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—Barbara Sprung, co-director of the Educational Equity Center at AED



‘Quit it!’

Promotes Civility and Respect in the Early Grades



BY MICHELLE GALLEY

Name calling, mocking, pushing, and shoving are forms of conflict that occur in every classroom and on every playground in the United States. These and other forms of bullying are pervasive problems, and research shows that it can have a negative effect on children’s learning, health, and social development, and can seriously disrupt learning environments.

To address teasing and bullying proactively in the early years, the Educational Equity Center at AED created “Quit it!,” a schoolwide program targeted at pre-kindergarten through third-grade classrooms.

“The seeds for conflict are sown in childhood,” said Barbara Sprung, co-director of the Educational Equity Center at AED. “Bullying and teasing are particularly troubling in the early years because they can lead to more dangerous behavior—such as sexual harassment, hate crimes, and other forms of violence—later in life.”

‘IT TAKES A TEAM’

To teach students to treat each other with respect and civility, “Quit it!” integrates the topic

of teasing and bullying into the daily life of the classroom.

The literacy-based curriculum includes such developmentally appropriate activities as reading and discussion, experience charts, art projects, creative writing, role-playing, mapmaking, and graphing.

It also includes intensive professional development for teachers, workshops for nonprofessional school personnel, and outreach to parents to ensure that they carry out the program’s strategies at home.

“We believe that it takes a team to combat bullying and teasing,” said Merle Froshl, co-director of the Educational Equity Center (EEC) at AED. “That’s why administrators, teachers, other school personnel, and parents all work together when they implement our curriculum.”

A RESEARCH-BASED APPROACH

Working in collaboration with the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women in New York and Massachusetts schools, and the Bank Street College of Education, EEC at AED created a research protocol that included classroom

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observations, interviews with children, and focus groups with teachers and parents to determine the nature and extent of teasing and bullying among students in kindergarten through 3rd grade.

The research, which was funded by the U.S. Department of Education, showed that:

- Teachers and other adults did not intervene most of the time, and in many cases, they felt unprepared to say or do anything helpful.
- Teasing and bullying were pervasive in the early grades.
- Boys were the primary initiators of these behaviors, although both boys and girls were equal recipients.
- Gender plays a subtle but important role in teasing and bullying behavior.

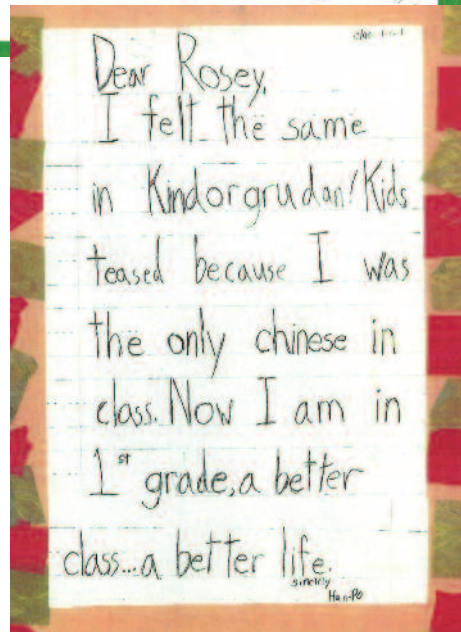
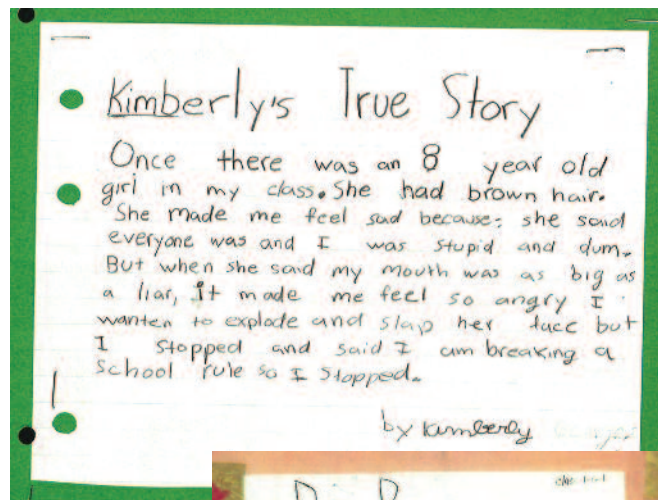
PROGRAM PROVES EFFECTIVE

Schools in Manhattan, New Jersey, and Connecticut implemented the resulting schoolwide model, which includes *Quit it! A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Students* in grades K-3, and companion CD-ROMs.

Evaluations done at those schools indicate that the program was effective. Teasing and bullying decreased by 35 percent, and adult involvement in preventing those incidents more than doubled.

Additional results include:

- Staff recognized that adult mediation is an effective intervention strategy.
- Fewer staff saw teasing and bullying as a serious problem in their school.



- More staff perceived that students were aware of the issue and were equipped with effective strategies for dealing with it.

As one teacher put it, "'Quit it!' changed the whole climate of my classroom. It used to take me half an hour after recess to resolve issues, but now the kids are better able to resolve their issues themselves, and I have more time to teach."

More information on "Quit it!" can be found at www.edequity.org or by contacting Barbara Sprung at bsprung@aed.org or Merle Froschl at mfroschl@aed.org

Michelle Galley is a senior writer for AED.

"[Make] each person feel important."

MICHELE ROVINS
Senior Project Director,
AED Disabilities
Studies and
Services Center



Making each person feel important and valued is the best thing anyone can do. In our work with children, youth, and adults who have disabilities, we have learned that generalizations don't work. That's why we focus on understanding each individual's unique needs.

It is also important to take the time to communicate and listen, even if you can't understand what the other person is saying. Listening to a person's ideas—whether they are said directly or through a sign language interpreter or a communication device—gives that person the power to change his or her world.

It can be tempting to take what you know and come up with a solution to a person's problem. But taking the time to communicate directly, and listen to what the person believes in, shows that you care about his or her thoughts and wishes. This process goes a long way toward creating a culture of dialogue and respect.



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