BULLYING AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

TWELFTH GRADE

LESSON 5

TITLE: What If Strategies Are Not Enough?

PURPOSE: To investigate the incidence of different types of violence that occurs in their schools and look for ways to resolve them.

OBJECTIVES: The student will be able to:

- explore their responses to hypothetical scenarios of school violence.
- conduct interviews and write a news analysis exploring the best way to curb violence in schools.

SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS: LA. 1112.4.2.2, 1112.1.6.1, 1112.1.6.4

STUDENT SERVICES BENCHAMARKS AND STANDARDS: PS 1.1, 1.2, 2.1

VOCABULARY: hypothetical, conflict, resolve

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME: 45 Minutes

PREPARATION/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:

- dry erase board and markers
- Xerox copy of handout 12-6 (one per student)
- Xerox copy of handout 12-7 (one scenario per student)
- paper
- pencil/pen

SPRINGBOARD ACTIVITY:

1) Ask the class, what can people who are bullied do about it? What should they do? Summarize with the students by suggesting that subjects of bullying can:
    - Name the problem and legitimize yourself - Be honest with yourself and others. Whether it is bullying, psychological harassment, or emotional abuse, seek information and support from others.
    - Expose the bully - In order to prevent bullying from continuing, bullies should be recognized for who they are. It is important to

avoid retaliation for the wrong that was done, or the cycle of bullying will continue.

2) Review handout 12-6: What If Strategies Are Not Enough? Summarize the discussion in concrete terms about what students can do who are being bullied in school.

3) Ask the class what should bystanders do? Again summarize with the procedures outlined on handout 12-6 : What If Strategies Are Not Enough?

ACTIVITY:

1) As a class, read and discuss handout: "Questions Fly in Mt. Vernon After School Violence," focusing on the following questions:

a. What are the three alleged incidents that happened at Mt. Vernon High School?
b. How does the principal, Dr. Larry Spruill, account for these three incidents?
c. Why isn't hiring more security guards possible at Mt. Vernon High School?
d. What further incidence of violence broke out at A.B. Davis Middle School?
e. How did police captain Robert Kelley characterize these incidents of school violence?
f. How did student Ashley Iuni characterize the violence?
g. What plan does Gerard Coleman advocate for reducing school violence?

2) Divide students into four groups, and assign each group one of the following topics: Fights, Bullying, Gang-Related Violence, and Gun-Related Violence.

3) Within the four groups, ask students to work individually or in pairs. Explain to students that they will be conducting background research, identifying resources, and planning interviews to gather information for writing a news analysis addressing the best way to curb violence in local schools. Using all available resources, students should begin their research by answering the following questions (written on the board or copied in a handout for easier student access):

- Scope of the Problem
  --How often does this type of violence occur in your school? Where, and from whom, might you get this type of information in your school or community?
  --How does this rate of incidence compare to other schools in the region or the nation as a whole?
  --What statistical evidence can you find to measure the incidences of this type of violence in schools?
- Causes of the Problem
  --Why do students engage in this type of violence?
  --Why don't other students engage in this violence?

--What might attract perpetrators to this type of violence?
--What warning signs indicate this type of violence is about to occur?

- School Response
  --How does your school address this type of violence?
  --What protocols, procedures, rules, and resources have been put in place to prevent this type of violence in schools?
  --How could your school's response be improved to stop this type of violent behavior?
- Helpful Resources
  --Who are the individuals, agencies, and organizations in your school and community who can convey first-hand, detailed information about this topic? Create a list of names and contact information.

Next, ask each student or pair to choose a focus for their article by answering the following question:
--What have you learned so far about this type of violence that you find most interesting, challenging, or in need of answers? With your group members' curiosity in mind, formulate a thesis question that you hope your article will answer.

Finally, ask each student or pair to choose one contact from their list of helpful resources, then ask them to begin writing a list of interview questions that will allow them to develop the focus of their article. Encourage students in each group to work together, looking for alternate ways to ask and target their questions. Students working in pairs should conduct separate interviews, but they may combine their interview research for a "dual byline" (an article written by two journalists).

ASSESSMENT: Teacher observation, class participation and completion of follow-up activity.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY: Individually or in pairs, students should refine their list of interview questions, conduct their interviews, and complete a rough draft of an article that seeks effective solutions to curbing violence in their school. Allow time for students conducting interviews outside of class to complete their interviews. In a future class, allow students to peer edit the first draft of their articles.

Lesson adapted from The New York Times Learning Network Teacher Connections and from Bullying Prevention Information: Resources for Schools by Warren Throckmorton, PhD

Handout 12-6

What If Strategies Are Not Enough?

**** VICTIMS AND BYSTANDERS MUST REPORT THE BULLYING OR HARASSING TO A TEACHER, SCHOOL COUNSELOR, OR THE PRINCIPAL HOW TO REPORT ****

FOR VICTIMS

- Report the incident to a teacher, counselor, or principal.
- Your name should be kept confidential; make sure you are promised this.
- Write down what was done or said to you and how you responded. Bullies will often try to shift the blame.
- Make a list of witnesses.

FOR BYSTANDERS

- Intervene in the situation. Tell the bully to stop and comfort the victim.
- Stand up to the bully and support the victim.
- Report it to a teacher, counselor, or principal.
- Your name should be kept confidential; make sure you are promised this.
- Write down what was done or said.
- Write down everyone who witnessed the situation.

Handout 12-7

Questions Fly in Mount Vernon

By Lydia Polgreen

MOUNT VERNON, N.Y., March 10 — It was a tough week in the halls of Mount Vernon High School.

The trouble began last Tuesday, when a 20-year-old student slashed a 15-year-old student in the hand outside the cafeteria, the police said.

On Wednesday, three teenage girls were arrested and charged with assault after they set upon a fourth student, who was found unconscious in a school hallway, the police said.

On Friday, a 19-year-old student was arrested after another student said he had pointed a gun at her stomach and threatened to kill her, the police said.

School officials dispute the accuracy of some of the accounts, but the spasm of hallway violence has them searching for ways to make Mount Vernon's 2,500-student high school safer.

The city is one of the poorest pockets in affluent Westchester County, and the school officials say that after covering education programs, they do not have the money to hire and train enough security guards. The guards they do have are paid less than others in Westchester County, the district cannot afford uniforms for the guards, and some do not have working radios, according to Gerald Coleman, president of the Mount Vernon Board of Education.

"I would like to have 15, even 20 more security guards and the money to train them," Mr. Coleman said, "but we are under an austerity budget, and we will be losing another $4 million in state aid next year."

Violence has also broken out at a middle school. On March 3, the police were called to A. B. Davis Middle School shortly after classes ended and found a 14-year-old boy lying unconscious in front of the school, bleeding from the mouth. The boy was taken to Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx, where he was treated for bruises. Detectives later learned that a high school student had punched the boy in the head.

Capt. Robert Kelly of the Mount Vernon Police Department said the violence was unusual but not necessarily indicative of a widespread problem with violence in the city's schools.

"Each of these incidents is serious in nature," Captain Kelly said. "However, it is not reflective of the entire student body."

School officials and students also dispute the notion that Mount Vernon's schools are unsafe. The high school's principal, Dr. Larry Spruill, said law enforcement and newspaper accounts of what happened at the school were misleading.

"No one was beaten unconscious here, and no one was slashed with a razor," Dr. Spruill said, refusing to comment further on the spate of violence.

Mr. Coleman said that in the case of the teenage girl beaten by three other students, it was discovered later that it was breathing problems rather than the beating that caused her to lose consciousness. As for the student who was said to have pulled a gun on another student, Mr. Coleman said, a gun was never found on the student or at his home.

"They made it sound like we had some wild man running through the halls with a gun," Mr. Coleman said. "That just didn't happen."

Ashley Iuni, 16, a 10th grader, said she felt safe in school. "I think all of this is being blown out of proportion," she said. "The security guards are very nice, and when there is trouble they are there."

Other students were not so sure. "We have some kids just wilding in here," said Jon St. Mark, a 17-year-old senior. "They cut classes and run the hallways, making trouble. Sometimes they crack down and sweep them all up, but sometimes it is just crazy here."

Mount Vernon's schools have had their ups and downs over the years.

The district wall of fame in the high school is covered with pictures of accomplished graduates, like the essayist E. B. White and Linda A. Fairstein, the Manhattan sex crimes prosecutor and crime fiction writer. Still, in the past several decades the district has made its way to the bottom of state school achievement lists. The district has 10,600 students and is saddled with many urban problems, like poverty and crime.

There have been signs of improvement lately, though. In 2001, several of the city's elementary schools had more than doubled the percentage of students passing fourth-grade reading tests.

School officials hope to make similar strides in improving safety. Mr. Coleman said preventing school crime would be an important part of a $100 million construction plan that includes building an additional, smaller high school and several other schools.

"The overall concept is smaller is better," Mr. Coleman said. "Smaller schools will be safer schools."