



Meet
Hilda Clarice Quiroz

Keynote Presenter,
Program Developer and
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Hilda Clarice Quiroz is a keynote presenter, program developer, training specialist and author for the National School Safety Center. Ms. Quiroz presents at local, regional and national levels. She has written numerous books, articles, pamphlets, and training designs about bullying, hate-bias crimes, school safety, team building and cultural issues. Having teaching experience in both public school and community settings, she serves as a consultant trainer for schools, communities, and law enforcement agencies. She serves as a master trainer for the California Department of Education.

Most recently, Hilda has completed a video about cyber-bullying and a training curriculum and video on the role of schools in homeland security. She received special congressional recognition for her work in the community regarding bullying prevention. She is currently developing a book on bullying. Her current efforts also include the training of more than 6,500 school resource officers and school administrators associated with the federal COPS in Schools Initiative, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Hilda has authored two prevention curricula developed for the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association: *Welcome to School: Helping Kids Belong* and *Talking About Hate Can Make a Difference*.

Recent participant comments regarding Ms. Quiroz's presentations include:

"An excellent and extraordinary presenter... passionate and honest."

"She opens minds with her approach to training."

"Hilda is an excellent storyteller... thought-provoking and inspirational."

"Her presentation was eye-opening and heartfelt."

"Hilda is an excellent instructor. She is joy to listen to..."

For more information about fees and services, contact NSSC.

Talking with Hilda Clarice Quiroz about Bullying

Hilda Clarice Quiroz is currently a program developer, training specialist, keynote presenter and author for the National School Safety Center. Having experience in both public schools and community settings, she serves as a consultant trainer for school staff and students, communities and law enforcement members. Ms. Quiroz conducts bullying prevention trainings nationally.

Q: How significant is bullying with regard to safe and effective schools?

A: Effective schools are also safe schools. The academic success of a school can be undermined by threat or actual violence. Bullying has been defined as an abusive act of violence that victimizes its targets. Bullying can create a hostile school climate that counters the rights of students to learn in secure and peaceful schools. These rights are often affirmed in state constitutions, school board policies, resolutions and many school mission statements. We know today that unchecked acts of bullying can and do escalate and that many schools seriously underestimate the prevalence of bullying at their schools.

Q: How does school bullying relate to the No Child Left Behind” Act?

A: At its broadest intent, the No Child Left Behind Act is the call to ensure that all students have the opportunity and the support to achieve academically. This goal simply cannot be pursued or accomplished in a hostile school environment. To use the words contained in the act, bullying creates the kind of social climate that could be described as “persistently dangerous”, and one that could promote an “event during which a student or group of students might risk becoming victims of a violent criminal offense at school.”

Q: What are the consequences of school bullying?

A: Bullying has been connected to some of the most notorious school shootings that have occurred on American school campuses in recent years. Any event that leads to the needless loss of the lives of students and staff is a serious tragedy for any school community. However, a more insidious consequence results in schools where bullying is allowed to continue without intervention. A subversive and menacing social code develops that begins to shape attitudes, behaviors and ultimately the relationship norms within a school community. Adults at a school begin to accept and even refer to bullying behaviors as “normal.” Students

are left to believe that students who are targets of such behavior “deserve” what they get. Targets of such behaviors begin to accept that feeling afraid and helpless at school is a way of life. Even parents who bully are able to badger schools into dismissing the behaviors of their children as “common teasing.”

Q: What notable trends are affecting our understanding of bullying?

A: Recently much attention is being paid to the impact of gender on bullying. We are much more aware that girls and boys tend to bully in gender-preferred ways. Boys tend to be more direct and physical in their bullying behaviors, while girls are more indirect, using the power their relationships or exclusion to hurt others. Understanding these trends can enhance the ability of a school community to accurately assess patterns of bullying at their school. Keep in mind that a hurtful blow can be delivered with silence, glaring looks, and leaving someone out as effectively as with a clinched fist. I was unforgettably impressed by a statement posted on a student-generated web site that expressed that “not to belong is not to exist.”

Children and youth are beginning to speak up about the bullying they are experiencing or observing at their schools. Recently, I trained over 100 eighth-graders who were part of a teens-teaching-teens program that was preparing students to be advocates in schools where bullying is not tolerated. They recounted their numerous experiences with bullying at school. I often tell adults that they are overlooking a tremendous resource for genuine commitment, initiative, creativity and energy when they forget to invite students to the problem-solving table.

The mention of problem solving raises one more exciting option for school communities who share partnerships with their local law enforcement agencies. The trend toward community-oriented policing and the development of school and law enforcement partnerships has introduced the SARA problem-solving process to the school community. SARA is a process that promotes the work of stakeholders in identifying and analyzing issues and problems of concern. The process helps team members generate, prioritize and tailor viable responses to identified problems such as school bullying.

A school in the Pacific Northwest inspires one final thought about increasing our understanding and ability to respond to bullying. At this particular school, a network of adults called “safe contacts” has been established. In essence, designated adults are trained and ready to be responsive to reports from students about a variety of problems. I believe this strategy works on two fronts: 1) It helps counter many of the reasons students offer for not reporting the behaviors of bullies with regard to a perceived lack of adult understanding, atten-

tiveness and response; and 2) it addresses the fact that not all staff members at a school are prepared to respond in appropriate ways to such reports. This worthwhile strategy can be put into place temporarily or permanently as an entire school staff is trained and brought around to work as a team to address bullying at school.

Q: What about the role of character education in preventing bullying?

A: What character education represents and offers to school communities is commendable. A quality and well-implemented character education program can be an important asset to creating effective, safe and welcoming schools for all students. It is however important to remember that character is a very unique aspect of a person, family or group. Elements and expressions of character can have strong connections to tradition, individual upbringing, personal culture, or history. I advise schools that are interested in pursuing the benefits of character education as a response to bullying problems to also consider the idea of “promoting civility.” Standards of civility at school create the same expectations of behavior for everyone regardless of who they are or where they come from. This strategy can help build and promote a program that is more acceptable, respectful and responsive in culturally diverse communities.

Q: How can a school effectively respond to bullying?

A: The more appropriate question should be “How can the entire school community respond to bullying?” The effective response to school bullying has been on the table since 1987. In that year, the National School Safety Center hosted the international Schoolyard Bullying Practicum held at Harvard University. Practitioners from around the world gathered to examine bullying issues and determine viable responses. The outcome was the recommendation of a “total school” approach.

In this approach, the entire school community shares responsibility for the prevention and response to acts of bullying. It requires that all stakeholders “buy into” creating a school that does not tolerate bullying. The approach stresses education for students and training for adults. It also includes viable reporting and systems of support for both bullies and their targets.

The major challenge to schools is not to view the solution to bullying problems as a set of simple intervention strategies to teach adults. You can “strategize yourself to death.” The viable response lies in the efforts to define, create and maintain a “pervasive” school climate where bullying is not tolerated and is responded to in an appropriate, consistent and

effective manner by all stakeholders.

Q: What are the advantages of an anti-bullying policy?

A: Policy is more than just a written document — it is an actual course of action to be followed. Policy can be used to communicate the school's values and behavioral expectations as well as to delineate roles and responsibilities for its implementation. An effective policy can promote equitable and consistent actions while directing legal and ethical choices. A policy can guide the school in managing daily situations or crisis events within the scope of the policy. An effectual policy can help deter and respond to litigation. For a policy to be of benefit, it must be well written, communicated and implemented.

Q: Why is defining bullying important to responding to bullying?

A: A clear and concise definition of bullying shared by all school community stakeholders can help eliminate confusion regarding bullying and teasing. The definition is often stated in anti-bullying policies, student handbooks, discipline codes and in some states must easily correlate to laws regarding bullying. The same definition is an important part of prevention education, training programs and materials. For some members of the school community, exposure to the definition of bullying is their first lesson regarding the seriousness of the problem.

Dr. Ken Rigby, a popular and respected researcher in the area of bullying, emphasizes the need for a clear, complete and concise definition of bullying. He contends that within the definition bullying, nuances exist for the response. In other words, if you understand what bullying is — then you will likely understand what to do about it.

Rigby promotes this definition: Bullying = A desire to hurt a person or group + hurtful action + an imbalance of power + (typically) repetition + an unjust use of power + satisfaction for the aggressor + a sense of being hurt on the part of the target

At NSSC, we have worked to further extrapolate Rigby's definition into categories of behaviors, manifestations of those behaviors, and the potential implications/consequences of such behaviors for a school community. The definition of bullying is a key element of any training or writing in which I am involved.

Q: What questions should a school ask to gain understanding about its bullying problem?

A: Understanding a bullying problem implies more than just asking questions. The process involves asking questions to gather information and then using the information to analyze the core causes and issues that are at the heart of the problem.

Information must be gathered from a variety of authentic voices to build real perspective on a bullying problem. These voices should include those of students, teachers, other staff members, administrators, parents and other school safety partners. Schools must ask: Is bullying happening? When does it happen? Where does it happen? Who sees it happen? Who makes it happen? To whom does it happen? What is done when the bullying happens? What has been done in the past and how effective has it been? These questions represent a good start to a problem-solving approach to bullying. The information that is gathered and analyzed will also be used to formulate and evaluate a response.

Q: What is involved with bullying litigation?

A: In court bullying is often portrayed as an act of violence and/or a violation of civil rights. Most bullying cases have been built on the basis of reckless indifference, failure to respond, or failure to anticipate third-party harm. School administrators, counselors, teachers or other staff members called upon to testify will more than likely face the following types of questions. What did you know about the bullying problem? When did **you** first become aware of the problem? What did **you** do about it? The responses to these questions are then weighed against yet another set of questions: What would a reasonable person have done under similar circumstance? What are the standards of practice within the profession? The responses to these questions can also point to vicarious liability—being held legally responsible and liable for the actions of another person. An example would be when a teacher is made aware of a bullying problem, does not intervene and serious injuries occur as a result.

The schools with the strongest positions in court cases regarding bullying seem be those who can demonstrate awareness of the problem and having reasonable and consistent measures in place to address the problem.

Q: How has technology affected bullying?

A: Technology has revolutionized our ability to share information. The world of computers and cyberspace is a popular and accessible domain for our children and youth. Put-

ting these two elements together yields a sense of how technology has impacted today's bullying/harassment problems. Technology has created the capacity to quickly, efficiently and anonymously deliver messages of ridicule, put-downs, threats and exclusion throughout a "connected" community. The stealthy nature of the Internet can motivate some youth to do and say things on-line that they would never attempt in person or face to face with another student. Detecting such acts is difficult, as is damage control. Internet bullying complicates our ability to supervise and legally respond to a problem that occurs outside of school but creates serious consequences at school.

Q: Is a comprehensive or total school approach the only answer to school bullying?

A: Yes and No. Research tells us that a comprehensive or total school approach is the most effective response to bullying. Such an approach requires a hefty commitment of the school's budget, time, attention, priority and effort. Some of the approaches require a high degree of fidelity and consistency to the design of the program. Schools willing to make such a commitment will likely reap the benefits of the program.

Not every school is in a position to take on bullying all at once or in a comprehensive way. Does this mean they should do nothing? By no means! There is a prevention strategy that can help schools begin to address the problem in reasonable, responsible and incremental ways. Taking the incremental approach can become a pathway to an eventual comprehensive approach.

One such common-sense measure is called situational prevention. Situational prevention focuses on reducing the opportunity for students to engage in bullying by making bullying behaviors harder, riskier and less rewarding for the bully. In the short-term, taking this type of approach may give some schools the opportunity to demonstrate a timely and common-sense response to the genuine concerns of their stakeholders regarding bullying. In addition, school personnel can be trained to recognize the problem and apply a basic set of tactics, mechanisms and systems to respond to bullying.

Q: How does bullying prevention and response relate to the developmental assets approach?

A: Both comprehensive and situational approaches to bullying prevention can align themselves naturally with the key categories of a youth asset development program. Those categories include: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies and positive identity. The

developmental asset approach can serve as a foundation or springboard for effective bullying prevention and response efforts or as an extension and reinforcement for existing anti-bullying efforts. The two approaches are mutually beneficial to one another. The goals of both approaches are to support the development of youth who are safe, healthy, caring, respectful, and contributing and responsible members of their school, family and larger community.

Q: Do bullying prevention and response efforts differ across the country?

A: I believe that in the end, every school that is effectively working to prevent and respond to bullying does so by applying research-based programs and promising practices with their own emphasis to create desired outcomes. This emphasis reflects the unique wants, needs and cultures of the communities they serve.

In my home state of California, responding to diversity sits squarely on the education agenda. Based on our diversity, responding to and preventing social violence in our schools must also include taking a serious look at acts of bias-based teasing or bullying and hate motivated behaviors or crimes. Bullying prevention and response efforts in our state cannot stand indifferent to our diversity.

In addition as we work to create and promote safe schools in California, we are also obligated to reflect our commitments to applying what we know about resiliency, law enforcement/education partnerships and effective discipline. We garner our authority to act based on the California Safe Schools Act, our education and penal codes, and state board policies. In addition, California schools are now working under a philosophy that promotes the preparation of students to become effective and productive members of the work world and to be prepared to assume civic responsibility. We are setting the bar for our schools to address and integrate the importance of building the social, mental and emotional infrastructure of our children and youth—all toward improving the achievement of our students. Teaching students to think and act in ways that demonstrate trust, respect and the responsible use of personal power can only move us closer to our desired outcomes.

Q: Who would you say is the most critical responder to bullying in the school setting?

A: The simple answer is the classroom teacher. The more complex answer is a classroom teacher who is working within a comprehensive approach to bully prevention at his/her school. This teacher has access to tools and systems of support that do not abandon him/her to manage bullying incidents without help.

Let's examine the phenomenon of bullying in the classroom. The ways in which teachers manage their classrooms will either discourage bullying behaviors or create opportunities for bullying to happen. Teachers make important decisions regarding the management of their classrooms, both during lesson planning and in the minute-by-minute delivery of those lessons. These choices include:

- the selection and management of learning content, activities, and learning processes;
- tending student-to-student and teacher-to-student relationships; and

About the National School Safety Center

OUR MISSION

The National School Safety Center serves as an advocate for safe, secure and peaceful schools worldwide and as a catalyst for the prevention of school crime and violence. NSSC provides school communities and their school safety partners with quality information, resources, consultation, and training services. The Center identifies and promotes strategies, promising practices and programs that support safe schools for all students as part of the total academic mission.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

The National School Safety Center believes that schools have the choice to create and maintain safe schools or to return their institutions to safe, secure and effective places of learning. We believe that this work is best done with the help of school safety partners. We believe that today great opportunities exist to apply the best of school safety research and practices to the vision of safe schools for all students.

NSSC and BULLY PREVENTION

Authorities from around the world on schoolyard bullying and victimization met at Harvard University in May 1987 to address the problem of bullying at school. The unprecedented gathering of researchers, psychologists and public relations professionals, sponsored by the National School Safety Center, yielded the basis of a national prevention program. The plan, which was administered by the Center, included producing a prevention-oriented film and publishing a companion book. The 18-minute video, entitled "Set Straight on Bullies, won an Emmy when it was first broadcast on public television.

According to practicum experts, in order to affect change regarding bullying, it is necessary to change the public's attitudes and opinions about the problem. Their mandate was clear: Schoolyard bullying can be prevented by changing the actions of kids and by changing the actions and attitudes of adults. In part, the practicum prompted the media to expose or rediscover the pervasive bullying phenomenon. Consequently, public understanding and support for prevention within the United States was enhanced.

Since its inception, the Center has been involved in training school communities and developing materials and resources to respond to bullying in schools. The Center currently offers a training program entitled "Fighting the Bully Battle" to the following types of audiences:

- Bully Prevention Facilitators
- School-Site Bully Prevention Work Teams
- The School Community, including Law Enforcement Partners
- Conference Audiences (keynotes, workshops)

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