

SUMMARY: STEPS TO RESPECT 2011 RESEARCH STUDY

Evaluation Team Members

This evaluation was funded in part by a generous grant from the Raynier Foundation and was carried out through collaboration between Dr. Eric Brown at the Social Development Research Group at the University of Washington, Dr. Sabina Low at Wichita State University, and staff at Committee for Children.

The Steps to Respect Program

Program overview: The *Steps to Respect* program is designed for bullying prevention in the upper three grades of elementary school (3–5 or 4–6). The program includes training for all school staff, eleven classroom lessons per grade, and materials to send home to families.

Classroom curriculum: For each of the top three grades, there are eleven semi-scripted skill lessons focusing on social-emotional skills for positive peer relations; emotion management; and recognizing, refusing, and reporting of bullying behavior. Lesson topics included joining groups, distinguishing reporting from tattling, and being a responsible bystander.

Staff training: For this study, Committee for Children trainers provided the same on-site, one-day training typically available to schools purchasing the program. All staff in the school received three hours of training, all teachers, counselors, and administrators received another one-and-a-half hours of training, and third-through sixth-grade teachers (the grades covered by the classroom lessons) received an additional two-hour training.

Study Design

The schools: Thirty-three elementary schools in Northern and Central California were involved in this study. The schools were from a mix of rural and suburban areas, small towns, and mid-sized cities and varied widely in the number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (the average was 40 percent).

Randomization: To test the program rigorously, half the schools were randomly chosen to implement the program during the study year, the other half to provide a non-intervention control group that year and then receive the program the following year.

Surveys: Both students and staff were surveyed at the beginning and end of the school year. Individual students and teachers were surveyed in a randomly chosen 128 classrooms. In all, data were collected from over 2,900 students and over 1,200 school staff.

Realistic trial: This study came close to testing the program as it is routinely used in schools. Committee for Children staff had no involvement and provided no support to schools beyond the initial training. Research staff interacted with schools about data collection, but provided no program-specific technical assistance.

Teachers in Steps to Respect schools reported students were 33 percent less likely to engage in physical bullying.

Outcomes

Summary: This study, the largest and most rigorous U.S. study to date of a school-based bullying prevention program, showed that the *Steps to Respect* program had significant impacts on bullying and a wide range of factors related to bullying—in just one year. Overall, the evaluation found the program had positive impacts on fully half of the outcomes measured. The findings support the effectiveness of the *Steps to Respect* program for preventing bullying and support the program’s model of targeting school-, peer-, and individual-level factors. In the key finding on bullying behavior, teachers in *Steps to Respect* schools reported students were 33 percent less likely to engage in physical bullying.

Students: Surveys of randomly selected students showed program impacts on:

- Whether teachers and staff were doing the right things to prevent bullying
- The likelihood of students helping out in bullying incidents
- The likelihood of teachers and staff helping out in bullying incidents
- How often bystanders responded well when they witnessed bullying
- Student climate—for example, how well students get along with or help each other

Teachers: Surveys of randomly selected teachers implementing the classroom lessons showed program impacts on:

- Perpetration of physical bullying, such as fighting, pushing, shoving and tripping weaker students
- Social competence, such as getting along with, helping, and cooperating with others

School staff: Surveys of all school staff showed program impacts on:

- Administrator and staff commitment to policies, programs, training, and support that address bullying
- The likelihood of students helping out in bullying incidents
- Student climate—for example, how well students get along or help each other
- Staff climate—for example, how trustworthy staff are and how well they get along with students, parents, and one another
- How big a problem various kinds of bullying are at school

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