Obesity and Bullying

Spreading Awareness and Putting a Stop to Bullying for Obese Students

Tag Words: Obesity, Bullying

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Summary

Childhood obesity percentages have increased throughout America. More and more children who are obese face the unlawful act of being bullied. Children who are obese and are being bullied, should be aware that there are laws and modes to follow, so they can stop what is happening to them. Most importantly programs should be provided to students with information to decrease bullying in schools. I have created a new program titled “A week of Anti-Bullying,” for schools to implement, to decrease bullying.

Video Link

Obesity and Bullying: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpeYeMFOARg
The Issue: Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity has increased dramatically over the years. Children across America have become less active and have unhealthy eating habits. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention defining childhood obesity can be determined by configuring a child’s BMI by their age and sex. Unlike an adult’s BMI, which are determined by height and weight, a child’s BMI has to considered their sex and age because body composition varies with those factors. A BMI for children that is above the 95th percentile is considered to be an obese child (CDC).

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*Overweight is defined as body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile of the 2000 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sex specific BMI-for-age growth charts (http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts).

Statistics show, “Adult obesity rates increased in 23 states and did not decrease in a single state in the past year, according to F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America 2009, a report released today by the Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)” (Healthy). This epidemic has affected millions of children nationwide. In New Jersey alone, childhood obesity has effected a great number of children, “New Jersey has the 10th lowest rate of adult obesity in the nation, at 23.4 percent and the 23rd highest of overweight youths (ages 10-17) at 31.0 percent, according to a new report by Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)” (Healthy). These statistics clearly show how important this epidemic is.

Below is a link where you can find map of the United States and it’s percentages in each state of obesity for adults and children.

http://healthyamericans.org/reports/obesity2009/

Children who are obese face major psychological effects. According to aboutourkids.org, “The most immediate consequence of being overweight as perceived by children themselves is social
discrimination and low-self-esteem.” Bullying alone can cause children to become depressed. Children who are obese wish not to participate in gym activities, have increased depression, and are more than likely to be bullied. Children who are bullied dread going to school or participating with other children in activities.

Children, who are bullied from being obese, or of different ethnic background, or just from being different, tend to be a social outcast. A study done by Julie Lumeng, an assistant researcher at Health Growth and Development, found that 63% of obese children are bullied (US News). These children will do anything to get that attention they yearn. These psychological effects can lead children to perform unthinkable events. On April 20th, 1999, two students who attended Columbine High School killed 12 students and a teacher. The students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were bullied by students at the school and were out to seek revenge (Bullying). Most recently, at our very own institute, Rutgers University, a freshmen student, Tyler Clementi committed suicide because he was secretly videotaped. Clementi was of different sexual orientation and unfortunately took his own life because of bullying. It is very unfortunate to lose young adults and children due to bullying.

Due to the recent lost of Tyler Clementi; New Jersey has decided to pass an Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights. Many will question how effective the bill will be and how much will it be enforced. The assistant secretary of Civil Rights, Russlynn Ali wrote a letter to address to colleague, where she stated how unlawful harassment of students who are of different sexual orientation, national origin, and disability (Letter). Using this information, those who are bullied because of their obesity can create a case for the unlawful act. Children who feel uncomfortable going to school or even worse, are scared to be around students who treat them terrible, should fight for their right to be treated better.

Rutgers University has also created a program called Project Civility to address the issues of bullying on the collegiate level. Project Civility is a two-year dialogue “Featuring a wide array of discussions, lectures, and student-driven activities, Project Civility engages faculty, students, and all Rutgers personnel in an ongoing inquiry about the nature of true respect for others- an inquiry that demands our openness to hear, to learn, to teach, and to change” (Project Civility).

There are multiple resources that one can use to bring their case of being a victim of bullying, to the courts. In the past adults have used Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In the act it states that a person cannot be discriminated based on race, color, national origin, or sex (Civil). This act also helps adults defend themselves when they were discriminated based on their weight.
Bullying for children who are obese can be stopped. Starting in the school environment would be the first step. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, school districts are entitled to experiment with different programs or role-playing (Bullying). There is not one set program for all school districts to maintain as school policy. In New Jersey, alone there are 604 school districts (Date Facts). Trying to implement programs for bullying would have to be tackled one district at a time.

As for children, there are laws and models to follow when presenting a case to the courts. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has models that students can use in the situation. Model Policy and Guidance for the Prohibiting Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying on School Property, at School-Sponsored Functions and on School Buses, states guidelines to follow if a child is bullied under these circumstances (Bullying).

**The Service Project: Programs and Awareness**

One may ask, what can be done to decrease bullying? Implementing programs, having students and parents be acknowledged on the issue, and awareness of the subject are some suggestions. Parents, most importantly, should be aware of what is happening at school and the involvement of their child. If their child is being bullied as school there should be a template for them to reference.

I based most of my community service project on the statement that was made in part five of the bullying model NJDOE has on their website. “The school district is encouraged to use experiential learning techniques, such as role play situations and other demonstration and modeling strategies in its information activities for students and staff designed to prevent and remediate problem behaviors” (Bullying). Being that there is no set program for all school districts to follow, creating a program for one school district would be a start. Hopefully the program is successful and will encourage other school districts to participate.

There are 604 districts in New Jersey, helping one school district at a time to apply the program would be the best way to stop bullying (Data Facts). Starting at a local district, the school district of New Brunswick, I tried to enforce my new program of “A Week of Anti-Bullying.” This program was to be presented to the superintendent of the district, Richard Kaplan and hopefully be enforced in elementary schools in the school district. I would have interviewed the superintendent and presented my program to him. I would have asked him only three questions:

1. What programs does the school district of New Brunswick have for anti-bullying? How well are they enforced?

2. Now that New Jersey is in the means of producing a Bill of Rights for anti-bullying, what are the schools (preferably secondary) in New Brunswick doing to instill the Bill of Rights?

3. The New Jersey Department of Education has stated under MODEL POLICY AND GUIDANCE FOR PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING ON SCHOOL PROPERTY, AT SCHOOL-SPONSORED FUNCTIONS
AND ON SCHOOL BUSES in part 5 that “The school district is encouraged to use experiential learning techniques, such as role play situations and other demonstration and modeling strategies in its information activities for students and staff designed to prevent and remediate problem behaviors” (bullying) How do you feel about creating a new program? I have created called a Week of Anti-Bullying, would you consider using this program?

In order to be able to interview Mr. Kaplan I had to fax his secretary a letter of permission. Below is the letter that was sent to Mr. Richard Kaplan.

Dear Richard Kaplan,

My name is Sasha Williams; I am currently a Rutgers student who is doing a project on “Childhood Obesity and Bullying.” I am taking called Ethics in Science and Society and we are to construct a project and present it to the class. For my topic I would like to interview you, asking only three questions. The interview will be recorded by video, and will be shown to students in the class. Below are the questions:

1. What programs does the school district of New Brunswick have for anti-bullying? How well are they enforced?

2. Now that New Jersey is in the means of producing a Bill of Rights for anti-bullying, what are the schools (preferably secondary) in New Brunswick doing to instill the Bill of Rights?

3. The New Jersey Department of Education has stated under MODEL POLICY AND GUIDANCE FOR PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING ON SCHOOL PROPERTY, AT SCHOOL-SPONSORED FUNCTIONS AND ON SCHOOL BUSES, in part 5 that “The school district is encouraged to use experiential learning techniques, such as role play situations and other demonstration and modeling strategies in its information activities for students and staff designed to prevent and remediate problem behaviors” How do you feel about creating a new program? I have created called a Week of Anti-Bullying, would you consider using this program?

Along with these questions I also have a PowerPoint to present to you about the new program. Hope you will consider the interview and also take the time to view this wonderful new program. You can contact me by email sashawil@eden.rutgers.edu. Thank you.

Sasha Williams

After two weeks of trying to get a response, I was told that my permission to interview him was denied. Being that there is an abundance of different school districts in New Jersey, I’ve chose to seek a different school district to try and implement the new program. I feel that it is crucial to implement this program so that those children who are being bullied have the resources to make it a case as well as programs to decrease those being bullied.
Richard Kaplan agreed to have my video sent to him because of his busy schedule.

Being a graduate from West Orange High School, I decided to try and interview the superintendent of West Orange School District. In the West Orange school district there are over five elementary schools. Therefore implementing my new program will be beneficial to the students, as well as to the teachers. Interviewing the superintendent, Anthony Cavanna, and presenting my new program will hopefully help children, as well as parents and teachers, become aware to bullying of obese children. The superintendent of the West Orange School district was sent a copy of my video and will hopefully implement this wonderful new program.

My program of “A week of Anti-Bullying” includes a 5 daylong event with fun activities and inspirational quotes for children to follow. Teachers are asked to present each topic in homeroom. The first day is for awareness; it addresses what bullying is so that students know what can be harmful to other students. Children will be given examples of name-calling and other harmful actions so that they can understand what bullying is. The second day is called an “Act of kindness”. The children will be given examples of acts of kindness and will have to perform five acts of kindness that day. An act of kindness may include helping someone who is struggling in math class when another student is doing well, or helping someone carry their books. An “Act of Courage” is on the third day. The students are given the inspirational quote; “When you feel like giving up, remember why you held on long in the first place –unknown” (Inspirational). To help those who are bullied students are asked to inspire others when they are feeling down. They are asked to recite the quote to their neighbors and to themselves. On the fourth day of a “Week of Anti-Bullying” the day is called an “Act of Respect” students are asked to be thankful and respect others. They are to perform five acts of respect; this includes saying thank you and/or complimenting other students. On the final day of the week “Loving Yourself/Becoming Healthy” students are given another inspirational quote “Reach high, for stars lie hidden in your soul. Dream deep, for every dream precedes the goal -Ralph Vaull Starr” (Greatest). Students are asked to have this quote available to look at, either on their desk or their cubby. Teachers are also more than welcome to have both quotes up in their classroom. The students will also be given three healthy tips. These tips include:

1. Eat a colorful plate. Have vegetables for dinner
2. Exercise. Walk more, go outside and play a sport you love
3. Eat healthy snacks, leave the chips and pick up the apple

By the end of the week the students should have a basic knowledge on how to treat others to decrease and stop bullying.
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Bullying and its Horrific Effects

Obesity has been an epidemic in the United States for a couple of years now. It is becoming increasingly prevalent to people in the US. More adults are suffering from obesity, but more importantly children are suffering as well. There are more children in the US that are eating less healthy and performing fewer activities. People in America should acquaint themselves with this issue. We as a collective can help stop this epidemic of obesity.

Along with obesity come its consequences. Children who are obese are more likely to be bullied. Children face psychological effects such as low self-esteem and depression. If we were to help these children by helping them become healthier and uplifting their spirits, we can end to this issue. Students have been brought to their breaking point and have gone far enough to where they have committed suicide. The rates of students who are bullied in relation to committing suicide have increased over the years. I personally think that we should try and put a stop to bullying, for the sake of students.

Bullying also targets students who are of different religions, race, and even sexual orientation. Rutgers has recently experienced a terrible lost in September. A student, Tyler Clementi was secretly video taped while he was with his guest. Due to this incident, NJ is considering on passing a new anti-bullying bill of rights. Students may wonder how effective this law may be. Is it fine to have a policy if they don’t deal with the complaints? What good is the policy? We shall see how this law may take effect.

Sasha Williams