

Bullying Prevention: *Innovative Approaches to Bully Prevention*



This **Quick Training Aid** was excerpted from *Preventing Bullying: A Manual for Schools and Communities*. US Department of Education (1998).

School-based bullying prevention programs across the United States vary a great deal in their target populations, their comprehensiveness and the specific approaches they take. When considering use of a given curriculum or program to eliminate bullying, request from the publisher evaluation data and names of persons to contact for information about the effectiveness of the program, its procedures and materials. Below are descriptions of anti-bullying programs being used in schools and communities around the country.

Charleston, South Carolina

In collaboration with the Medical University of South Carolina, staff at Alice Birney Middle School will launch a unique violence prevention initiative in the fall of 1998 that combines two model programs targeted at aggressive behavior: a comprehensive bullying prevention effort and multisystemic therapy for children with serious behavior problems. Following the model bullying prevention program developed by Olweus, the entire school will participate in violence prevention activities to reduce bullying among the school's sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. Activities include the development of rules against bullying, increased supervision of students' behavior, role playing, discussions and other classroom activities and the active involvement of parents and community members. In addition, students who exhibit particularly aggressive behavior will be invited to participate in multisystemic therapy (MST), an intensive family and home-based treatment that attempts to change how youth function in their natural settings - home, school and neighborhood. MST therapists will have small caseloads (four to six families) and will provide services in the family's home or at school. A therapist will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Says project director Phillippe Cunningham, "Individually, these two models have shown success in reducing aggressive behavior among kids by targeting the many causes of aggressive behavior in the child's natural environment. We are anxious to see how effective this combined approach can be." An evaluation of this project will continue over the next two years.

Austin, Texas

In the fall of 1998, students and staff at six elementary schools in Austin, Texas, are preparing to implement and evaluate a comprehensive violence prevention program called "Expect Respect." This program is a collaborative effort among SafePlace (a domestic violence and sexual assault center), the Austin Independent School District, and the University of Texas at Austin, and is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Expect Respect" will focus on the reduction of bullying and the promotion of respectful relationships among students as a means of preventing dating and domestic violence. The program includes classroom activities that are cofacilitated by SafePlace staff and teachers, and staff and parent seminars to increase awareness of prevention strategies for bullying and sexual harassment and to increase understanding of the effects of domestic violence on children. Individual support services for students experiencing difficulties in peer or family relationships will be provided on campus. In addition, existing Campus Advisory Councils (consisting of administrators, parents, teachers and students) will review and develop campuswide policies and procedures to reduce bullying and sexual harassment. According to Barri Rosenbluth, director of School-based Services at SafePlace, "Bullying is

at the heart of domestic violence. The goal of this project is to reduce the social acceptance of bullying and sexual harassment in schools and to help children increase their skills and expectations for healthy relationships."

Englewood, Colorado

Willow Creek Elementary School in suburban Englewood, Colorado, employed the "Bully-Proofing Your School" (Sopris West) Program beginning in the fall of 1995. The program began increasing the knowledge of staff and students, clearing misconceptions regarding bullying and emphasizing the importance of a consistent schoolwide intervention. Staff were taught different methods for dealing with bullies and victims. Students were taught protective skills that gave them a sense of empowerment in dealing with bullying situations. The students were also encouraged to form a caring community in which everyone looks out for and sticks up for everyone else. During the first year, students in grades one through five participated in nine weekly group meetings. Children also participated in optional sessions dealing with conflict resolution and diversity. Follow-up review sessions were conducted one to two months later. Kindergarten students were introduced to an abbreviated version of the program. During the second year, first-grade students were provided with the entire program, and students in grades two through five participated in a three-session review of the program.

A series of student and parent surveys were conducted over the two-year program. Based on these reports, the bully-proofing program appears to be impacting the school environment in a positive way. Central to the success of the program is the caring majority concept whereby 80 percent of children who are neither bullies nor victims set the climate for the school by working together to stop bullying. According to William Porter, associate director for Student Achievement Services for the Cherry Creek School District, "Perceptions of safety increased before the actual incidence of bullying declined. We believe that the mere act of informing students about bullying, letting them know that the Willow Creek staff were working together, and giving them strategies for handling bullying increased their sense of safety even before behaviors began to change."

Caruthersville, Missouri

Principal J.J. Ballington believes that Respect & Protect, a violence prevention and intervention program developed by the Johnson Institute of Minneapolis, has made a significant difference in the atmosphere at Caruthersville Middle School in Caruthersville, Missouri. Implemented in September 1996, the program emphasizes a comprehensive approach to violence prevention, encouraging all school personnel to commit to a violence prevention plan and to consistently enforce appropriate measures to intervene when violent acts occur. School staff have learned to recognize and control actions that enable violence - actions such as denying, rationalizing, justifying, avoiding or blaming. They have also learned that appropriate consequences coupled with prevention and intervention programs will change negative behaviors and ultimately the school environment. Students are reminded daily that no form of violence - including hurtful words, looks, signs or acts that cause harm to a person's body, feelings or possessions - will be tolerated. Students who engage in physical violence, bullying or intimidation are required to attend after-school violence intervention counseling that focuses on anger management and conflict resolution. Failure to attend results in suspension. Prevention programs that have been implemented at Caruthersville Middle School as part of its comprehensive approach include the Fight-Free School program, Violence is Preventable exploratory course, the No Bullying program, and Resolve All Problems Peacefully (R.A.P.P.) peer mediation program.

Principal Bullington is conducting an evaluation of the Respect and Protect program at Caruthersville Middle School. Initial results indicate a 16 percent reduction in the first year and a 25 percent reduction in the second year in the number of students involved in physical confrontations. He reports, "Students as well as teachers feel empowered to help stop the violence. Students are realizing they are responsible for their own behavior and if they choose to engage in unacceptable behavior, appropriate consequences will apply."