

DISCOURAGING BULLYING IN OUR SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Bullying is a common scholar experience. Teachers, parents and students must work together to eradicate it. Based on the reality of Jaime Hilario Integrated School-La Salle (JHIS-LS) at Philippines, the author discusses about teachers and students concern with Bullying. It offers some useful characteristics, taking in account the perspective of victims and the role of teachers inside the scholar spaces. Finally it presents a project to prevent the Bullying in JHIS-LS based on the Lasallian heritage.

Key-words: Lasallian School, bullying, victim, civility, vigilance, Lasallian heritage.

Introduction

A short description of JHIS-LS in Bagac Bataan

Recently, a couple was summoned to the Principal's office regarding their son. The couple was distressed since their son was involved in a very grievous misdemeanor. In their mind, they have done everything to raise their son well, yet, here was their son who was caught in possession of a knife in school, with the self-confessed intention of using it against a classmate. At first glance, it would seem that this boy is a hooligan who is up to no good. It would have been all too easy to just apply the rules as stated in the school handbook. During the initial interview, however, the faculty member in charge of guidance and counseling discovered that the child brought the knife to defend himself against another student. The parents were right about how they brought up their son, but, the sheer terror of facing a stronger and potentially violent classmate drove this boy to bring a knife to class.

The story above is a true story and similar stories are happening in schools all over the world. This particular incident happened in a small school in the town of Bagac.

Jaime Hilario Integrated School-La Salle, henceforth JHIS-LS, is located in the town of Bagac in the province of Bataan in the Philippines. It is the youngest Lasallian School in the Philippines, being founded only in the year 2006. This school was founded to educate children from low income homes: children of fisher folk, day-laborers, and market vendors. JHIS-LS aims to bring

quality Lasallian and Catholic education to these people who did not have such. Currently, the school has a total population of about 260 students with 15 faculty and staff members.

JHIS-LS is a beautiful school. It is found along one of the shores that border the West Philippine Sea on one side and the vast Bataan mountain range of the other. The students are pleasant, polite and thanks to generous donors, even have proper uniforms. Yet, in this little paradise, we have a problem that when left unaddressed has the potential to undermine the beautiful work being done here. Bullying, as this problem is called affects many schools. This paper is an attempt to find ways to discourage this problem and thus, provide a safer environment for our students.

Bullying in JHIS-LS

What the students say?

In order to start this study, two surveys were conducted. The first was held among the students and the second among the faculty. In the student survey, students from grades 6 and 7, who were the most senior students then, were the chosen respondents. In the faculty survey, 12 out of the 15 faculty members were invited to participate. Their answers were tabulated and examined. The full results are presented as appendix A.1 for the students and A.2 for the teachers.

A total of 90 students took part of this survey. These comprise all the students of grades 6 and 7. These levels were chosen because they are the most senior students and they have stayed in JHIS-LS for the longest time.

In the student survey, 45 out of the 90 students equate bullying with teasing. Twenty-two students identify “hurting others feelings” as bullying while 19 define it as physical violence. Of the 90 respondents, only 4 stated that they have not seen any kind of bullying in class and only 12 said they have never been bullied. Most of the respondents have been teased in class although there are various ways where they have been bullied.

A total of 71 students admitted to being bullies themselves at one time or another. Furthermore, 42 of these self-confessed bullies have admitted to teasing their classmates. Although there is no overwhelming consensus, most students who participated in the survey seem to think that bullying happens to make fun or get amusement out of a classmate or because of envy and jealousy.

When the students were asked how bullying can be stopped, there was a variety of answers from visiting the parents to refraining from saying bad words. It seems that the students do not have a common suggestion on how bullying can be stopped in school.

What the JHIS-LS teachers say?

In the faculty survey, 12 of the 15 faculty members were invited. All of the 12 respondents stated that they have witnessed bullying in their classes. Eleven of the faculty members have witnessed

physical violence in class. Ten of the respondents also stated that they also witnessed teasing in class.

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Whenever they witness bullying, 10 of the faculty members talk to the students involved, 4 mentioned that they call the attention of the bully and 3 mentioned that they also help the bully realize that what he or she is doing is wrong. Teachers also have differing ways of dealing with bullies such as: isolation, writing discipline reports, verbally warning them etc.

Regardless of the response of the teachers, eleven out of the twelve felt like their response to bullying is not enough. When asked however what needs to be done, there does not seem to be any clear consensus of what the teachers would like to happen. Some suggest a very strict set of rules that will not tolerate bullying while some would take a more pastoral track of discovering the root of the unacceptable behavior.

This paper is being written in order to help teachers and administrators come up with a better way to address bullying in Lasallian schools. Hopefully, the schools can become safer environments where students can learn without having to fear what their classmates can inflict on them.

Why study bullying?

Definition of Bullying

Why is bullying a concern? According to Elliot (2011), pupils cannot learn when there is bullying in the school. The victims are constantly afraid of what will be done to them next, and the perpetrators are busy thinking of newer ways to torment their chosen victim.

Bullying is a problem wherever it exists. In its most extreme cases, students have been to commit murder in order to get back at their bullies. In the opposite extreme, students have taken their own lives just to escape their tormentors. This problems need to be addressed carefully. On the surface, bullying may seem like something normal among children. Yet, failure to address this problem may have very grave effects on our students, especially those who are most vulnerable.

How exactly do we understand bullying? How can bullying be differentiated from normal playful behavior? According to Sullivan (2011:10), “Bullying is a conscious, willful and repetitive act of aggression and/or manipulation and/or exclusion by one or more person against another person or people.” He also adds that the following are characteristics of bullying (10):

- Bullying is abusive and cowardly.
- Harm is intended.
- It is repetitive and can occur over a short or long period of time.
- The person(s) doing the bullying has more power than the one(s) being victimized.
- It is often hidden from people in authority.
- Bullies do not expect either to be caught or to suffer any consequences.
- Those who bully are often feared for their bullying behavior.

- Bullying can gradually undermine and damage the physical and mental well-being of the person being bullied.
- Bullying can be premeditated, organized and systematic, or it can be opportunistic. Once it starts however, it is likely to continue.
- Although bullying may be directed towards one victim, it may also communicate a sense of menace to those who are witnesses but are not contributors to it.
- Hurt experienced by a victim of bullying can be external (physical) and/or internal (emotional/psychological).
- All bullying causes psychological damage.

As seen in this definition of Sullivan (2011), bullying is not simple and involves a vast array of factors. It is definite, however, that when bullying happens, it involves the oppression of one that is weaker, over the course of time and has the potential to cause much damage on the victim.

In her book *The Essential Guide to Tackling Bullying*, author Elliot (2011:2) defines bullying as: “deliberately harming someone who is less powerful with the intention of causing pain.” She continues by stating that the following are what forms bullying can take:

- Physical: the victim is pushed in the lunch queue, hit in the playground, or thumped when passing someone in the hall.
- Verbal intimidation, with threats and extortion: the victim is called a slag and there is vile graffiti about them in toilets or demands to hand over their homework or dinner money.
- Cyber bullying: using e-mails, websites, mobile phones and social networks to torment their victims 24/7, including telling pupils to kill themselves.
- Emotional: comments that the victim is stupid and ugly and hated by the entire class.
- Exclusion: the victim suffers silent treatment, with no one talking to or supporting them or sitting with them at lunch or walking near them.
- Racist: taunting with racist remarks, gestures and graffiti.
- Homophobic: nasty comments about being gay or lesbian.

According to Elliot (2011:9) there are several types of pupils that end up as bullies. “The first are the spoilt children whose parents excuse everything they do. Some bullies however are also victims of abuse and neglect. She states that these bullies are acting up as a reaction to the own pain that they feel.” She likewise points out that there are bullies who seem to be popular because everyone else is afraid of being victimized by them.

It is worth pointing out that the lines between bully and victim are not always clear. In the survey conducted on the JHIS-LS students, many have admitted to both being both aggressors and victims. Instead of trying to separate the students like the proverbial sheep and goats in the Gospel, it would be more helpful to see all the students as children who are in need of guidance and who are in danger of being led astray if the persons who are in-charge of guiding them miss the warning signs and indicators. Sullivan also reiterates that teachers must understand that students who are chronically bullied are unable to stand up for themselves. Hence, it is really important that systems are put in place to protect the most vulnerable students.

Why don't victims talk?

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Earlier, it was cited that bullies seldom expect to be caught. It would seem that the simplest way to end bullying is to encourage the students to report their bullies to the people in authority. Unfortunately, this solution is seldom implementable. According to Lap (2007), most bullied students prefer to inform a close friend rather than a teacher or a parent. He further states that bullied children do not want to inform people in authority since they are afraid that they would be branded as weak. Most of these children fear that if they tell on their victimizers, the abuse will get worse.

Furthermore, Lap (2007:2) adds that some parents tell their children that being bullied is a rite of passage and that “it is part of growing up”. These attitudes and responses do not help in finding help for both the victim and the perpetrator. Lap (2007: 9-10) also mentions in his thesis that various researchers have consistently discovered that a lot of students would opt not to tell adults, especially teachers, since they believe that these adults in their lives are not really interested in stopping bullying.

What can be done?

There are a number of things that can be done to stop bullying. One of the most common suggestions is that teachers become more visible in places where bullying is likely to occur. Lap (2007) identifies “hotspots” where bullying is likely to occur. He identifies areas that need to be monitored: restrooms, lunch rooms, locker areas, hallways and anywhere where students stay when they do not have classes. He continues to mention that in order to be effective, the programs, which are implemented, must be “whole-school” approaches. This means that bullying must be addressed at all levels that are involved from the students, their teachers, the administration, the parents and even the non-teaching staff.

Villasor (2002) points out that oftentimes, when there is a large number of students, teachers are only likely to intervene when the situation gets out of hand. At this point, intervention is already very late and the damage is most likely done already.

Sullivan (2011) suggests what he calls the “Cooperative Learning” approach-- this is done by dividing the student body into small groups of about 3 members. Together, this small circle of friends is responsible and accountable to one another. They help one another to learn, they support one another and if need be, they help one other through difficult times. This system when done properly helps the students to adjust to dealing with different persons.

Lap (2007) states that peers are almost always present when bullying occurs. He suggests that peers must be educated and provided appropriate strategies, which they can apply when they witness bullying. Elliot calls these witnesses the by-standers. She states that when these on lookers take a more active role, the bully is isolated and there is more motivation to change their behavior.

Bringing peers into the solution makes a lot of sense. Since there are very few faculty members in proportion to the number of students, extra help from other students will be most welcome.

After all, those who witness bullying are also victims since, as was pointed out in a quote from Sullivan earlier, the witnesses may also get a feeling of dread when they witness bullying. Whenever there is bullying in campus, none of the students would feel safe since they would always wonder when they would be next. 17

Awareness with what is happening to the students is a major challenge to teachers. No student is ever just suddenly victimized. Normally, there are warning signs, which the teacher must be able to pick up as soon as possible so that intervention may be done immediately. Sullivan (2011:24) lists the following warning signs that indicate that a child might be a victim of bullying:

- When a child is getting a lot of negative attention and being teased.
- Sitting alone at lunchtime, having no friends to play with and being ignored by peers except to be taunted.
- Never being chosen when sports or classroom teams are selected.
- Not speaking up in class, lacking confidence when forced to participate and eliciting snide remarks when they do.
- When a physical problem develops or becomes worse, for example, a stutter.
- When someone seems to be drawn into conflict, but then flounders and appears stupid.
- When classwork deteriorates in an unaccountable way.
- Unhappiness, distress and withdrawal.
- Irregular attendance or frequent absence.
- When a child is small and not strong, yet seems to be the centre of fights and gets blamed for starting them.

Sullivan (2011) insists further that it is not fair to ask the victims to stand up for themselves. He states that such an expectation is unrealistic since, if they could stand up for themselves, they would have done so a long time ago.

Lap (2007) also states that the teachers must be vigilant so that incidents of bullying may be minimized. Furthermore, he adds that teachers must be approachable and sensitive to the needs of students. In this way, students will not feel intimidated or shy to approach someone in authority regarding being bullied.

Qualities of the teachers

Elliot (2011) states that the head teacher has a major role to play in deterring bullies. She states that it is essential that the head teacher is not a bully himself. He must lead the staff against bullying and ensure that everyone from the students, faculty, staff and parents know the stand of the school against bullying. She continues by stating that although the school does not have any control over the home environment, the school has the opportunity to give erring students a different outlook and new ways of behaving.

The teachers must be exemplars of showing respect. Elliot (2011:34) states that: “When pupils feel that they are respected and they respect you as someone who does not bully or misuse your power, they will be less likely to bully in your classroom. They will also more likely to tell you

about bullying because they trust you.” Describing the rapport between student and teacher, Van Greiken (1995:309) states:

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The teacher / student relationship – reflects a creativity and fortitude that becomes a student's greatest ally in his/her developing character, anchoring and shaping the shifting whirlwind of newly discovered relational capacities through a combination of empathy and detachment, individual application and common accountability.

Our Lasallian Heritage

Vigilance

Much has been written about vigilance. For example, in the “Conduct of Christian Schools” an entire chapter is devoted to this topic. This is likewise important when trying to find a solution to bullying. Earlier, it was mentioned that bullying can be better addressed through a “whole-school” approach. Unfortunately, implementing a massive program is often impractical, especially in JHIS-LS where parents are often busy with their occupations for the sake of their families. Furthermore, in a country like the Philippines, many parents find work in other countries. It is therefore not always possible to involve parents into the solution. In “Lasallian Themes 2,” Br. Leon Lauraire (1995) writes about vigilance and he gives some very practical considerations, which can be applied easily in the case of JHIS-LS. First of all, Lauraire (1995) mentions the importance of the role of the teachers. They must watch over the students especially those who are “young, weak and ignorant”. These are the students who are especially prone to bullying. The role of the teacher is very crucial. Van Greiken (1995:21) states the following: “Catholic schoolteachers, both as individuals and as a community of educators, are the most important influence in a Catholic school. De La Salle realized this when he concentrated his efforts specifically on the training of teachers”.

Second, Lauraire (1995) advises that adults must always be present wherever children meet. This is consistent with the advice earlier given by Sullivan where he identifies places where bullying is likely to occur. When a teacher is always present in these “hotspots”, Lauraire (1995) states that it will provide a shield for the students that will dissuade them from doing anything that is unacceptable. Br. Alfredo Morales (1995), also in “Lasallian Themes 2” stresses that these adults who supervise the children must be “models”. Instead of instilling an atmosphere of fear, these teachers must be “models” that will demonstrate qualities, which the students can emulate.

Once the perpetrators of bullying are identified, due care must be exercised to correct them properly. In the “Conduct of Christian Schools,” De La Salle (1996:135) writes that: “The correction of the students is one of the most important things to be done in the schools. The greatest care must be taken in order that it may be timely a beneficial both for those who receive it and for those who witness it.” In the case of bullying, extra care must be taken since there will always be a possibility that the victims will be further tormented if corrections are poorly done.

A valuable advice found in the “Conduct of Christian Schools” (De La Salle,1996:143) states that: “It is also important never to use insulting words, or words that are even in the slightest degree unseemly, for example, rascal, knave, or sniveler. None of these words should ever be in

the mouth of a teacher in the Christian Schools.” Whenever a student needs to be corrected, the teacher must himself show an example of respect for the erring student. In this way, the perpetrator will see that there are better ways to deal with problems. This “better way” was often referred to as “civility” in the writings of the Founder. 19

Civility

Aside from vigilance, the Founder was also very particular with the notion of “civility”. Lauraire (2006:123) writes in “Cahiers Lasalliens 62”:

The profound reasons and the basis of Decorum and Civility goes far beyond, therefore, social codes of politeness... What we have here is not a superficial varnish imposed by some form of etiquette, but a Christian anthropological view which is the basis for modesty, respect, union and charity in personal relationships. This is the interior vision which gives the impetus, conviction and finally freedom to social behavior, leading to charity and love for ones’ neighbor.

Lauraire (2006) continues to write that De La Salle himself suffered through his first teachers’ lack of civility. His refined upbringing contrasted sharply with the manner of these teachers who came from the working class. Hence, De La Salle eventually took these coarse and rough teachers to be educated in his own household.

Lauraire (2006:118) continues that civility is not something that is learned through lectures: “Decorum and Civility is not learned only as a result of teaching. Quite the contrary, actually: example and imitation seem to be more effective and more important.” It is therefore crucial that people in authority in school do have the necessary training so as to mirror the expected behavior to the students they are educating.

In Lasallian Schools, the interest in teaching proper manners to the students goes beyond the need for an orderly and polite society. Lauraire (2006:124) writes: “For John Baptist de La Salle, the Rules of Decorum and Civility have religious justification. In his work, particularly in the first part, Christian decency holds an important place. Respect for oneself and respect for others go together.” He further states that it is only when we see this with the eyes of faith is the best justification to treat others with unconditional respect. In a Lasallian school therefore, Lauraire (2006:129) states that: “Violence was to be replaced by unconditional mutual respect... Even irritation did not justify disrespectful actions or behavior”.

In terms of civility, once again, it is the teachers who are in the forefront. They must be the ones who are first to show an example of unconditional respect to their students. It is only through this positive example that the students will gradually assimilate what behavior is acceptable and what is not. Furthermore, proper manners towards each other are not just a matter of acquiring smooth interpersonal relationships; it is necessary since we call ourselves Christians and are brothers and sisters to each other.

In. Br. George van Greiken F.S.C.'s thesis dissertation entitled: *To Touch Hearts: The Pedagogical Spirituality of John Baptist De La Salle* (1995: 281), he mentions six elements that can be found in a Lasallian school:

1. Sensitivity to social needs, the reason why De La Salle began his work in education in the first place.
2. The importance given to religious education, something crucial and challenging in today's society.
3. A commitment, in association, to teaching as a vocation, involving a sense of mission and an appreciation of competent, committed teachers.
4. A quality education marked, in De La Salle's time, by emphasis on reading, writing, and religious instruction, together with cleanliness, politeness, discipline, regular attendance, and a two-fold spirit of discipline and friendship.
5. An emphasis on the practical, focused on the needs of the students.
6. The maintenance of a certain distance from the organization of the Roman Church, keeping alive the spirit and reality of brotherhood in the Church, rejecting clerical privilege and rank.

It is with these traditions that are handed down to the administrators and teachers that can begin to face the overwhelming problem of bullying. By being sensitive to the social needs, the desires and aspirations of the students will be recognized. The pressures that these students undergo and expectations they work hard to meet can be understood. It is through this understanding these struggles that concerns can be addressed and that better ways of dealing with problems can be taught

Likewise, the Christian aspect of the Lasallian tradition may never be excluded from efforts to end bullying in schools. As disciples of Jesus, humans are taught love one another as brothers and sisters that we train students to respect each other. Jesus' mandate to love one another must permeate all decisions and policies in the Lasallian School. As Van Greiken (1995:303) states: "De La Salle's first concern in all that he did, whether for himself, for the Brothers, or for the Christian School, was the life of faith, the reality of God's saving presence in Jesus Christ." He further states (316):

The student – is educated in all that is necessary for salvation in this world and the next. Beyond basic knowledge/skills in writing, reading, calculating, speaking, listening, and core curriculum subjects, students acquire habits of interaction with peers and others, along with the religious activities associated with a mature Christian life.

The inputs from the various sources cited in this article point to the necessity of the teachers' assistance in solving this problem. Lasallian Schools take pride in a faculty who are more than willing to go that extra mile to help their students become better. It is very natural for Lasallian teachers to show concern for the victims and also the perpetrators of bullying. Both of them, after all, are victims who need to be assisted in the various challenges that life throws at them. Hence, the Lasallian teachers - as mentioned in number 4 - engage their students, not only to teach them skills they need to know, but also to help them to become better people. Van Greiken (1995:309)

points out that the Lasallian teacher: “demonstrates the creativity and fortitude of God's Love through his/her daily resourcefulness and resilience, imagination and determination, ingenuity and persistence”. Furthermore, he also states that the lessons offered must make sense to the students. 21

In Lasallian schools, the students must be taught to work together. A spirit of camaraderie and friendship must be fostered and modeled by the teachers. Van Greiken (1995:324) describes the Lasallian student as: “educated towards an appreciation of working together. Whether in class or outside of it, the student works in cooperation with others for the attainment of an education”. Just as the Brothers associated with one another and the lay partners, so too must our students learn to appreciate one another for their unique gifts. They must be taught by word and by example that their classmates are their brothers and sisters. Just as the early Brothers refused the trappings of ecclesiastical power, the teachers and administrators of Lasallian Schools are not interested in being esteemed highly. Their priority is to educate the students well by being elder brothers and sisters to them.

There are many ways to address bullying. Books have been written and systems proposed. For a Lasallian school however, the solution must be practical. It must not add to the burden the teachers already have. It must not add more problems to students who already have a lot to deal with. Hence, the program must be practical, and ideally; productive and fun. Van Greiken (1995:335) elaborates: “Lasallian teaching is a kind of teaching that is realistic and innovative, that proceeds incrementally along practical and uniform lines”.

In formulating a response to bullying, the solution needs to build brotherhood among students. Teachers and students must be assisted in order to help each other. In the words of Van Greiken (1995:324), the Lasallian School:

“...focuses on the student's welfare, with teachers and students separately accountable to the other for their separate appropriate responsibilities. They face challenges together, commonly committed to persevering in their scholastic and personal efforts towards achieving realistic and worthwhile goals.”

Everyone must form part of the solution. Everyone must play a crucial part. Those who are placed in positions of responsibility therefore, are not placed there as masters and lords, instead, they are Brothers protecting the interests and safety of their younger siblings. As Van Greiken (1995:345) states: “The Lasallian School should be organized around the welfare of its students and its teachers. Each detail of its life speaks to whether or not that is true.”

Addressing Bullying in JHIS

Four Critical Factors

After going through various works on bullying and some of our Lasallian traditions, four considerations are now being put forward as the foundation for the program that will help discourage bullying in JHIS-LS. The elements to be considered are:

1. All the students must play an active part in this program.
2. The Faculty must show the proper example to the students.
3. The Head Teacher must project an image of concern for all students as well as fairness.
4. It must be both practical and fun.

The students first and foremost, must be empowered to make a stand against the bullies. This program will not be successful if the students do not stand up to support it. Of course, there will be a risk that the bullies will try to target those who take a stand. However, with the support of the Head Teacher, the Faculty, as well as the entire student body, it would be very difficult for a maladjusted child to still force his way. As members of the same school, the student body must realize that they ought to support one another since if one student is bullied, then the school becomes less conducive to learning. Furthermore, they must realize that if their school environment is safer, then everyone can learn more and that the campus will be a more enjoyable place to be in.

The Faculty must likewise show that any form of bullying is not acceptable. They do this first and foremost by being vigilant enough to nip at the bud any form of bullying. They know their students well and they can detect when something is amiss. The teachers must be able to bring the message across to the bullies that their behavior will not be tolerated. Furthermore, the students must see in their teachers the examples of adults whom they can trust and will protect them. Their behavior must reflect concern and respect for all their students; both the perpetrator and the victim since the teacher recognize that all of these children are under her care.

The Head Teacher, on his part, must set the direction of the school. Whether the school will tolerate bullying or not would really depend on the priorities set by the Head Teacher. In order to seriously address the problem of bullying therefore, a firm decision to stop any form of such must be made from the very top of the school hierarchy.

Finally, it must be said that laying down another layer of rules and policies will not work. This initiative must engage the imagination of the students. This system must prove practical and easily understood by the students and faculty alike. Whatever will be done in the school must be enjoyable in such a way that the students and even the faculty would not see it as an additional chore that is imposed on them. By approaching this problem with a sense of creativity and playfulness, none of the students will feel threatened. Hence, the succeeding paragraphs will try to enlist the four qualities mentioned above.

All the students must play an active part in this program

In the Philippines, the idea of dividing the school into houses was popularized by J.K. Rowling (1997) in her popular series “Harry Potter”. In the fabled Hogwarts, where the young Harry Potter was to learn how to be a wizard, the students were divided into “houses”. These houses function as a support group and foster family for the students who are far away from their own families.

In JHIS-LS, students will be divided into four houses whose function is to support and strengthen one another (see appendix B). Each house will be composed of members from different grade

levels. The goal is to promote camaraderie and fraternity among the members of the same house. Just like Hogwarts, achievements of each house would gain them points which may later be exchanged for a reward.

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This house system being proposed for JHIS-LS must be organized in such a way that the students will be taught to value one another's gifts, as well as protect from possible opportunistic instances of bullying. Doing this, students will allow assisting the faculty in watching over the school. This way, both faculty and students are involved in trying to make the school more conducive to learning and a safer place for all students.

Each house is to be further subdivided into clusters. Students will be divided into clusters which are composed of five members from different grade levels. Each member will have roles like: secretary, monitor, timer, rule enforcer and liaison. More than what roles the students play in the cluster, it is important that they have a clear sense that they have an important role to fulfill. The house may even determine what the roles within its clusters are. None in the cluster will be called a "leader" since a sense of equality would like to be promoted, even within the small units. It is hoped that they will become a group of buddies who do things together.

As members of the same house, clusters must watch out for one another. They must make sure that none of the clusters in their house are being attacked by bullies. If for example the bully comes from within their house, the clusters may report the perpetrator to their house parent, and the matter will be settled within the house. If the bully comes from another house, it may likewise be reported to the house parent who will coordinate with the house parent of the offending party. Within the house therefore are two layers of securities against bullying: the cluster and the house itself.

The Faculty must show the proper example to the students

As mentioned earlier, each house would have a "House Parent". The House Parent is a specially trusted faculty member who is known for both fairness and compassion to the students. The main role they must fulfill is that of an overseer. They must be sensitive to the workings within the house. They must be able to encourage clusters that are not performing well or they must put to stop anything improper that they may notice within the clusters in their care.

It is important to note at this point that the House Parent must keep in mind that the Houses are not at war with one another. As the recognized parents of their respective Houses, their focus must be to facilitate the development of their wards and not to put down members of the other Houses.

Under the leadership of the House Parent, the clusters may decide on activities which they may do to foster their friendship with one another. Likewise, the House Parent must also observe the dynamics of the clusters keenly to make sure that there are no forms of bullying happening in the house.

Other faculty members may likewise be assigned to the house as auxiliaries to the House Parent. They are to help the House Parent in supervising the clusters. Occasionally, they may even be put in direct charge of a cluster who is not behaving as expected.

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The House Parent and the auxiliaries must keep in mind that more than their words, it is expected that they are the models of good behavior to their students. They are expected to treat their students, even the erring ones, with respect and dignity, even if the student is from another House. It is hoped that House Parent, auxiliaries and clusters may work creatively together to foster the unity and camaraderie which we are hoping for.

The Head Teacher must project an image of fairness and concern for all students

The Head Teacher must play the part of the one governing all the Houses. He must be firm, but also fair and impartial. As the final arbiter between houses, he must keep in mind that he is not there to be “lord” over the students and faculty. Instead, he is tasked to be the eldest brother of the school. Just as an elder brother is expected to care for his siblings in the absence of the parents, so too, the Head Teacher must take care of all members of the School community. He recognizes each House’s uniqueness but always strives to remind them that in the final reckoning, they are members of one school and that they are all brothers and sisters to each other.

His role is most crucial especially when there are disagreements that arise between the houses. It is in the power of the Head Teacher to make the final ruling on any matter that may arise between the Houses. Under his leadership; his actions and his words, he must show that bullying has no place in the school. Under his watch, all houses must feel secure and appreciated.

It must be both practical and fun

Rules tend to be very oppressive and burdensome. The whole idea of arranging the school into Houses is not to control the students and make them subservient. Instead, the goal is to help the students form lifetime bonds of support and friendship. In order to do such, the main activity of the students is not to police each other. Instead, they will be challenged to work together through tasks that will highlight the different gifts of the students.

A possible activity which can be organized is a camp where the houses will be made to solve various puzzles, challenges and other activities. The Houses may be brought together for and they will be required to organize their camp site. Students normally love the chance to do such things with their classmates.

Another activity, an obstacle course which is punctuated with various challenges may be set up. In this activity, the challenges may include problems which will demand cooperation from the students. Whatever challenges are put in place, the course must be planned in such a way that the various challenges will highlight the many talents which the students possess.

On a more regular basis, the houses must get together for meetings. Here, the clusters will be given a chance to talk about whatever they want to. The members of each cluster may talk about

their lives, what makes them happy or anything else that is significant in their lives at the moment. This will allow the students to get to know their cluster-mates more. Hopefully, this will allow them to bond on an emotional level and relate to each other with more empathy.

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Probably one of the biggest challenges this system poses is that of the rewards. The Head Teacher as well as the Faculty must devise a reward system which will encourage the students to cooperate. In order to find these rewards, it is essential that the school administration knows the students well, so that the prizes may be tailored to their preferences.

Conclusion

The theme of fighting bullies is echoed in the book “Inheritance” by Christopher Paolini (2011), the fourth book in a series that describe Eragon’s battle against Galbatorix. Like any bully, Galbatorix is powerful and cruel. At the very end of the novel, when all hope seems lost, the hero, Eragon found a way to defeat the powerful opponent. Somehow, though the help of many friends, Eragon finds a way to force the bully to see and feel the pain he has caused. At that moment the bully was flooded with regret and recognizes his culpability. This realization caused the bully’s defeat.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear of another bully who was also strong and cruel. Saul from Tarsus approved the martyrdom of Stephen and even acquired letters which allowed him to arrest followers of Jesus. Along the way to Damascus however, he was struck by a light. Jesus himself asked him “Why are you persecuting me?” In our journey towards eliminating bullying from schools, a similar challenge is faced. How are bullies made to realize that it is actually Christ whom they persecute?

Later on, Saul, blinded by a bright light was healed by Ananias, who introduced himself as “your brother” to Saul. It was at this moment that the scales from his eyes fell and he was healed from his blindness. The bullies in schools are likewise blinded by their own anger and problems. The entire school must help the bully to see Jesus. They must see Jesus, their brother, in the face of the classmates they oppress. They too must be led to the Lord to be asked the question “Why are you persecuting me?” On August 2, 2013, Br. Alvaro Rodriguez Echeverria FSC, Superior General, came to JHIS-LS. In his message to the students, he reiterated that in Lasallian Schools, the students must recognize one another as brothers and sisters.

The paper started with the problem of bullying. Oftentimes, the automatic reaction would be to vilify the bully and lay down sanctions. In this paper however, the proposal is to create a school culture of acceptance, fraternity and mutual concern. This is the hope for the bullies in schools; that through a carefully planned program, students who are labeled as “bullies” may be able to see that they are causing much pain and hurt; that their actions are not helpful to anyone, least of all themselves. May this realization lead them to remorse and a deep desire for conversion. Finally, when the time comes for the bully to make an attempt to repair the damage he has caused, may he find in our school a community of fellow students and teachers who are not there to condemn him, but are instead equipped and ready to help him become a better person.

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APPENDIX A.1 STUDENT SURVEY

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Number of participants

Grade 7	60
Grade 6	30

1. What do you understand with the word "Bullying"?

	Gr. 7	Gr.6
a. teasing	32	13
b. Physical violence	16	3
c. name calling	6	
d. hurt others' feelings	9	13
e. stealing things/ food	1	
f. manipulation of classmate	1	
g. asserting superiority	1	
h. fighting		1
i. it is bad		1
j. saying bad words		1
k. destroying ones life		1
l. for bully's amusement		1

2. Have you seen bullying in your class?

	Gr. 7	Gr. 6
a. Yes	56	30
B. No	4	0

3. Have you ever been a victim of Bullying?

	Gr. 7	Gr. 6
a. Yes	48	29
B. No	12	1

How have you been bullied?

	Gr. 7	Gr. 6
a. teasing	35	14
b. punching	8	5
c. forcibly getting my things	4	
d. fighting with classmate	2	3
e. kicking	1	
f. pulling hair	1	
g. public humiliation	1	

h. harsh criticism	1	
i. made to cry		1
j. emotionally hurt		1
k. made to feel jealous		1
l. feared coming to class		1

4. Have you ever bullied your classmates?

	Gr. 7	Gr. 6
a. Yes	47	24
B. No	13	4

5. How have you bullied your classmate?

	Gr. 7	Gr. 6
a. teasing	30	12
b. punching	3	2
c. pushing/ bumping	1	
d. it was an act of revenge	9	7
e. slapping	1	
f. sabotage of their work	1	
g. locked out of room	1	
h. taking their things	1	
i. hurt others' feelings		1

5. In your opinion, why does bullying happen?

	Gr. 7	Gr. 6
a. inequality	1	
b. violence at home	2	
c. hyperactive classmate	3	
d. Make fun of classmate/ amusement	13	6
e. bully was also bullied	3	
f. misunderstanding with classmate	2	
g. boredom	7	3
h. lack of guidance	4	
i. new student	1	
j. crush	1	
k. disliked by the class	1	
l. envy/ jealousy	11	4
m. taking advantage of weak classmate	3	
n. provoked by anger	1	
o. feeling of superiority/ boastfulness	4	2

p. physical appearances	1	1
q. bad example of classmates	2	
r. personal problems of the bully	2	1
s. anger/ need for revenge	1	1
t. normal rite of passage	1	
u. somebody starts it		4
v. bully wants to hurt classmate		1
w. not caring about others		1
x. need for attention		1
y. spoiled kids		1

6. How can we stop bullying?

	Gr. 7	Gr. 6
visit parents	4	1
ignore the bully	4	7
make school policies	6	
tell teacher	2	
include in lessons	1	
punish bullies	11	
keep students busy	1	
enforce discipline	2	
promote equality/ unity	4	1
open communication lines	5	
make anti-bullying posters/ activities	4	
constant presence of teachers	3	
show role models	1	
build self-esteem	1	
be good	1	
foster respect	6	
constantly remind students	3	
love one another	2	1
just stop bullying		7
do not provoke bullies		1
tell Brother/ teacher		2
do not follow their example		2
Patience		2
do not be envious		1
do not say bad words		1

Other comments:

I stop before my classmate starts crying

I choose to bully someone who can fight back so we are

even Bullying leads to fights It makes classmates cry Bullying makes them was to absent from class They get thoughts of suicide They experience sadness They feel abnormal when they are bullied	30
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APPENDIX A.2 FACULTY SURVEY

1. Witnessed bullying in class

yes:	12
no:	0

2. Types of bullying you see the most?

physical violence	11
verbal (teasing/ name-calling)	10
emotional bullying	4
use of profane language	1
subtle forms like "snubbing" classmates	1

3. What do you do when you see bullying?

talk to the students	10
call bully's attention	4
help them realize bullying is wrong	3
give a verbal warning	1
isolate bullies	1
make a discipline report	1
for physical violence: intervene and report	1
for verbal bullying: ignore	1
send to guidance counselor	1

4. Do you think this is enough?

Yes:	1
No:	11

5. What more needs to be done?

set up rules/ do not tolerate bullying	3
firm implementation of rules	3
discuss bullying with parents	3
inform students about the effects of bullying	2
counseling for students and parents	2
develop atmosphere of respect	1
review student handbook	1
institute tougher sanctions	1
develop program to help bullies	1
visible system of implementing rules	1
parent formation	1
check student's background	1
improve policies	1
design activities that show evil of bullying	1
help students discover why they bully	1

APPENDIX B

Diagram Illustrating the House System

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