Anti-Bullying Interventions

The bullying that students, parents, and educators face today differs from that of earlier years in part because of young people's access to more lethal forms of aggression.

Bullying is a specific subset of hostile aggression in which:

1). There is an imbalance of power with a more powerful person or group attacking a less powerful one.
2). A behavior is intended to disturb or harm.
3.) The behavior occurs repeatedly over time.

The aggressive behavior may be verbal (e.g., threats, name calling), psychological (e.g., exclusion, rumors), or physical (e.g., hitting, kicking).
Males are more likely than girls to be the victims and perpetrators of bullying. Girls normatively use relational aggression to bully their victims.
Young people who are bullied generally show higher levels of anxiety, depression, and unhappiness, and display significant behavioral difficulties even two years after the bullying.

An effective way of dealing with bullying is to develop a system-wide plan to significantly reduce bullying. This plan needs to consider interventions with specific people in bullying. This includes the victims, bullies, parents and the bystanders who observe the victimization and bullying.

Have a plan that gives a clear agreed upon definition of bullying and make a plan for action. Answers to these questions:

Does the plan develop an effective way to eliminate or reduce student-to-student put-downs?
Are there many opportunities for students to be recognized for pro-social behaviors, positive behaviors as opportunities to be recognized for anti-social and negative behaviors?
Does the plan promote student random acts of kindness?
Is support of faculty and staff there to back up efforts to identify and halt bullying?

The purpose of a school-wide plan is to change the context in which bullying occurs. Norms of looking the other way, intermittent punishment, and classroom Darwinism must be changed to norms of attending to bullying incidents, consistent application of consequences, and the fostering of a strong sense of community within every classroom.