

Bayport-Blue Point UFSD

1

Counseling Center

Newsletter

May 2010 Edition

District Counselors



High School

Susan Mullins Dan Harrington

Ronald Bard

Middle School

Heather Woods

James Hughes

Elementary

Matthew Birdsall

Dear Community,

Spring is upon us and our children are busier than ever. They are juggling between community and school activities, AP's, SAT's, Act's exams and preparing for end of the year finals and activities. Indeed, it is a busy time of year for you and your family.

Many of us believe, that the amount of pressure students have is overwhelming. We see our children staying up late, never having time to socialize and most of all complaining about all they have to do. They need to recognize their current state as a warm-up of what is to come. Whether it is college, middle school, high school or just starting school next, it will be a move up and more to juggle.

Children today live a very different life than we had, their day is filled with communication and information (texting and email) which fill a void we once had as "veg time." They do not have that time and do not know what it feels like to just stare. A new brand of child in constant motion, physically and emotionally is here.

So what do we do...place constraints on their time, organize their time, preach on time management or watch carefully as they grow into the 21st Century Child. I believe the observation of their behaviors are the most important. When they get stressed they will tell you or you will see it. That is the time to intervene and help. Unfortunately, we are not going to change the pace of society today. So prepare them for their future instead of rebelling against it.

With that said, remember important spring events; finals, review classes, SAT prep, ACT prep, college visits and of course planning a meaningful summer.

Good luck and hang on for the ride!

Counseling Center

What to do this summer?

My advice:

Find something you're interested in and pursue it.

Focus on what is important to you because colleges are creating well-rounded classes filled with students with special talents or interests. Colleges get more excited about students who have demonstrated a passion and achieved something in a single area than students who are known as "serial joiners" and just list show up for meetings.

Be true to yourself and don't be concerned with padding your college application with programs that cost a lot of money that you think will "look good" to an admissions representative.

Make an impact. Christoph Guttentag, director of undergraduate admissions at Duke University, says his school looks for evidence of impact and having made a difference. "We ask ourselves what has this student done with the opportunities given to him?"

National Association for College Admission Counseling to Release Space Availability Survey

ARLINGTON, Va., May 4 (AScribe Newswire) -- The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) is set to release the results of its Space Availability Survey, an annual list of colleges that still have enrollment openings, on May 5 at <http://www.nacacnet.org>. Each year NACAC coordinates the release of the survey results with the May 1 student deadline to respond to offers of admission and financial aid, providing colleges a chance to review the responses before they reveal additional openings. The results will indicate available freshman and transfer openings, as well as the availability of housing and financial aid.

NACAC conducts the survey to help counselors and students identify enrollment opportunities late in the application season. The survey results are updated throughout the summer, as colleges make adjustments to their availability.

About NACAC

NACAC is an Arlington, VA-based education association of more than 11,000 secondary school counselors, independent counselors, college admission and financial aid officers, enrollment managers, and organizations that work with students as they make the transition from high school to postsecondary education. The association, founded in 1937, is committed to maintaining high standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the transition process, as outlined in the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice. More information about NACAC is available at <http://www.nacacnet.org>

College admissions is more subjective than you might think. It wasn't that long ago that Ivy League schools tried to keep out Jewish applicants — New York —

Steven got nearly perfect SAT scores, but he didn't get into Princeton. Suzanne has straight A's, but Brown rejected her. And Samantha – Samantha! – got into both schools, even though her scores and grades are pretty mediocre.

Can you believe it?

Welcome to an average school day in April, the cruelest month of the calendar for America's upper-middle-class teens. If you live in a leafy American suburb, as I do, you simply can't escape the drudgery and the drama of the College admissions sweepstakes. Everywhere you go, the conversation is the same: who got in where, and why. Kids like to talk, of course. But in the old days, it took a little while for the word to get around. Now, it's just a mouse-click away. And that just makes things worse.

Worst of all, though, most of our children seem to think that the college admissions process is a meritocracy: The "best" students get into [the "best" schools](#). That's precisely why they express such surprise – and, often, outrage – when an apparently ordinary student gets into a top-rated college. She's not that smart! No fair!

Let's leave aside the question of what "smart" means, or [whether SAT scores and grades provide a useful measure](#) of it. Colleges don't want classes composed solely of kids with perfect grades and scores. They also want "diversity" – of enthusiasms, experiences, and, yes, ethnicities.

The kids know all of that, too, but they still say it's a numbers game. And for a brief moment, about a century ago, it was. Fearful that its classes were filled with mediocre young men from prep schools, Harvard College adopted the College Entrance Examination Board as the major basis for admission in 1905.

Other leading universities quickly followed suit. So for a few years anyone with a high enough score – and a big enough bank account – could get in. But the result, to the chagrin of America's WASP gentry, was a steep spike in Jewish students.

By 1908, the fraction of Jewish students in Harvard's freshman class had jumped from almost nil to 7 percent; a decade later, it rose to 20 percent. At Yale, meanwhile, an admissions officer complained that the roster of new students "might easily be mistaken for a recent roll call at the Wailing Wall."

To elite university officials, this development threatened nothing less than the destruction of the elite university itself. "The summer hotel that is ruined by admitting Jews meets its fate because they drive away the Gentiles," Harvard president A. Lawrence Lowell warned, "and then after the Gentiles have left, they leave also."

The solution was simple: request more information about the “character” of the applicants. Starting in the 1920s, Harvard applicants had to submit essays, recommendations, and lists of extracurricular activities. [They also had to answer questions about “Race and Color,”](#) “Maiden Name of Mother,” and, believe it or not, “What change, if any, has been made since birth in your own name or that of your father? (Explain fully.)”

That made it a whole lot easier to identify – and, of course, to reject – Jewish students. But you could never tell for sure. So Harvard’s admissions office devised a secret labeling system. The designation “j1” meant that a student was “conclusively Jewish;” “j2” indicated a “preponderance of evidence” towards Jewishness; and “j3” meant it was a “possibility.”

Ironically, then, our current system for determining “diversity” – essays, recommendations, and so on – was born in a bigoted attempt to *prevent* it. Today, it’s unheard of for someone to scour applications to figure out a kid’s religious background. But colleges still try to gauge each applicant’s “character,” which is no easier to measure than “Jewishness” was in the 1920s.

So [to get in](#), it’s not enough to be smart. You also have to be fortunate, which is something nobody likes to talk about around here. We want to believe that the process is systematic, rational, and predictable. And, most of all, we want to believe that we have earned whatever we get.

But any honest admissions officer will tell you that isn’t so. Sure, you can do any number of things to [improve your odds](#). At the end of the day, though, it’s still a crapshoot. A bunch of people will sit around a table and try to judge your character, as well as your smartness. And they’ll make highly imperfect estimates of both.

That’s why Swarthmore psychology professor Barry Schwartz has suggested that colleges set a standard – of grades, scores, and extracurricular activities – and make a random selection among all the candidates that meet the standard. The colleges would end up accepting kids that are every bit as talented as the current ones are. And we wouldn’t have to pretend that everyone “earned” their way in.

So if you didn’t get accepted by the college of your choice, please don’t take it personally. And if you did land your top school, don’t let it go to your head. Yes, you got into a great college. But you also got lucky.

Jonathan Zimmerman teaches history at New York University and lives in suburban Philadelphia. He is the author of “Small Wonder: The Little Red Schoolhouse in History and Memory.”



10 Things To Do This Summer

By Lee Bierer

Colleges are curious about what students do in their spare time. Being smart about what you do over the summer is a great way for you to set yourself apart from other applicants.

Still, it's important to recognize that no summer experience can compensate for mediocre grades.

Top 10 to-dos

I've created my top 10 list of interesting things to do during the summer:

1. Take a remedial or advanced class locally or online.
2. Experience a college campus with an academic or enrichment program.
3. Do your part - volunteer for a community service project.
4. Get a job - earn some money and enhance your maturity.
5. Identify an internship or job-shadowing experience.
6. Do something different - find a nontraditional activity.
7. Create something from nothing - be an entrepreneur.
8. Focus on a special interest.
9. Travel - explore and experience another culture.
10. Prepare college applications.

What to ask yourself

There are lots of options. Here are some questions to help decide which path to pursue:

What would be my dream summer job?

What are my strongest academic subjects?

If I could travel anywhere, where would I go, what would I do and why?

Are there particular social issues that concern me?

How can I make a difference?

5 College Admission Facts You Should Know

By [Lynn O'Shaughnessy](#)

Last year, colleges dug deeper and dramatically increased the amount of financial aid they provided students as families struggled through hard economic times.

But what about this year? The economy is still in a funk and families need just as much help in 2010. While colleges are continuing to trim their budgets in many areas, it looks like they will once again dig deeper to generate more financial aid dollars for families.

I asked Jonathan Epstein, a senior consultant at Maguire Associates, a high-ed consulting firm, to elaborate on his firm's recent paper, [The State of the Enrollment Market: Where Are We Now and What Does it Mean?](#)

Here are the highlights:

- 1. Admission applications are up.** Since the last admission cycle, applications are up roughly 5% to 10% across the country among both private and state colleges and universities. Here's the reason for the increase: more students are sending out more applications.
- 2. Families are focusing on financial aid.** Students are applying to extra colleges because they want to reel in the best financial aid packages. They are looking for quality schools with the best aid awards and they assume applying to more colleges will produce better news.
- 3. Colleges will continue to dig deeper.** Colleges have continued to slash their budgets, but financial aid appears sacrosanct for this year. It looks like schools will continue to funnel more money into their financial aid budgets. Some schools with extra capacity will help defray this cost by increasing the slots in their freshmen class.

At the same time, there are signs that some elite institutions, which offer the most generous financial aid packages in the land, might be caving on their commitment to provide no-loan financial aid packages. [Dartmouth](#) and Williams College have pulled back.

4. Demographics are cresting. The good news is that the number of high school seniors peaked last year. The number of high school seniors will drop about 200,000 until 2013 or 2014 when the number of teens begins climbing again primarily because of the Hispanic population.

5. Endowments and donor contributions have slumped. Endowments cratered during 2009. [Harvard](#), for instance, lost more than \$5 billion in its endowment, which was more than double the losses of all other Massachusetts colleges and universities combined. Donor contributions to colleges and universities last year dropped nearly 12%, which is the biggest decline since the [Council for Aid to Education](#) began keeping tabs in 1969.

Lynn O'Shaughnessy is the author of [The College Solution](#), an Amazon bestseller. Follow her on [Twitter](#).

[College admission](#) image by uhuru1701. CC 2.0.

Texting Could Deny Teens Admission

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - If texting language is a habit for students working on homework, you can bet the "LOLs" and "BRBs" make their way into life outside of academics.

Harrison High School English teacher Kristen Trella said if teens don't change their ways, it could cost them a job or a college admission.

"First of all, their college application may be returned because they're going to look at it and go 'What are all these letters? This didn't answer our questions,'" said Trella.

"If they have to write an admissions essay or anything of that type, they're looking at the quality of writing they have and how they're writing. 'Is our program going to benefit that person?' If they write in all kinds of slang and abbreviations, they're either going to go 'Okay, this is going to be our project and admit them' or they're going to say 'There's no way this person can do it. They don't have what it takes. Sorry, we're going to send them a ding letter,'" said Trella.

Trella said the trend can also impact a student when it comes to finding a job. She said it's all about first impressions.

"You only get one chance to make a first impression and it's on those applications. It's on admissions essays, those types of things. If you start filling them with slang, people are going to look at you like 'Okay, if you're going to try and do as little as possible on this aspect, what are they going to do on the job? Are they going to cut corners here, are they going to do this,'" said Trella.

Trella has found the 'text talk' doesn't even sink in for the student until that person goes back and proof-reads his or her work.

"They don't even realize they are doing it because they are so used to doing it," said Trella.

Choosing your senior classes wisely will help you do better in college

May 4, 9:49 AM · Julie Manhan - Seattle College Bound Examiner

It's springtime in Seattle – and everywhere else for that matter. That means that Juniors everywhere are being asked to choose the classes they plan to take Senior year. With all the possibilities that are often available to students, it's no wonder there can be some confusion as to what classes they should take.

Before I go any further, let me address the myth that: “Senior year is a time to take it easy.” While your parents might have gotten away with taking a light schedule when they were seniors, it is no longer a good choice for a college bound student. Instead, Senior year is a time to show colleges just how serious you are about preparing to do well once you get there. Colleges want you to arrive on their campus ready and able to do the work. A year of easy classes can get you out of the habit of doing challenging assignments and keeping up with reading. So, what kind of classes should you take?

1. Take a math class. Yes, math. Chances are you will have to take at least one Math class in college. Giving your math skills a yearlong break could make that class incredibly challenging.

2. Take an additional year of an international language. Understanding another language is becoming increasingly important in many professions. You should be aware that some colleges even waive their own language requirement for students who took more than the minimum is high school.

3. Take an advanced class in a subject you enjoy. Whether it's science, art, or history, don't just settle for what is required; expand your knowledge! If your school doesn't offer advanced classes in the subject, consider taking one at your local community college.

THE EDUCATION ISSUE

The secret to stopping a bully?

After decades of research, no one has yet found a way to reduce bullying in US schools. But in the shadows, you just might find the solution.

By Neil Swidey | **May 2, 2010**

She looks as you expect she would. Straight blond hair, pert nose, complexion as perfect as her clothes. She can say a lot with just a surgical flick of her head and can stretch simple phrases like “shut up” and “totally” to twice their natural length. Tess Tyler is the privileged, beautiful-but-brittle, mean-girl bully who torments Mitchie Torres, the working-class, wide-eyed, good-girl protagonist. In this case, the bully and victim come from the Disney Channel tweener franchise *Camp Rock*, which will pump out a sequel this summer. But you can find similar pairs driving the drama in many popular kids' TV shows and movies.

For proof, I recently watched – or, in some cases, endured – a host of youth-oriented movies, ranging from *Princess Protection Program*, another Disney vehicle for its teen stars of the moment, to *The Longshots*, a sports-oriented movie starring rapper and actor Ice Cube, to *Chrissa Stands Strong*, a movie produced by doll maker American Girl. While there are some clear surface differences, the overall dramatic patterns are remarkably similar. For much of the film, the bully is in control, and intimidation reigns. But in the final scenes, one of two things happens: Either the bully experiences an epiphany and begins engaging in more pro-social behavior or, more often, the bully's sidekicks realize they'd given up their souls in exchange for social standing and choose to make a clean break, a move that isolates the bully and helps the victim triumph. That's exactly what happens in *Camp Rock*, when one of Tess's two sidekicks, Peggy, confronts Tess minutes before the big show, yelling, “Stop telling us what to do!” and storming off. Ella, the other sidekick, follows suit, with both lending their support to good girl Mitchie en route to a happy finale.

Despite their uplifting endings, I doubt these pop-culture products do much to discourage bullying among their young viewers, since 95 percent of the movie's running time is spent reinforcing the awful behavior, and the conversions that spark the last 5 percent come across as contrived. Still, this form of entertainment can be useful in a different way. Although these tidy resolutions are wrong, the overall depictions are often right. Stock bully characters, from mean girls like Tess Tyler to rough boys like Nelson Muntz of *The Simpsons*, have held up surprisingly well in descriptive studies conducted by bullying-prevention researchers. So maybe the Peggys and Ellas of the world deserve a closer look. Could anti-bullying programs be more successful if they dropped their primary focus on bullies and victims and instead took aim directly at the sidekicks and other key members of the bully's posse? After all, if a supportive audience is what fuels the bully, wouldn't the sidekicks be the most logical place to try to choke off that oxygen supply? (continued on next page)

Summer tasks for high school seniors

June

- Plan for college transportation.
- Notify your high school guidance office of your college selection and any scholarships received.
- Follow up with the financial aid office to ensure all paperwork is complete.

July

- Save money from your summer job.
- Send "thank you notes" to everyone who helped you plan and prepare for college.
- Make copies of your financial aid forms, health forms, etc for your files to aid in resolving future issues.

There's been lots of talk lately about anti-bullying programs. How could there not be, after all the horrifying details that emerged following the suicide of South Hadley teenager Phoebe Prince. And there will be lots more talk now that the Massachusetts Legislature has approved a bullying bill requiring schools to implement prevention and intervention programs. The available programs vary widely, as do the people behind them, who range from self-promoting, self-proclaimed experts, offering little more than buzzwords, bromides, and books for sale, to thoughtful, committed educators determined to do the hard work to protect other kids like Phoebe. But here's what has gotten lost amid all the legislation and finger-pointing: None of the current anti-bullying programs, despite their fanfare, have been successful in reducing actual bullying among American students in any meaningful way.

Researchers from the University of Oregon, led by Kenneth Merrell, conducted a meta-analysis – a review statistically combining the results of many earlier studies – that examined the effectiveness of bullying intervention programs in the United States and Europe across a 25-year period. Their results, published in 2008, could hardly have been more depressing. While they found that some programs produced modest improvements in students' attitudes about bullying and in their feelings of social competence, they found none that demonstrated a significant reduction in bullying behavior. In fact, the researchers found that “the average teacher actually reported more bullying after intervention than before.”

A separate meta-analysis by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention found better results, but that 2008 report was less rigorous than Merrell's. In general, European researchers have reported more optimistic findings, particularly in Norway, the nation that pioneered bullying studies and intervention. But Dorothy Espelage, a professor of educational psychology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, says there's no scientific evidence to show that strategies developed for Norway's homogeneous population actually work for the population here, especially given its diversity. Nonetheless, the Norwegian model has somehow become the gold standard for federal officials evaluating bullying prevention programs in the United States.

Espelage is a leading American authority on bullying and definitely someone who falls into that category of thoughtful, committed educators. Yet, after 17 years in the field, she admits, “It's a mess. I want to bang my head against the wall.”

Still, she remains on the hunt. The Phoebe Prince case is just the latest evidence of the deadly consequences that bullying can have – consequences that have led to homicide as well as suicide. Research has shown that bullying victims are more likely to bring weapons to school, and many of the students behind school shootings like Columbine had been repeat victims of bullying.

Defined as deliberate and repeated acts of aggression and intimidation against someone less powerful, bullying has traditionally intensified during the middle school years, when a child's peer groups tend to become more influential than parents or teachers. While bullying is certainly not new, and researchers debate whether it's more prevalent, there's no question that the chances of it escalating are now higher, thanks to technology. A generation ago, a seventh-grade girl might have dreaded walking into school, convinced that all of her classmates would have instantly heard about some embarrassment she had suffered. Of course, that was just adolescent paranoia at work. Today, her paranoia is justified. By the time she steps off the bus, everyone has been able to read the embarrassing details on somebody's Facebook wall.

The speed and ferocity with which rumors and cutting remarks are now spread, thanks to social networking, has transformed cyber-bullying from an ancillary concern to something entwined with the core problem. Yet most bullying prevention programs are based on research and thinking formulated during the era before the Internet, or at least before social networking tools took hold, says Elizabeth Englander, who directs the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center in Bridgewater. That's like trying to develop strategies to reduce highway deaths based on data from horse-and-buggy accidents.

So we need to think a lot more creatively and rigorously about how to combat bullying. One strategy gaining a good deal of traction involves bystander training. The thinking is that we can reduce bullying by encouraging uninvolved students to step in to protest when they see it happening. You can understand the logic just by imagining a school corridor scene: A bully taunts another student as a thicket of classmates looks on, the laughter and hoots mounting. The bully has no incentive to change, since he derives social status from putting on this display of power. The victim has little ability to change, since he is too intimidated by the taunting. The bystanders would seem to hold the power to change the dynamic. If the bully were suddenly to lose his audience or see the crowd turn on him, he would seem much more likely to pull back.

Steve Tower is wearing a navy suit, but the 6-foot-2 guest is flying around this fifth-grade classroom with the same intensity as when he's wearing sweats on the practice court, coaching a college basketball team. Tower is a youth health coordinator with Massachusetts General Hospital. The 41-year-old has come to the colorfully decorated classroom in the Warren/Prescott K-8 School as part of a pilot [anti-bullying curriculum](#) launched this year in Charlestown. Wisely, he doesn't use the word *bullying* until two-thirds of the way into his presentation.

He divides the students into four groups, unleashing the din of desk chairs being dragged along a linoleum floor. He hands each group a copy of the same photograph. It shows a handsome boy wearing the uniform of his youth football team. The smiling boy is 11 and would easily fit into this Charlestown classroom. "Write down as many things about what you imagine that person in the picture is like," Tower tells the kids. "Be as creative as possible." The kids start with obvious characteristics. "He's African-American." "He likes playing football." Soon they move on to assumptions. "He likes video games." "He has lots of friends."

Knowing a fast pace is the way to keep the attention of 11-year-olds, Tower quickly shifts into a discussion about how leadership means making smart choices. Then comes a role-playing exercise in which he whips out his cell phone and pretends to text nasty things about one of the teacher's aides. He goes to the chalk board to point out the arithmetic behind bullying: one bully, one victim, and, after counting heads in the class, he writes "25 bystanders," circling the last data point for emphasis. Just by their sheer number, he says, the bystanders hold the key to stopping bullying, if they do the right thing.

"Is that easy?" he asks.

"No," comes the chorus from the class.

They talk about the options for intervening, from telling the bully to stop to letting a teacher or parent know. This segues into another exercise called “Agree-Disagree.” Tower makes a statement – “Some kids deserve to be picked on or teased” – and tells the fifth-graders to walk to the left side of the room if they agree and the right side if they disagree. He’s not surprised to see a few unlikely boys among the handful of students lining up on the “Agree” side. When he gave the same presentation to a different class, he watched as a boy sheepishly crossed the room to the “Agree” side, prompting one of the girls in the class to ask him, “Why are you going over there? You’re one of the kids being bullied.” Some victims can become so intimidated by bullies that they have to pretend publicly to support their victimizers. He tries to expose the flaws in each rationalization for the “Agree” argument.

As the minutes wind down, Tower tells the students, “Remember that picture I gave you in the beginning?” He holds up the photo of the 11-year-old boy in the football uniform and begins rattling off the many descriptions of him that the kids had come up with. “He likes pizza, dogs, loves birds, hates the rain – I hate the rain – he loves outdoors, he’s strong, he hopes to play in the NFL when he gets older, he’s a cool kid.” Tower waves around the photo once more. “All of these things are very true. This is Carl Walker-Hoover. He’s actually from Springfield, Mass. He’s a great kid.”

Then Tower holds up a different photo, one that causes several of the fifth-graders to gasp. “This is him.” The photo shows a silver casket.

“He’s dead?” one of the boys asks.

“Yes.”

“How’d he die?” asks a girl.

“He was bullied,” Tower says, explaining that some boys accused Carl of being gay, even though he wasn’t, and then mercilessly taunted him. “And no one, *no one*, did anything. There were no *leaders* in that bystander group. And because no one did anything, this great kid hung himself.”

As an example of bystander training, Tower’s presentation did several things right: He established a strong connection with the kids and managed to open their eyes. Crucially, he also acknowledged that intervening isn’t easy. Too often, bystander intervention is preached without any real recognition of the high social costs that bystanders risk by choosing to get involved. As a result, the whole approach can seem hopelessly simplistic. Take, for example, the bullying materials the Massachusetts Medical Society puts out for parents. “Teach your child how to help without getting hurt,” the materials advise. “Your child might say, ‘Cool it! This isn’t going to solve anything.’”

Really, can you imagine any better guarantee for turning a bystander into a victim than by encouraging him to yell “*Cool it!*” to a bully in a crowded corridor? And when was that last time you even heard that phrase come out of the mouth of someone under the age of 34? More realistic and practical advice might simply be to get the bystanders to walk away, denying the bully an audience without drawing a target on their backs.

Espelage, the University of Illinois researcher, agrees with the notion that bystanders can play an important role by getting involved, or even by walking away, but she points to data suggesting that “adolescents rarely intervene to assist victims.” That could be the bystander approach’s Achilles’ heel. For a better understanding of the forces at work, Espelage and two colleagues recently completed a fascinating study that examines middle schoolers’ willingness to intervene, with a particular eye on whether they had a bully within their circle of friends. Their paper, which is under review, offers some sobering results. They found that if a boy had a bully within his circle, his willingness to intervene was close to zero. Interestingly, they found that girls’ willingness to intervene appeared to be unconnected to whether they could count a bully as one of their friends.

Understanding this gender gap was beyond the scope of their paper, but work by other researchers on gender norms among middle schoolers offers some possible clues. Girls now vigorously compete with boys in sports, academics, and other pursuits, so the definition of being female and the range of gender-appropriate behavior for them are wider than they’ve ever been. But sociologists Barbara Risman and Elizabeth Seale have found that the range of socially acceptable behavior for boys among their peers is narrower than ever, perhaps because they’re more motivated to protect their remaining turf as a result of the increased competition from girls. And boys who don’t conform to those standards of masculinity are likely to be labeled gay. Homophobic-fueled bullying is the most devastatingly effective tool that boys use to enforce these restrictions on one another. And any boy who steps in to defend a classmate being bullied for acting “queer,” or who even just declines to cheer on that taunting, instantly makes himself vulnerable to those same slurs.

Where does this leave us? Back to sidekicks. We know that with bullying intervention, the least effective programs are the most generic. Even in a field where nothing much is working, the broad “whole school” assembly-type approaches are notable for their abject failure. And we know that, although it happens far too rarely, when kids around the bully intervene, the bullying is much more likely to stop. So the real goal must be to boost those willingness-to-intervene levels among students. Following the premise that the more targeted the approach, the better, it stands to reason that converting the kids closest to the bully would have the biggest effect. After all, even if other bystanders step in, as long as bullies maintain the support of their sidekicks and other close friends, that should be enough oxygen to keep fueling their behavior. And there is more hope for reforming the behavior of sidekicks than the bullies. Bullies derive power from their behavior, but like the girls in those Disney flicks, sidekicks often base their support for the bully less on principle than on fear.

At this point, there’s not a lot of science to back the sidekick approach. But when I ran it by Espelage, she agreed, saying, “It would be more fruitful to target those bystanders who are actively contributing to the bullying in a different way than those who are less integrated and just looking on.” And there are some promising signs, notably in Finland. Researchers there have developed a program called KiVa, which identifies the various roles students play and then targets those students actively involved in bullying – ringleaders, sidekicks, and victims – putting them through a series of discussions. Admittedly, Finland, like Norway, lacks the diversity of the United States. But psychologist Christina Salmivalli, a KiVa co-leader, says one large-scale Finnish study found KiVa had reduced bullying more than any other program evaluated as rigorously. Researchers from the University of Kansas plan to test KiVa in US schools to see if its positive results hold up here.

Granted, it won’t be easy to change the behavior of sidekicks, especially boys, given their particularly low willingness to intervene if they can count a bully among their friends. But since the anti-bullying programs now in circulation have thoroughly failed to move the meter, a sidekick strategy seems like a smart investment.

Doing it well would require a school staff acutely attuned to the social landscape in its corridors and willing to confront bullying head-on, with a fearless focus on the ring of students most closely orbiting the bully. The next Phoebe Prince will need that support.

Neil Swidey is a Globe Magazine staff writer.

Guidance/Counseling Related Dates

14

High School

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| AP's End | May 12 |
| Interim Progress Reports | May 14 (end of interim period) |
| High School Academic Awards | May 20 |
| National Honor Society Inductions | May 27 |

Middle School

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Second Language Proficiency Oral Exams | May 19 & 20 |
| NYS Science Assessments (Grades 4 & 8) | May 25 June 3 |

Elementary

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| AS Kindergarten Parent Orientation | May 20 |
|------------------------------------|--------|

School District Election & Budget Votes

HS Gymnasium

7:00 AM-9:00 PM