



## Reducing Cultural Bullying in Schools



By Dr. Derrick R. Campbell, Ed.D.

School staff members who lack cultural sensitivity place school districts at the risk of cultural bullying lawsuits.

Bullying begins when a student singles out another student because of differences. Those differences could be skin color, hair texture, eye shape, ethnicity, and other distinguishable features and behaviors. The bully may then resort to name calling or taunting and directing their anger towards the victim's ethnic group and family.

Many teachers may see this type of discrimination as normal and a natural part of growing up and therefore become indifferent when the bullying occurs.

In most cases, the source of their indifference is the biases that they have learned from childhood to adulthood. Many teacher biases are consistent with school expectations and when confronted about these biases the teacher is apt to become defensive and blame their inability to decipher the cultural bullying on the school, or the school district's diversity training. Also, the teacher may continue to displace themselves from cultural accusations by blaming the students, parents, and administration.

This pattern sends the wrong message to students and parents. Students who are bullies now become empowered by the ineffectiveness of the school district. This empowerment will cause other students to support the bully which will have an impact on the entire culture of the school and result in violence by the perpetrators or violence by the victim.

Victims of bullying are often reluctant to attend school which affects

merely impacts student achievement and the bullying experience may result in long-term depression, low self-esteem, health problems, and suicidal thoughts. When this disempowerment continues the victim may only feel comfortable around students of their own ethnicity or beliefs and continue to increase their distrust for school officials and staff members.

Parents who complain about cultural bullying may find themselves in an uphill battle when schools officials and teachers determine that their complaints are unfounded. This may cause the parent to feel that their only alternative is to file a lawsuit.

Schools can avoid cultural bullying lawsuits by providing teachers with diversity training that allows for growth. When the school district implements a process that allows teachers to grow and learn from the biases that they bring to the classroom then teachers are less likely to become defensive when faced with determining cultural bullying issues. This also provides teachers an opportunity to level the playing ground. Teachers are the best candidates for this type of training because they have more contact with the students. When students know that teachers have and accept cultural respect and tolerance for all students, students are more likely to accept and respect students from all cultural backgrounds and beliefs.

Overcoming cultural bullying requires the following process:

1. Evaluate school disciplinary practices to determine culturally biases.
2. Interview teachers, students, and parents.
3. Recruit a team of teachers to implement the transition.
4. Allow the teachers to determine academic and disciplinary strategies that show respect for all students in the school.
5. Share the results with the entire staff.
6. Recruit the entire staff to implement strategies.