BullyBuster

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Executive summary
BullyBuster is a geographically-targeted, community-based, child/adolescent focused application that targets the problems of avoiding and addressing school bullies. BullyBuster is marketed toward current or regular victims of bullying, and would be especially interesting to students whose bullying problems have been satisfactorily resolved via traditional channels of resolution. Since bullying is a problem of growing concern in American schools, parents, school administrators, and victims are increasingly willing to report their bullies to some sort of authority. However, a lack of evidence, apathy from school administration, or a swamped administrator’s schedule may prevent students from getting assistance in time.

BullyBuster fits into the equation by aiming to solve these problems without relying on a central authority. BullyBuster allows peer reports of bullies so that students will know of bullies before becoming a victim. Additionally, location reporting of bullies alerts current or potential victims of a bully’s whereabouts so that they can use avoidance tactics, such as planning an alternate route home, to avoid the bully. The application also offers users that have a “common bully” the option to use the “buddy system” on their way to/from school or to confront the bully as a group.

Finally, BullyBuster offers the option for users to purchase the services of third parties to more directly address their problem. Users can hire an arbitrator to be present while the victim and bully verbally discuss their issues. Alternately, users can hire the third party to serve as a bodyguard in areas where they may encounter the bully.

BullyBuster’s effectiveness is not limited to text on paper; multiple studies in schools with differing grade levels and city types have proven its effectiveness. Specifically, two featured case studies involving an urban high school and a rural middle school showed that the introduction of BullyBuster among certain students (versus a control group) significantly reduced the incidence of bullying. In some cases, the percentage of bully-related complaints reduced over 80%. Additionally, students extolled the arbitration feature as a fast and effective way to permanently resolve their issues with their bullies.

Industry-wide problem
In the United States, nearly one in five students reports that they are being bullied (Lessne & Yanez, 2016). Yet only 36% of students say that they report their bullying (Petrosino, Guckenburg, DeVoe, & Hanson, 2010). There are many reasons that children don’t feel safe reporting their bullies, such as they don’t feel that teachers will believe them or do anything about it. When one doesn’t believe that anything will
happen, there is less and less reason to bother reporting at all. Another issue is that people are scared of the repercussions of reporting a bully, they may suffer even more physical or emotional harm from being called a “tattle-tale” or a snitch. But even worse, some students just don’t know what to do and feel alone dealing with their issues.

A number of anti-bullying solutions have been tried to combat students inability to report and intervene when they see bullying or are the victims of bullying. But the efficacy of these has been shown to be extremely low. The McMaster University in Ontario led a study in 2016 where they interviewed 97 students of varying ages/genders and many students noted that their current presentations were “boring”, as they were just a person talking to a classroom or even the entire school all at once. Nor did they find the literature engaging, as it was all based around what not to do instead of what to do (Vitelli, 2016). Instead of setting the students up for success with proper tools and knowledge to deal with bullying, they are being told what not do instead of what to do and how to do it.

That same study came to a number of defined points to help schools improve their anti-bullying programs which have been taken into account with BullyBuster. Firstly, schools need to avoid negative wording and instead promote students to stand up for themselves and other students they see being bullied. By encouraging reporting and grouping of students, we help the kids become confident in reporting their problems and that there are others with the same issues that they can solve together. Secondly, they found that bully reporting needs to be dealt with in an immediate fashion. With the rapid-fire nature of social media schools will be able to utilize BullyBuster to deal with bullying at their school and be able to track if bullying that started as school continues off campus. By utilizing BullyBuster, students and faculty will be able to deal with bullying in a growing modern age. Thirdly, teachers feel that they not given the proper tools to deal with bullying in addition to their normal workload. Teachers have the ability to utilize BullyBuster to see bullying reports, and even add their own if they notice issues in their classroom.

BullyBuster is the modern solution to an age-old problem. By encouraging students to stand up for themselves, report their bullies to a global forum and seek peaceful remediation or group up by common bully we have taken the problem out of the darkness. Teachers will be able to utilize the tool for data tracking as well, and school faculty can use the application to see trends in their local area as well as identify common areas of issue. The solution to bullying won’t come overnight, but it also doesn’t come from posters and lectures. Give your students the key to their own success.
Existing solutions and drawbacks
Definitively deciding whether or not a bullying problem is "solved" presents a bit of a challenge due to a lack of a clear goal. Is the problem solved when the violent behaviors stop? What if the bully continues to shoot the victim dirty looks or subtly threaten them? Ultimately, it is best to treat the decision of declaring a bullying problem solved as a decision that the victim makes. This does not necessarily align with the viewpoint of the (currently) monopolistic solution to school bullying: discipline through school administration.

In the eyes of most school administrators, treatment for bullying is purely symptomatic: each school policy-violating action that the bully commits earns a punishment. The fact that the actions are targeted at a specific student or that they happen repeatedly very possibly may not factor into the punishment at all. This leaves the victim in a state of feeling as if the school is not paying attention to their specific problem, or that their problem is being trivialized.

Consider another problem regarding schoolyard bullying: if a bully pushes another student down during recess, the victim may be a bit upset the first time, but very well may not tell anybody about it. If this goes on for two weeks and the student finally decides to report the bully to administration, does he have any proof that these events happened at all? Unless a school has cameras installed that cover the area where the event took place, the visit to the administrator's office will likely devolve into a bundle of hear-say accusations. Even if there were an eyewitness to testify about the bullying on a specific day, how might the victim document an ongoing bullying problem? Unless there were some way to start and maintain a detailed paper trail of the bully-victim interactions, a bully may get away scot-free due to a lack of evidence.

If a student is frustrated with a lack of response (or satisfactory response) from official channels, he may seek to solve his problem through vigilantism. This most commonly brings up a mental image of the victim “turning the tables” and physically battering the bully or forming a group to do the same. However, if school officials catch wind of this, the student will most likely be punished as if this were an unprovoked response, rather than one of self defense. Additionally, such an outlash will most likely harm the student’s case for punishing the bully.

New, improved solution
BullyBuster provides a solution to all of the traditional problems that come along with typical school yard bullying. BullyBuster removes the power from a central authority
figure, such as a school administration, and gives it back to the person being victimized. BullyBuster provides a online community for children who are being bullied, allowing them to report and monitor the activity of those who are bullying them. BullyBuster also gives people the ability to deal with bullies outside of whatever establishment they are being bullied in. For example, if a child is being bullied by someone who attends a separate school from them, then school administration is incapable of taking any action in this situation. BullyBuster navigates its way around this problem.

Using BullyBuster allows our users to feel as if their specific scenario is being heard and addressed, as compared to the typical school scenario, where a child’s problem can be thrown into a large pile of reported issues and swept under the rug. BullyBuster allows our users to become empowered and take action to resolve their own issues. With the remediation options laid out in our application we are able to bring a user together with their bully and allow them to address their issues immediately and efficiently, avoiding the bureaucracy of traditional school administration.

Secondly BullyBuster allows students to document the issues that they are having, creating a record of evidence in the process. This allows a child who is being bullied to have resources to rely on, and prove the validity of their claims if they do decide to take their issues to some upper authority, such as their school. Having a database of the actions that a child being bullied took before going to appropriate authority figures could inspire a child to come forward with their problems, and providing them the confidence that they know they will be heard.

Case study

In two separate studies, researchers compared the effectiveness of Bully Buster to traditional methods of school discipline. One study was conducted at a rural middle school and another was conducted at an urban high school. Researchers solicited participants from the student body who felt like they were being bullied to participate in an anti-bullying study and randomly assigned them to two groups. All participants first completed a survey about how often they were bullied, what kind of bullying they suffered, how much bullying they observed, and how it impacted their lives. Participants in the experimental groups attended an informational session about Bully Buster where a researcher demonstrated the Bully Buster application and helped participants download the application and create user accounts. Participants in the control groups attended an informational session where a researcher lectured them on the school’s anti-bullying policy and reporting procedures. After three months, participants completed a second survey asking the same questions as the first.
Bully Buster was more effective than traditional methods of school discipline in both studies but especially in the urban high school environment. Students who used Bully Buster reported, on average, that the how often they were bullied decreased by 82%, that they were bullied in fewer and less intrusive ways, that they observed 67% less bullying, and that the impact that bullying had on their life decreased by 73%. Students in the rural control group reported no effective change whereas students in the urban control group reported that they were actually bullied more after attending the presentation on their school’s anti-bullying policy and reporting procedures.

Students said the following about Bully Buster:

- “I found an arbitrator and the next day we spoke to my bully. Now he leaves me alone! I had been talking to my guidance counselor for weeks but nothing ever happened.”
- “I reported an incident of bullying and learned that, like, a dozen other kids were being bullied by the same guy. Now we walk home together and nobody messes with us. And I don’t feel like I’m alone.”
- “My family just moved here this year so everyone was picking on me as the new guy. I started checking Bully Buster for bullying reports and was able to avoid the areas where all the bullies hang out.”

Students who were in the control group said that the school’s disciplinary procedures “don’t work” or “made things worse” and that they felt like school administration “didn’t listen” to their complaints, “didn’t care” about students, or “took the sides of the bullies.”

If there was one flaw to the two studies done, it was control group contamination. BullyBuster was so effective that students who were in the control group and attended the presentation on their school’s anti-bullying policies and reporting procedures started using the application after hearing about it from their friends. The researchers noted that this was the best evidence for BullyBuster’s effectiveness: When presented with the option of turning to school administrators or turning to BullyBuster, bullied kids abandoned their school’s ineffective policies and trusted in their peers.

Conclusions
BullyBuster has many features that have shown to be successful when it comes to students bullying problems. Giving the power to the community to resolve this common but worldwide epidemic can do a multitude of things. As only a small number of people actually admit to being bullied, we could eliminate the stigma of being the “bad person” by bringing up the issue to the traditional authorities. When students actually talk to someone about these issues they feel like it goes unresolved anyway because of how school’s traditionally handle bullying situations. Most situations are going to be unique contrary to how presentations and slideshows represent the bullying.
Being able to insure that a student is safe during, and most importantly after school, can give assurance to the guardians and concerned teachers. Since BullyBuster’s release we have had many cases of success of those battling their ongoing bully problem, finally giving these students the solutions they need to rise against their foes. BullyBuster’s mission to rid the communities of bullies can become a reality if you take the initiative now to download BullyBuster and give the attention to the students that are caught in this epidemic.

About the company

BullyBuster is a company founded upon the idea of self-improvement through action. We have grown up in this society of inaction rather than reaction and decided that enough was enough. The application was created in response to the issues of bullying in schools and society as a whole that children deal with mostly on their own with pseudo-support from their teachers and school faculty. By empowering the children to deal with their bullies by self reporting and look for peaceful solutions such as remediation or even talking to other students about the same struggles they face everyday we believe society will be better as a whole.

References

