Assessment and Development of a Plan for Handling Allegations of Sexual Harassment

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This research is a product of the graduate program in Educational Administration at Eastern Illinois University. Find out more about the program.

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Assessment and Development of a Plan for Handling

Allegations of Sexual Harassment

(TITLE)

BY

James I. Smith

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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1996

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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DEPARTMENT HEAD
Sexual Harassment in Schools:
Assessment and Development of a Plan for Handling Allegations of Sexual Harassment

James I. Smith
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Sexual Harassment

Abstract

Sexual harassment exists not only in the workplace but also in the nation's schools. School districts and administrators have a legal responsibility and liability to deal with allegations of sexual harassment.

The purpose of this study was to develop a step-by-step grievance procedure to resolve complaints of student-student and student-employee sexual harassment in which students are the alleged victims for Centralia High School District 200 in Centralia, Illinois. To obtain data for the development of this plan, a survey was taken of the student population at Centralia High School to determine student perceptions of the following:

1. Have they been victims of sexual harassment?
2. From whom have they received sexual harassment?
3. How frequently have they been sexually harassed?
4. Has sexual harassment affected their academic life at school?
5. To whom would they go for help if they were sexually harassed?
6. Are they aware of any policy at school that offers help if they are sexually harassed?

Surveys were administered by homeroom teachers and the results were tabulated by the author. The data collected indicated that sexual harassment was probably occurring at Centralia High School, that most was in the student-student
form and that females were more often the victims than males.

The existing Student Assistance Program (SAP) was expanded to handle allegations of sexual harassment. Educating students about sexual harassment was to become part of student orientation. A discipline plan was to be developed by the administration.
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Chapter 1
Overview

Only in recent years has sexual harassment been recognized as a legitimate issue that creates problems for males and females. While once thought to be limited to smoke-filled bars or part of the games of office politics, sexual harassment also takes place in schools. Sexual harassment disrupts the right to equal education by interfering with the psychological, social and physical well-being of students as well as their learning, attendance, course choices, grades, and as a result, economic potential (Strauss, 1988).

The American Association of University Women Education Foundation completed a survey in 1993 of 1,643 students in grades 8 through 11 in 79 schools across the nation which revealed that 75% of the girls and 56% of the boys reported that they were targets of unwanted sexual comments, jokes, gestures or looks. Two-thirds of the girls and 42% of the boys reported that they had been touched or grabbed. Twenty-nine percent of the girls reported being sexually harassed at least once a week in the preceding year (Barringer, 1993).

Sexual harassment in an educational setting victimizes all students whether or not they are the victim and whether or not they are male or female. It undermines security and safety in school. Sexual harassment can also interfere with the socialization process. If such behavior is condoned in
school, harassment becomes an acceptable behavior, and
tolerance of such action demeans members of both sexes.
Victims of sexual harassment are seen as not worthy of
respect (Roth, 1994).

Sexual harassment is illegal under Title VII of the
Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education
Amendments of 1972. Some forms of sexual harassment are
criminal offenses under child abuse laws in some states
(Strauss, 1988). Under the Illinois School Code, schools
are required to have a written policy dealing with the issue
of sexual harassment.

If incidents of sexual harassment are ignored, school
administrators and their districts may be legally liable
(Strauss, 1994). Given the stakes when sexual harassment is
allowed to continue in the school environment, districts
must have written policies to resolve the problem.

Purpose of the Study

Sexual harassment at school comes in three forms:
student-student, student-employee and employee-employee.
The purpose of this study was to develop a step-by-step
grievance procedure to resolve complaints of student-student
and student-employee sexual harassment in which students are
the alleged victims for Centralia High School District 200
in Centralia, Illinois.

Background Information

Centralia High School District 200 is located in
Centralia, Marion County, Illinois. The district employs
four administrators, 79 teachers and 34 non-certified support staff members. It has one attendance center with an enrollment of approximately 1237 students. The author has served as Centralia High School Principal for the past two years. Forty-nine percent (603) of the student body is female; 51% (634) is male. The student body includes a majority (88%) of white non-Hispanic students, 9% black non-Hispanic students and slightly over 1% Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic students.

The community of Centralia contains a variety of economic and social classes due to the presence of blue-collar industries, a large hospital, a community college and a state prison. The area is also surrounded by rural farmlands and smaller communities that look to Centralia for education, shopping, recreation, medical services and other amenities not available to them. The high school reflects the diversity of the community and its urban and rural feeder districts.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following:

1. The student body at Centralia High School was surveyed to determine student perceptions of sexual harassment.

2. Given the existence of a Student Assistance Program at Centralia High School, it was decided to work within the existing program to develop a procedure to resolve complaints of sexual harassment involving student-
student and student-employee relationships in which students were the alleged victims.

Definitions

The following terms have been defined to provide a better understanding of their use within the text of this study.

Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX). A federal statute that provides that "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal assistance" (20 U.S.C.A. § 1681a, 1972).

Hostile Environment. A hostile environment exists when the workplace is permeated with discriminating behavior that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create conditions that a reasonable person would find threatening or abusive. Also considered in defining a hostile environment is the victim's subjective perception of abusiveness. It is determined by examining frequency of conduct, severity of conduct, physically threatening or humiliating conduct, and conduct that unreasonably interferes with work performance. Hostile environment harassment occurs when there is a sexually intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. To prove a hostile environment, the offensive conduct does not have to seriously affect the person psychologically, nor does the conduct have to lead to injury (Braun, 1994).
Organizational Socialization. Where acceptable values and behaviors of the institution itself and society are learned (Roth, 1994).

Quid Pro Quo Harassment. Harassment that occurs when a teacher conditions the grant of a benefit on the receipt of a sexual favor or punishes a student for rejecting the favor (Braun, 1994).

Sexual Harassment. As defined by the Equal Opportunity Commission, sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance or request for sexual favors or any conduct of a sexual nature when 1) submission is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting said individual; and 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment (Braun, 1994). Specific behaviors that are unwanted and sexual in nature that could constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to touching, verbal comments, sexual name calling, gestures, spreading sexual rumors, jokes, cartoons or pictures, cornering or blocking movements, conversations of an excessively personal nature, attempted rape and rape (Strauss, 1988).

Student Assistance Program (SAP). A program that exists within the structure of the school to assist students
who are experiencing difficulties in areas other than the academic realm, which are adversely affecting their education. These areas include drug/alcohol abuse-depency, depression, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, stress, and numerous other problems faced by students.

Unwelcome. A way of determining whether conduct is sexual harassment. It means the conduct was not wanted or willingly permitted. Although the victim may "voluntarily" submit to sexual advances or intercourse, the behavior may still be considered unwelcome. An example is a student who is afraid to refuse a teacher fondling him or her, allowing the fondling to occur (Equity Issues, 1995).
Chapter 2
Rationale and Review of the Literature

Rationale
An eighth grade boy made catcalls and ugly sexual remarks while another pulled down a girl's slacks in a middle school hallway. A high school girl was dragged into the boys' locker room while the boys were showering. A teacher told an eleventh grade girl that she looked so good in her sweater that she'd make a great Playboy centerfold. The preceding are actual cases of sexual harassment in the public schools (Strauss, 1988). The educational environment that once was thought to be a safe place where support was offered and intellectual and personal development happened has become for many students a center of stress and exploitation (Roth, 1994).

Sexual harassment can come in many forms. Sexual harassment is often in the eyes of the beholder: what may be harassment to one person is flirtation to another. Specific behaviors that are unwanted and sexual in nature that could constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, touching, verbal comments, sexual name calling, gestures, spreading sexual rumors, jokes, cartoons or pictures, students "making out" in the hallways, conversations of an excessively personal nature, cornering or blocking movements, attempted rape or rape (Strauss, 1988). Anytime there is unwanted sexual touching, it becomes sexual assault as well as sexual harassment (Braun,
Sexual harassment is common in the workplace and the educational institutions of the United States (Roth, 1994).

At the elementary and secondary school level, sexual harassment is in early stages of documentation. Based on the evidence, it appears to be a pervasive problem. In 1993, 19 of 40 cases of sexual harassment investigated by the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, involved elementary or secondary school students (Lawson, 1993). A survey of high school students in Minnesota revealed that between 33% and 60% of female respondents had experienced some form of sexual harassment (Stein, 1991). A 1993 survey of over 4200 girls in grades 2 through 12 found that 89% of the students reported receiving sexually "suggestive gestures, looks, comments or jokes." Eighty-three percent reported that they had been "touched, pinched or grabbed." Twenty-eight percent of the girls and young women had received "sexual notes or pictures." Twenty-seven percent reported that they had been "forced to do something sexual." Thirty-nine percent of the students "reported being harassed at school on a daily basis during the last year." Another 1993 survey of 1632 students in grades eight through twelve found that 41% of male students and 31% of female students believed that sexual harassment was "just part of school life" and "no big deal" (Roth, 1994, p. 460).

Roth (1994) maintains that sexual harassment is a "big deal." Sexual harassment can impact the future of students. Sexually harassed students often lose interest in their
education, have higher rates of absenteeism and may drop out of school. Such students may be afraid to go to school, have lower levels of motivation and a loss of faith in the fairness and safety of the education system.

Roth (1994, p.462) also states that "sexual harassment in an educational setting victimizes all students, whether or not they are the intended targets." Schools provide organizational socialization for students where they learn the acceptable values and behaviors of the institution itself and society. If schools fail to support victims of sexual harassment or take steps to discipline those engaging in such behavior, students are taught that such behaviors are acceptable. Such non-action sends a clear message to members of both sexes that sexually harassing behavior is not only tolerated, but that females are of less value than males.

In another survey, a majority of girls responded that they ignored unwanted sexual attention because they "didn't want to make waves" or "were afraid people would think I was making a big deal out of nothing." It suggests that the respondents were minimizing what was happening or failing to recognize the seriousness of the offense (Strauss, 1988).

Sexual harassment and the existence of a hostile environment deprive females of the education rights and benefits they are entitled to under law (Roth, 1988). Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, school officials have an affirmative duty to protect students from
tortuous conduct by others. School officials also have a responsibility to properly monitor and discipline those under their direction who would commit tortuous acts. They also have a constitutional duty to protect students from known reasonable, foreseeable harm occurring during or in connection with school activities (Braun, 1994).

Schools can be held responsible for maintaining an environment that is safe from sexual harassment (Mawdsley, 1994). Administrators should not assume that just because no sexual harassment complaints have been filed in their district or school that sexual harassment is not happening (Massey, 1994). It is established that less than 10% of those sexually harassed file complaints. People hesitate to bring complaints fearing embarrassment, difficulty in proving their case, lack of support, and reprisals (Brandenberg, 1995). Administrators and school districts should also be aware that in sexual harassment situations, the law focuses on the impact the behavior had on the victim, not the intent of the harasser. If a complaint is filed, principals should be ready with copies of the district or school policy, training materials, and documentation about the facts of the incident and the steps to be taken in a follow-up investigation (Massey, 1994).

Review of the Literature

Sexual harassment often involves a male attempting to control a female. Historically, women's behaviors nearly always have been more restricted than those of men. Men
have established codes of social conduct and men have labeled "good" and "bad" women.

Throughout most of Western history, women have been regarded as male possessions. For centuries, rape was not seen as a crime against women but as a crime against the property of her husband or other male family members (Wishnietsky, 1994). Women who are assaulted have been viewed as "asking for it" with their style of dress, choices of behavior or lifestyles.

In the nineteenth century, several scientists believed that women were physically and mentally inferior to men. Edward H. Clarke believed that the development of the female brain was hampered by the development of the female reproductive system. According to this theory, males were more intelligent than females. Education, according to Clarke, would strain a woman's body leading to a nervous breakdown or sterility (Wishnietsky, 1994). In 1873, the Supreme Court upheld the refusal of the University of Illinois to admit women on the ground that "the paramount mission and destiny of women are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother." William James in his Principles of Psychology written in 1890 believed that girls did not reach the intellectual capacity of boys; therefore, the male brain could deal more effectively with complex matters than the limited more intuitive female brain (Risjord, 1986).
These attitudes persisted into the twentieth century and helped produce a culture in which sexual harassment of women was an accepted practice. Things would not begin to change until the 1970s.

With the adoption of Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, the principles and guidelines of Title VII were applied to education. Under Title IX,

"...no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal assistance" (20 U.S.C.A. § 1681a, 1972).

Educational institutions that did not take steps to prevent discrimination - sexual harassment being a form of discrimination - faced the possible loss of federal funding (Wishnietsky, 1994).

A legal precedent for hearing sexual harassment grievances under Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments was set in Alexander v. Yale University (1976). The court ruled against female students who had filed suit against Yale University claiming that the school had the responsibility of preventing sexual harassment and mediating disputes against harassment (Wishnietsky, 1994).

In 1977, the U.S. Supreme Court wrote in Ingraham v. Wright (430 U.S. 651, 654) that school administrators have "the duty of ensuring that the school environment is a safe one for students." In 1987, a federal court ruled that a
safe environment was one free of sexual harassment (Wishnietsky, 1994). Educational institutions have also been found to be legally responsible for prohibiting sexual harassment on their campuses and in their educational programs and activities. Institutions must act to prevent both quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment. They are responsible for the actions of employees as well as student-student harassment (Brandenberg, 1994).

In 1991, the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas inquiry made sexual harassment a national issue. Thomas, a nominee for a position on the U.S. Supreme Court was accused by Hill of sexual harassment. The nation watched as the Senate Confirmation Committee heard testimony on the "dirty little secret" (Mawdsley, 1994). Thomas was confirmed by the Senate, but the nation's attitude toward sexual harassment may have been changed forever.

Twenty years after Title IX went into effect, the Supreme Court ruled that victims of sex discrimination in schools and colleges may collect damages. The case was Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools in 1992. Before the Franklin case, the common remedy for complaints of sexual harassment was a court order to stop the harassment. In Franklin, the Supreme Court ruled that education institutions can be ordered to pay compensatory and punitive damages (Wishnietsky, 1994).

In Franklin, the Supreme Court held that, when a teacher was alleged to have harassed a student by forcible
kissing on the mouth, placing calls to the student's home requesting social meetings, and coerced sexual intercourse, monetary damages would be available to the student under Title IX for virtually all forms of this type of misconduct. The student could also recover damages against the school district and its administrators because they took no action to stop the harassment and discouraged the student from pressing charges against the teacher (Mawdsley, 1994).

Schools can also be held liable for failing to maintain a safe environment free from sexual harassment. In 1991, a Minnesota State Human Rights Commission awarded damages to a student for "alleged mental anguish and suffering" because the school had failed to remove sexually explicit graffiti about her in the boys' bathroom, despite her repeated requests. In 1992, a northern California student was awarded $20,000 because she had been unhappy with the way school officials had handled her complaint about boys making comments about her breasts. It is obvious that school officials can no longer dismiss student harassment as "kids will be kids" behavior (Mawdsley, 1994).

School officials and boards of education may not be liable for sexual harassment if they have no knowledge of the harassment. If a student does complain to school officials, however, they not only have a duty to investigate the complaints but also need to provide effective remedies for sexual misconduct that is found to have occurred (Mawdsley).
Chapter 3

Design of the Study

General Design of the Study

This study developed a step-by-step plan for dealing with incidents of sexual harassment at the student-student and student-employee levels.

To obtain data for the development of this plan, a survey was taken of the student population at Centralia High School to determine student perceptions of the following:

1. Have they been victims of sexual harassment?
2. From whom have they received sexual harassment?
3. How frequently have they been sexually harassed?
4. Has sexual harassment affected their academic life at school?
5. To whom would they go for help if they were sexually harassed?
6. Are they aware of any policy at school that offers help if they are sexually harassed?

The survey was in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix A) developed by the author. All tabulations were also completed by the author.

Sample and Population

On the day of the survey, 1196 students out of a total enrollment of 1237 students were in attendance. Of the students in attendance, 610 were males and 586 were females. A total of 957 (465 boys, 492 girls) completed surveys were returned for tabulation.
Data Collection and Instrumentation

The author developed the survey based on a review of the literature on the subject of sexual harassment in schools. The questions in the survey were intended to reflect major areas of concern regarding the issue of sexual harassment such as frequency of incident, sources of sexual harassment, impact of sexual harassment on student performance, and student awareness of possible support services.

The survey was distributed by homeroom teachers at Centralia High School. Teachers had been instructed as to the purpose of the survey and any special instructions needed to administer the survey in a general staff meeting held before the scheduled homeroom period and in a memo attached to the survey (see Appendix B). Upon completion of the survey by the students, the teachers collected the surveys and then returned them to the author for tabulation.

Data Analysis

This study utilized descriptive statistics in the form of totals and percentages. These types of statistics provided the basis for the conclusions that were developed. All of the data collected in this study were coded by the author.

The Plan

Given the nature of the problems covered by the Student Assistance Program (SAP) (see Appendix C), it was decided to use that program to handle complaints of sexual harassment,
also. A form was developed with the help of the Student Assistance Program Coordinator and the available literature (see Appendix D). Students have two avenues open to them should they wish to report sexual harassment by using the SAP program. Referral to the SAP program is done in strictest confidence and can originate from a staff member, an administrator or a parent. A student could also obtain a complaint form from the SAP Coordinator, complete it, and proceed through the SAP process on his or her own initiative.

The Student Referral Process is as follows:

1. A staff member, administrator or parent completes a SAP referral form (see Appendix E).

2. The SAP referral form is submitted to the SAP Coordinator. The SAP Coordinator requests a Behavior Checklist (see Appendix F) from student contacts (teachers, coaches, etc.).

3. The Coordinator contacts the student and then sees the student for further assessment.

4. Depending on the result of the assessment, the Coordinator may proceed with an initial intervention.

5. The Coordinator provides feedback to the referring parties. Parents are contacted with regard to the problem and solution options.

6. If the problem has been resolved, no further service is needed. If not, the student may be referred to
an outside agency for help. Follow-up assessments are made by the SAP Coordinator.

In complaints of sexual harassment, a similar procedure can be followed with the addition of contacting the administration for necessary disciplinary action to be taken against the offending parties. It is imperative that such actions be taken in order to provide a safe and secure environment for all students.
Chapter 4

Results

Student Surveys

Of 1196 surveys distributed to students, 957 (80%) were completed and used in this study. Twenty percent (239) of the surveys were either not returned to the teachers administering the survey or were incomplete to the point that the survey information data were not usable.

Question 1 asked students to indicate their gender. Of the 957 students surveyed, 492 (51%) were females and 465 (49%) were males.

Question 2 asked students if they had ever been sexually harassed in school. Eighty percent (393) of the females answered yes, 14% (69) answered no and 6% (30) were unsure (see Figure 1). From the male group, 60% (279) answered yes, 38% (177) answered no and 2% (9) were unsure (see Figure 2). It would appear that sexual harassment happens at Centralia High School to a majority (70%) of the student body.

Question 3 asked students to indicate frequency of sexual harassment. Thirty-four percent (167) of the females said that they were sexually harassed every day at school. Thirty percent (147) responded that they were sexually harassed 1-3 times a week. Twenty-eight percent (138) responded that it happened 1-5 times a month and 8% (39) said that such incidents happened less than 10 times in a school year (see Figure 3). Of males responding to the
survey, only 2% (9) said they were sexually harassed on a daily basis. Seven percent (33) said that sexual harassment occurred 1-3 times a week. Thirty percent (140) said it happened 1-5 times a month and 61% (284) responded that sexual harassment happened to them less than 10 times a school year (see Figure 4).

Figure 1 and 2

![Figure 1](image1)

![Figure 2](image2)

Figures 3 and 4

![Figure 3](image3)

![Figure 4](image4)
Question 4 asked students to identify a person who has sexually harassed them. Sixty percent (295) of the females indicated that a male student had harassed them. Three percent (15) said that harassment had come from female students. Thirty-seven percent (182) responded that a boyfriend had sexually harassed them. There were no responses to the choices of male or female teacher/employee and girlfriend (see Figure 5). About 20% (90) of the males responded that they had been sexually harassed by female students. Nearly the same number (19%, 88) reported that harassment had come from their fellow male students. Forty percent (186) said that harassment had come from their girlfriends. Twenty-two percent (101) failed to mark a response. There were no responses to the choices of male or female teacher/employee and boyfriend (see Figure 6).

Figures 5 and 6

Question 5 asked students if they felt that sexual harassment was just a "part of life." A majority of females
said "yes" (62%, 305). About 25% (120) responded that it was not just "part of life." Ten percent (49) responded "sometimes" and 2% (10) were unsure (see Figure 7). A majority of males (80%, 372) also said that sexual harassment was just "part of life." Only about 15% (70) said that it was not. Three percent (14) answered "sometimes" and 2% (9) were unsure (see Figure 8). While many females seemed to be resigned to living with sexual harassment, a sizable number of them were recognizing that it was demeaning and wrong. Enlightenment among the males was not so prevalent.

Figures 7 and 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 7</th>
<th>Figure 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong> 63%</td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong> 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong> 25%</td>
<td><strong>No</strong> 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsure</strong> 2%</td>
<td><strong>Unsure</strong> 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sometime</strong> 10%</td>
<td><strong>Sometime</strong> 3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 6 asked students if they had ever ignored sexual harassment because they didn't want "to cause trouble." Nearly all females and males responding answered yes (92%, 452 females, 89%, 414 males). It is unknown if students did not report sexual harassment because they were unsure of exactly what constituted sexual harassment, if
they were unaware of how to report such incidents, or if they truly did not want "to cause trouble."

Question 7 asked students if they had ever been touched, grabbed or fondled in an unwanted way. About 35% (170) of the females responded yes (see Figure 9) while only 16% (74) of the males answered yes (see Figure 10).

Figures 9 and 10

Question 8 asked students to again indicate who had harassed them in this fashion. Twenty percent (24) of the females indicated that that person had been a male student, and 80% (96) indicated that such attention had come from their boyfriend (see Figure 11). Only about 15% (46) of the males reported such unwanted behavior with most of it coming from their fellow male students (82%, 38)(see Figure 12). Males may not interpret the physical aspects of their "horseplay" as being sexual harassment.

Question 9 asked students if they had ever found it hard to study or had their classroom performance changed or
affected in a negative way by sexual harassment. Only 5% (23) males and 15% (74) females felt that sexual harassment impacted their lives in this manner. Taunts of "teacher's pet" or "brain" or labels of "nerd" would not necessarily fit into the category of sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment did have an impact on class choice for some students (Question 10). A majority (51%, 251) of females responded that fear of sexual harassment or actual sexual harassment affected their decision on what classes to take. Fewer (26%, 121) males were affected in the same manner. Such fears may prevent a female from taking vocational classes such as woodworking or auto mechanics or advanced science and mathematics classes. By the same token, males may avoid music, art, home economics, parenting or drama.

Question 11 asked students that if fear of sexual harassment or actual sexual harassment made them want to stay home from school. While a majority of students experienced sexual harassment to some degree at school, only 5% (23) of the male respondents and 7% (29) of the female respondents felt it to the extent that it kept them out of school.

Question 12 asked students that, if they were sexually harassed, to whom would they turn for help. Responses varied. "Peers of the same sex" was the most common response for females (25%, 123). Teachers ranked second (22%, 108), counselors, third (18%, 89) and their parents
Sexual Harassment 25

fourth (13%, 64). The Student Assistance Program Coordinator ranked fourth among school personnel, fifth overall (10%, 49). Eight percent (39) would turn to peers of a different sex. Only 2% (9) would go to the principal while another 2% (9) would turn to "no one" (see Figure 11). A majority of males (52%, 242) felt they would go to "no one" if they were sexually harassed. Among school personnel, teachers ranked first (11%, 51), the Student Assistance Program Coordinator, second (5%, 23), counselors, third (3%, 14) and principal, fourth, (1%, 5). Males turned to their male peers (11%, 51) over their parents (9%, 42) or female peers (8%, 37)(see Figure 12).

Figures 11 and 12

Question 12 asked students if there was a written policy to handle incidents of sexual harassment. Fifty-two percent (256) of females responded "no," 9% (44) said "yes" and 39% (192) were unsure. A majority of males also responded "no" (63%, 293) while 7% (33) said "yes" and 30% (139) were
unsure. This is indicative of how much attention is paid to the issue of sexual harassment in the minds of students of both sexes.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

Schools are required by law to have a written sexual harassment policy. While Centralia High School District 200 had such a policy for both students and employees, it was not of much practical use to either group or to the district. A step-by-step plan was needed to handle complaints of sexual harassment.

A student survey revealed that a majority of students at Centralia High School had experienced sexual harassment. It was particularly prevalent among females and such incidents happened on a regular basis for many. There are two possible conclusions. Females are harassed much more frequently than males. Males do not perceive sexual harassment in the same way as females do. The survey also revealed that such behavior was often tolerated because it was seen as part of daily life. It might also be concluded that behavior from classmates that inhibits a student’s academic performance is not perceived as sexual in nature. Sexual harassment also influenced choice of classes for some and the academic performance of others. The most disturbing fact was that few students, male or female, realized that there was a school policy to handle such incidents.

By working through the existing Student Assistance Program (SAP), a step-by-step plan was developed to handle complaints of sexual harassment. In addition, a form was developed to allow students to initiate complaints outside
the normal referral process of the SAP program. The administration was also involved in handling disciplinary actions deemed necessary as part of the process.

In an effort to make students more aware of the problem of sexual harassment, training in recognizing sexual harassment and in combating it through complaints and referrals will be implemented as a part of Freshman Orientation at Centralia High School. Just as the staff members are made aware of the non-confidential activities of the Student Assistance Program, they will be made aware of similar actions taken in handling sexual harassment. The student body needs to be aware that such behavior will not be tolerated by the administration and that consequences will be administered as they would be for other violations of rules. Complaint procedures will be included in the student handbook, the staff/employee handbook and in district policy.
Appendix A

Student Survey

Instructions

Please read the definition below and fill out the survey that follows. Please be honest in your answers.

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or any conduct of a sexual nature Specific behaviors that are unwanted and sexual in nature and could constitute sexual harassment which include, but are not limited to, touching, verbal comments, sexual name calling, gestures, spreading sexual rumors, jokes, cartoons or pictures, cornering or blocking movements, conversations of an excessively personal nature, attempted rape and rape.

Please circle the appropriate response.

1. Male Female

2. Have you ever been sexually harassed in school?
   Yes No I don't know.

3. If you answered "Yes" to question 2 how often has this happened in school?
   Every day.
   1-3 times a week.
   1-5 times a month
   Less than 10 times a school year
4. If you answered "Yes" to question 2, who has made you a victim of sexual harassment?
   - Male student
   - Female student
   - Male teacher/school employee
   - Female teacher/employee
   - Boyfriend
   - Girlfriend

5. Do you feel that sexual harassment is "just a part of life?"
   - Yes  No  Sometimes  I don't know.

6. Have you ever ignored sexual harassment because you don't want to cause any trouble?
   - Yes  No  Sometimes

7. Have you ever been touched, grabbed or fondled in an unwanted way?
   - Yes  No

8. If you answered "Yes" to question 2, from whom have you received this unwanted physical contact?
   - Male friend
   - Female friend
   - Male teacher/employee
   - Female teacher/employee
   - Boyfriend
   - Girlfriend
9. Have you ever found it hard to study or had your performance in the classroom changed or affected in a negative way by sexual harassment?
   Yes    No    Sometimes

10. Has fear of sexual harassment or actual sexual harassment affected your decision on what classes to take?
    Yes    No    Sometimes

11. Has fear of sexual harassment or actual sexual harassment made you not want to come to school?
    Yes    No    Sometimes

12. Have you ever been asked to trade sexual behavior for grades, homework help, safety, etc.?
    Yes    No

13. If you were sexually harassed, to whom would you turn for help?
   Teacher
   Counselor
   Principal
   Student Assistance Program Coordinator
   Parents
   Peer of the same sex.
   Peer of a different sex.
   No one.

14. Does the school have a written policy to handle incidents of sexual harassment?
    Yes    No    I don't know.
TO: Homeroom Teachers

FROM: James I. Smith, Principal

RE: Sexual Harassment Survey

The survey on sexual harassment that was discussed at the staff meeting is attached. Please have the students in your homerooms complete this survey on Wednesday, ________.

As a reminder...

1. Remind students not to put their names on the survey.

2. Reinforce the idea that they are to be as honest as possible.

3. Explain the survey if needed but be as objective as possible.

4. Collect the surveys at the end of homeroom and return them to me by the end of the day.

Thanks!
Appendix C

Student Assistance Program Goals and Objectives

In the spring of 1990, a grant was written seeking funds to establish a Student Assistance Program at Centralia High School. With the award of the grant monies in August, the program actually became a reality.

A Student Assistance Program is a program that exists within the structure of the school to assist students who are experiencing difficulties in areas other than the academic realm, which are adversely affecting their education. These areas include drug/alcohol abuse-dependency, depression, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, stress, and numerous other problem areas facing our younger people today.

The need for S.A.P.s is being experienced by schools across the country. Adolescents are experiencing extreme amounts of stress in order to keep up with a fast-paced society, and overall, with a society that has changed the basic way our young people grow up. Divorce, single parenting, media influence, mobility, and an immediate gratification society are just a few of the factors.

It is our intention here at Centralia High School to begin to impact these social issues to better ensure the overall quality of education for our students. Students cannot achieve their fullest potential academically if they are high on a drug, depressed or facing overwhelming emotional difficulty.
The task before us is great. It is our intent not to tackle this problem alone, but in collaboration with our community members, local social service agencies, law enforcement, and through a network of parents (Centralia Board of Education, 1990).
Appendix D

Centralia High School

Sexual Harassment Complaint Form

This complaint form is to be utilized for filing complaints alleging a violation of the sexual harassment policies of Centralia High School.

Complainant: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________
Phone: ________________________________
Date and time of alleged incident(s): ________________
Name of person(s) you believe violated school policy: ________________________________
List any witnesses who were present: ________________
Where did the incident(s) occur? ________________
Describe the incident(s) as clearly as possible, including verbal statements, physical conduct or contract, and your response to the situation. Attach additional pages if necessary. ________________
This complaint is filed based upon my honest belief that ______________ has violated school policy. I hereby certify that the information which I have provided in this complaint is true, correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

_________________________  __________
Complainant's Signature    Date

_________________________  __________
Received by                 Date
Appendix E

Centralia High School

Student Assistance Program

Referral

Please place in the locked Student Assistance Program Box in the mail room. Thank you!

Student: ___________________________  Date: ___________

Grade: _____  Referred By: ___________________________

Reason for Referral: (Check all appropriate areas)

___ Drop in academic performance

___ Change in attendance pattern

___ Noticeable changes in behavior or attitude

___ Change in physical appearance

___ Sign of possible substance abuse

___ Change in peer groups

___ Change in extra curricular involvement

___ Family situation

___ Other: ___________________________

Additional comments:
Appendix F
Centralia High School
Student Assistance Program
Behavior Checklist

To: ___________________________ Date: ______
Re: ___________________________ Please return by: ____

(student)

The purpose of this Behavior Checklist is to identify observable negative behavior changes in a student. The Core Team compiles the information and assesses the seriousness of the problem. If the problem is serious, we will do all that we can to get help for that student. The team does not attempt to diagnose. The identities of referring staff members will be kept confidential within the Core Team.

Please check all that apply to the student indicated above and return to ___________________________

Thank you for taking time to complete this checklist. We appreciate your objective response.

____________________________

Unusual Behavior
___ Recent changes in friends
___ Extreme mood swings
___ Sudden popularity
___ Disoriented
__ Has unrealistic goals
__ Talks about suicide or death
__ Depressed
__ Talks freely about alcohol or other drug use
__ Defensive
__ Withdrawn; isn't relating to others

Disruptive Behaviors
__ Defiance of rules
__ Irresponsible, blaming, denying
__ Fighting
__ Cheating
__ Verbally abusive to others
__ Obscene language/gestures
__ Attention-getting behaviors
__ Crying
__ Hyperactive; nervous

Physical Symptoms
__ Changes in personal appearance
__ Sleeping in class
__ Frequent cold-like symptoms
__ Glassy, bloodshot eyes
__ Slurred speech
__ Unexpected, frequent physical injuries
__ Frequent complaints of nausea

Academic Performance
__ Current grade
__ Current grade is a drop in achievement
Decrease in class participation
Fails to complete assignments
Has short attention span
Poor short-term memory

Class Attendance
Number of absences this quarter
Number of times tardy
On absence list but in school
Frequently visits nurse
Frequently uses the lavatory

Extra Curricular Activities
Loss of eligibility
Missed practice without good reason
Dropped out of activity

Home and Family
Suffered recent loss (death, divorce, moved)
Troubles in family (financial, health, separation)
Runaway
Job problems
Other sibling's problems
Family member with possible drug/alcohol use problems
Speaks angrily of parents

Comments:
References


Centralia Board of Education Policy Book.


