Stop Bullying Now

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Online surveys to enhance and inform bullying prevention in schools

Survey administration, analysis and report generation available from Stan Davis, school counselor, trainer, and author of Schools Where Everyone Belongs and Empowering Bystanders in Bullying Prevention. More information on pricing at the end of this article.

Why use anonymous online surveys?

Collecting anonymous student and staff survey data informs bullying prevention and school climate interventions, enhances buy-in from teachers, and provides you with a way to track improvements. When interventions are data-driven, they can affirm and improve what is working and help you focus on what needs to change. Without collecting ongoing data, it is difficult to know if your efforts are leading to improvements for students. Without data, schools may attempt to change practices that are working well or continue practices that are not working.

Many kinds of data can assist in building safe and accepting schools, including disciplinary data, qualitative data gathered from focus groups and discussions, observational data, and data from anonymous surveys. There are a number of advantages to using anonymous online surveys, including:

- No student needs to fear peers' or adults' reactions to their statements, and responses can be more authentic.
- Online survey data is easily disaggregated. We can categorize data by gender, race, age and special education status, thereby allowing us to understand the experiences of different demographic groups.
- Online surveys can be repeated in a uniform way. This allows us to track changes over time, compare school-wide trends, and set and follow goals.
- Online surveys can combine quantitative questions with qualitative questions, which allow students to share their ideas and experiences. Students often appreciate being asked their opinions. Text responses can help schools understand and interpret numerical data accurately.

What types of data do we gather?

There are at least four types of questions that are helpful to ask. The first category gauges how connected students are to school and to staff and other students. A large body of research shows that youth who have positive connections with adults outside the family are more resilient – that is, they are less likely to be traumatized by negative events. In addition, developing research on the effects of social isolation and ostracism suggests that social isolation at school is uniquely damaging and that a sense of belonging and being valued at school are key elements in promoting success and preventing harm if a student is bullied.

The second category asks about the frequency of specific negative behaviors such as swearing, cutting in line, exclusion, hitting, and name-calling based on a variety of factors. While there are several problems with using frequency data as the *primary* indicator of the effectiveness of school programs over time, it is helpful to know how often youth at school are seeing or hearing specific negative actions that focus on sexual orientation, disability, social class, race, high achievement, or other categories. Asking about a wide range of specific actions gives us a more complete picture than just asking about "bullying." We ask all youth completing the survey to describe how often they observe different actions. We also ask youth to describe how often they were the targets of relational or physical aggression. We can analyze victimization data by demographic group and get a picture of who is experiencing peer mistreatment at school.

Third, we have questions about young peoples' attitudes toward different negative peer actions. Finding out whether students want adults to take action to stop different behaviors, and whether they think peers should tell adults about these behaviors is useful information in both program planning and in social norms interventions.

Fourth, our survey asks youth who asked adults at school for help what happened next. Did things get better? Was there no change? Did things get worse? The numerical data that emerges from this question – and what students write about this question – can help us assess our effectiveness and improve schools' reactions to reports of peer mistreatment.

The last type of question asks how students themselves have helped others who were mistreated or isolated and what the results of those helping actions were. It is powerful for youth to reflect on the effects of their own helping actions and to learn what students at their school have done to help others.

Brief staff surveys provide important information as well, and encourage staff to describe how well yours school is doing in maintaining positive emotional tone with students and colleagues, building connections, following through on behavior expectations, and other important dimensions of maintaining school safety and belonging for all.

Details and pricing

We administer and analyze anonymous online surveys and generate clear reports for school staff to review. We provide a unique URL for each school's survey. Surveys are hosted confidentially on our online surveymonkey account. School staff administer the survey to as many students as possible, then inform us when they are finished. We then analyze the data by demographic groups and organize and edit text comments. All survey fees include a pdf report of results and an

expanded article on using survey data to implement bullying prevention interventions.

We have worked to keep our prices low to encourage schools to use survey data. Standard survey fees are: **$350 per school** for student surveys and **$200 per school for staff surveys**. This fee includes one hour of consultation by phone or skype after surveys are completed. Customized surveys, in-depth customized reports, and extended phone or skype consultation about the meaning and use of your school's survey data are available for a fee. Note: to keep prices low, we will not spell check or summarize text answers to the surveys, which should be spell-checked, filtered, and summarized before being distributed to staff members.

New for 2012: We have participated in regional survey projects in several states where more than ten schools' students took the same survey. This type of regional surveying adds two important dimensions to individual school surveys. First, it provides local norms for schools to compare their own data with. Second, regional surveys provide in depth composite data for policy makers and planners. They provide large student samples that help us find trends in mistreatment, connectedness, behaviors, and school responsiveness by gender, special education status, and race. Often individual schools' results are not made public nor be submitted to state agencies, but are sent only to the school itself. To encourage the use of regional surveys, we have set a reduced fee for such projects. **FEE: $175 per school for groups of 10 or more schools, plus $175 for the composite report.** As described above, phone or skype consultation, survey customization, and written reports including detailed recommendations are available for additional fees.