

## A Synthesis of International School-based Bullying Interventions

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Bullying is a prevalent problem in school systems in the United States and abroad. This literature review focuses on elementary school-based bullying interventions for students published between 2005-2012. Ten studies reviewed included students from the first grade through the eighth grade from five countries. There were many common themes among successful bullying interventions including: (a) teacher training, (b) school-wide interventions, (c) social skills training in the classroom, (d) homework as a follow up to instruction, and (e) the incorporation of storybooks. Implications for practice and future research directions are shared.

*Keywords:* bullying, intervention, interventions for bullying, literature review

Bullying is a prevalent problem in the United States school system and is continuing to grow. Students and parents regularly question how and why bullying occurs in school settings. Teachers are often overwhelmed by its occurrence and are unsure how to best address this pervasive problem. The term bullying has evolved within the last two decades. In 1994, Batsche and Howard describe bullying as, “a form of aggression in which one or more students physically and/or psychologically harass another student over a period of time”. A more complete definition of bullying can be defined as, “repeated acts of aggression, intimidation, or coercion against a victim who is weaker than the perpetrator in terms of physical size, psychological/social power, or other factors that result in a notable power differential” (Carney &

Merrell, 2001; Smith & Ananiadou, 2003). One of the most recent definition comes from Rose, Monda-Amaya, and Espelage (2011), in which they created a three-part definition of bullying; first, for an act to be considered bullying there must be an imbalance of physical, social, or emotional power between the victim and the bully; second, the act of perpetration is systematic with intent to cause emotional or physical harm to the victim; and third, victimization and/or perpetration is generally repeated over the course of days, months or years. As the definitions evolve, so do the prevalence rates of bullying within schools.

There have been several studies conducted in European countries, as well as, the United States. Both show similar results to support the problem and progression of bullying (Dinkes, Cataldi, Kena, & Baum,

2006; Lane, 1989; Nansel, Overpeck, Polla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001; Stephenson & Smith, 1989). A 1984 study, conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, revealed that 25% of students surveyed stated that “one of their most serious concerns was fear of bullies” and 10% of those students could be victims of extreme bullying (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). A survey conducted in junior high and high school students in 1992, by Hoover, Oliver and Hazier, asked the question “Have you ever been bullied during your school years,” in which 75% of respondents said “yes”. This same survey discovered that 88% of students reported they had observed bullying and 77% reported being a victim of bullying during their school years (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazier, 1992). Bullying showed a 6% increase to 19% in 1980 to 25% in 1992 (Johnston, O’Malley, & Bachman, 1993). Johnston, O’Malley, and Bachman (1993) also found that in the 1992 school year 29% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed were threatened without a weapon and 19% were threatened with a weapon at school. This evidence supports Olweus’ (1991) statement that bullying takes on more serious forms and occurs more frequently than it did 10-15 years ago. A national survey, conducted by Nansel et al. (2001), reveals that 30% of the school-age population experienced bullying as a perpetrator, victim, or provocative victim. In 2006, the National Center for Educational Statistics documented that 28% of adolescents reported being victimized within a six-month period prior to being surveyed (Dinkes, Cataldi, Kena, & Baum, 2006). There are reports that state that there may be a decline in juvenile violence (Brener, Lowry, Barrios, Simon & Eaton, 2005; Dinkes et al., 2006). However, evidence suggests that bullying victimization and perpetration have remained relatively stable or increased over the last

decade (Garrity, Jens, Porter, & Stoker, 2002; Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011). Further, Rose, Monda-Amaya, and Espelage (2011) estimate that 20% to 30% of the student population experiences bullying through either victimization or perpetration.

There are many reasons for why bullying occurs within the schools. One explanation for bullying that many researchers agree on is that; bullies come from homes where parents prefer physical means of discipline, parents are hostile, rejecting, and permissive, parents have poor problem solving skills or the parents teach their children to strike back at the least provocation (Floyd, 1985; Greenbaum, 1988; Loeber & Dishion, 1984). Olweus (1991) reported that bullies are characterized by impulsivity, a strong need to dominate others, and have little empathy with their victims. In 1993, Olweus classified bullies into three categories: (a) aggressive bully, (b) anxious bully, and (c) passive bully. An aggressive bully usually displays violent characteristics with the desire to dominate others. The anxious bully is generally a provocative victim who has adopted bullying behaviors as a way to fight back against a bully. The passive bully is often less violent or aggressive and usually plays a supporting role to the aggressive bully. A more recent description of a bully, put forth by Pontzer (2010), is one who identifies bullies as those who exercise antisocial traits (including a desire to socially dominate others), a positive attitude towards violence, a deficient ability to empathize, a tendency to ascribe hostile meanings to an ambiguous situations, and impulsiveness. Given these descriptions, a bully would be easy to identify, however, Rose, Monda-Amaya, and Espelage (2011) find it difficult to characterize or profile a bully because he or she may exhibit either negative (e.g., low self-control, poor academic performance,

externalizing behaviors, alcohol abuse) or desirable (e.g., classroom leader, popular, high spirited, active, engaged) personality traits.

In addition to different types of bullies, there are also different categories of bullying. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Building Respectful and Safe Schools (2010) identifies four different types of bullying: (a) physical bullying (b) verbal bullying (c) covert bullying and (d) cyber bullying. They also put forth definitions for each type of bullying. Physical bullying includes: (a) hitting, (b) kicking, (c) tripping, (d) pinching and pushing, or (e) damaging property. Verbal bullying refers to name-calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse. Covert bullying is harder to recognize as it can be carried out without the victim knowing. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Covert bullying includes: (a) lying and spreading rumors, gossip, negative facial or physical gestures, (b) playing jokes to embarrass or humiliate someone, (c) encouraging others to exclude someone, and (d) damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance. Along with the evolution of the Internet, cyber bullying has emerged and gradually increased in prevalence. Cyber bullying can be overt or covert bullying behaviors using digital technology. Examples include: (a) harassment via mobile phone, (b) setting up an offensive personal website, and/or (c) deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces. Cyber bullying can happen at any time being both public and private.

Bullies intimidate those who they believe cannot, or will not retaliate, or those with whom they have been successful at bullying in the past (Batsche & Howard, 1994). Olweus (2003) identified two types of victims: the passive victim and the

provocative victim. The passive victims make up about 80% to 85% of the victimized population and are described as: (a) anxious, (b) insecure, and (c) appearing to do nothing to provoke attacks and appearing not to defend them. The passive victim is lonely and abandoned at school, friendless, not aggressive, does not tease others and is weaker than others. Parent interviews suggest that these children were sensitive at a young age and have a closer, more positive relationship with their parents. On the other hand, the provocative victims are characterized as being hot-tempered, restless, anxious, and will attempt to retaliate when attacked (Olweus, 2003). Rose, Monda-Amaya, and Espelage (2011) explain that the provocative victim develops bullying characteristics as a result of exposure to victimization. Others describe this group of victims as having internalizing and externalizing behavior problems, being reactively aggressive, maintaining poor interpersonal relationships, or displaying a negative demeanor (Kumpulainen et al., 1998; Marini et al., 2006; Nansel et al., 2001). Avoidance and withdrawal behaviors are likely to occur in all victims of bullies (Olweus, 2003). They may also possess or develop character traits that have long-term consequences and adversely affect their social, emotional or academic development (Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011). It is evident that bullying and bullies are present in schools, thereby causing harm to others.

Many students and parents question how bullying happens in school. Where are teachers when bullying is taking place and why do other students not intervene? In the early 1990's, 60% of victims reported that school personnel respond poorly, respond "sometimes or never," or try to put a stop to the bullying only "once in a while or almost never" (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Hoover, Oliver & Hazler, 1992; Olweus,

1991). Stephenson and Smith (1998) stated two possible explanations for the lack of response to bullying from teachers within the school setting. The first explanation is that 25% of teachers feel that it is helpful to ignore the problem. The second explanation is that the social skills and behaviors of the victim may be such that the teachers are less motivated to intervene. Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan (2007) surveyed teachers, school psychologists, guidance counselors and students in 109 schools in a large Maryland public school setting. The results show how school staff and students have an apparent misperception of bullying. The results of the survey indicated that 49% of students reported being bullied at least once, 41% reported frequent involvement in bullying. However, most staff (71.4%) estimated that fewer than 15% of students were frequent victims. There is also evidence to suggest that teachers have a hard time differentiating between bullying and typical student conflict. Research shows that teachers view physical threats or abuse more severe than verbal or socio-emotional abuse (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Conversely, students rate the severity of emotional, verbal, and physical abuse equally (Newman & Murray, 2005). These findings are important for developing effective bullying interventions. Both the students and school staff need to be provided with a clear definition of bullying. They also need to be taught how to identify all of the different types of bullying in order to successfully to reduce the acts of bullying within schools.

Rodkin and Hodges (2003) feel that teachers are a school's most valuable resource for combating bullying and victimization. Successful teachers guide children toward higher levels of moral reasoning, show warmth, and anticipate interpersonal problems by knowing their students' social status, peer groups, friends, and enemies. Contrastingly, teachers often seem unaware

of aggression among their students, or they are overwhelmed by its prevalence. Pellegrini (2002) notes that teacher awareness and concern is a necessary first step. Teachers who are attentive to interpersonal aggression among their students should help their fellow teachers become more aware. Teachers should be well informed about the social dynamics operating among their students. Teachers can acquire this information by being connected to all of their students. Olweus (1993) calls for teachers to closely supervise children's relationships during break times, to intervene "where there is only a suspicion that bullying is taking place," and to have children internalize school rules that they do not bully, aid children who are bullied, and include children who tend to be left out of peer activities. Olweus recommends that teachers participate in social development programs where problems concerning bullying and victimization are explored and discussed.

Olweus makes recommendations; however, bullying is still a persistent problem in many schools. This paper aims to gather research on specific bullying interventions in order to offer options and knowledge to schools when choosing an intervention program to implement. The goal of this study is to provide information on specific bullying interventions, the materials used to implement the interventions, measures, the outcome of the interventions, and the effect size of the interventions. Another aim of this review is to find out how many cited bullying interventions yielded a significant reduction in bullying behaviors within schools. It would also be beneficial in future studies to find out which bullying interventions that teachers and students find to be the most effective. School administrators and teachers should be able to use the information provided in this paper to make an informed

choice on which type of intervention program would work best within their school in order to reduce the amount of bullying occurring.

## **Method**

### **Search Strategy**

In this study, a comprehensive search of databases was used to retrieve articles that have reviewed bullying prevention programs within the last eight years (2005-2012). Two online databases were used to conduct this search: ProQuest Education Journals and Academic Search Complete. Combinations of the following search terms were used: “antibully\*,” “bully\*,” and “intervention\*.” These terms were first used in the ProQuest Education Journals database, where three articles were located from 2005, two from 2009, three from 2011, and one from 2012. In addition, the reference sections of all of the selected articles were searched for relevant studies that were not found during the computer-assisted database search. The ancestral search retrieved two seemingly relevant studies. However, one study by Kilian and another by Ross and Horner did not include interventions. Therefore, on Academic Search Complete we searched for the author “Kilian” in addition to the search terms “bully\*” and “intervention\*.” This search yielded one result from 2006, and this study met our search criteria and was included in our review. The same search criteria were used to locate a relevant article published by Ross and Horner. The search also only yielded one result (from 2009), and is also included in the review. Hence, ten total studies were included in this review.

### **Article Criteria**

This study focuses on successful school-based bullying interventions for children in elementary or middle school. In order to collect these relevant bullying intervention programs, studies were only

collected from peer-reviewed scholarly journals published from the years 2005 through 2012. All interventions discussed in other mediums, such as doctoral dissertations or edited books, were not included in the search due to their potential lack of empirical credibility and peer accountability. The review includes interventions from the United States, Canada, Norway, and Finland (all of which were written in English). Studies reviewed include students from the first grade through the seventh grade, yet interventions with school-aged children based outside of the school were excluded from the review (such as at home or through a community organization).

Studies included in the review are primarily designed to increase awareness about bullying and/or reduce bullying behaviors in the school. The studies collected could address any role or roles involved in the act of bullying (such as the bully, a bystander, or the victim), while excluding studies that did not contain a specific intervention being evaluated for its effectiveness. In addition, studies were not excluded that include the assessment of children who are considered “at risk” or have been diagnosed with disability. However, none of the quantitative studies collected for this review distinguished between these populations.

### **Study Characteristics**

A coding spreadsheet was developed for this review that included the number and demographics of participants (gender, age, and grade range), the geographical location(s) of the research, the design of the study, the name of intervention that was implemented, any other materials/surveys that were used in the study, outcome variables and measures used, a brief description of the procedure used in the study, a brief description of the results and conclusions of the study, and the research

database and search terms used to retrieve the article.

A total of seven intervention programs, within ten articles were reviewed; four from the United States, two from Canada, two from the Pacific Northwest region, one from Finland, and one from Norway. Approximately 17,000 students and 1,400 school staff/teachers were included. Gender representation was not always consistently reported, but all of the studies reviewed reported a grade-level range for their participants. The child and adolescent participants in these studies were either from an elementary or middle school.

### Results

The search yielded several interventions that are realistically implementable by teachers and administrators. The studies collected were primarily de-signed to increase awareness about bullying and/or reduce bullying behaviors in school. A total of ten studies were reviewed. Table 1 provides an overview of the intervention components.

The interventions reviewed in our analysis include: (a) Project Ploughshares Puppets for Peace (P4) Program, (b) Step to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program Take a Stand, (c) Lend a Hand, (d) Stop Bullying Now Social Marketing Campaign, (e) Walk Away, Ignore, Talk it Out and Seek Help (WITS) Primary Program (f) Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (New Bergen Project & New National Initiative Against Bullying); (g) KiVa Anti-Bullying Program, (h) Project ACHIEVE Social Skills Program, and (i) Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS) Intervention Program. Seven of the eight interventions reviewed provided effective bullying interventions that significantly reduced bullying behaviors. No significant effects were noted

in the Project Ploughshares Puppets for Peace (P4) Program.

Many common themes were dominant throughout the successful bullying interventions. Most successful bullying interventions included a pre and post-test using some sort of measure (e.g., School Environment Survey (SES), Teacher Assessment of Student Behavior (TASB), Peer-Preferred Social Behavior subscale of the Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment). It is important to establish a baseline in order to measure improvement, or lack of throughout any intervention. Results show that it is imperative to include the entire school in the designated bullying intervention program, so that all staff and students are working together in the same way to reduce bullying behavior. In order to achieve success, many intervention programs include school staff training before any intervention is ever implemented. In addition, the school will provide students with a definition of what bullying means, how to identify bullying through observation, and the steps of how to report a bully or bullying behaviors. Not only do the successful interventions teach the students about bullying behaviors, they also teach students positive behaviors and social skills, as well as how to replace the bullying behaviors with new behaviors. Certain intervention programs have storybooks, scripted lessons, and written manuals specifically designed to help teachers teach the material on how to recognize, report and help children that are being bullied. When teaching positive social skills, intervention programs show that it is vital that the teacher model, role play and reinforce the new and appropriate behaviors with the students, so they can be sure to understand and generalize the behaviors. A common way of testing the student's understanding of the

Table 1  
*Summary of Bullying Interventions*

<b>Study</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Data Collection Measurement</b>	<b>Outcome Summary</b>
Project Ploughshares Puppets for Peace (P4 Program) Beran and Shapiro (2005)	129 students Grades 3-4 (N=129, 69 boys, 60 girls)	Canada 2 public elementary schools	Pre and post performance questionnaires	No meaningful effects
Steps to Respect Brown, Low, Smith and Haggerty (2011)	School staff: 1296 Teachers: 128 Students: 2,940	California, USA 33 elementary schools (50% suburban, 25% rural, 15% mid-sized cities, 10% small towns)	School Environment Survey (SES), Teacher Assessment of Student Behavior (TASB), Student Survey, Steps to Respect: A Bullying Intervention Program (SS)	<u>SES</u> : Significant intervention effects <u>TASB</u> : Significant intervention effects <u>SS</u> : Significant intervention effects
Steps to Respect Frey, Hirschstein and Edstrom (2009)	1,126 students Grades 4-6	Pacific/Northwest 6 elementary schools	Pre and post test teacher and student surveys, observation, classroom curricula, one on one intervention	Bullying in intervention schools showed a significant decline (p .01, d2.11). Victimization by bullying consistently declined. Students who participated in the Steps to Respect program across 2 school years showed no change in Acceptance of Bullying/Aggression across four survey administrations. Mean levels of bullying, victimization, and destructive bystander levels were significantly lower in the intervention group. Students in the intervention group tended to be less accepting of bullying and aggression. No group differences were found in student's perceived bystander.

*(continued)*

Table 1 (continued)  
*Literature on Bullying Intervention*

<b>Study</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Data Collection Measurement</b>	<b>Outcome Summary</b>
Steps to Respect Frey et al (2005)	1,126 students Grades 3-6	Pacific/Northwest 6 elementary schools	Pre and post teacher ratings of peer inter- action skill, pre and post student surveys of beliefs and behavior and observational coding	A decline in bullying and argumentative behavior increases in agreeable interactions and a trend toward reduced destructive bystander behavior was witnessed.
Walk Away, Ignore, Talk it Out, and Seek Help (WITS) Primary Program  Hoglund, Hosan, and Leadbeater (2012)	432 Students Grade 1	Canada 17 public elementary schools	Pre and post scores on measures of Social Experiences Ques- tionnaire, Relationship Questionnaire and teacher reports on the Early School Behavior Rating Scale	The average rates of peer victimization and help seeking decreased linearly and then acc- elerated significantly over time. The average rate of social competence decelerated over time, but not significantly, while rates of ag- gression and internalizing increased linearly and then decelerated over time. WITS contributed significantly to linear decreases in physical and relational victimization and increases in social competence and modestly to slower increases in aggression. WITS children show- ed greater declines in physical and relational victimization until Grade 5 but then an accelerated rate of growth by the spring of Grade 6, greater increases in social competence and a slower rate of growth in aggression.

*(continued)*



Table 1 (continued)  
*Literature on Bullying Intervention*

<b>Study</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Data Collection Measurement</b>	<b>Outcome Summary</b>
KiVa program Kaarna et al (2011)	8,237 students grades 4-6 78 schools	Finland	Pre and post Self- Reported Bullying and Self-Reported Victimization	Several positive trends could be noted from the sample statistics. Substantial decreases occurred in the intervention groups. Students in KiVa schools had a lower level of peer-reported victimization. Students in KiVa schools were less victimized and bullied.
Project ACHIEVE program Kilian, Fish, and Maniago (2006)	Students grade 3 - 6 and their parents / guar- dians and teachers/staff	Suburban school district	Pre and post behavior checklists, discipline referrals, surveys, sus- pensions, standardized test scores	Overall results suggest that the school wide Project ACHIEVE program is an effective tool to aide in the reduction in adverse behaviors. Decreases were found in bullying behaviors.
Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Olweus (2005)	3,200 students Grades 5-7 14 intervention schools / 16 co- mparison schools The New National Initiative against Bullying: 21,000 students, grades 4-7 100+ schools	Norway	Pre and post test self bullying report	Highly statistically significant reductions in self reported bully/victim behaviors. Clear reductions in general antisocial behavior, marked improvement of the "social climate" of the class and at the same time, there was an increase in student satisfaction with school life.

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)  
*Literature on Bullying Intervention*

<b>Study</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Data Collection Measurement</b>	<b>Outcome Summary</b>
Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS) intervention program. Ross and Horner (2009)	Single subject design of 6 students within 3 elementary schools that have implemented the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Program	Oregon, USA Various elementary Schools	1) Documentation of problem behavior that includes physical or verbal aggression 2) recorded victim responses and 3) social responses to problem behavior from bystanders.	Implemented BP-PBS displayed overall reduction in the mean level of problem behavior per school day for all six students While there was an overall reduction in behavior problems, there was also an increase in victim and bystander "stop, walk, talk" responses.
Take a Stand, Lend a Hand Vessey (2011)	65 students Ages 8 to 14	Massachusetts USA 11 elementary and secondary schools	Post-intervention scores on the Child-Adolescent Teasing Scale (CATS), Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC), and Piers-Harris Children's Self-concept Scale (PHCSCS)	Student alleged they experienced fewer bothersome peer interactions and felt better about themselves (according to results from the CATS and PHCSCS). While parents (according to the PSC) noted no significant changes.

bullying behavior and new social skills in the successful intervention program is through homework and workbooks. Lastly, in all studies reviewed, the intervention programs were implemented very consistently.

### **Interventions Overview**

#### **KiVa anti-bullying program**

The KiVa program, for grades 4–6, includes twenty hours of student lessons (ten double lessons) given by classroom teachers during one school year. The central aim of the lessons are to: (a) raise awareness of the role that the group plays in maintaining bullying, (b) increase empathy toward victims, and (c) promote children's strategies of supporting the victim and thus their self-efficacy to do so. The lessons involve discussion, group work, role-play exercises, and short films about bullying. As the lessons proceed, class rules based on the central themes of the lessons are successively adopted one at a time. A unique feature of KiVa is an anti-bullying computer game included in the primary school versions of the program. Support to implement the program is given to teachers and schools in several ways. In addition to two full days of face-to-face training, networks of school teams are created, consisting of three school teams each. The network members meet three times during the school year with one person from the KiVa project guiding the network.

Several positive trends can be noted from the sample statistics. The biggest change took place in the mean of self-reported victimization, for which a substantial decrease occurred in the intervention group (from 0.741 to 0.485), with a much smaller change in the control group (from 0.782 to 0.657). Intervention and control schools did not differ statistically on the criterion variables. Compared with the control school students, students in KiVa schools had a lower level of peer-reported victimization. Students in schools that

implemented the KiVa program self-reported as being less victimized and bullied than students in the control schools. The KiVa intervention program also decreased peer-reported bullying, but this effect did not reach statistical significance. The KiVa intervention had some positive effects on the bystanders' behaviors as well. Initially when compared to the control school students, students in KiVa schools had more anti-bullying attitudes and empathy. However, by the end of the study, these intervention effects had diminished, making the results statistically non-significant. At the post-test assessment, KiVa school students reported having more self-efficacy for defending and well-being at school when compared to the control school students.

#### **Olweus bullying prevention program**

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program works with interventions at three different levels of implementation: school wide, classroom-level, and individual-level. An implementation essential to carrying out this program is training. All school staff participated in a half to one-day training session. Teachers are expected to read training materials, hold weekly classroom meetings, and participate in regular teacher discussion groups as well.

In the New Bergen Project, there were marked (and statistically significant) reductions by 50% or more in self-reported bully/victim problems for the periods studied, with eight and twenty months of intervention, respectively. There were also clear reductions in general antisocial behavior such as vandalism, fighting with the police, pilfering, drunkenness, and truancy. Marked improvements were also seen in regards to various aspects of the "social climate" of the class: improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude to schoolwork and the school. At the same time, there was an increase in student

satisfaction with school life. For the comparison schools, there were very small or no changes in being bullied, and actually an increase in the level of bullying other students by about 35%.

In the New National Initiative against Bullying, the percentage of bullied students in the first cohort of schools was 15.2, while at follow-up one year later this percentage had been reduced to 10.3% (a relative reduction of 32%). The relative reductions for the two successive cohorts of schools were very similar, both amounting to 34%. Absolute reductions for these three cohorts amounted to 4.9, 4.8, and 4.5 percentage points, respectively. The relative reductions for the first three cohorts of schools were 37%, 48% and 49%, respectively. The absolute reductions amounted to 2.1, 2.8, and 2.5 percentage points.

#### **Bully prevention in positive behavior support (BP-PBS)**

Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS) begins with a one-hour training seminar for all students. In this seminar, students are taught the idea and definition of "being respectful" to everyone in the school, the importance of "stop, walk, talk" when they come across inappropriate or "dis-respectful" behaviors, to emphasize the importance of students' good behaviors when attending activities that are prone to inappropriate/disrespectful behaviors, and the proper way to respond to the three-step response (stop, walk, talk). Staff members are trained with a two-step process on BP-PBS curriculum. The first step is an interactive program download, and the second step is a one-hour workshop (which includes collective techniques on how to respond when students engage and/or report occurrences). Aides in areas such as PE or the cafeteria (which are areas that are prone to problems) receive an additional 30 minutes of training on how to effectively manage inappropriate behaviors. In this

study, BP-PBS was implemented, and the students at the school displayed an overall reduction in the mean level of problem behavior per school day for all six students tested (0.9 incidents, 72% decrease from baseline). Students were selected from each school based on their high levels of physical or verbal aggression toward peers. While there was an overall reduction in behavior problems, there was also an increase in victim and bystander "stop, walk, talk" responses.

#### **Project ACHIEVE social skills program**

The Project ACHIEVE social skills program is considered a cognitive-behavioral program and was designed for students in grades 3-6. Students are provided with a curriculum orientation, as well as, tangible reinforcers throughout the program. Teachers and staff complete a training program that reviews program goals and the key features of program content. Practice sessions (in addition to training) take place with all adults involved in the program. Parents are also provided with information about the mission of Project ACHIEVE. The "Stop and Think" training process includes assemblies, lectures, and videos. The five "Stop and Think" steps are as follows: 1. Stop and Think, 2. Are you going to make a Good Choice or a Bad Choice?, 3. What are your Choices or Steps?, 4. Do It!, 5. Good Job! In this study, students were taught ten core skills over the course of the school year. The core skills taught include prerequisite skills, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, and conflict resolution skills. Each skill supported by the program was modeled, practiced, and infused in the all students' classes and in common areas. The overall results of the study suggest that the school wide Project ACHIEVE Social Skills Program is an effective tool to aide in the reduction of adverse behaviors. Bullying behaviors decreased by 2,200% in 3rd grade, 94.7% in

4th grade, 78.6% in 5th grade, and 82.4% in 6th grade.

#### **Project ploughshares puppets for peace (P4) program**

The P4 program is a 45 minute presentation that utilizes puppets and a script to educate elementary school students about bullying and conflict resolution. Within this study, sixty-six students completed a questionnaire before and after the P4 program; the other sixty-three students completed the same questionnaire twice before viewing the performance. Three months after the performance, all of the students completed the questionnaire again. Less than one-third of the students felt the show had no impact on them, with 23% of these students indicating that this was because they were already knowledgeable about bullying and strategies before the show took place. Chi-square results showed no significant increases in knowledge or skills to deal with bullying. Students were not better at differentiating between bullying and reciprocal aggression, and they did not report using more positive anti-bullying strategies after the puppet show. However, responses to open-ended questions on the questionnaire indicated that half of the students reported feeling more confident in managing bullying after viewing the P4 program.

#### **Step to respect: A bullying prevention program**

Three of the studies reviewed in this analysis used the Steps to Respect program as their primary intervention tool. All of the studies in this review used a pre-test/post-test format. Students and teachers both completed surveys in order to determine the effectiveness of the Steps to Respect bullying prevention program. The Steps to Respect program is a school-wide bullying intervention that includes instruction over anti-bullying procedures and rules for reporting bullying incidents. The program

assesses the school's environment and establishes school-wide bullying policies and procedures, including the protection of students reporting bullying and encouraging socially responsible actions. Disciplinary models are also set-up in order to encourage proportional, consistent actions aimed at stopping problems before they escalate. Instruction in this program is delivered through teacher and student training, and includes one-on-one interventions and classroom curriculum components. The Steps to Respect program comprises of a school-wide program guide, staff training (including a training manual and in-depth training sessions), and classroom lessons for students in the third through sixth grade. Teachers, counselors, and administrators also receive additional training in how to provide brief individual coaching sessions for each participant in a bullying episode. Skill and literature based classroom lessons use cognitive-behavioral techniques in order to promote socially responsible norms and to foster social-emotional skill acquisition. Typically instruction is delivered through ten semi-scripted skill lessons and the incorporation of grade-appropriate literature units. The administration of classroom lessons is typically administered on a weekly basis, but this administration can be modified depending on the school district or researcher's needs. Parents are also given a scripted information overview and a take-home letter describing the Steps to Respect program.

Significant intervention effects were present in all of three of the studies reviewed. In the study by Brown, Low, Smith, and Haggerty (2011), their results indicated greater increases in school anti-bullying policies and strategies, student climate, and staff climate. Larger decreases in bullying-related problems were seen in intervention schools relative to control schools. The increase in the prevalence of

physical bullying perpetration was smaller in intervention schools, and there also was a reduction of 31% in the likelihood of Physical Bullying Perpetration in intervention schools relative to control schools. No significant differences were found between intervention and control schools for nonphysical bullying perpetration, academic competency, or academic achievement. Students from schools that implemented the reviewed intervention reported higher mean levels of student climate, a lower decline in teacher/staff bullying prevention during the school year, and greater increases in student bullying intervention, teacher/staff bullying intervention, and positive bystander behavior, when compared to students from control schools.

In the study by Frey, Hirschstein, and Edstrom (2009), bullying in intervention schools showed a significant decline across all of the time periods evaluated. The significant overall decline in bullying is attributable to changes in the behavior of those who exhibited bullying behaviors during the pre-test period. Victimization by bullying consistently declined over time as well. Confidence intervals show consistent declines among those who previously encouraged bullying, particularly after the first year of program implementation. Non-bullying aggression in intervention schools also showed significant declines. Agreeable interactions, contrary to predictions, did not increase over time in the intervention schools. Students who participated in the Steps to Respect program showed no change in Acceptance of Bullying/Aggression across four survey administrations. As predicted, self-reports of victimization in intervention schools declined over time. Mean levels of bullying, victimization, and destructive bystander levels were significantly lower in the intervention group than in the control group. Children in the intervention group tended to be less

accepting of bullying and aggression than those in the control group. No group differences were found in children's perceived bystander responsibility, which declined over time. Mean perceived difficulty of responding assertively to bullying was lower among intervention group children than among their peers in the control group. Contrary to predictions, no group differences in self-reported aggression or victimization were seen in this study.

In the last study reviewed (Frey, Hirschstein, Snell, & Edstrom, 2005), declines in bullying and argumentative behavior among intervention-group children relative to control-group children were observed. Increases in agreeable interactions and a trend toward reduced destructive bystander behavior were also witnessed. Students in the intervention group reported enhanced bystander responsibility, greater perceived adult responsiveness, and fewer acceptances of bullying/aggression than those in the control group. Self-reported aggression did not differ between the groups. The results of these studies show that Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program is an effective instruction medium for children in elementary schools.

#### **Take a stand, lend a hand, stop bullying now social marketing campaign**

The Take a Stand, Lend a Hand, Stop Bullying Now Social Marketing Campaign is a bullying prevention program involving twelve webisodes of bullying prevention training. In this study, approximately every two weeks (for a total of 24 weeks) a total of twelve sessions were conducted with 65 students, ages eight to fourteen, by a school nurse. Each session included a 30 minute support group and the viewing of a Take a Stand, Lend a Hand, Stop Bullying Now episode. School nurses completed a training session before beginning the campaign, and parental informed consent was obtained for each student who

participated. Tip sheets were also administered to parents and staff, and a celebratory party and awards were given to the students after the completion of the program. Lastly, a focus group with participating school nurses took place. According to surveys completed after the intervention, students perceived that they experienced fewer bothersome peer interactions and felt better about themselves overall, while parents noted no significant changes. Focus group results obtained from the participating school nurses showed three central themes: feeling special, strength in numbers, and lifting the veil.

### **WITS primary program**

WITS stands for *Walk away* (and seek help), *Ignore it* (and seek help), *Talk it out* (and seek help), and *Seek help*. Before the intervention program took place, teachers and administrators took part in a two-hour in-service training. In the first phase of this program, storybooks that focus on a form of bullying and introduce kids to WITS messages were presented to the participants (432 children in the first grade). Program resource guides were administered to teachers and administrators in order to identify books with WITS themes, and the guides also included lesson plans with pre-reading and post-reading questions. Role-play and creative writing exercises are also used to supplement the classroom storybook lessons.

The average rates of peer victimization and help seeking decreased linearly and then accelerated significantly over time. The average rate of social competence decelerated over time, but not significantly, while rates of aggression and internalizing increased linearly and then decelerated over time. The WITS program contributed significantly to linear decreases in physical and relational victimization increases in social competence, and modestly to slower increases in aggression in the children who

completed the WITS program. Program estimates on quadratic changes were also significant, but not meaningful for relational victimization, social competence, and aggression. No program differences were found for help seeking and internalizing relative to the children in the comparison group. Children who completed the WITS program showed greater declines in physical and relational victimization until the fifth grade, but then an accelerated rate of growth by the spring of the sixth grade. Greater increases in social competence were also seen in children of the WITS program, and a slower rate of growth in aggression. Rates of deceleration in help seeking and acceleration in internalizing were comparable across the WITS and comparison children.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this literature review was to explore the outcome of bullying intervention programs that are currently implemented in various elementary and middle schools. A total of ten articles were reviewed that contained eight intervention programs, with one program reviewed three times in separate articles. The articles highlight implemented bullying interventions from the United States, Canada, Pacific Northwest region, Finland and Norway. Approximately 17,000 students and 1,400 school staff/teachers were included.

The overall results of this study are consistent with previously published work. Polanin, Espelage and Pigott (2012) constructed a study that encompassed bullying prevention programs, but also included the secondary evaluation of bystander intervention behavior. The results yielded an overall significant treatment effect with no differentiation found between the United States and other countries.

We discovered that bullying is not only prevalent in the United States, but across the nation as well. However, the

results from this study do suggest that bullying intervention programs contribute to the overall decrease in bullying behaviors. Additional intervention research is clearly warranted.

### Limitations

A number of limitations should be taken into consideration. First, this review only includes seven bullying intervention programs. While there were three researchers participating in the study, we must add that we consider having an unbiased collection of articles, yet prudence should be used when translating the results. Additionally, only two databases were searched and it is possible that articles were inadvertently missed.

Second, while this meta-analysis is to be considered quantitative, offering a high level of significance, the studies reviewed only included control groups. Therefore, the study is more reflective of an observational study.

Last, the size of the study must again be brought forth. While the importance and urgent need to implement bullying intervention programs across the nation has been captured in this study, there are a number of other bullying intervention programs that may have not been included.

### Future Research

Bullying in schools across the nation is rapidly rising. As concluded, great strides have been made throughout to implement and hold those accountable for bullying intervention programs. The results of this study, and many others previously published, is to benevolently suggest future research. This study demonstrates that the incorporation of a bullying intervention program can produce positive effects by decreasing bullying behaviors. The issue at hand is much larger than the ten studies reviewed. Future research, both quantitative and qualitative, should be conducted to aid

in the elevation of awareness and implementation.

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### Author Notes

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