NEW PERSPECTIVES ON BULLYING PREVENTION: WHY ARE CURRENT PROGRAMS NOT WORKING?

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University of Illinois Anti-Bullying Program

- **Indiana University Teen Conflict Survey** (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999; Espelage et al., 2000, 2001)

- **University of Illinois Bullying Research Program**
  - INTERVIEW STUDY (Espelage & Asidao, 2001)
  - EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE STUDY (Espelage, 1998)
  - SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS STUDY (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003; Espelage, Green, & Wasserman, 2007; Espelage, Green, & Polanin, in press)
  - SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DATING VIOLENCE, & BULLYING STUDIES (Holt & Espelage, 2003; Holt & Espelage, 2005; Espelage & Holt, 2006)
  - ATTRIBUTION, COPING STYLES, & BULLYING (Kingsbury & Espelage, 2006)
  - THEORY OF MIND, EMPATHY, & BULLYING (Espelage et al., 2004; Mayberry & Espelage, 2006)
  - HOMOPHOBIA, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, & BULLYING (Poteat & Espelage, 2006; Espelage et al., 2008)
  - Sexual Orientation, Bullying, & Mental Health Outcomes (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Poteat, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009)
  - CDC Federally-funded Grants:
    - Bullying & SV Overlap (2007 - 2010)
    - Randomized Clinical Trial of Middle School Second Step Program (Committee for Children, 2008) in Reducing Bullying & SV (2009-2013)

Definition of Bullying (Swearer, 2001)

- Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Usually, bullying happens over and over.
  - Punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically
  - Spreading bad rumors about people
  - Keeping certain people out of a "group"
  - Teasing people in a mean way
  - Getting certain people to "gang up" on others
  - Use of technology

Bully/Victim Continuum

- Bully – reports bullying others
- Victim – reports being bullied by others
- Bully-victim – reports bullying others & being bullied
- Bystander – reports observing others being bullied
- No Status/Not involved – does not report any involvement with bullying

Bullying Prevalence

- Among 3rd – 8th graders:
    - 15% Chronically Victimized
    - 17% Ringleader Bullies
    - 8% Bully-Victims
    - 60% Bystanders
        - Only 13% intervene to help victim
          (Espelage & Swearer, 2003)

Cyber-Bullying

"Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others."

(Bill Belsey: www.cyberbullying.ca)

Cyber-Bullying Prevalence

□ National Statistics (Lifetime):

- 10% - 33% youth (ages 11 to 19) have been the target of aggression/bullying online
- 15% perpetrate the aggression/bullying online
- 15% have been victims of sexual solicitation online (asked to talk about sex, perform a sexual act, or provide personal sexual information)

(Finn, 2004; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004)

Cyber-Bullying Prevalence

- Illinois Middle School Students
  - Online Victimization in Last Year:
    - 14.9% received rude comment
    - 7% had rumor spread about him/her
    - 2% threatened by a student
    - 11% received rude text message
      - 13% girls; 7% boys
    - 6% received sexually related text
    - 1% received sexual picture text
    - 1-3% rarely did someone solicit sex online

Homophobic Language & Bullying

- Approximately 22% of middle school students ($n = 4,302$) report teasing another student because he/she was gay (16.6% girls, 26.1% boys; Koenig & Espelage, 2003)

- 17.7% of high school students ($n = 4,938$) reported teasing another student because he/she was gay (9.2% girls, 26.2% boys; Koenig & Espelage, 2003)

- Bullying and homophobia perpetration strongly related among middle school students ($r = .61$; Poteat & Espelage, 2005)

- Homophobia victimization was reported more by males than females (Poteat & Espelage, 2007)

Poteat & Espelage (2005)

- Bullying and homophobia are strongly interrelated for males and females
- Homophobic content and empathy
    - Similar to past findings for attitudinal homophobia and empathy (Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997)
- Homophobic content and school belonging
    - Similar to past findings for LGBT students and isolation, stigmatization (Uribe & Harbeck, 1991)
- Homophobic content and anxiety/depression
    - Negative consequences to "harmless" banter?

Bullying Prevention – Meta-analysis (Merrell et al., 2008)

- Evaluated effectiveness of 16 bullying efficacy studies across some six countries (six studies in US).

- Only two of six US studies published.

- All showed small to negligible effects.

- Small positive effects found for enhancing social competence and peer acceptance, and increasing teacher knowledge and efficacy in implementing interventions.

- Reality—No impact on bullying behaviors.

- *Farrington & Tfoti (2009) – programs that are effective in European country include parents, use of multimedia, and target teacher's competence in responding to bullying.*

Bullying Prevention –Why little success?

- Majority of the programs fail to recognize that bullying co-occurs with other types of aggression, including sexual violence, dating aggression, and homophobic banter.

- Programs often fail to address basic life and social skills that kids may need to effectively respond to bullying.

- Only one program directs prevention efforts at the key context that promotes and sustains bullying perpetration – the peer group.

- No programs consider the impact of family and community violence on bullying prevalence .

- All programs fail to address the extent to which demographic variables (such as gender and race) and implementation levels impact a program's effectiveness.
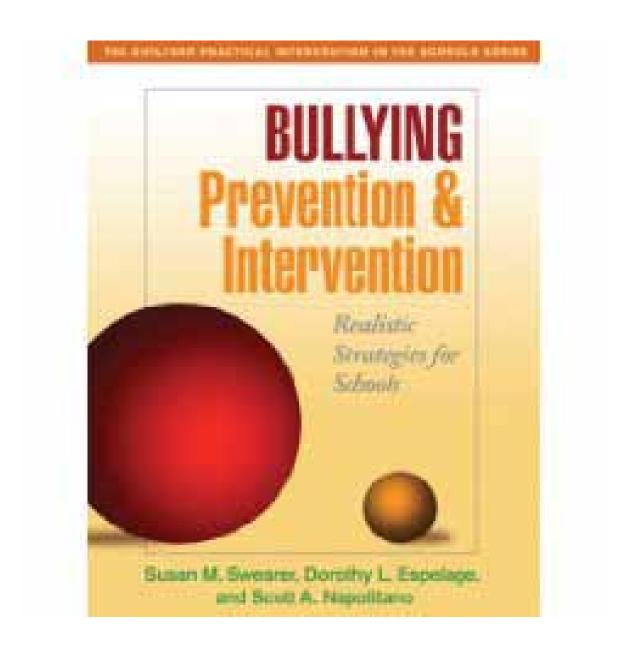
Bullying
in American
Schools

A Social-Ecological Perspective
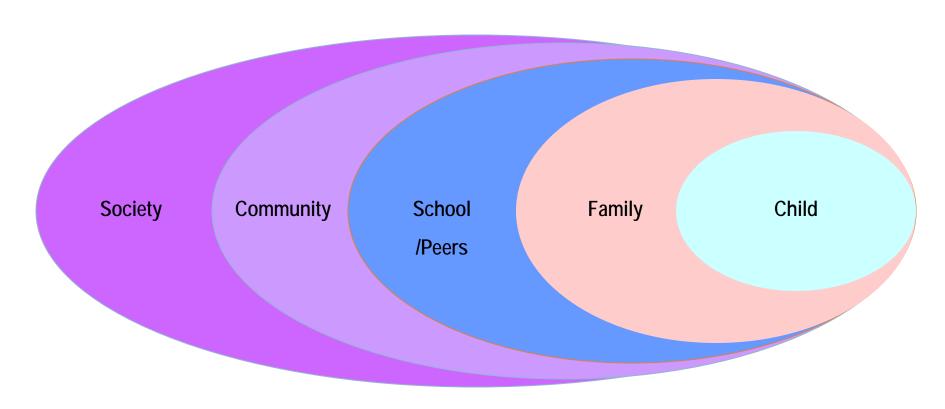on Prevention and Intervention

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www.guilford.com

Social-Ecological Perspective

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Swearer & Doll, 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)

Individual Correlates of Bullying Involvement

- Depression/Anxiety
- Empathy
- Delinquency
- Impulsivity
- Other forms of Aggression
- Alcohol/Drug Use
- Positive Attitudes toward Violence/Bullying
- Low Value for Prosocial Behaviors
  - For review (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)

Family & School Risk Factors

FAMILY

- Lack of supervision
- Lack of attachment
- Negative, critical relationships
- Lack of discipline/ consequences
- Support for violence
- Modeling of violence

SCHOOL

- Lack of supervision
- Lack of attachment
- Negative, critical relationships
- Lack of discipline/ consequences
- Support for violence
- Modeling of violence

For review (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)

Sibling Bullying

- Sibling bullying is tied to school-based bullying in many countries (Espelage & Swearer, 2003 for review)

- Study of 779 middle school students, association between bullying perpetration and sibling aggression perpetration was strongly associated (girls $r = .52$, boys $r = .42$; Espelage & Stein, in prep)

Relation Between Bullying & Other Victimization Forms

- Child maltreatment has been associated with difficulties in peer relations (Jacobsen & Straker, 1992; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001)

- Exposure to domestic violence has been linked to bullying perpetration (Baldry, 2003)

- Study of 779 middle school students, association between bullying perpetration and family violence victimization was moderately associated for females $(r = .31)$ and bullying perpetration was also related to neighborhood violence victimization $(r = .40;$ Espelage & Stein, in prep)

Bullying Perpetration: Peers Matter

- Unconditional Null Models:

  - ICC indicated homophily; peer group homogeneity

  - 22% variance in bullying perpetration between peer groups

  - indicated multilevel modeling appropriate

- Level-1 Models :

  - Wave 1 and Wave 2 self-reported bullying positively related

  - Deviances indicated better model over the null model

- Level-2 Models : Peer-level bullying significantly predicted individual level perpetration at Wave 2 when controlling for Wave 1 Bullying. 91% of variance explained.

    - (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003; Espelage, Green, & Wasserman, 2008)
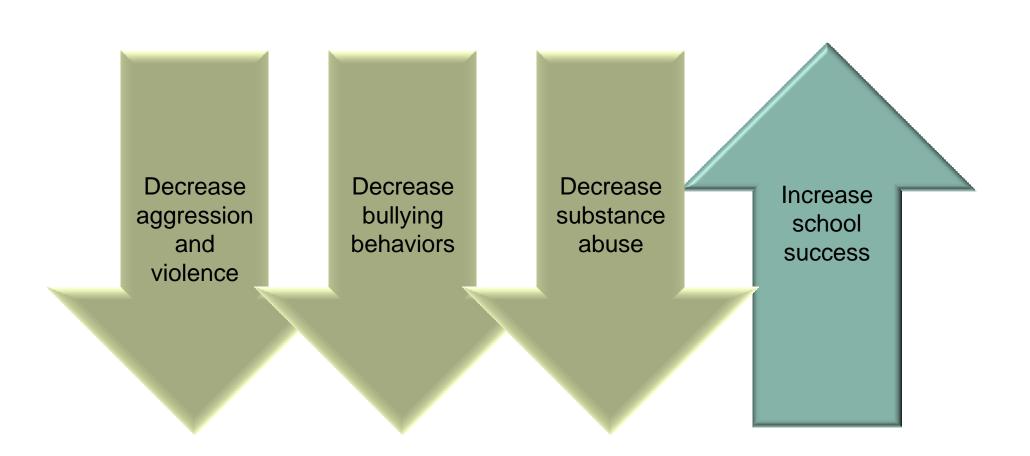
Second Step

Committee for Children, 2008

Second Step: Addresses Multiple Issues

Prevalence of aggression and bullying in middle schools

Substance abuse is a middle school prevention priority

Bullying program for middle school

Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention

One program that focuses on multiple issues

Program Goals

Decrease aggression and violence

Decrease bullying behaviors

Decrease substance abuse

Increase school success

Program Goals

Research Foundations

- Risk and Protective Factors
- Bullying
- Brain Research
- Positive Approaches to Problem Behavior
- Developmental Needs of Young Adolescents

Prevention Research Supports One Program Targeting Multiple Issues

□ Risk and protective factors are at the heart of *Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention*

■ Many of the same factors predict substance abuse, violence, delinquency and school failure.

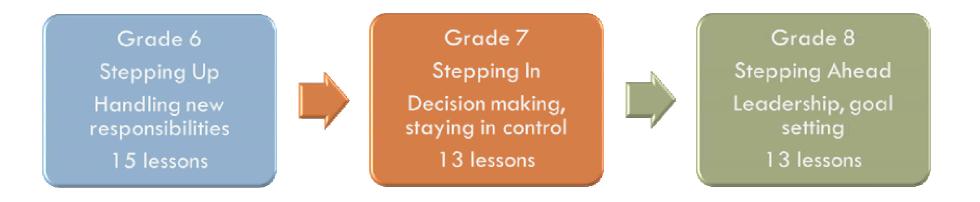# Risk and Protective Factors Addressed in the Second Step Program

Risk Factors

- Inappropriate classroom behavior
- Favorable attitudes towards violence or substance use
- Friends who engage in violence or substance use
- Early initiation of violence or substance use
- Peer rewards for antisocial behavior
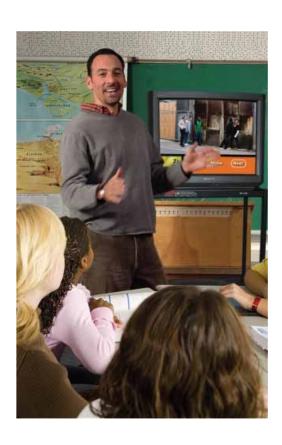- Peer rejection
- Impulsiveness

Protective Factors

- Social skills
- School connectedness
- Adoption of conventional norms about substance use

Levels and Lessons

Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8
Stepping Up		Stepping In		Stepping Ahead
Handling new responsibilities	→	Decision making, staying in control	→	Leadership, goal setting
15 lessons		13 lessons		13 lessons

- 50 minutes to teach a complete lesson
- Each lesson is divided into two parts that can be taught separately

Teaching strategies

- Use of DVD with rich multi-media content to accompany each lesson
- Carefully constructed approach to partner and group work
  - Class discussion and activities
  - Partner or group exchanges
  - Individual, partner, or group activities
  - Partner or group skill practices
- Individual reflection
- Frequent review of core skills and concepts

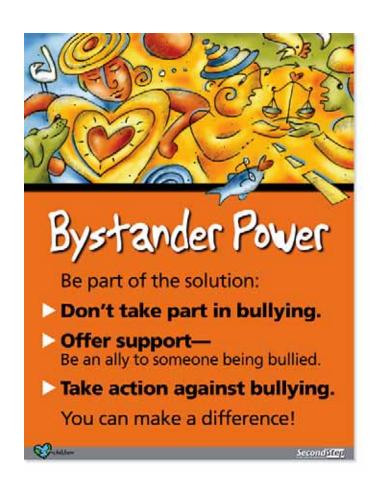# Increasing Student Exposure to Lesson Content

- Additional practice activity
- Reflective writing assessment
- Homework
- Integration activities
- Journal page

Five Program Themes

- Each level includes the following five themes:
  - Empathy and communication
  - Bullying prevention
  - Emotion management
    - Coping with stress (grades 7 and 8)
  - Problem-solving
    - Decision-making (grade 7)
    - Goal-setting (grade 8)
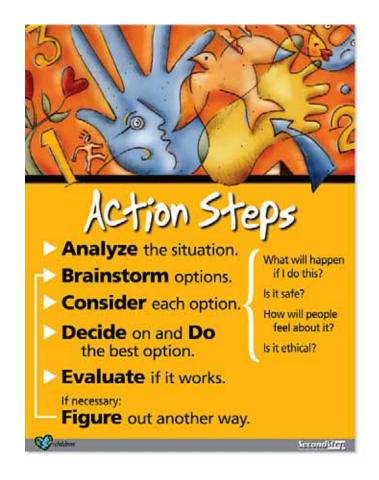 - Substance abuse prevention

Bullying Prevention

- Recognizing bullying (all grades)
- Bystander responses (all grades)
- Grade 7
  - Sexual harassment
  - Cyberbullying
- Grade 8
  - Labels, stereotypes and prejudice
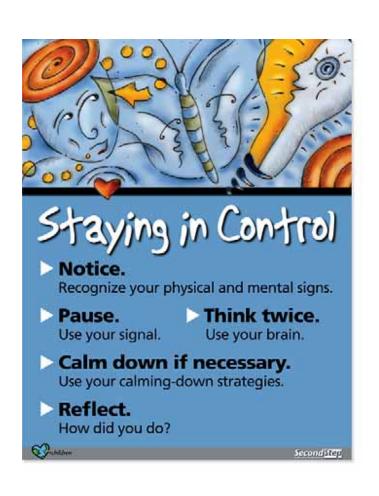 - Bullying in friendships
  - Bullying in dating relationships

Bystander Power

Be part of the solution:
- Don't take part in bullying.
- Offer support—
  Be an ally to someone being bullied.
- Take action against bullying.
You can make a difference!

SecondStep

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Problem-Solving, Decision Making and Goal Setting

□ Using the Action Steps for
- ◘ Problem-solving (All levels)
- ◘ Decision-making (Level 2)
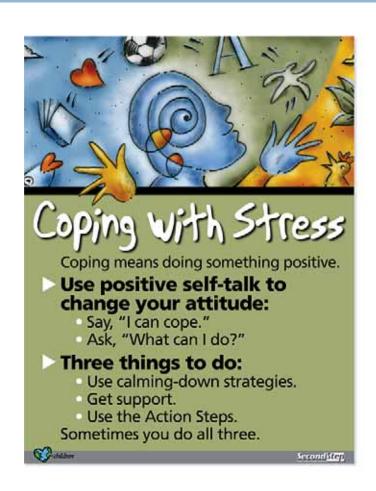- ◘ Goal-setting (Level 3)

Emotion Management

□ Staying in Control

- Steps for Staying in Control (All grades)
- Focus on anger and checking assumptions (grade 7)
- De-escalating tense situations (grade 8)

Emotion Management
Coping with Stress

- Taught in grades 7 and 8

Substance Abuse Prevention
Tobacco, Marijuana, Alcohol and Inhalants

- Health, personal and social consequences of using alcohol and other drugs
- Preferred future
- Making good decisions about friends
- Normative education
- Resistance skills
- Making a commitment

Applying Lesson Content to Academics

- "Using lesson Content Every Day" section
- Self-regulated learning
- Integration activities
  - Language arts and social studies
  - Health/science
  - Media and technology
- Reflective writing assessment
- Alignment with numerous academic and life skills content standards

Implications for Prevention Programming

- Need to give kids life and social skills, not just knowledge about bullying

- Need to develop secondary and tertiary programs, not just primary prevention programs

- Bullying programs need to consider incorporating discussion of sexual harassment and (homophobic language; Birkett & Espelage, 2010).
  - 67 bullying prevention programs in US, only five discuss sexual harassment or sexual orientation issues.

- Peers influence has to be considered in developing and evaluating prevention/intervention programs
  - 67 bullying prevention programs, only one attempts to target and shift peer norms.

Implications for Prevention Programming

- Recognize that students are witnessing and involved in violence in their homes. We need to give them alternatives to violence for solving problems and conflicts.

- Consider how the use of technology is influencing relationships and talk to kids about responsible use of technology.