

Social Studies Hour 7

19 November 2018

Preventing Bullying Through Education

Bullying is a chronic problem, especially among students, and it has many negative effects. The problem is, the bully seldom realizes that their actions are considered bullying. Bullying is when a person uses their power to repeatedly harm another person physically, mentally, socially, or emotionally, and on purpose. Since students often don't know that they are bullying, we can effectively prevent it through education, specifically focusing on the effects of bullying and experiences of it. In the next paragraph, I will explain several examples of bullying that I and others have experienced or witnessed.

My first example of bullying was experienced by Olympic gymnast Gabby Douglas. Expecting to find praise online after her amazing performance on the uneven bars, Douglas went online, only to find she had become a victim of cyberbullying. The cyberbullies seemed to tease Douglas about the most insignificant things, from her not placing her hand over her heart during the national anthem, to her expressions being "too sour" while her teammates were competing. Douglas experienced several negative effects of bullying, including being hurt emotionally and socially, having more pressure on her while she was competing, and loss of self-esteem, so she spoke to her teammates and the press. She discovered that several of her teammates had also been victims of cyberbullying. Although the cyberbullying has had a very negative effect on Douglas, she has been able to rebuild her confidence and start speaking out against bullying. My second example of bullying is something that I witnessed when I was in elementary school. I have changed names in order to protect the privacy of those involved in the bullying. Sam, a boy who was small for his age, was often being bullied at school during recess because of his size. Four students, all who were bigger than Sam, would often punch, kick or throw Sam to the ground while saying mean things to him about his size. They seemed to think it was funny, and assumed Sam thought so too,

even though I could tell that Sam was being hurt. After witnessing this for a few days, I told my mom about it, and she encouraged me to email my teacher. My teacher replied the next day, thanking me for telling her, and promising to talk to the bullies about their behavior. The next day, I noticed that the bullying had significantly decreased, although it had not gone away completely. In the next paragraph, I will share something I have found to be true about bullying.

Before I explain my ideas about bullying prevention, I would like to first elaborate on a previously stated truth I have noticed about bullying. The truth is that, in most situations, the bully, victim, and bystanders do not realize that bullying is occurring. The bully may think that they are just joking around, and that the victim thinks it is funny, too. They don't fully realize how harmful their actions are. Since the bully acts as though the bullying is "no big deal", the victim and bystander start to believe it is okay to be treated in a hurtful way; that they are just being too sensitive or making it seem like a bigger deal than it is. This makes it almost impossible for the victim to stand up for themselves, and the bystander to stand up for the victim. It is not enough to try to prevent bullying by simply explaining to students what bullying is, or by telling them to not be a bully. We must give students the skills to be able to recognize when bullying occurs, and let them know that it has very harmful effects, including physical pain, social isolation, depression, stress, and anxiety, in order to prevent students from becoming bullies. In the next paragraph, I will share some specific ideas on how to combat bullying.

One idea for bullying prevention involves school leaders, the victims of bullying, and all other students. In this action step, teachers observe which students or which groups of students have been targets of bullying. Then, they talk to all students about the bullying, why it is wrong, and what effects it has on the victim. The teachers also give the victims ideas of ways to stand up to bullying. I read about this idea in an article about Chicago school officials who were helping Muslim students combat bullying. In this Chicago school, students learned why it is not okay to bully someone because they are Muslim, teachers were able to help victims stand up for themselves, and the bullying decreased overall. The

second idea I have for how to combat bullying was inspired by a news article I read about Gabby Douglas. In this action step, social media users and news organizations will post messages and articles about what bullying is, its effects, and real life experiences of bullying. This step will affect everyone who uses social media and/or reads news articles. Because of this, many people will learn how to recognize bullying behaviors in both themselves and others, how to stop and encourage others to stop bullying, and how to stand up and speak out against bullying. The third idea I have for how to prevent bullying is by creating a bullying prevention curriculum that teachers are required to use to educate all students about bullying. The curriculum specifically focuses on examples and effects of bullying. This action step is intended to not only educate students on what bullying is, but to also teach them what classifies as bullying, and to provide several effects of bullying. This would cause students to think about their own actions, and to ask themselves if their behaviors are considered bullying. Students will also learn how awful bullying is for the victim, and why is it never okay. Through this action step, we will empower students to stop bullying.

Because we know that students often do not realize that they are bullying, we can educate students about real experiences and effects of bullying in order to effectively prevent it. It is very important to include the effects and examples of bullying when educating students because it is necessary to not only ensure that students know what bullying is, but to also make sure that students recognize when their actions are considered bullying, and that their behaviors need to stop. If these steps are followed, I believe that all bullies will realize that their behavior is wrong, hurtful, and unkind, which will inspire all students to not be a bully.

Works Cited

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Washington Post. "Gabby Douglas partners with an anti-bullying group after Olympics backlash." Newsela. January 5, 2017.