Bullying and Students with Disabilities

Presented by Elizabeth Assad-Penner, Educational Advocate, People Inc.

What will be discussed:

- Reasons students with disabilities are bullied more when compared to non-disabled peers

- Research/statistics regarding bullying

- Addressing bullying and the IEP

- Law/legal aspects

- Types of bullying

- Parent response/intervention to bullying

- Best Practices for schools to help reduce bullying of students with special needs

- Programs/Curriculums for Students with Disabilities that may help decrease bullying at school

- Resources/Museum of DisABILITY

Why are students with disabilities bullied more when compared to non-disabled peers?

- Low frustration tolerance
- Students with developmental disabilities difficulty with attention during conversations-adverse affect on social skills
- Children with motor difficulties affecting reading, writing, and participation in P.E.-ridiculed by peers
- Children with communication disabilities-use of devices
- Students with physical impairments-slower/unsteady gait-may be viewed as sign of weakness by peers

Students with Autism

- Study completed in Massachusetts Advocates for Children (2009)
- Survey 400 parents of children with Autism across state
- 88 % of children with Autism have been bullied at school
- Bullying took the forms of verbal abuse and/or physical contact.

Students with various disabilities

- Twyman and Saylor (2010) Students with learning disabilities ADHD, and Autism are more likely to be bullied by their peers.

Teachers Reporting of Bullying

- Study conducted by Mr. Holzbauer at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (2008)

- 90 special education teachers were surveyed in large public school district

- 96.7% of these teachers reported that they observed "school related disability" harassment conduct.

Some statistics/research

- **<u>10 studies have been conducted in the US on bullying and students with developmental disabilities!</u>**
- All studies found that children with disabilities are 2 to 3 times more likely to be victims of bullying than their non-disabled peers.
- **65% of the parents reported that their children with Asperger's syndrome had been victimized by peers in some way within the past year**
- 47% reported that their children had been hit by peers or siblings
- **50% reported them to be scared by their peers**
- 9% were attacked by a gang and hurt in the private parts
- 12% indicated their child had never been invited to a birthday party
- 6% were almost always picked last for teams
- 3% ate alone at lunch every day
- *Source: Disabilities: Insights from across Fields and around the World (2009)*

Bullying and children on the Autism Spectrum

- Study from Massachusetts Advocates for Children (2009)
- Amount of time bullying occurred when asked of parents with children on the Autism Spectrum
- 1 time 11.7%
- 2-5 days 9.3%
- 2-4 weeks 11.4%
- Several months 20.4%
- 1 year 5.1%
- **More than a year 39.6%**
- Other 10.8%

Bullying and special health needs

- Students with food/allergies can be at a higher risk of bullying

- Students with certain health conditions (epilepsy, diabetes)

- Students with speech-language issues (stuttering/difficulties speaking)

- Children with medical conditions that effect appearance may be called names due to disability (Cerebral Palsy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy)

Legal aspects

- OSERS published a Dear Colleague Letter on Bullying that addresses bullying of children with disabilities on August 20, 2013

- Letter states that children with disabilities are disproportionately affected by bullying and bullying of a student with a disability which results in the student not receiving an educational benefit is considered a denial of FAPE.

- Letter also explains that placing a child in a more restricted "protected" setting to avoid bullying behavior may constitute a denial of the requirement schools have to provide FAPE in the least restrictive environment

- Included an enclosure letter-Effective Evidence based Practices for Preventing and Addressing Bullying offers strategies schools can use to intervene and prevent bullying

Child Find Obligations

- Bullying may trigger a schools' Child Find Obligations for students not being previously identified as a child with a disability under IDEA

- This is stressed in the OSERS/Dear Colleague Letter on Bullying that addresses bullying of children with disabilities on August 20, 2013.

Legal/Law aspects

- Dignity of All students act (2012)

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

- Title VI of the Civil Rights of 1964

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

- IDEA (Individuals with disabilities Education Act) of 2004

Law/legal aspects

- Individuals with disabilities Act (IDEA) (OSERS's 8/20/2013, Dear Colleague Letter on addressing bullying of children with disabilities)

- If the bullying of a student with a disability that results in the student not receiving an educational benefit constitutes a denial of FAPE under the IDEA must be remedied

- States and school district responsibility under IDEA is to ensure that FAPE is in the least restricted environment (LRE) is made available to eligible students with disabilities

- In order for a student to receive FAPE, the students' IEP must be reasonably calculated to provide a meaningful educational environment.

Addressing Bullying and IEP

- Goals for IEP to consider (social skills, speech and language, self-advocacy, and self-awareness of strength and building skills)
- Accommodations/Modifications that may assist:
  - Monitor and supervise during unstructured time
  - Educate the staff and students about child's assistive tech, 1:1 aide, and other modifications as necessary
  - Avoid certain situations or locations
  - Keep the child away from the bully
  - Consider seating the student away from students who maybe "problematic"
  - Allow the child to leave class early to avoid crowded hallways
  - Peer buddy
  - Counseling service from school psychologist or social worker

Different forms of bullying (AbilityPath.org)

- Manipulative bullying

- Conditional Friendship

- Exploitative Bullying

Cyber bullying and students with special needs

- Students with special needs can be more targeted for this type of bullying due to difficulties with social cues and self-esteem (want to fit in)

- Computers/technology could possibly be student's with disabilities only social outlet

- ".... parents and teachers to encourage children with special needs to tell you how they are feeling, even if they may not respond" (Dr. Sameer Hinduga/co-director of the Cyber bullying Research Center in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida Atlantic University)

Teach students with disabilities some tips about online activities

- Teach a child not to share personal info online

- Limit online time

- Use role play and social stories to teach a child what improper conduct may look like

- Keep copies of inappropriate messages

- Do not dissuade a child from using technology

- Research screening programs

- Check text messages

Tips for Parents

- ASK QUESTIONS!
- Students with special needs may not recognize they are being bullied or students are afraid to discuss
- Parents should ask: Do you have friends have nicknames for you?
- Who do you spend time with at school?

Tips of Parents

- Be aware

- Be observant of child's behavior

- Get details form the child about the incident

- Brainstorm/problem solve with child

- Talk with school staff/teacher

- Put concerns in writing to the principal if issue is not successfully addressed by the teacher

- Record dates/conversations

- Ask for CSE meeting/team meeting

- Continue to access and monitor the child

Tips for parents

- Be supportive of the child and encourage description of the details (where/how questions)
- Make sure to tell the child it is not his or her fault
- Do not encourage the child to fight back
- Ask the child for specific questions about friendships
- Be persistent!!!!

Best Practices for Schools to help reduce bullying incidents

- Outlined in the Dear Collegugue Letter from OSERS on August 20, 2013

- NO one size fits all approach

- Need comprehensive multitiered behavioral framework

- Develop a positive school environment with high standards

Comprehensive multitiered behavioral framework

- Can help schools organize evidence based practices, support the use of evidence based practices according to practice guidelines, and monitor the outcomes for students to determine the effectiveness of the evidence based practices

- Ensuring needs of students with disabilities must be addressed in school wide plans!!!!

- One example: PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support).

- Offers school personal with decision making structure that they can use to identify implement, and evaluate effective based instruction

Teach appropriate behaviors/responses

Teach all students and personnel:

- What does bullying look like?

- What behaviors are expected at the school and during school activities?

- How to respond appropriately to bullying when it occurs?

Provide Active Adult Supervision

- This should be addressed on IEP as necessary

- Teachers can model these behaviors in interactions with students

- Focus on unstructured times (examples: Lunch, transition in hallways)

Train and provide outgoing support for staff and students

- School personnel must be aware that students with disabilities are more likely to be targets of bullying

- Guidance on legal requirements, policy , and practice implications for students with disabilities needs to be provided in training sessions

- Training of staff on different forms of bullying that may be directed at students with disabilities

- All students should receive clear, explicit instruction on how to respond and report bullying

- School staff should monitor bullying and its possible side effects on denial of FAPE

Develop and implement clear policies to address bullying

- Schools should develop policies and procedures which are consistent with Federal, State, and local laws

- Schools should provide ongoing training to staff, parents, and students on their antibullying polices

Monitor and track bullying behaviors

- Data needs to be completed from multiple sources-surveys of students

- Should include frequency, locations of bullying, adult, and peer responses

Notify parents when bullying occurs

- Clear and accurate communication to inform the parents of both student who was the target, and the student who engage in the bullying behavior
- Parents needs to be encouraged to work with their child's teachers and other school personnel.

Address on-going concerns

- Identity need areas
- Does the student need more focused social skills instruction?
- Does the student need specific feedback on behavior?
- Data should measure an individuals student's responsiveness to anti-bullying instruction and intervention

Sustain bullying prevention over time

- Ongoing prevention
- Close examination of evidence based practices

Programs/Curriculums for students with special needs

- Social and emotional learning curriculums (SEL)
- Can assist children in developing skills and develop relationships with peers and adults
- Help students manage emotions
- These skills can be taught
- Research has show that high quality SEL programs help improve student emotions skills, attitude, and classroom behavior
- Programs should be focused on ALL students in school
- Needs to be "well executed"

SEL programs

- Increase self-awareness

- Self management

- Social awareness

- Relationship skills

- Responsible decision making

- For more information on SEL programs visit www.casel.org (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning)

Examples of SEL programs

- "PATHS" (promoting alternate thinking strategies)

- Preschool-6

- "School-Connect"-40 lessons geared for high school students

- Help increase social, emotional and academic skills

Inclusive Community Programs and Organizations

- Special Olympics

- Best Buddies

- Help develop social skills and create friendships

- May keep students with disabilities form being bullied less when involved with community organizations

Website/Resource for Parents/School Staff

- www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org

- Contains videos, cartoon, and games to help encourage dialogue with children regarding bullying.

Museum of DisABILITY

- Please visit our website: www.museumofdisability.org

- Educational Resources Tab: Contains lesson plans for elementary, middle school, high school students to increase disability awareness and sensitivity

- Virtual Museum also available on the website

- If interested in a tour of the Museum or would like more information, please call 629-3626.

Resources

- Ability Path. Walk a mile in their shoes: Bullying and the child with special needs. Retrieved on September 13, 2013 from www.abilitypath.org

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012) Bullying and children and youth with disabilities and special health needs(tip sheet). Retrieved September 21, 2013 from www.stopbullying.gov

- Twyman, K.A., Saylor, C.F., Saia D., Macias, M. M., Taylor, L.A., and Spatt, E. (2010). Bullying and ostracism experiences in children with special health care needs. Journal of Development Pediatrics, 31, 1-8

- OSERS (8/20/13): Dear Colleague: Bullying of Students with Disabilities letter. Retrieved on September 4, 2014 from www.2.ed.gov

- Hinduja, S. Walk a mile in their shoes. (D. Stephens, Interview) Retrieved from "Walk a mile in their shoes": Bullying and the child with special needs on September 13, 2013 from www.abilitypath.org

- Hozbauer, J. (2008, June). Disability Harassment Observed by Teachers in Special Education, Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 162-171.