

How one Central New York teen confronted and stopped a school bully

By [Elizabeth Doran](#)

At first, Hannah Blum tried to just ignore it.

When that didn't work, the LaFayette teen-ager turned to administrators, but Blum said the bullying still didn't stop. For the first four months of eighth grade, Blum said she was bullied relentlessly. She couldn't sleep, withdrew from others and felt increasingly depressed.

"I felt powerless," said Blum, who will be a junior this September at LaFayette Jr./Sr. High School.

Blum said the bully, who was another eighth-grade girl, pushed her, shoved her into the wall, pulled her hair and degraded her.

"I'd be sitting in the computer lab and she'd walk up to me and start petting the back of my head like I was a dog," Blum recalls. "I would ask her not to touch me, but she'd act like she didn't hear me."

Blum decided to share her story with Syracuse.com to show others how prevalent bullying is, how it makes you feel and how she finally took action to stop the bullying.

The LaFayette school district has been in the spotlight recently after a bullying incident in the boy's locker room focused that community's attention on school bullying. Several students were suspended **in June after a 13-year-old boy was attacked by two other boys who reportedly punched, shoved and choked him.**

Hundreds of parents who **attended a district-wide meeting on bullying** shared their stories and voiced their concerns about bullying in the LaFayette schools - and in other Central New York districts.

Hannah Blum spoke at the meeting, telling people how helpless she felt and how she finally took action by writing the girl who was bullying her a heartfelt letter.

Blum, in an interview with Syracuse.com, said the girl who bullied her harassed other too. No one could get it to stop.

"I lived in the guidance office; I was probably there several times a day," Blum said. "This girl had no reason to bully me. We were friends in elementary school. I would tell the principal and we would get called to the office, but the bully would just deny it."

"I would come home from school and cry most every day," Blum said.

Blum's mother, Karen, said she made several trips to the school, but said officials put the focus on Hannah and how she could learn to deal with it.

"Hannah would come home from school almost every day in tears, " Karen Blum said. "I couldn't believe no one could control this girl. I even asked if there was something we could do for this girl, because something must have made her feel she had to be mean to others."

Hannah Blum said her frustration made her seem weaker, and more vulnerable. She thought about getting a group of girls to confront the girl, but said administrators told her that would be like forming a posse to try and intimidate the girl.

Blum said she couldn't get the administration to take any action - she was just directed to go to counseling. District officials bring in speakers routinely on bullying and how to prevent it, but when it happens Blum said she doesn't see any action taken or enforcement of the rules.

Blum said she didn't feel any support from administrators, and her parents, Karen and John, agree.

Laura Lavine, who became LaFayette's superintendent in July, said administrators can't comment on individual students. She said **the district is taking steps to combat bullying.**

Frustrated by her inability to stop the bullying, Blum said she requested a one-on-one meeting with the bully through her principal, and then wrote the bully a two-page letter. In the letter, Blum said she reminded the girl they had been friends in elementary school and that Blum had waited with her one day when she felt sick, never leaving her side.

In the letter, she asked what was going on in the girl's life that made her feel she had to be mean to others, and told her she would pray for her, and any issues she was facing.

"It was much easier to write to her, because I'm not a good talker," Blum said. "I told her she was hurting me, and that I wanted to yell at her or push her back but I didn't. I told her there must be a reason she was like this, and I wondered what it was."

Blum said the girl read it and said: "That was strong." She then told Blum she "didn't have a choice" when it came to bullying.

After that encounter, Blum said she never had a problem with the girl again. "It was like shutting off a faucet," she said.

Blum said she found later the bully was going through personal difficulties.

"I learned I have more power than I think I did," Blum said. "Bullying is a huge problem. It doesn't matter how old you are or where you go to school. It happens everywhere."

SOURCE: www.syracuse.edu