

## Problem & Motivation

Bullying is often viewed as a power imbalance between one or more parties in which repeated aggressive and unwanted behavior is exhibited. Roughly 30% of American students have reported being the victims of bullying and 70-85% of children have been exposed to bullying in the role of the victim, perpetrator, bystander, or some combination of the three. These statistics indicate that bullying is one of the most widespread forms of violence that young people are confronted with nationwide.- Given both the prevalence of bullying and its negative behavioral and emotional consequences, bullying should be considered a serious public and mental health issue worthy of attention.-

## Analysis of Problem

Victims of bullying are vulnerable to negative physical, educational, and mental health issues. Children who are bullied frequently exhibit signs of depression and anxiety, disrupted sleeping and eating patterns, and loss of interest in previously pleasurable hobbies. These individuals report an increase in sadness and loneliness, as well as a decrease in academic performance. Perpetrators of bullying are more likely to suffer from substance abuse problems in adolescence as well as in adulthood. Children who bully are also more likely to engage in criminal activity including vandalizing property, physical altercations, and domestic violence. Witnesses to bullying - colloquially known as bystanders - are at increased risk of substance use including tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Bystanders are also more likely to be absent for school and to develop mental health issues, including depression and anxiety. Put simply, bullying hurts everyone.

## Proposed Solution

Research suggests that the best way to prevent bullying is to foster a strong community in which teachers, school administrators, and students are all engaged. Most children are empathetic and want to help but are unsure how to because confronting bullies is difficult. Bystanders are often reluctant to report bullying to adults because they are afraid of being perceived as “snitches” and making themselves the targets of bullies. A study conducted by UCLA psychology professor Jaana Juvonen indicates that bystanders are more likely to intervene when they can stand up to bullies indirectly. My solution capitalizes upon this insight in order to strengthen the effectiveness of anti-bullying curricula in schools.

I am proposing a system in which students can anonymously report instances of bullying. Teachers and school administrators can then use this information to track whether or not reports of bullying decrease or increase over time in order to determine whether or not school sponsored efforts to intervene are actually effective. This information could also bring issues to light that teachers, administrators, and parents were unaware of; anti-bullying curricula could then be tailored to the problems most commonly experienced in a particular school, for example, cyber-bullying via social networking platforms.

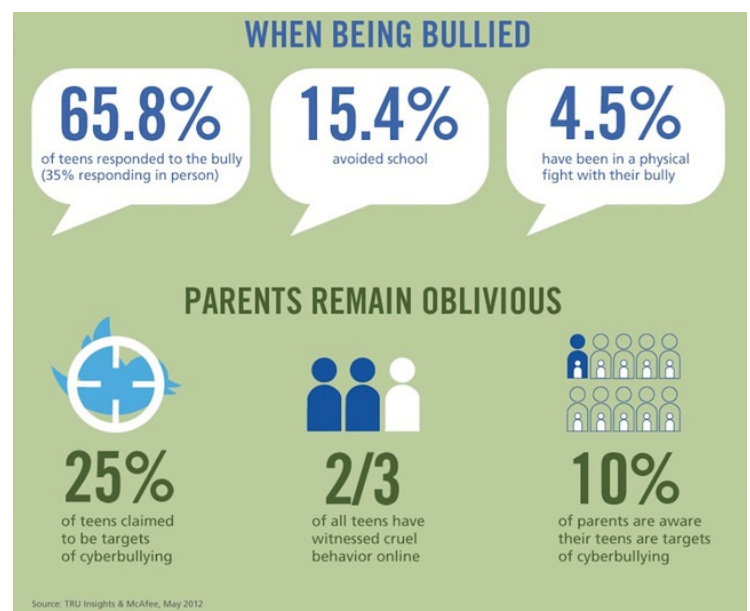


Figure 1: Perceptions of cyber-bullying and the ways in which it impacts teens

## Sources

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