

# ***Snitching versus Seeking Help: Barriers to the Prevention of School Violence***

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# Snitching versus Seeking Help Overview

1. Bullying case example
2. Snitching
3. Seeking help
4. Bullying prevention



## **Bullying case example**

- School newspaper gossip column
- Restroom swirlies
- Hallway namecalling
- Classroom pranks
- Marching band initiation
- Gym class humiliation
- Group rivalry

# Why didn't you tell anyone?

**“I didn't want to be a snitch.”**

**“I'm no narc.”**

**“I'm not a tattletale.”**

**“I didn't want to get anyone in  
trouble.”**

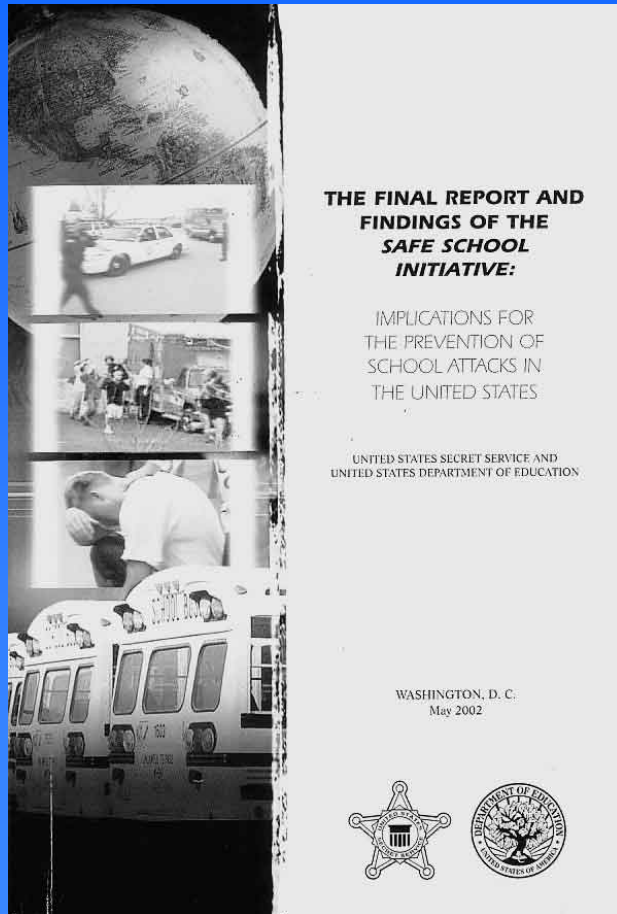
# **Bullying and threats preceded the Columbine shooting**

**“Everyone is always making fun of me because of how I look ...well I will get you all back.”**

**“Whatever I do people make fun of me, and sometimes directly to my face.”**

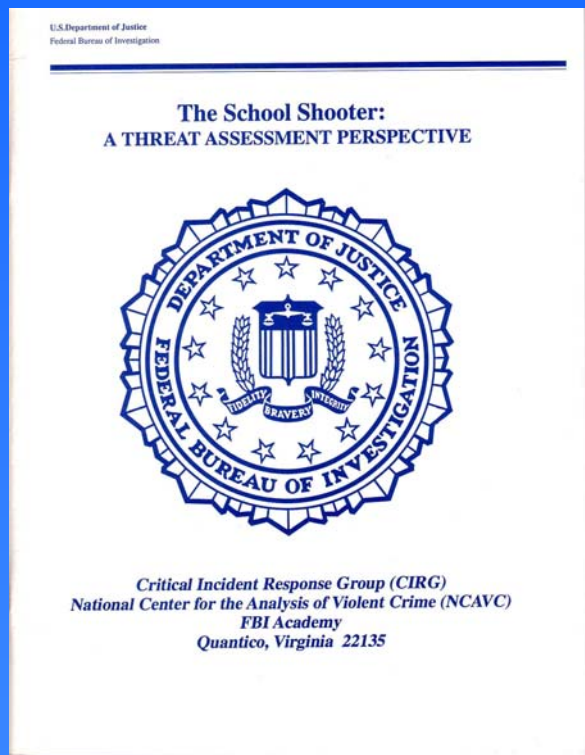
**Eric Harris diary**

# Secret Service study of school shootings emphasizes bullying



“The prevalence of bullying found in this and other recent studies should strongly support ongoing efforts to reduce bullying in American schools. Educators can play an important role in ensuring that students are not bullied in schools and that school not only do not permit bullying but also empower other students to let adults in the school know if students are being bullied.” (p 36)

# School dynamics that increase the risk of violence



**Download at  
[www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov)**

“Bullying is part of the school culture and school authorities seem oblivious to it. . . .

A code of silence prevails among students. Few feel they can safely tell teachers or administrators if they are concerned about another student’s behavior or attitudes.”  
(pp 22)

# What is snitching?

## Snitch

1. *intransitive verb* **inform on somebody**:  
to tell somebody in authority about another  
person's wrongdoing

*Friends don't snitch on each other.*

Encarta® World English Dictionary [North American Edition]

# Why is snitching so reviled?

**Snitch:** blabbermouth, canary, fink, narc, rat, sneak, squealer, stoolie, stoolpigeon, tattletale, etc.

# Can we distinguish snitching from seeking help?

**Snitching:** informing on someone for personal gain

**Seeking help:** attempting to prevent violence



# Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

- 50+% reductions in bullying in Bergen, Norway
- Most widely used program worldwide
- Widely endorsed as an effective program
  - SAMHSA Exemplary Program
  - OJJDP Blueprints Program

# Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

- Most independent studies have yielded disappointing results
- Program fidelity is important
- Evaluations are based largely on anonymous self-report surveys

School Psychology Review,  
2004, Volume 33, No. 4, pp. 547-560

## The Effectiveness of Whole-School Antibullying Programs: A Synthesis of Evaluation Research

J. David Smith and Barry H. Schneider  
*University of Ottawa*

Peter K. Smith and Katerina Ananiadou  
*University of London*

*Abstract.* Bullying is a serious problem in schools, and school authorities need effective solutions to resolve this problem. There is growing interest in the whole-school approach to bullying. Whole-school programs have multiple components that operate simultaneously at different levels in the school community. This article synthesizes the existing evaluation research on whole-school programs to determine the overall effectiveness of this approach. The majority of programs evaluated to date have yielded nonsignificant outcomes on measures of self-reported victimization and bullying, and only a small number have yielded positive outcomes. On the whole, programs in which implementation was systematically monitored tended to be more effective than programs without any monitoring.

# Limitations of anonymous self-report

- Cannot confirm student reports.
- Little evidence for external validity.
- Limited value for schools because staff do not know who is being bullied.

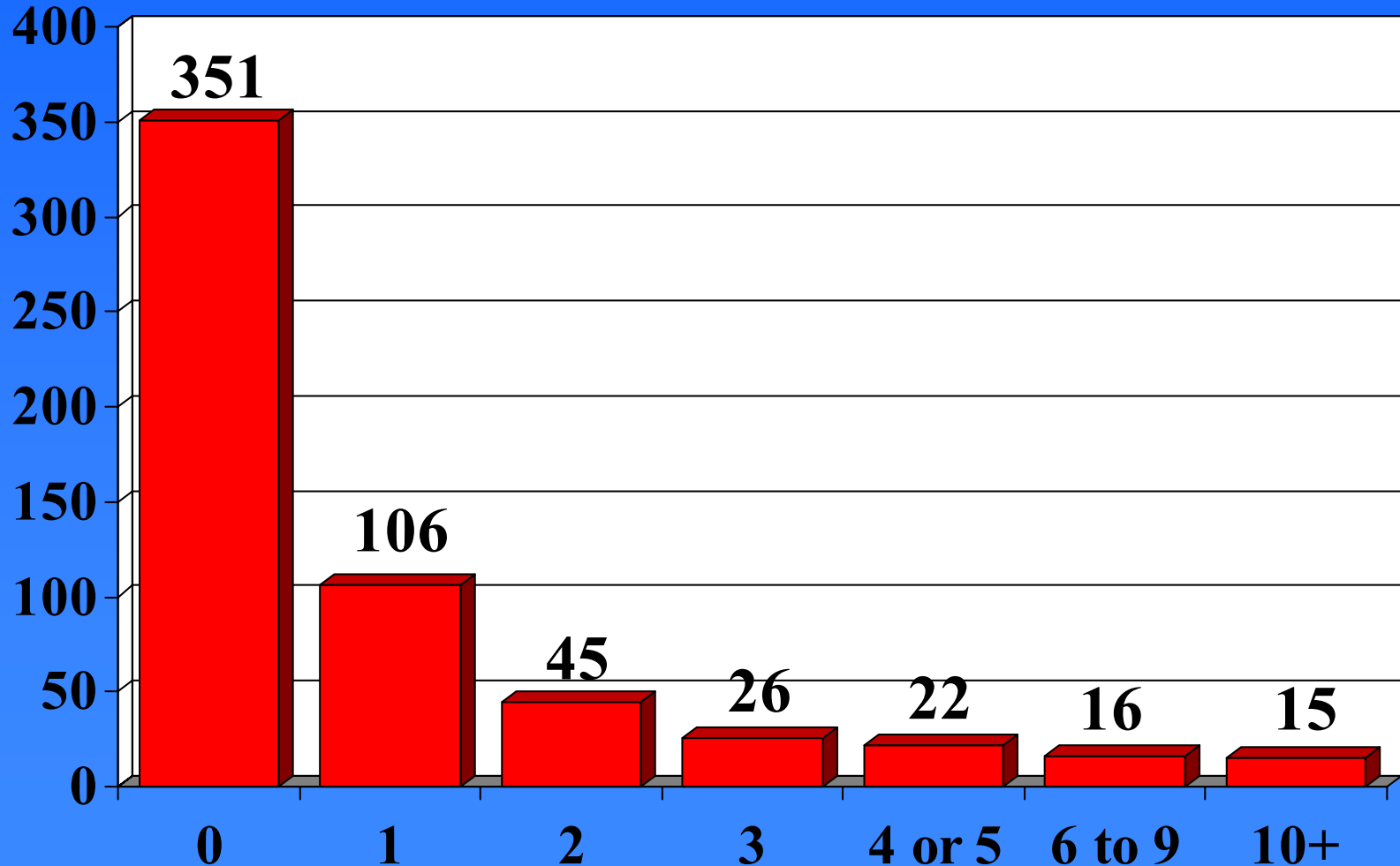
# Bully Victim Survey

This confidential survey will be used to help us be aware of students who are being bullied.

**Definitions of Bullying.** Physical bullying is when a student hits, kicks, grabs, or shoves you on purpose. Verbal bullying is when a student threatens or teases you in a hurtful way. Social bullying is when a student tries to keep others from being your friend or from letting you join in what they are doing. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength argue or fight. Based on this definition of bullying, write the names of any students who are the *victims of repeated bullying*.

First and last name of student who is bullied	What kinds of bullying? Mark all that apply.		
	Physical	Verbal	Social

# How many students are identified as victims by their classmates?

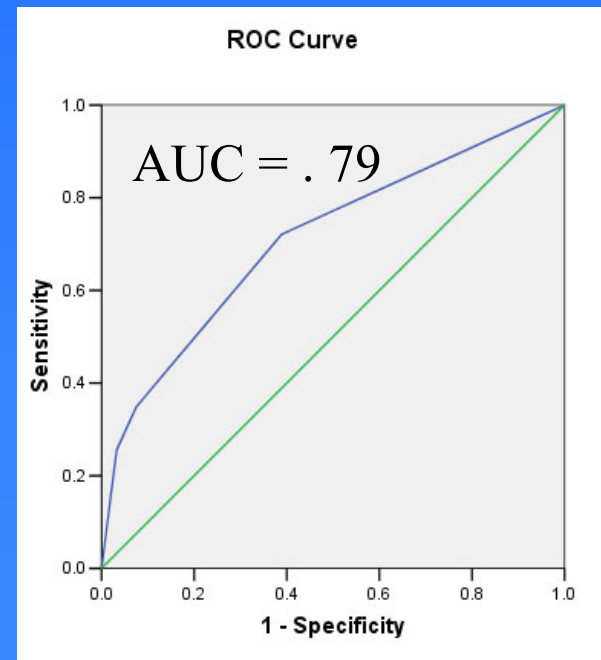
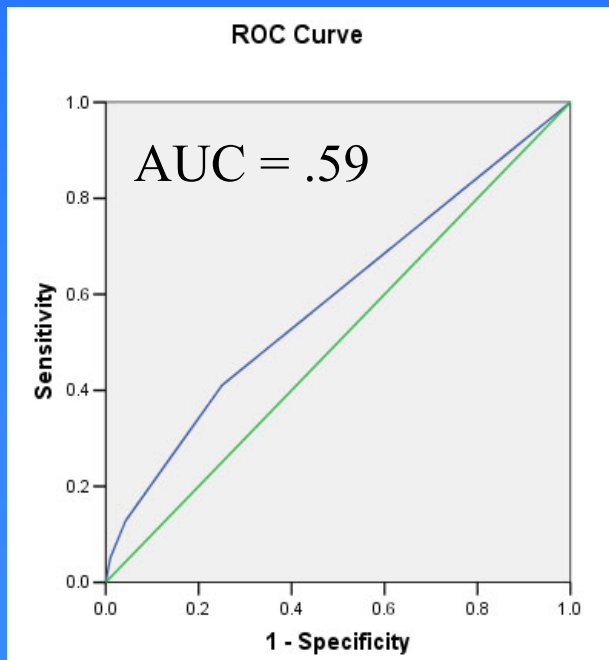


Do students and teachers identify the same students as victims?		3 or more peer nominations as victim	
		Not a victim	Victim
Teacher nomination as victim	Not a victim	482	61
	Victim	20	18

Students identify more victims than teachers. Most students identified as victims are NOT identified by teachers.

# How does self-report compare to peer-report?

1. Self vs peer reports of bullying others,  $r = .18$
2. Self vs peer reports of being bullied,  $r = .32$

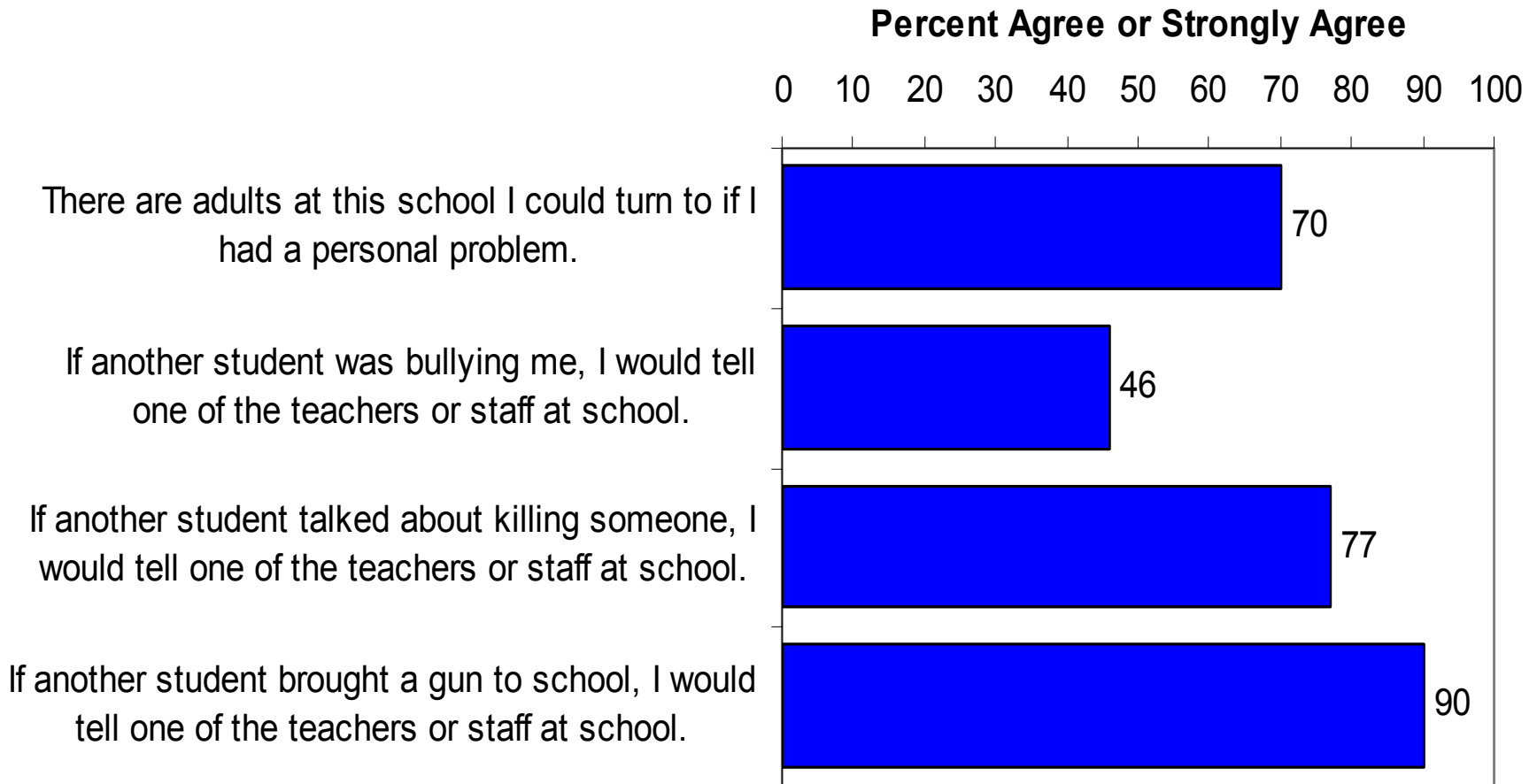


# Factors associated with telling an adult you have been bullied

<b>Selected predictors</b>	<b>Odds ratio</b>
Male gender	.69
Grade level	.79
Chronicity of victimization	1.45
Perception that bullying is not tolerated	1.34
Use of coercive parenting	.82

N = 756 bully victims from 6 middle schools. Unnever & Cornell (2004)

# Student willingness to seek help



**N = 542 middle school students. Data from Williams & Cornell (in press) *Journal of School Violence*.**

# Characteristics associated with willingness to seek help

- Lower grade level
- Female gender
- Less aggressive attitudes
- Perception that school does not tolerate bullying



# Burley Middle School Project

- Suburban middle school of 400-500 students in grades 6-7-8
- Staff-initiated bullying prevention in 2001
- Features similar to Olweus program
  - Staff training
  - Schoolwide campaign
  - Classroom curriculum
  - Repeated student surveys
- Peer nomination of victims with counselor follow-up



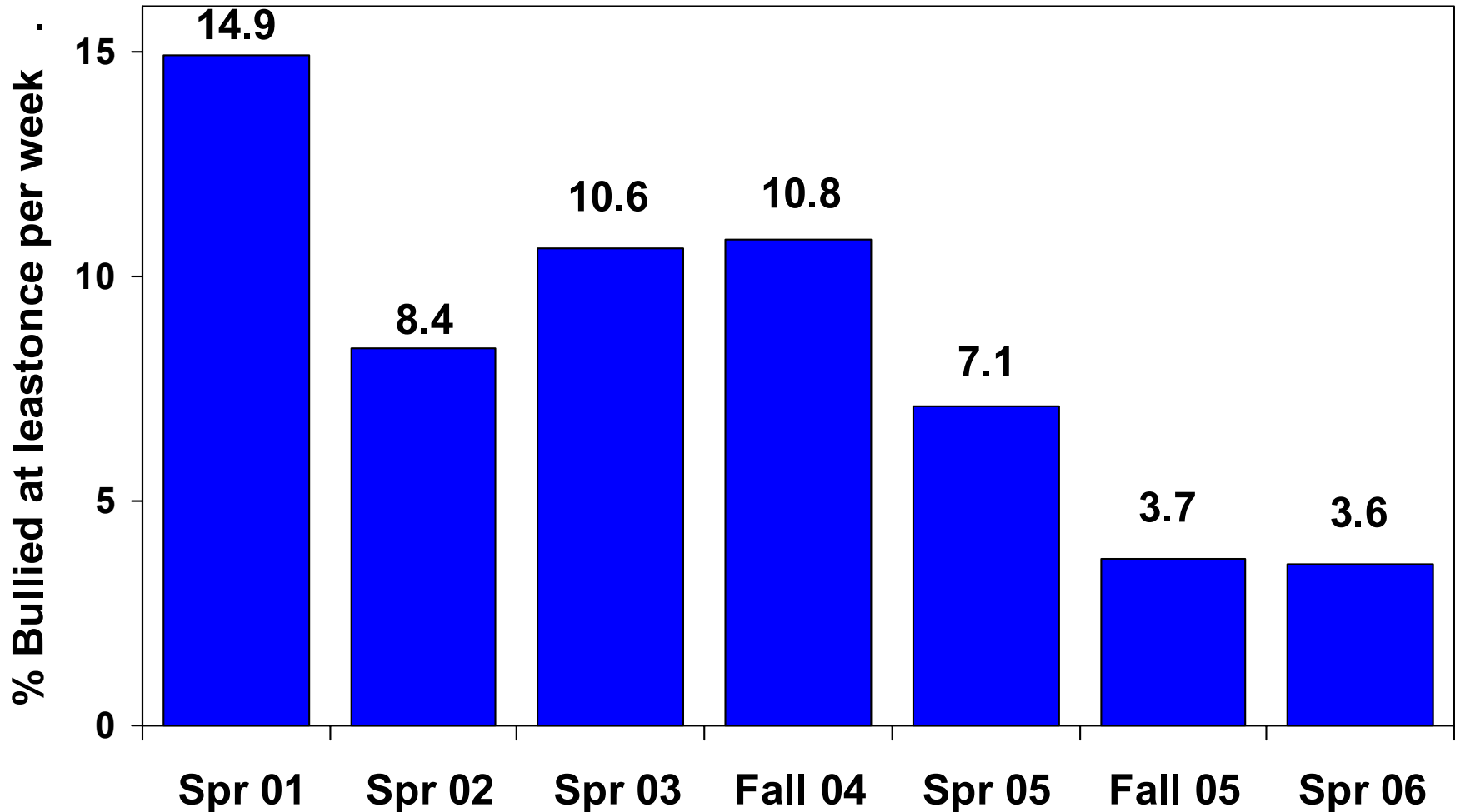
# Burley Middle School Project

1. Strong administrative support
2. Ongoing attention to bullying issues
3. Emphasis on identifying victims and working with them to make sure bullying stops.

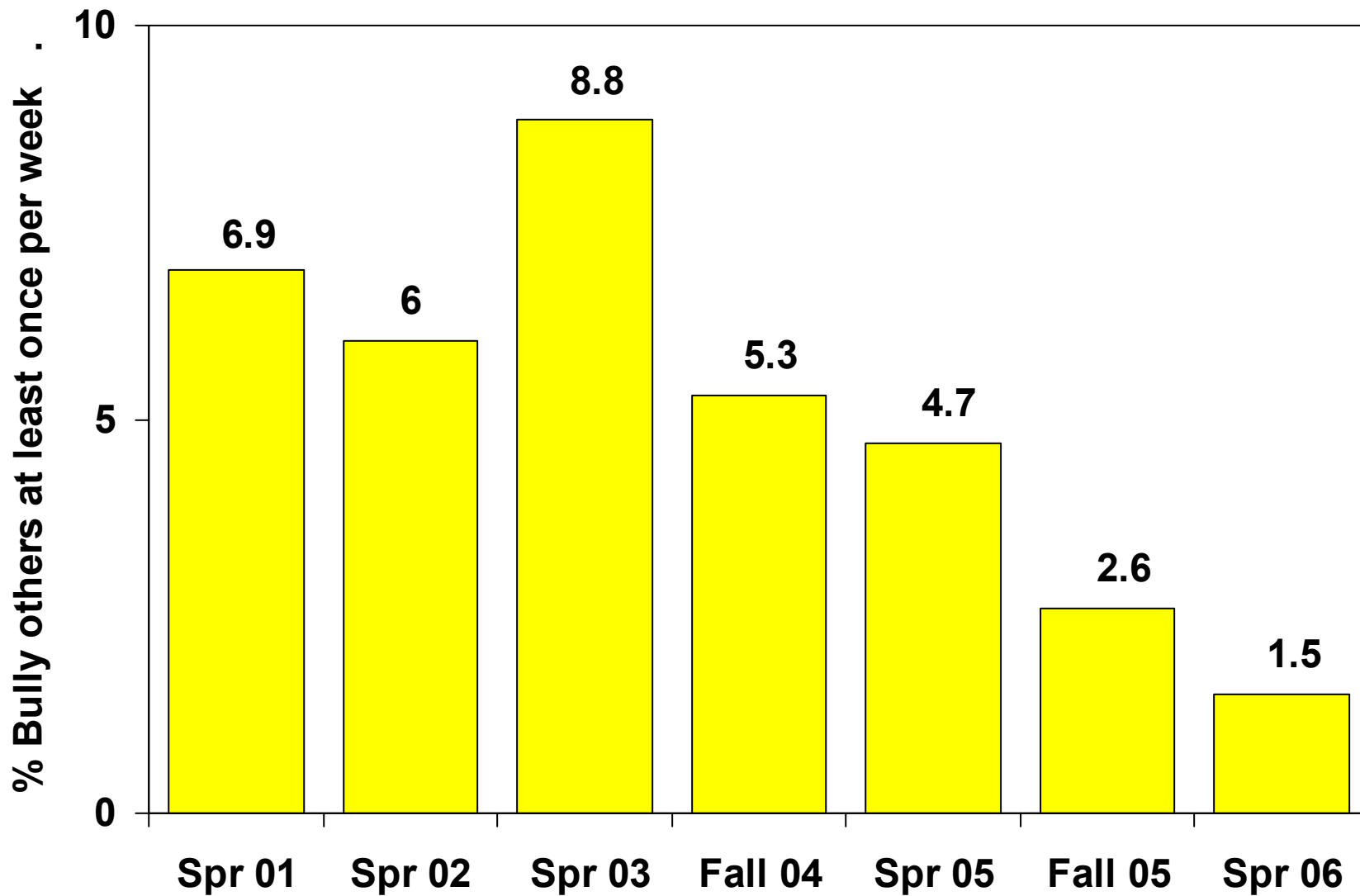


# Students Bullied in Past Month

## 2001 to 2006



# Students Who Bully Others 2001 to 2006



# Directions for future study

1. How can we distinguish snitching from help-seeking?
2. How can we encourage students to seek help for bullying and for threats of violence?
3. How can we make bullying prevention more effective?