

Creating a Climate for Learning:

A data-driven strategy to prevent bullying, promote upstander behavior and create even safer, supportive, engaging and responsible schools

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National School Climate Center (formerly, the Center for Social and Emotional Education)



Goals

1. To learn about bully-victim-witness behavior:
 - Definitions
 - Prevalence
 - Implications
2. To consider research-based bully prevention efforts and how school climate reform is a data driven strategy that supports effective bully prevention/pro-upstander efforts: safe, supportive, engaging and responsible schools -
3. Policy and practice implications? Possible next steps



The bully-victim-witness cycle

Definitions:

- A person or group of people who have more power than another person or group use their power to intentionally hurt -- socially, emotionally and/or physically -- the other person/group.
- Bullying is generally repeated over time.
- There is virtually never a bully and victim without a witness: bystander or upstander



The bully-victim-witness cycle (cont.)

Forms of bullying

Direct: Hitting, taunting, name calling

Indirect: Rumors, exclusion, cyber bullying



School climate

“The quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life and reflects

- norms,
- goals,
- values,
- interpersonal relationships,
- teaching and learning,
- leadership practices, and
- organizational structures.”



Prevalence of bullying?

- Up to 25% of all U.S. students are bullied every year
- As many as 160,000 students stay home on any given day due to fears of being bullied
- Cyberbullying – a growing trend! One in three teenagers report being seriously threatened on-line and 60% report that they have participated in cyberbullying
- Boys self-report greater rates of bullying
- Girls bullied by both girls and boys; boys more typically bullied by other boys
- Girls more frequently report being the targets of rumor spreading and sexual comments



Consequences of bullying

- Bully-victim behavior has a toxic and powerfully undermining effect on the bully, the target and the witnesses
- Undermines learning and children's health development
- A public health problem! (Center for Disease Control)



Health Consequences of Bullying

| | <u>Bullied</u> | <u>Not bullied</u> |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Headache | 16% | 6% |
| Sleep problems | 42% | 23% |
| Abdominal pain | 17% | 9% |
| Feeling tense | 20% | 9% |
| Anxiety | 28% | 10% |
| Feeling unhappy | 23% | 5% |
| Depression scale | | |
| moderate indication | 49% | 16% |
| strong indication | 16% | 2% |



Our challenge

- Inadequate bully prevention policies that today tend to focus on:
 - ✓ Identifying the bully
 - ✓ Punishing the bully
- A narrow focus on reading, math and science scores as well as rates of physical violence.



Breaking the bully-victim-bystander cycle

Overall, what works?

Policy: Educational policy that promotes positive school climate or the norms, expectations, beliefs, teaching/learning and leadership practices that support safe, supportive, engaging, helpfully challenging school communities for students to learn and develop in healthy ways.

This importantly includes meaningful guidelines that support educators, parents and mental health professionals recognizing students who chronically 'fall into the role of bully and/or victim' and addressing barriers to learning.

National School Climate Standards:

www.schoolclimate.org/climate/standards.php



Breaking the bully-victim-bystander cycle

(cont.)

Overall, what works?

- Mobilizing students, parents and school personnel to understand the schools strength and needs then using this data to develop instructional and systemic efforts that will – truly – make schools safer, more supportive, engaging, helpfully challenging (and as much as possible) fun: school climate reform.
- Whole School or Universal Social Skills Training
- Infusing bully-victim-witness learning objectives & activities into existing curriculum, morning meetings and Advisories
- Consciousness raising about bully-victim-witness behavior
- Focus on human rights
- Modeling supportive relationships: on the importance of being helpful “living examples”
- Focus on role of witness as well as bullies and victims
- Educator-parent-mental health professional partnerships



Breaking the bully-victim-bystander cycle

(cont.)

Stakeholder Involvement , what works?

- Ongoing Efforts, Active Task Force or Coordinating Committee
- Advocacy with School Board
- Teacher/School Mental Health Professional/
Administrator Training which includes an ongoing
commitment to pay attention to adult bullying
- Coordination with Parents
- Active Role for Students



Breaking the bully-victim-bystander cycle

(cont.)

Best Practices , what works?

- School leaders support the development of a **'shared vision' about 'what kind of school do we want and need ours to be?'**
- Clear, committed, long term **leadership** from the Principal
- **School-wide** interventions that support safer, more supportive, engaging and helpfully challenging norms, expectations, beliefs, learning/teaching and leadership that include:
 - Constructive sanctions, positive behavioral supports;
 - Dissemination of simple rules and rights
 - Graduated sanctions
 - Consistently enforced & fair rules
 - Safe ways to report bullying as well as recognizing upstander behavior with focus on helping to make the school safer for all
 - Focus on all forms of bullying, including most prevalent types



Breaking the bully-victim-bystander cycle (cont.)

Best Practices , what works (cont)?

- **Small group** (classroom; Advisory) interventions that promote awareness and skill building that supports upstander behavior, including
 - Teaching students about bullying, rules, and the role of the witness: bystander or upstander
 - Social, emotional and civic learning: for students and the adults!
 - Creating a climate for learning
 - Providing opportunities for students to develop upstander skills and dispositions (role plays, excises, student led activities)
 - Infusing bully-victim-witness themes into the curriculum and life of the classroom



Breaking the bully-victim-bystander cycle (cont.)

Best Practices , what works (cont)?

- **School-home-community partnerships** that are meaningful, engaged and reflect ongoing learning
- **Focus on strengths**
- **Peer support networks**
- **Individual considerations**
 - ✓ Recognizing and addressing students who chronically ‘fall into’ the role of bully and/or victim
 - ✓ On the importance of parent-educator-mental health partnerships
 - ✓ On-the-spot interventions and follow-up



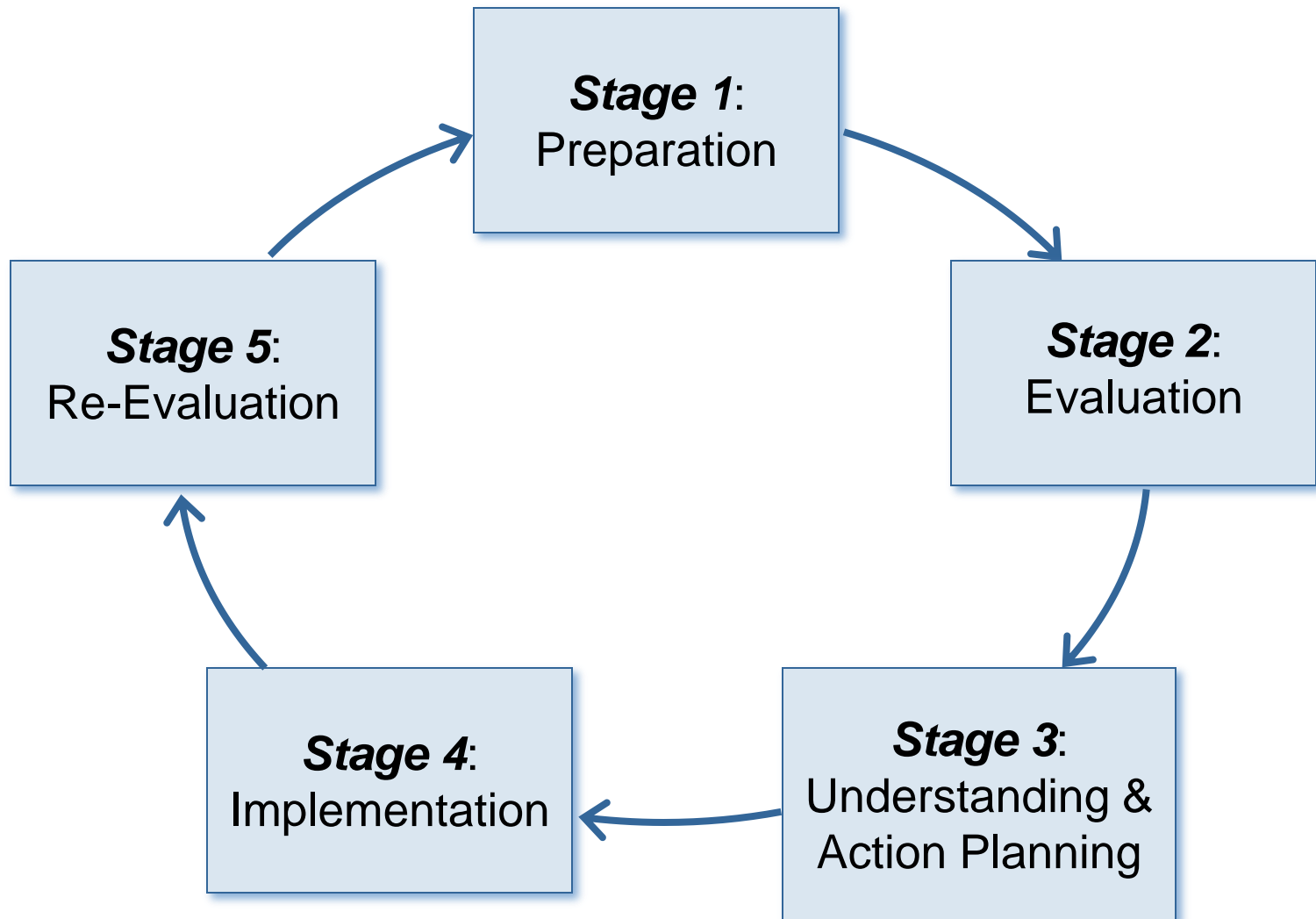
Breaking the bully-victim-bystander cycle (cont.)

Measurement and assessment , what works (cont)?

- School climate surveys that assess how students, parents and school personnel perceive the range of safety-related, relationship-related, teaching/learning related and environmental factors that define the quality and character of school life;
- Focus groups
- Student led participatory action research



The School Climate Improvement Process





Next steps?

Supporting the whole village to support the whole child

- What is your vision for your school community?
- To what extent do you now have policies that support this vision?
- To what extent do you have instructional and school-wide efforts that support this vision?
- What is the 'gap' between your vision and the current reality of school?
- What are the most meaningful “next steps” that parents, school leaders and students can take together to narrow this gap?