

Evidence Based Practices in School Mental Health: Bully Prevention and Intervention

Although many adults vividly remember what it feels like to be bullied at school, they often underestimate the amount of bullying that still takes place and the impact that it can have on today's children (Nansel et al., 2001). Recent research has suggested that more than a quarter of students report having been bullied (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011), and that bullying behaviors can result in significant adverse outcomes for all involved (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV), 2004). This *Fast Facts* defines issues around bullying behaviors and presents ideas and resources for creating a more positive school climate that reduces incidences of bullying behaviors and improves the learning environment for all.

Background Information

Traditionally, bullying behavior is thought of as one student being physically aggressive towards another student. However, this is not true in many instances, and several forms of bullying behaviors, including cyberbullying, relational aggression, and identity-based bullying (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion) do not involve physical aggression at all. In fact, Colorado legislation defines bullying as "... any written or verbal expression, or physical or electronic or gesture, or pattern thereof, that is intended to coerce, intimidate, or cause any physical, mental, or emotional harm to any student (C.R.S 22-32-109.1 (a)(X)(B))."

Adverse social-emotional implications have been documented for all involved in bullying, including the target of bullying behaviors, those who initiate bullying behaviors, and bystanders. Targets of bullying behavior may become depressed, anxious, have decreased self-esteem, exhibit psychosomatic symptoms, and decreased academic outcomes. Students who demonstrate bullying behaviors are more likely to engage in behaviors that escalate to criminal activities if adequate and timely interventions are not provided (CSPV, 2004).

Research also indicates that both students who demonstrate bullying behaviors and targets of the bullying behavior exhibit reactive aggression (Camodeca & Goossens, 2004). Bystanders of bullying, including those who do not become involved but actively observe bullying take place, are at increased risk of feeling fearful, powerless to act, and guilty for not acting (Olweus, 2011). Finally, research indicates that bystanders may likewise contribute to the problem by providing attention and assistance in bullying situations. Hawkins, Pepler, and Craig (2001) found that in greater than 80% of bullying situations, bystanders were involved in the bullying and typically reinforced the aggression.

One of the most important consequences of bullying behaviors is the impact it has on overall school climate. A school culture where bullying behavior is ignored or not properly addressed can undermine students' sense of safety while at school. This in turn can hinder students' ability to learn by impacting concentration and sustained attention (Farrell, Meyer, Sullivan, & Kung, 2003). As such, addressing bullying behavior is important to not only the social-emotional health of students, but for academic success as well.

Effective Bully Prevention and Intervention

Even though the research base on effective bully prevention and intervention is still growing, there are specific program features that have consistently been proven to be effective when addressing bullying school-wide. The US Department of Health and Human Services has proposed 10 "best practices" in bully prevention and intervention efforts (Stop Bullying Now, 2011):

- 1) **Focus on the social environment of the school.** Social norms at the school must be changed so that bullying is no longer an acceptable activity. This climate change requires the involvement of not only students, but staff and administration.

- 2) **Assess bullying at the school.** Climate surveys can help assess the nature of the bullying problem, assist in tailoring a school-specific prevention approach, and allow for data to track prevention and intervention progress.
- 3) **Garner staff and parent support for bullying intervention.** As discussed above, bullying prevention requires support and reinforcement from all those in students' lives to be effective.
- 4) **Form a group to coordinate the school's bully prevention efforts.** This group should collect and maintain data and design and implement bully prevention efforts.
- 5) **Train your staff in bullying prevention.** All adults who interact with students should be trained.
- 6) **Establish and enforce school rules related to bullying.** Clear, straightforward expectations should be developed and made easily visible.
- 7) **Increase adult supervision in bullying "hot spots."** Increase adult presence in areas where bullying occurs most frequently.
- 8) **Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations.** Staff should be trained to intervene on the spot when bullying occurs.
- 9) **Focus some class time on bullying prevention.** Aim for 20-30 minutes every other week.
- 10) **Continue these efforts over time.**

Schools may wish to implement a formal bully prevention curriculum in concert with the suggestions provided above. A list of research-based strategies, programs, and approaches is provided in table form at the end of this document. While it may be tempting for school personnel to implement these strategies in isolation, it should be noted that doing so may possibly exacerbate the problem and cause unintended outcomes (Good, McIntosh, & Pieler, in press), as in isolation it may be difficult to develop enough buy-in to implement program curriculum successfully (Biggs, Vernberg, Twemlow, Fonagy, & Dill, 2008). As such, care should be given to implementing any anti-bullying curriculum within a supportive school-wide framework that addresses school culture as a whole and creates clear expectations for acceptable behavior. Doing so will support the best conditions for reducing school bullying behaviors and improving student outcomes.

It is also important to note that while most students will respond to primary bully prevention efforts such as those discussed above, some students will require more individualized support at a higher level of

intensity (e.g. targeted or intensive needs); as such, a multi-tiered system of support should be in place to most effectively address bullying.

Disclaimer

The information gathered for this evidence-based practice sheet is a summary of common practices and/or programs with a strong research base and definitions found in recent literature. This summary is by no means a comprehensive representation of all information, definitions, programs, and standards to be found. The listing of a specific program within this sheet does not constitute as an endorsement from CDE for the program.

Resources

Colorado Legacy Foundation: <http://www.colegacy.org/>

Colorado School Safety Resource Center

<http://www.safeschools.state.co.us/>

OSEP's Technical Assistance Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: <http://www.pbis.org>

Stop Bullying Now: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>

The Colorado Trust: <http://www.bullyingprevention.org>

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<u>Program</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Target Population</u>	<u>Key Outcomes and References</u>	<u>Level of Evidence (see key below)</u>
Bully Prevention in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (BP-PBIS) <i>Summary:</i> BP-PBIS is intended to be implemented within the PBIS framework. BP-PBIS is designed with five outcomes in mind, including: 1) defining respect and teaching students how to "be respectful" to all, 2) teaching students how to address bullying through the three step-response (stop, walk, talk), 3) pre-correcting behaviors before the three step-response is needed, 4) teaching appropriate replies to the three-step response, and 5) teaching staff on a universal strategy when addressing student reports.	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports http://www.pbis.org/school/bully_prevention.aspx	Elementary Middle School High School	By investing in the implementation of multi-tiered prevention frameworks like PBIS, schools are creating cultures that prevent the development and occurrences of bullying behavior. If bullying behavior occurs, a team-based and data-driven problem-solving process is initiated to address the bullying. Ross et al., (2009)	Blueprints for Violence Prevention: N/R NREPP/SAHMSA: N/R Communities that Care: N/R OJJDP Model Program Guide: N/R <i>*BP-PBIS has not yet been evaluated by these programs; however, BP-PBIS is founded on the research-substantiated PBIS approach which is supported by the Office of Special Education Programs.</i>
Bully Proofing Your School (BPYS) <i>Summary:</i> BPYS follows many of the principles involved in the Olweus BPP program, but provides a more-defined curriculum for teachers to use. Implementation occurs in three phases beginning with a definition of bullying, a discussion of its impact, and establishment of classroom rules regarding bullying. The second phase involves developing skills and techniques for dealing with bullying and increasing resilience to victimization. In the third phase, emphasis is placed on change in school culture through converting children who are neither bullies nor victims of bullying — the silent majority — into the "caring majority."	Sopris West Learning www.Soprislearning.com	Elementary Middle School High School	Research at the elementary level suggests BPYS results in: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased safety in the classroom and cafeteria• Increased playground safety• Reduced bullying and violence• Change in attitudes about bullying Epstein et al. (2002), Menard et al. (2008), Gallagher et al., (2008).	Blueprints for Violence Prevention: N/R NREPP/SAHMSA: N/R Communities that Care: N/R OJJDP Model Program Guide: N/R <i>*BPYS has not yet been evaluated by these programs. However, stringent research and studies where the program was applied with fidelity have demonstrated the efficacy of BPYS at the elementary level.</i>
Olweus Bully Prevention Program (BPP) <i>Summary:</i> The purpose of this program is to reduce and prevent bully/victim problems as well as to increase positive peer relations within the school environment by creating adult involvement, implementing classroom rules, and performing individual interventions as needed. The program emphasizes involvement at four levels: school, individual, classroom, and community. Additional components have been added such as the <i>Olweus Bully Questionnaire</i> which can be used as a planning tool before and after implementation.	Olweus Bullying Prevention http://www.clemson.edu/olweus/index.html	Elementary Middle School	Research has demonstrated: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significant reductions in reports of bullying and victimization, as well as in reports of antisocial behaviors.• Significant enhancement of school climate. Black & Jackson (2007), Limber (2004), Olweus (2005).	Blueprints for Violence Prevention: <i>Model</i> NREPP/SAHMSA: N/R Communities that Care: <i>Effective</i> OJJDP Model Program Guide: <i>Effective</i>

<u>Program</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Target Population</u>	<u>Key Outcomes and References</u>	<u>Level of Evidence (see key below)</u>
Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) <i>Summary: The PATHS Curriculum provides elementary school teachers with a systematic developmental procedure for helping children understand their feelings, tolerate frustration and come up with constructive solutions for dealing with conflict. In the classroom, teachers give frequent, short lessons on interpreting social cues and others' perspectives, developing positive relationships, using self-control and solving interpersonal problems. Students also learn how to reduce stress, communicate better, develop a positive attitude, and understand the difference between feelings and behaviors.</i>	Channing-Bete http://www.channing-bete.com/	Preschool Elementary	<p>Research has demonstrated that the PATHS program results in significant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improvements in self control, understanding and recognition of emotions, conflict resolution skills, thinking and planning skills, and academic achievement. reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression, and conduct problems, and aggression. <p>Greenberg et al. (1995), Kam et al. (2004), Domitrovich et al. (2007)</p>	Blueprints for Violence Prevention: <i>Model</i> NREPP/SAHMSA: 2.6-3.2 Communities that Care: <i>Effective</i> OJJDP Model Program Guide: <i>Exemplary</i>
Second Step <i>Summary: Second Step is a classroom-based social skills curriculum for students from preschool through middle school. The curriculum aims to reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviors and increase protective factors and social-emotional competence. Organized by grade level, the program teaches children empathy, problem-solving skills, risk assessment, decision-making, and goal-setting skills.</i>	Committee for Children www.cfchildren.org	Preschool Elementary Middle School	<p>Research has demonstrated that Second Step results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased prosocial behavior and social competence Decreased levels of aggression. <p>Cooke et al. (2007), Holsen et al. (2008 & 2009).</p>	Blueprints for Violence Prevention: <i>N/R</i> NREPP/SAHMSA: 2.4 Communities that Care: <i>Effective</i> OJJDP Model Program Guide: <i>Effective</i>
Steps to Respect <i>Summary: This program is designed to teach students how to effectively address bullying by promoting social-emotional skills and learning how to recognize and report bullying. The program also increases staff awareness and responsiveness by involving teachers as coaches in bullying situations.</i>	Committee for Children www.cfchildren.org	Grades 3-6	<p>Steps to Respect has been found</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to significantly decrease bullying and destructive bystander behavior To significantly decrease malicious gossiping <p>Frey et al. (2005 & 2009), Low et al. (2010).</p>	Blueprints for Violence Prevention: <i>N/R</i> NREPP/SAHMSA: <i>N/R</i> Communities that Care: <i>N/R</i> OJJDP Model Program Guide: <i>Effective</i>

Level of Evidence Key

(Source: <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/matrixfiles/criteria.pdf>)

Blueprints for Violence Prevention Ratings System: Model Programs, Promising Programs www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints

Blueprints Model Programs must meet three criteria: evidence of effect with a strong research design (experimental or quasi-experimental), sustained effect (at least one year beyond treatment), and multiple site replication. Promising Programs must have evidence of effect with a strong research design (experimental or quasi-experimental).

NREPP-SAMHSA Ratings System: 0-4 www.nrepp.samhsa.gov

NREPP uses a 'quality of research' rating for each criminal and substance abuse outcome, ranging from 0 to 4, on six criteria: reliability, validity, intervention fidelity, missing data and attrition, potential confounding variables, and appropriateness of analysis. An overall rating for each outcome is provided.

Communities that Care Ratings System: Effective <http://www.samhsa.gov/about/csap.aspx>

Communities That Care focuses on preventing adolescent substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout, and violence as well as promoting the positive development of youth and children. Programs focus on the family, school, and community. The criteria include: (1) programs that address research-based risk factors for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence; (2) programs that increase protective factors; (3) programs that intervene at developmentally appropriate ages; and (4) show significant effects on risk and protective factors in controlled studies or community trials.

OJJDP Model Programs Guide Ratings System: Exemplary, Effective, Promising www.ojjdp.gov/mpg

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Model Programs Guide (MPG) is designed to assist practitioners and communities in implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention programs that can make a difference in the lives of children and communities. The MPG evidence ratings are derived from four summary dimensions of program effectiveness: (1) conceptual framework, (2) program fidelity, (3) evaluation design and (4) empirical evidence. *Exemplary* programs are implemented with a high degree of fidelity, demonstrate robust empirical findings and have an experimental evaluation design. *Effective* programs are implemented with sufficient fidelity and demonstrate adequate empirical findings using a high-quality (quasi-experimental) evaluation design. *Promising* programs are generally implemented with minimal fidelity and demonstrate promising (perhaps inconsistent) empirical findings using a reasonable conceptual framework and a limited evaluation design (single group pre- post-test).

Program References

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