

Youth Voice Project

The Youth Voice Project asks students about their level of school connectedness, frequency of relationally, verbally, and physically aggressive behaviors they have seen and experienced, and the effectiveness of different strategies used to address the aggressive behaviors.

Charisse Nixon & Stan Davis

Youth Voice Project

Fall 2009

From the Wingspread Declaration

“Students are more likely to succeed when they feel connected to school. School connection is the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. The critical requirements for feeling connected include students’ experiencing

** High academic expectations and rigor coupled with support for learning,*

** Positive adult/student relationships,*

** Physical and emotional safety.*

Increasing the number of students connected to school is likely to influence critical accountability measures, such as

** Academic performance, incidence of fighting, bullying, or vandalism, absenteeism, & school completion rates.*

Strong scientific evidence demonstrates that increased student connection to school promotes motivation, classroom engagement, improved school attendance.

The most effective strategies for increasing the likelihood that students will be connected to school include...

** Creating trusting relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators, and families.*

The Youth Voice Project is based in part on a summary of research on school connectedness called the Wingspread Declaration, created by a group of education leaders in 2004 (<http://www.jhsph.edu/wingspread/Septemberissue.pdf>).



The Youth Voice Project asks students about their levels of (1) **school connectedness**, (2) **peer victimization** (bystanders & targets), and (3) **staff responsiveness**. This report includes 3,510 students in grades 5 – 12.

This report outlines some of your school’s results. When the national study is completed, you will receive a parallel report based on data collected from *all* the schools in the project.

Youth Voice Project

Culver City Unified School District

School Connectedness

Students’ data were analyzed by **gender**, **grade level** (elem., middle & high school), and **special education** status (yes or no). *Only significant effects are discussed.*

(1) “I feel close to adults at my school.”

Your results show that overall, 45% of students feel close to an adult at school, while 30% are unsure and 25% do not.

Grade level effects? Yes!

Results from your data show a linear trend with elementary students feeling the closest to adults at school and HS students feeling the least close to adults at school.

Special Education effects?

Yes! Across grade level and gender, those students receiving special education services reported feeling less close to adults at school.

Gender effects? No.



(2) “I feel like I am part of this school.”

Your results show that overall, students do feel part of their school (81%), while 13% are unsure and 6% do not feel part of their school.

Are there grade level effects?

Yes! Consistent with other national studies, your data shows a linear trend with students in elementary school feeling more part of their school than students in middle or high school.

Gender effects? Yes. At all three levels (elem., middle & HS), females report feeling more a part of their school than males.

(3) “I feel valued and respected at school.”

Your results show that the majority of students feel valued and respected at school (72%). Approximately 9% do NOT feel valued and respected and 19% of the students are unsure.

Grade level effects were found.

Your results suggest that students in middle school feel more valued and respected than elementary and HS students.

Future Directions:

Continue successful efforts in providing opportunities for students to feel part of their school.

Consider creative strategies to help students develop meaningful relationships with adults at school, particularly for secondary students and students receiving special education services.

Develop intentional strategies to communicate value and respect to all students.

Connect special education students

WHERE is the peer victimization occurring?

'Hot spots'

Across grade levels, the top three places are:

- HALLWAYS**
- CAFETERIA**
- CLASSROOMS**



Why focus on the Bystander?

Recent work (see Janosz et al., 2008) suggests that considering bystanders is as important as studying targets for the following reasons:

- ★ **Witnessing** aggression has been identified as a public health issue.
- ★ **Witnessing** aggression is a **STRONGER** risk factor of adolescent adjustment than actual victimization.
- ★ **Witnessing** aggression can promote feelings of powerlessness and fear - which can further result in avoidance behavior.

Targets

Summary of Target Data
Direct Peer Victimization

Relational Victimization: Your results revealed that across all grade levels ~ **1 in 5 students reported being excluded or emotionally hurt** by another student or students on a regular basis.

Gender effects were found with females reporting more relational victimization in elementary school.

Physical Victimization: Results also showed that about ~ **1 in 11 students reported being physically victimized** on a regular basis. No grade level effects were found. However, males receiving special education services were more likely to be physically victimized.

Frequency of Peer Victimization

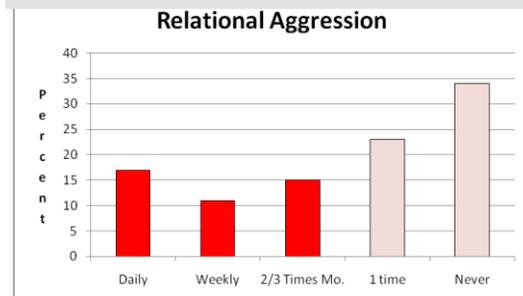
This next section looks at various forms of peer victimization (relational, verbal & physical) from two different perspectives; (1) **Bystander:** "How often did you see/ hear the victimization?" and (2) **Target:** "How often did it happen to you?" Both perspectives are important in predicting student adjustment.

Bystanders

Relational Aggression (RA)

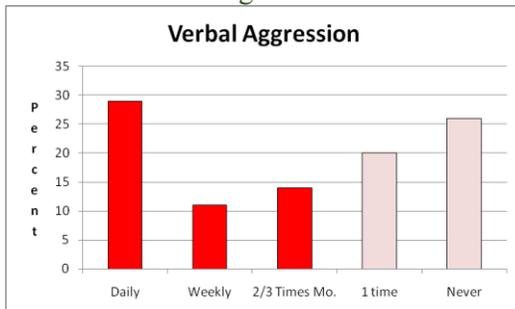
Students were asked... "How often did you see or hear rumor-spreading, exclusion, or students working together to be mean to someone?"

Regular exposure ~ Refers to students' reports of victimization of at least 2 to 3 times a month or more (similar to Olweus's work).



~ 43% of students were regularly exposed to RA

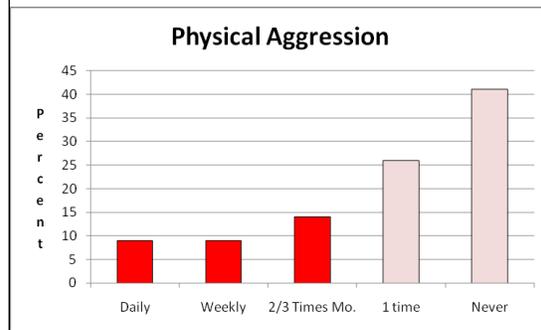
"How often do you see/hear name calling or threatening comments?"



~ 54% of students were regularly exposed to VA



"How often did you see hitting/kicking?"



~ 32% of students were regularly exposed to PA

Staff Responsiveness



Students' perception of adult responsiveness is an important process variable reflecting school climate.

Students who reported that others' actions were having a moderate to severe impact on them were asked what helps them when people at school hurt them or make them feel unsafe.

Question: "What happened when you told an adult at school?" Did things get better? Worse? Or no change?

Your results:

- Approximately **69%** of these students **did not tell an adult** at school.
- ~ **12%** **told an adult** at school and things **got better**.
- ~ **8%** of these students **told an adult** at school and things **got worse**.
- 11% told an adult and things did **not change**.

* Important to look at ratio between "things got better" to "things got worse."

Future Directions:

Consider intervention/prevention efforts to reduce *relational* and *verbal* victimization (e.g., intentional educational efforts).

Consider creating meaningful ways for students to connect with adults at school [69% of students did *not* tell an adult about victimization].

Monitor "hot spots."

