49 of the 50 states have anti-bullying initiatives. Source: <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2014301150057>

Iowa & US Statistics for Bullying

According to the Iowa Youth survey, 57% of Iowa students reported having been bullied in the month prior to being polled, which is up over 7% from 2010.

In the 2011 "National Crime Victimization Survey," 28% of students reported some kind of bullying behavior. However, very few students across the country report persistent bullying. Bullying behavior that happens at least once or twice a week is considered "persistent." Persistent acts of harm that happen regularly and persistently are more in keeping with the generally accepted definition of bullying. While the Iowa survey did not give statistics on persistent bullying, we should consider that when evaluating bullying in Iowa.

Sources: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/04/state-bullying-laws_n_4213261.html?utm_hp_ref=school-bullying

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20140115/NEWS09/301150036/Proposal-aids-schools-against-cyber-bullying?archive>

"The most important element of the changes is a shift in the overall climate of a school community," says Astor. An emphasis on educating the whole person, rather than focusing solely on academic achievement, has resulted in significant and measurable decreases in bullying behavior..." - "Do schools' anti-bullying programs really help?" By: Gloria Goodale

One obstacle US schools face in their efforts to decrease/eliminate bullying is our country's obsession with immediate results and quick fixes. For this reason, awareness months and other month-long anti-bullying programs are very popular across the country. However, these types of programs have not proven very effective in long-term changes in public schools. What is effective, as the article states, is a shift in the school culture. This takes time, and can be difficult to achieve, because it requires the efforts of a large group of people over time.

So what is Northwood-Kensett doing to bring about long-term change and improvement in how its students treat each other? In 2012, Northwood-Kensett adopted the Character Counts! program. While it is not an "anti-bullying" program, it does promote positive interactions between students. Both buildings have formed student leadership groups, who, along with faculty advisers, plan monthly activities and special events to encourage students to act with good character in school and in life, as tied in with the Character Counts! program.

Our district is still in the relative beginning stages of bringing about long-term change, and we will work to build on the foundation that has been set. Please assist us in growing the best students we can.

Source: <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2013/1017/Do-schools-anti-bullying-programs-really-help-video>

