Best Practices in Bullying Prevention

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OVERVIEW

In surveys of bullying, many students describe their concerns about the reactions of their peers and teachers to bullying: “A lot of the times, kids bully in small ways but after a year it all adds up and I think that no one really understands it.” “It happens in the classroom. Sometimes, teachers don’t notice. Other times, they ignore it.” “Teachers never know when gossip is going around, and when they do find out, they most often say things like ‘It will pass,’ or they say ‘Don’t worry, no one believes it anyway’ but people laugh at the person who the rumor is about, and no one even tries to help just the tiniest bit.”

How schools, and the individuals within them, choose to address bullying has a substantial impact on students' feelings of safety and well-being. Approximately, 30–50% of U.S. students are involved as aggressors or as targets of bullying (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). The long-term effects of bullying on mental and physical health outcomes, for both bullies and victims, are well documented, and the potentially tragic consequences of bullying are frequently highlighted in the media.

School psychologists are increasingly involved in bullying prevention and intervention efforts, both at the request of their schools or districts and as required by some state legislatures. In response to these needs, there has been a surge of bullying prevention programs developed by university researchers and by private companies.

This chapter is designed to serve as a guide for school psychologists involved with bullying prevention and intervention activities. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services (NASP, 2010) recognizes the importance of the domain of Preventive and Responsive Services in school psychologists’ roles and delineates the comprehensive training school psychologists receive as problem solvers in the school context, which makes them ideally suited to address bullying in schools. First, school psychologists have knowledge in data-based decision making and accountability, which is important for accurately assessing and identifying school-wide and individual-level needs related to bullying prevention, selecting evidence-based interventions, and monitoring intervention success over time. Second, school psychologists are able to use consultation and collaboration skills to implement antibullying services as part of a team. Third, school psychologists are trained to implement interventions and mental health services to develop the social and life skills that can help bullies learn positive peer interaction and help victims avoid future bullying. Fourth, school psychologists’ training in preventive and responsive services in multitiered prevention efforts is invaluable for planning to comprehensively address bullying, which cannot be successfully addressed at any one level exclusively. Fifth, school psychologists are trained in family–school collaboration so they can engage parents in the process.

Given the comprehensive training school psychologists receive to address student academic, social, and mental health problems in school, and the prevalence and negative consequences of bullying in schools, it is
absolutely critical that school psychologists take a leadership role to address bullying in their schools. To help school psychologists accomplish this goal, this chapter provides information on the nature and consequences of bullying; the current state of bullying legislation as it is related to prevention efforts; and strategies that school psychologists can use to identify the most effective interventions for their schools and to be critical consumers of available programs. Several leading bullying prevention and intervention programs that school psychologists can implement as part of a comprehensive problem-solving team effort to address bullying in their schools are reviewed. Finally, a case study outlines the process of implementing bullying prevention and interventions at one school, with the role of the school psychologist highlighted.

Definitions of Bullying

There are many definitions of bullying. The most widely used definition was developed in the late 1970s by Dan Olweus, who pioneered research on bullying in Norway. This definition describes bullying as a subset of peer victimization that involves intentional aggression that is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power between the person doing the bullying and the person being bullied (Olweus, 1996). Bullying can incorporate both physical and verbal aggression, as well as relational aggression (e.g., spreading rumors or gossip with the goal of harming a person’s relationships), stealing and property damage, behaviors consistent with sexual harassment, and cyberbullying (i.e., using cyberspace as the vehicle through which to aggress against others). Throughout this chapter, when we use the term bullying, we are including any subtype a student can experience.

The specificity of the definition of bullying is designed to distinguish bullying behaviors from other forms of peer aggression, such as fighting between friends, or one-time events (Olweus, 1996). Bullying is considered to be a more pervasive and chronic form of victimization. It involves an ongoing aggressive relationship in which the child being bullied cannot defend himself or herself. Some equate bullying to abuse, because of the chronicity of victimization from which a target cannot escape. Although the three hallmarks of bullying (intentionality, repetition, power imbalance) may seem straightforward, in practice they can pose difficulties for schools aiming to identify and report acts of bullying. For example, does one severe incident of physical assault constitute bullying, even if it was not repeated? Decisions about which behaviors constitute bullying can have consequences for school disciplinary responses and reporting regulations.

Cyberbullying is a recent phenomenon that poses a unique challenge to educators because it occurs largely outside of any potential visibility of adults, can happen instantaneously, opens the opportunities for multiple or repeated victimization within a short time period, and occurs in a context in which the victim may be relatively helpless to prevent or respond. In this regard, cyberbullying is more similar to verbal harassment (e.g., name calling or intimidation threats) and relational aggression (e.g., spreading demeaning rumors or causing ostracization from a group) than it is to physical forms of bullying (e.g., physical attacks or extortion of money). Currently, the most widely used definition of cyberbullying states it is the intentional and repeated harm of others through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices (Perren et al., 2012). As such, cyberbullying is considered to be a subset of verbal and relational aggression that involves the use of digital media to victimize others. This can include the use of social network sites, chat rooms, and e-mails to disseminate cruel or demeaning messages to individuals or to threaten or harass individuals using text, photos, videos, audio recordings, or multimedia forms.

Impact of Bullying

Bullying is widely prevalent among students and can have substantial long-term negative effects on psychological and physical health outcomes. Strong evidence links bullying and peer victimization with increased internalizing problems (e.g., depression, anxiety, withdrawal; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010) and later aggression (Sansone, Leung, & Wiederman, 2013). Bullies also show risk for mental health and aggressive behavior problems, and bully-victims—those who both bully others and are also targets of bullying themselves—show the greatest risk for mental health difficulties (Kumpainen et al., 1998).

Thus, school psychologists have good reason to be concerned about children involved in bullying (as both aggressors and victims). School psychologists have entered a period of increased recognition of the toll of bullying, as well as legislative and policy commitments to reducing bullying in schools. By championing bullying prevention and intervention efforts in their schools and school districts, school psychologists can play a central role in ensuring that policies and practices are based on solid evidence and thoughtful implementation.
BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

There are several basic considerations for school psychologists to attend to in selecting and adopting a bullying prevention program, including understanding the antibullying legislation in their state and common issues in successfully implementing a bullying prevention program.

Understanding Legal Mandates

In 1999 Georgia was the first U.S. state to enact bullying legislation, and most states have followed with their own legislation. These laws vary considerably in their definitions of bullying, purpose statements, scope of their laws, consequences for students, and expectations for schools (Stuart-Cassel, Bell, & Springer, 2011). However, the majority of state laws either mandate or encourage schools to implement bullying prevention programs or teacher training related to bullying (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011). These laws have led schools and school districts to increasingly seek information about effective bullying prevention programs that will enable them to meet state mandates. Of the states with bullying laws, Stuart-Cassel et al. (2011) found that 45 states required school districts to adopt bullying policies, 36 explicitly prohibited cyberbullying, and 13 stated that schools have jurisdiction over behaviors occurring off of the school campus, if they contributed to a hostile environment at school.

As of 2013, there are no U.S. federal laws that specifically address bullying. However, there are federal laws requiring schools to respond to related victimization, including discriminatory harassment (harassment based on race, national origin, color, sex, age, disability, religion; see http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/federal). These behaviors may overlap with bullying, requiring that schools address student conduct that may be considered discriminatory harassment.

The varying nature and scope of state bullying legislation has implications for the way school personnel conceptualize and respond to bullying, both at the school level and in individual cases. At times, these state mandates may be at odds with recommendations from research or the best practice standards of school psychologists. For example, schools may be required to enact specific no-tolerance disciplinary policies, whereas school psychologists may prefer flexibility in individualizing responses to bullying or remediating psychosocial challenges within a particular peer context. School psychologists are often integrally involved in ensuring that schools meet state mandates in regard to bullying legislation, and it is therefore important that they stay up to date with current laws and are aware of state-distributed model policies (this information can be found at http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws).

Adoption and Implementation of Programs

Recent research on the implementation of bullying prevention programs has found that educators vary in their preferences for methods of selecting antibullying programs. For example, Cunningham et al. (2009) found that teachers generally fell into three categories: those who are decision sensitive, those who are support sensitive, and those who are cost sensitive. Decision-sensitive teachers believe that individual schools, rather than districts or governments, should select prevention programs. This group is interested in the characteristics that define programs (e.g., simplicity, sustainability), believe in the effectiveness of prevention programs, and are the most supportive of prevention programs. Support-sensitive teachers are attuned to contextual factors that might influence the effective adoption and implementation of bullying prevention programs. This group prefers programs with a high level of staff and parent involvement, those that are supported by scientific research, and those that provide a comprehensive package of trainings, manuals, and supports. Cost-sensitive teachers prefer lower cost programs that minimize time demands for training and implementation. They anticipate fewer benefits of bullying prevention programs and are more likely than educators in the other groups to believe that bullying prevention is the responsibility of parents. These findings have important implications for selecting and designing bullying prevention programs, as they highlight the need for school psychologists to identify programs that will be most acceptable and feasible for implementation by the particular set of educators, staff, and families in their school.

Specificity of Programs

A final basic consideration to highlight is whether schools or districts should select programs specifically designed to address bullying or programs that are broader in scope. Although schools may work to accurately identify incidents of bullying and states may mandate that schools document and report bullying, many schools are much more interested in reducing peer aggression broadly and improving the social–emotional skills and
well-being of their students in general rather than focusing on bullying alone. Similarly, many school-based prevention and intervention programs are also aimed at a broader base of behaviors than bullying alone. The decision of whether to select a prevention program that addresses a broader set of social–emotional goals (in addition to addressing bullying) or a program that focuses solely on bullying can be made by (a) considering the range of social–emotional programs being implemented in the school to determine how multiple goals can best be integrated and (b) conducting a comprehensive school-wide assessment of student social–emotional needs (including bullying) to determine the priorities of school intervention efforts. In some cases, schools will need to develop their own strategy for integrating multiple programs and goals, while in others they may be able to draw on existing resources. For example, a bullying prevention component has been developed to be implemented within the broader framework of positive behavior support (Ross & Horner, 2009). In this chapter, we will specifically focus on bullying prevention efforts, instead of broader violence prevention or social–emotional skills curricula.

**BEST PRACTICES IN BULLYING PREVENTION**

School psychologists can play a central role in selecting, implementing, and evaluating bullying prevention programs. Schools that consistently implement comprehensive strategies should be able to reduce bullying and victimization, while working to build a positive school climate that engages all students.

**Where to Start**

Collecting data on student experiences with bullying, victimization, and related behaviors is critical to planning for bullying prevention and intervention activities. The most widely used prevention program, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (described in more detail below; Olweus & Limber, 2010) begins by administering the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire to assess the current state of school bullying and guide school-level intervention planning. Information about, for example, where and when bullying is most likely to occur can play a central role in determining first steps for increasing teacher monitoring and planning for intervention.

There are many other measures with different strengths and limitations that school psychologists can use to identify the incidence of bullying and victimization. For example, the California Bullying Victimization Scale (Felix, Sharkey, Green, Furlong, & Tanigawa, 2011) is designed to be a school-wide anonymous bullying assessment that provides data on rates of student bullying and victimization. This scale does not use the term bullying, therefore eliminating concerns that students may have predefined notions of what the word bullying means that influence their survey responses. This strategy also addresses concerns that some surveys may be asking students to self-identify as bullying victims and that identifying as a victim of bullying may be an emotionally charged experience. Instead of using the word bullying and presenting a definition of bullying (as many bullying surveys do), the California Bullying Victimization Scale asks students whether they have experienced each of the key definitional components of bullying (i.e., aggression that is repeated, is intentional, and involves an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the target). Interestingly, this assessment strategy identifies a somewhat different group of students than other measures (Felix et al., 2011).

Regardless of the specific assessment tool selected, school psychologists should choose an assessment method with the following characteristics. First, assessments should be administered either school-wide or to a randomly selected group of students, rather than targeting students suspected to be involved in bullying, because bullying is often undetected by teachers and other adults. A school-wide or random assessment of students will provide school psychologists with a comprehensive picture of the nature of bullying and victimization. Second, assessments should include a wide range of victimization and aggressive behaviors (including physical, verbal, relational, sexual, and online aggression), so that school psychologists can identify the areas in which students are most in need of intervention. Third, school psychologists should select assessment tools that will provide key information that can guide interventions for students. This will likely include the location of bullying; the time of day at which it is most likely to happen; student help-seeking; and the reactions of school staff, teachers, parents, and uninvolved peers to bullying when it occurs. This type of information is critical to school safety planning. Fourth, schools also need to assess other related constructs (e.g., a range of forms of peer victimization, like conflict between friends or dating violence, and emotional well-being) in addition to bullying, in order both to understand the context of bullying and to inform the strategic selection of
prevention and intervention programs. Fifth, we recommend that schools collect data from teachers and parents on their perceptions of bullying. Data collection from parents can be particularly useful for understanding experiences of younger students who may not be able to complete a self-report survey. Even in older grades, comparing data from student self-report with parent and teacher report can provide important information about potential gaps in perceptions of bullying. For example, if teachers report low rates of bullying, but students report high rates, these data can help to facilitate important conversations about how teachers understand student experiences.

**General Strategies to Reduce Bullying**

Ttofi and Farrington (2011) conducted an extensive review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of antibullying programs in schools. Searching published and unpublished reports, 35 journals from 1983 through May 2009, and 18 electronic databases in various languages including English, the authors found 53 unique program evaluations, of which 44 allowed for the calculation of effect size. They concluded that school-based antibullying programs are generally effective in reducing bullying (average decrease 20–23%) and victimization (average decrease 17–20%). They found the following program elements were associated with a statistically significant decrease in bullying: parent training/meetings, playground supervision, intensity for children, intensity for teachers, duration for children, classroom management, teacher training, classroom rules, a whole-school policy, school conferences, and having more than 10 components of bullying prevention. In light of these findings, we recommend the following general strategies. Note that these are components of a comprehensive effort and should not be simply implemented in isolation and then expected to be effective. As Ttofi and Farrington (2011) confirmed, intensity, duration, and comprehensiveness of antibullying programs are related to their success. (See Table 17.1 for a summary.)

A whole-school policy should be developed that discusses the goals of the school in reducing bullying behavior and the strategies school members should follow (Olweus, 1996). This should be a collaborative effort among school members for several reasons. In her efforts to implement the Olweus bullying prevention program, Limber (2004) found that (a) teacher commitment was paramount and that without it the program was not implemented with fidelity and, consequently, showed no effect; (b) when there was resistance from staff and parents, it was because some did not view bullying as a problem or considered it to be a rite of passage; and (c) the schools required extensive consultation to implement the program, so school psychologists should plan for this. As with many prevention efforts, care and planning must be taken to

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**Table 17.1. General Strategies for School Psychologists to Reduce Bullying and Victimization**

- Form a group that includes teachers, parents, and students to coordinate the school’s bullying prevention activities. With skills in consultation, collaboration, and data-based decision making, and expertise in direct and indirect services for children and families, a school psychologist is ideal to chair this group.
- Focus on the social environment of the school by creating a climate of respect and mutual support.
- Assess bullying at school with a survey designed to identify school-level needs.
- Using assessment results, work in collaboration with staff and parents to develop school-wide action plans.
- Select and implement a bullying prevention program that has evaluation data to support its effectiveness to address identified needs. Evidence-based programs have been shown to be effective and can protect against unintended negative consequences.
- Train staff in bullying prevention, because awareness and interest need to be supported with skills in how to respond and deal with bullying when it occurs.
- Establish and enforce school rules and policies associated with bullying by explicitly establishing positive behavior guidelines that prohibit bullying while defining positive behavioral expectations.
- Advocate for increased adult supervision in places where bullying is known to occur (e.g., playgrounds). Train staff to intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations, as this helps students feel safe. Failure to do so may inadvertently convey to students that bullying is tolerated.
- Consider a school-wide bully-victim screening to identify students who need more in-depth assessment and targeted or intensive intervention to address their bully-victim experiences and subsequent mental health consequences.
- Consult with teachers and other school staff around any challenges that prevent effective responses to bullying.
- Continue these efforts over time, as they need to be reinforced with each new cohort of students and to transcend any staff changes.
institutionalize the program, because staff turnover and leadership changes can result in the adoption of different programs each year. Limber (2004) stressed the importance of each school developing a committee to coordinate school-wide policies and activities. Using their expertise in data-based decision making, school psychologists can help the committee monitor bullying experiences of students and adjust practices to implement the optimal response based on individual schools' current needs and resources.

Part of a whole-school approach to bullying prevention should be attention to disciplinary methods (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Fair, firm, and consistently implemented consequences for bullying and victimization should be balanced with individualized intervention to address student concerns. Schools often implement zero tolerance policies that provide harsh consequences for breaking school rules, including bullying. However, zero tolerance policies may fail to correct behavior for students engaging in repeated rule violations and may even reinforce repetition of antisocial behavior. Thus, the use of the zero tolerance discipline approach for bullying is discouraged. The side effect of this philosophy of discipline is that it may affect staff and student willingness to report bullying because the punishment is so severe. Children who bully need prosocial role models, which they may not get if excluded from school (Limber, 2004). Instead of zero tolerance policies, students need opportunities to develop self-discipline, and schools must provide a positive climate for learning.

Playground supervision appears to be critical in the prevention of bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). This includes adult monitoring on the playground, lunch areas, hallways, and other open unstructured areas where students have increased opportunity to target each other. The hot spots identified by a school’s bullying screening survey should receive increased monitoring, and a survey should reassess if hot spots change once increased monitoring is in place. Increasing monitoring alone will reduce rates of physical bullying, because this form of aggression is more likely to occur in the absence of adult observers. It is harder to monitor and intervene with the more subtle forms of aggression, such as spreading rumors or social exclusion as a way to hurt others. Playground supervisors interacting positively with youth and promoting prosocial play would likely prevent such social exclusion. In addition, strategies for monitoring and dealing with cyberbullying should be discussed, such as monitoring computer use on school campus and identifying discipline strategies for misuse.

Educational presentations and parent–teacher meetings appear to be important in the reduction of bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Some antibullying programs include parent education. For example, the Bully Busters school-based program includes a manual for parents that helps them understand and respond to bullying. In addition to describing bullying and its impact on victims, the manual provides parents with techniques to help them communicate better within their families about the issue of bullying. Further research is necessary to determine specifically which aspects of parent training have the most impact on reducing the incidence of bullying.

Most prevention programs (e.g., Bully Busters and Steps to Respect) advocate dispelling myths about bullying among teachers and staff and training them how to effectively intervene when confronting a bullying situation. With their training in consultation, school psychologists are ideally positioned to lead this type of training and to offer booster trainings as needed. Steps to Respect offers video-based training that school psychologists can use. In addition to training specific to bullying, it is important to attend to the quality of classroom management, which may also help reduce bullying (Smith, Ananiadou, & Cowie, 2003). It is important that teachers model the skills they would like to see their students learn in terms of handling disagreements, treating others with respect, and using other prosocial behaviors. School psychologists can help impart classroom management skills that may not have been taught in educators’ teacher preparation programs. In addition, classroom climate can be improved by directly addressing pupil-to-pupil relationships (Smith et al., 2003). Some programs (e.g., Steps to Respect) offer a social–cognitive curriculum that maps onto state standards that teachers can use.

Although most antibullying program components had the intended impact of reducing bullying behavior to some degree, there is some evidence that peer mediation and conflict resolution are ineffective interventions. Ttofi and Farrington (2011) found that the use of peers to tackle bullying, including peer mediation, increased rates of bullying. Similarly, Limber (2004) discouraged the use of peer mediation or conflict resolution curriculum to address bullying because, she argues, bullying is not a conflict or a matter of occasional interpersonal disagreements, but a form of chronic victimization. Limber (2004) suggests that peer mediation sends the wrong message to the bully if bullying is presented as a matter for conflict resolution (i.e., “You are both partly right and partly wrong”).
Strategies to Reduce Cyberbullying

Many schools are specifically concerned about cyberbullying, its impact on students, and strategies for effective intervention. Although cyberbullying appears to be less common than other forms of in-person bullying, there is some evidence that the effects of cyberbullying are particularly devastating for students because of the anonymous nature of aggression, the speed at which material can be spread to a large number of students, and 24/7 access to technology, which makes it more difficult for students to have a reprieve from bullying. As described by Perren et al. (2012), preventing cyberbullying typically involves two strategies. First, students involved in cyberbullying are often the same students who are involved in other forms of bullying. As such, addressing broader bullying behaviors will likely lead to a reduction in cyberbullying, and many bullying prevention efforts now incorporate cyberbullying in their general approach. Second, strategies to reduce cyberbullying often aim to reduce online risks more broadly. Increasing parental monitoring, teaching safe Internet use, and discussing Internet etiquette may effectively reduce cyberbullying in schools (Perren et al., 2012). Research on the effectiveness of strategies and interventions to reduce cyberbullying is still relatively new. Additional studies of these strategies are needed to determine how schools can successfully reduce cyberbullying among students.

Review of Research-Supported Bullying Prevention Efforts

Although schools are clamoring for programs to address school bullying, and many commercial products make claims of efficacy, most programs currently used in U.S. schools have not undergone rigorous evaluation with a diverse student population. Programs to reduce student aggression in general may also reduce bullying to some degree. However, the chronic nature of school bullying, with its implicit power imbalance, may make it a more formidable problem to address. Therefore, general character education or violence prevention curricula may not adequately reduce bullying. Consistent with a multitiered problem-solving model, we describe prevention and intervention efforts for everyone at the whole-school level, for bullies and bully victims at the targeted level, and for chronic participants in bullying at the intensive level. The strategies for whole-school assessments can be starting points, but ultimately schools will also need to systematically collect data on students involved in bullying incidences to identify who may benefit from more targeted and intensive responsive services.

Whole-School Interventions

Table 17.2 summarizes the content, purpose, and evidence for the efficacy of six universal programs specifically focused on preventing bullying. These programs were selected because there was published evaluation data on them. These and other such programs are implemented throughout schools in order to increase bullying awareness, shape attitudes about bullying, and provide strategies for addressing bullying behavior. Components may include teacher training, classroom lessons, training videos, and social marketing. Schools can select a program based on what strategies are feasible and acceptable given their resources and needs.

Targeted Interventions

No universal prevention program can be 100% effective. Therefore, targeted programs to address the needs of chronic bullies and victims are crucial. For bullies, Limber (2004) warns against the use of group treatment as bullies may actually learn from and encourage each other. She also advocates the need for prosocial role models for bullies. Theory and research on aggression suggests that interventions to teach prosocial behavior to students who engage in bullying increase their feelings of empathy toward their victims, reduce peer group approval for aggression, improve problem solving for social situations, and reduce hostile attributions that can help reduce their aggressive behavior. Working with parents on developing consistent and fair discipline plans and increasing monitoring of their child’s behavior should also reduce engagement in aggressive behavior. For victims, assertiveness training has been recommended and has shown modest empirical support (Smith et al., 2003). Other efforts focus on social skills training as a method to reduce the incidence of victimization by helping the student to be a less vulnerable target (see Table 17.2). Targeted interventions addressing the social dynamics in bullying, such as the Method of Shared Concern (Pikas, 2002), are showing some preliminary evaluation data supporting their effectiveness (Rigby & Griffiths, 2011).

Intensive Interventions

The available literature on interventions for chronic bullies and victims does not detail intensive interventions
### Table 17.2. Evidence-Based Bullying Interventions

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<tr>
<th>Program and Web Link</th>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Content/Purpose</th>
<th>Sessions/ Duration</th>
<th>State of Evidence</th>
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<td><strong>Whole-School Interventions</strong></td>
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| **Bully Busters** (K–5 or 6–8) | A psychoeducational program targeting teachers in a group setting that focuses on increasing bullying awareness and prevention, personal power, identifying bullies and victims, recommendations and interventions for bullying behavior and helping victims, and relaxation and coping skills. | An ongoing workshop where teachers participate in a Bully Busters support team group | Evaluations showed significant changes in teachers’ belief in skills and ability to influence students, sense of personal responsibility for students’ learning/behavior, knowledge and use of bullying interventions, and reductions in disciplinary referrals (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). Some efficacy was found with African American and Caucasian K–5 students (Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003). Studies have found overall decreases in bullying behavior and positive effects on teacher self-efficacy (Bell, Raczynski, & Horne, 2010). | Expect Respect (5, 6–8, or 9–12)  
http://www.expectrespectaustin.org/ | Addresses bullying, dating violence, and sexual harassment. Sessions focus on strengthening relationship and conflict resolution skills to improve school safety, school climate, student empowerment, and social support, and to prevent future violence. | Originally 12 weekly sessions; recently expanded to 24 weekly sessions | Bullying was not reduced among fifth graders, as students reported witnessing bullying more after the intervention. However, awareness of sexual harassment and intentions to intervene when observing bullying increased (Whitaker, Rosenbluth, Valle, & Sanchez, 2004). Both 6th–8th and 9th–12th graders increased their use of healthy conflict resolution behaviors, but victimization and perpetration were not reduced in this sample (Ball et al., 2012). | **KiVa** (Primary and secondary school)  
http://www.kivaprogram.net/ | Addresses bullying as a “group phenomenon” and emphasizes the role of witnesses of bullying. Includes universal interventions (e.g., teacher-implemented lesson plans, antibullying computer games, a virtual learning environment, a parent guide) and indicated interventions (discussions with students involved in bullying and selected classmates). | Ongoing | Randomized controlled trials in Finland found that students in schools randomly assigned to the KiVa program were significantly less likely to report multiple forms of victimization at the end of the school year than students in control-group schools (Kärnä et al., 2011; Salmivalli, Kärnä, & Poskiparta, 2011). A pilot study is currently being planned in the United States by researchers at the University of Kansas. | **Olweus Bullying Prevention Program** (K–9; 11–12)  
http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/ | To reduce and prevent bullying in the schools and between students. The program is implemented at the student, parent, teacher, school, and community levels. | 4–6 months to implement; ongoing boosters | Research shows mixed results. Some research has reported less victimization, bullying (Black & Jackson, 2007; Schroeder et al., 2012), and aggression (Lindm, Nation, Tracy, Melton, & Fierx, 2004). However, research has also found increases in tolerance of bullying and decreases in bystander intervention (Lindm et al., 2004). |
Table 17.2. Continued

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<th>Program and Web Link</th>
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<th>Content/Purpose</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stories of Us: Promoting Positive Peer Relationships</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.storiesofus.com/">http://www.storiesofus.com/</a></td>
<td>Middle and high school</td>
<td>Brief, film-based program that includes a DVD and teacher’s guide with lesson plans that are aligned with National Standards for English Language Arts, a supplementary make-your-own-film resource, and staff development and community education resources.</td>
<td>Five or eight lessons with optional classroom activities and homework</td>
<td>One study shows small effect sizes for attitudes toward bullying and perceptions of support for the intervention group compared to a control group. Implemented with fidelity and perceived as feasible and effective within the school context (Renshaw &amp; Jimerson, 2012).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Steps to Respect (Committee for Children)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.cfchildren.org/">http://www.cfchildren.org/</a> steps-to-respect.aspx</td>
<td>3–5 or 4–6</td>
<td>Addresses bullying and friendship. Sessions focus on relationship skills, coping, assertiveness, empathy, positive social norms, socially responsive behavior, problem solving and emotion management.</td>
<td>11 student lessons, 2 literature units, teacher training video</td>
<td>Very well researched. Participating schools showed 33% reduction in physical bullying; 35% fewer teachers reporting fighting as a major problem (Brown, Low, Smith, &amp; Haggerty, 2011); 72% decrease in malicious gossip (Low, Frey, &amp; Brockman, 2010); and 70% reduction in destructive bystander behavior (Frey, Hirschstein, Edstrom, &amp; Snell, 2009), for example.</td>
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**Targeted Interventions**

| Method of Shared Concern<br>http://www.readymade.com.au/method/ | Not specified | Intervention for responding to identified cases of school bullying; an alternative to strict, punitive responses. Used for noncriminal cases that involve groups of students. Involves a series of meetings between trained practitioner and students involved. Aims to elicit concern about the bullied student, helps students develop a solution to the problem, and facilitates implementation of the solution. | A series of meetings, both individual and group | Evaluation evidence is emerging. A report of 17 case studies in Australia found that the majority of involved students reported an improvement in their situation, bullying students were positive about their involvement, and practitioners and school principals were positive about the program’s effectiveness (Rigby & Griffiths, 2011). |
| Social Skills Group Intervention<br>http://www.selmediainc.com/ssgrin/overview | Pre-K–10 | A Tier 2 RTI antibullying intervention aimed toward bullies and victims. Aims to increase social-emotional skills among both groups, and to reduce incidences of bullying. | 10 sessions | Research has found reductions in aggression, bullying, victimization (including relational; DeRosier, 2004), teasing by peers, depression, anxiety, and internalizing problems; and increases in social acceptance of others and self-esteem, self-concept, and self-efficacy (Harrell, Mercer, & DeRosier, 2009). |

*Note. RTI = response to intervention.*
or treatments. Anecdotally, most often a student will present as having chronic problems with aggression (bullies) or clinical levels of depression, anxiety, or school avoidance (bully or victim). In this case, a thorough assessment by the school psychologist is indicated, and referral to the appropriate school mental health service or community-based treatment services is recommended. The school psychologist should take care to refer to community resources that are familiar with evidence-based treatments for the particular referral problem.

Developmental Differences

Studies consistently find that bullying increases from elementary to middle school and decreases again in later adolescence (e.g., Olweus, 1996). Types of bullying experienced change with age as well, with physical bullying among younger children giving way to relational bullying and sexual harassment among older adolescents. School psychologists can take into consideration the developmental needs of their students when selecting school-wide interventions, considering the role of parental involvement (e.g., explicit parental intervention may be more appropriate for younger students), determining the extent to which bullying behaviors are developmentally atypical (e.g., physical bullying is more atypical among older students), and designing individual intervention strategies.

School-wide bullying prevention programs typically shift with the age of their audience to address the most pressing developmental needs of students and to present strategies and materials in a format that is developmentally appropriate. Many commonly implemented programs consist of curricula designed for students at different grade levels (e.g., Olweus Bullying Prevention Program), or transition from a program geared toward younger students to a paired program aimed at older students. When addressing bullying with individual students, taking a developmental perspective can lead school psychologists to think about bullying within the context of an individual’s social development and to determine whether skill building (such as empathy building and assertiveness training) may be beneficial. As noted earlier, students experiencing long-term chronic victimization are at greatest risk for a number of poor psychosocial outcomes. School psychologists can play an important role in monitoring (or collecting data to identify) involvement in bullying across many years of a child’s development so that they can provide needed supports.

Multicultural Competencies Needed

Schools are a microcosm of society and can reflect societal attitudes about aggression, race relations, and diversity. Within the school context, youth learn from their peers, teachers, and other adults about acceptable behavior; how to handle conflict; ways to assert, manage, or limit power and control within relationships; and appropriate social behavior. A significant minority of youth are victimized by their peers due to race, ethnicity, or immigration status (for a review see Scherr & Larson, 2010). Research on trends in victimization and ethnicity show inconsistent patterns, as various studies have used different definitions of violence and victimization, measures, and samples. As bullying is a problem within every school, it is something that students and the adults in their lives learn to avoid, resolve, or endure. School psychologists can play an important role in making school a positive place for all.

Bullying Prevention Case Study

This case study combines experiences from various schools to provide practical direction as to how each aspect of bullying prevention should be considered and then implemented to meet the individual needs of a single school. School psychologists are encouraged to focus on the process of decisions rather than the ultimate interventions, as what is selected for implementation will depend on the needs of a particular school.

A junior high school of approximately 800 students is located in a suburban community and has a student population representative of the youth in the community, with about 50% Latino, 36% Caucasian, and 14% other or multiple racial background. About 40% are socio-economically disadvantaged and 34% are English language learners. The campus was renovated less than 10 years ago and is well maintained. It has more than adequate instructional resources, including computer labs, a library, science labs, a theater, an activity room, and athletic fields and courts.

The school principal first identified the need to focus on bullying prevention by reviewing results of the California Healthy Kids Survey (http://chks.wested.org), a surveillance survey similar to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey used nationwide, which indicated that a large percentage of students in the junior high school’s county disagree that they feel safe in their school (19%), and many had experienced verbal harassment such as having been made fun of (35%) and having had sexual jokes made to them (39%), as well as
physical violence such as having been in a fight (48%) and having been pushed or shoved (30%). The principal presented these results to the staff and the parents in separate meetings and found that there was agreement between stakeholders that bullying was a problem and should be addressed. Participants in the meeting shared anecdotes of verbal and physical aggression on campus, but the exact scope of the problem was unknown. Up to this point, the school treated incidents of peer victimization as disciplinary issues and interventions were limited to punishment of the aggressor by exclusion, such as suspension.

At the start of the school year, the school principal consulted with the school psychologist and formed a bullying prevention committee to understand and address the problem. The committee consisted of the principal, the school psychologist, the school counselor, and two interested teachers (physical education and social studies). The school psychologist encouraged the use of a school-wide screening to identify the most pressing needs, and the team agreed this was an important first step.

The team consulted with experts in bullying assessment and were offered the opportunity to administer the California Bullying Victimization Scale and have their data processed and analyzed without cost as part of an effort by the researchers to confirm the reliability and validity of the scale. The two teachers on the committee were selected to implement the scale to a large subsection of the entire school because they taught core courses required of all students. The survey was conducted anonymously and for the purposes of school safety planning, so passive instead of active parental consent procedures were used, and the results were not required to be included in the students’ records. On the other hand, this meant the survey results could not be linked to individual students regardless whether incidences of bullying were reported, and thus action could not be taken to intervene.

Results of the survey indicated that 58% of males and 47% of females reported some kind of peer victimization in the past 30 days, and 16% of males and 23% of females reported victimization that was classified as bullying victimization (i.e., it was repeated and was done by someone more powerful than the victim). Victimization most often occurred in the lunch or eating areas (41%), followed by in the classrooms (28%), hallways (26%), and on the sports fields (25%). Victimization occurred less frequently in the bathrooms (17%), coming to/from school (8%), and on the bus (6%). Students reported that they most often talk to their friends about their victimization experiences (49%) followed by adults at home (27%), adults at school (10%), and no one (8%).

Reviewing these results, the bullying prevention committee determined that bullying and peer victimization was indeed a problem on their campus and affected a majority of students. The committee also identified certain areas of the school campus where incidents most often occur and determined that these areas could use better supervision. The committee presented these results to the entire school community along with some basic information about bullying and skits they developed with students to demonstrate what bystanders could do to intervene in victimization.

The bullying prevention committee made a wish list of prevention activities and prioritized them for implementation. This list included (a) updating policies on bullying and victimization, (b) adding structure and supervision for students during free periods, (c) teaching all school community members about bullying and about policies and practices to prevent and intervene with bullying, (d) identifying and implementing a universal bully prevention program, (e) developing and implementing a system for students to anonymously report bullying incidents, and (f) identifying the most effective responses for handling incidents of bullying.

The bullying prevention committee updated policies on bullying prevention before the end of the school year. In the committee’s research, it determined that its previous approach focusing on zero tolerance for bullying is a popular but harmful approach to bullying prevention. Zero tolerance approaches promote punishment for specific infractions without taking into consideration the unique needs of a given situation. Students may be scared to report incidents for fear that peers will be treated harshly. The committee realized that the issue of bullying needed to be addressed openly through constant dialogue and that school community members needed to feel safe and empowered to report incidents and intervene when safe to do so.

The committee also realized that students who bully needed more support to stop hurtful behaviors and students who are victims may need help to overcome the psychosocial impacts of being bullied. Thus, the new policy focused on responsibilities of the school district to provide staff development and training on bullying and to encourage reporting of bullying incidents while maintaining confidentiality whenever possible. The policy made clear the punitive consequences of bullying but also noted the importance of empowering students to resolve bullying. The new policy was disseminated to
teachers during professional development days prior to school the following school year and to parents and students through a handout in the annual student handbook that was required to be signed and returned. Classroom teachers reviewed the policy with students during the first week of school.

The bullying prevention committee also developed two key strategies to provide additional structure and supervision on school campus with a limited budget. First, the committee recruited parents to monitor hallways and the lunch areas during passing periods and breaks. To prepare the parent volunteers, they included them in staff training on how to recognize various forms of victimization, to intervene effectively, and to document incidents for administrator follow-up. Second, the committee recruited teachers to keep their classrooms open during lunch with planned activities such as playing board games or learning Morse code. Over time these classrooms became safe havens for students who had difficulty finding social connections in unstructured situations. Eventually, the school psychologist was able to incorporate this strategy with her work with students with autism spectrum disorders, developing lunch clubs for these students based on their particular interests and encouraging other students to join them.

For a universal bullying prevention program, the bullying prevention committee selected Promoting Positive Peer Relationships because of the enthusiastic endorsement of local bullying researchers who also offered to support implementation of the program free of charge in exchange for access to collect evaluation data. In addition, the program is brief and easy to implement so would not require extensive training or redevelopment of the curriculum in whatever class it was offered. The bullying prevention committee secured the participation of the health teachers, who were trained to implement the lessons and incorporate the lesson concepts into other aspects of their curriculum. The program was evaluated over 2 years, and results found small effect sizes for improving students’ attitudes about bullying and their sense of social support in the school as well as strong social validity for ease of implementation and perceived benefit to students. The school continues to implement the Promoting Positive Peer Relationships program.

The school bullying committee identified a need to allow students to report bullying incidents anonymously because the committee did not have an efficient way to track bullying outside the standard office discipline referral process. The committee partnered with a local software company that developed an online system for school members to anonymously report bullying incidents and to prompt school administrators to investigate, respond to, and track each incident. Once a report is submitted, the system sends instant e-mail and text notifications to the administrator. The system also connects students and other participants to online resources to prevent and intervene with bullying. The system allows for aggregate data tracking at the school or across an entire district. The district has implemented the system for 2 years, helping provide feedback to the software company as they develop the software. There has not been a formal study of the impact of the software on incidents of bullying, nor has the software been used to help evaluate other bully prevention efforts, although these uses are possible. However, the administrators have expressed that using the software has helped them track and respond to incidents in a timely manner.

As the bullying prevention activities were being identified and implemented, the bullying prevention committee recognized a need to develop a more proactive and positive discipline strategy to respond effectively to bullying incidents when they occur and to prevent future occurrences of bullying and other discipline infractions. Initially the administration worked with the bullying prevention committee, and the school psychologist and school counselor in particular, to provide ad hoc intervention when needed. However, the committee recognized that a formal three-tiered approach to discipline would be more successful. Around this time, the school district notified the school that it decided to implement a restorative justice approach to discipline across the district, piloting it in one junior high school one year, expanding it to the other schools in subsequent years. Thus, the administrators of this school decided to maintain the current discipline approach to wait for the opportunity to engage in the district training and scale-up of restorative approaches, which will occur in the next school year.

The school continues to engage in the Promoting Positive Peer Relationships program and is beginning to implement the restorative justice approach. The school continues to use the software system to collect data about specific bullying incidences. The school also conducts school-wide annual assessments of bullying, to continue to track trends in bullying, where it is occurring, and whom students reach out to when they have been bullied. School administrators believe this annual assessment is crucial, because as a school serving seventh- and eighth-grade students, half of their student population changes every year. The administrators need current information for the student population they are serving that academic year.
These data have allowed the school to adjust and refine intervention efforts in response to the needs of specific groups of students. Bullying continues to occur at this school, but the rates of bullying have declined and school staff report much greater confidence in their ability to respond to bullying when it occurs.

**SUMMARY**

Studies estimate that 30–50% of U.S. students are involved as aggressors or targets of bullying (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009), and the long-term negative effects of bullying on mental and physical health for both bullies and victims are well documented. Bullying is a subset of peer victimization that involves intentional aggression that is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power between the person doing the bullying and the person being bullied (Olweus, 1996).

School psychologists are often integrally involved in ensuring that schools meet state mandates in regard to bullying legislation, and it is therefore important that they stay up to date with current laws and are aware of state-distributed model policies (this information can be found at http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws). Collecting data on student experiences with bullying, victimization, and related behaviors is a critical starting point for planning bullying prevention and intervention activities. This can be done through a school-wide survey of students, staff, and parents. Then, it is important to select bullying prevention efforts that have evaluation data to support their success. Bullying prevention and intervention efforts that have some research and data to support their success. Bullying prevention and intervention efforts in response to the needs of specific groups of students. Bullying continues to occur at this school, but the rates of bullying have declined and school staff report much greater confidence in their ability to respond to bullying when it occurs.

**REFERENCES**


