**Bullying Victimization**

**Research and Recommended Interventions**

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**Bullying Defined**

Bullying is defined as a type of intentional aggression that aims to harm the victim, is repetitive over time, and involves an imbalance of power (i.e., the bully is more powerful than the victim).1 For Delaware schools, Delaware law defines bullying as:

Intentional actions that occur in physical, verbal, written, or electronic form towards a student, school employee, or school volunteer that:

* + - * cause reasonable fear or substantial harm to the victim’s physical or emotional well-being, or damage to property;
      * are pervasive/persistent or characterized by a power differential that creates a hostile educational environment;
      * interfere with a safe environment;
      * include coercing others to cause the above harmful actions.

**Four Types of Bullying Victimization, as Assessed by the Delaware School Surveys**

Four types of bullying—verbal, physical, social/relational, and cyber—are most commonly recognized by researchers and targeted in bullying prevention programs. Each of these types is assessed by subscales of the *Delaware School Surveys (DSS)*.

The *Delaware Bullying Victimization Scale* of the DSS assesses students’ reports of the extent to which they have personally experienced each type. On the verbal subscale, students report how often they have been called names, been the target of hurtful jokes or teasing, and have had hurtful or mean things said to them by peers. On the physical subscale, students report the extent to which they have been pushed/shoved, hit/kicked, threatened harm, or have had their belongings stolen or broken. On the social/relational subscale, students report how often another student got others to say mean things about them, not to like them, or not to be friends with them, and how often they have been left out by peers. Finally, on the cyberbullying subscale, students report the frequency of behaviors such as having had mean or hurtful messages about them sent to others, mean or hurtful things posted about them on social media, and others having pretended to be the student and sending or posting mean messages.

A separate subscale, the *Bullying School-wide* subscale of the *Delaware School Climate Scale* of the DSS assesses bullying, in general, throughout the school. There are three items on the subscale that ask if students bully one another, threaten and bully others, and worry about others bullying them.

**Negative Effects of Bullying Victimization**

The foremost reason why bullying has gained increased attention in recent years is that ample research has shown that students who experience bullying are at greater risk for a number of negative outcomes, especially the following:

* Greater internalizing problems, including depression, anxiety, and loneliness,1-12 as well suicide ideation, suicide attempts, and self-injury13-16
* Participation in delinquent and problem behaviors, such as substance use, stealing, physical fighting, and vandalism17-18
* Difficulty making friends, social rejection, and isolation1,15,19-20
* Lower social competence21
* Lower self-esteem11,15,19  and increased levels of self-criticism12
* Less attachment or connectedness to school,2,22 including more negative perceptions of belonging and safety in school,23-24 greater fear and anxiety toward school, and avoidance of particular areas of school8,25
* Lower academic engagement, achievement, and classroom concentration, including attention difficulties8,11,20,26-28
* Psychosomatic problems, such as headaches, stomach pain, and sleeping problems4

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| ***Important Note: Not only are victims of bullying at increased risk for a number of negative outcomes, but so too are students who bully others. Those risks include:***   * *Involvement in crime, violence, drugs, alcohol, and delinquency*8,17,29-34,108 * *Greater internalizing problems, including depression,*7 *psychosomatic symptoms such as feeling tired or tense,*3 *and suicide attempts and ideation*14 * *Less school bonding, or connectedness*22 * *Lower academic achievement*8,17   Likewise, students who **witness** bullying also are at risk for negative outcomes.109  Particularly at risk for the above negative outcomes are those who are **both victims and perpetrators of bullying**.110 |

**Primary Factors Contributing to Bullying Victimization**

Best viewed from a social-ecological perspective, bullying is a complex phenomenon influenced by an array of interacting factors that play out in a social context that may foster, prevent, or suppress its various forms.110-111 Those factors range from individual student characteristics to factors within classrooms, schools, homes, and communities. Among them are relationships students have with peers, teachers, staff, family members, and others. Within relationships, as well as across other factors, influences on bullying are often bidirectional or multidirectional, dynamic, and contextual. Thus, often an act of bullying cannot be attributed to a single factor. Instead, it can be attributed to a combination of factors, including individual factors that characterize the bullying victim and the perpetrator; other proximal factors, such as the involvement of others in the bullying incident (e.g., defenders of the victim, supporters of the bully, and bystanders); the presence or absence of various classroom and school factors (e.g., supervision in halls and playground, classroom management); and more distal factors such as school policies, and influences at home, in the community, and in the media and society in general.

Factors influencing bullying victimization *and* that are most malleable should be the primary targets of school-based programs for preventing bullying. Those factors can be viewed as falling into two general categories: (1) *student and home characteristics* and (2) *classroom, school, and teacher characteristics*.

**Student and Home Characteristics**

The following characteristics have been shown to be associated with students who experience the *least* bullying:

* In general, exhibiting social and emotional competence. This includes:
  + Exhibiting few, if any, behavior problems22,35,36
  + Having good social skills, such as the ability to avoid and negotiate situations of potential conflict and disagreement with peers37
  + Regulating one’s emotions—that is, being able to recognize, understand, and modulate emotions and match emotions to surrounding situations and individuals37-38
  + Experiencing and expressing empathy—that is, understanding and sharing the feelings of another39
  + Viewing oneself favorably, which includes having positive self-perceptions, high self-esteem, high self-confidence, and the absence of internalizing problems,21,38,40-41 particularly submissiveness and social anxiety36,42 and overall life satisfaction (e.g., in education, family life, and society)15
* Acceptance and support from peers, and having one or more friends.43-48 This includes friendships with others who are not victims of bullying and who are likely to stand up against bullies,2 as well as friendship groups made up of individuals who do not exhibit bullying behaviors and possess anti-bullying norms.49-51 Victims often have no or few friends and have negative relations with peers.1,36,52 Having friends not only helps prevent being bullied, but also helps buffer victims from the negative outcomes associated with being bullied.42,53
* Being in good health and physical condition.38
* Parental support, engagement, and an authoritative style of parenting (i.e., not overly controlling or overly protective).16,53-55,112

Although not malleable, there are other characteristics of students that place them at increased risk of being bullied. Primary among them are sexual orientation, having a disability, and gender. To a lesser extent, grade level, age, race, and religion also have been found to increase the risk for bullying victimization, as discussed below.

*Sexual Orientation:* Students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning tend to experience greater levels of bullying victimization than heterosexual students.51,60-61

*Disability:* In general, students with disabilities are more likely to be bullied than those without disabilities. Students with disabilities that present observable behavior problems (e.g., autism, ADHD, emotional disturbance) are at greatest risk, especially those with an emotional disturbance.56-59

*Gender:* Males tend to experience more bullying (and bully others) more so than females, especially when it comes to verbal and physical bullying.1,11,19,21,38,40,44,53,63,67 Females tend to both experience and bully others with more verbal and social/relational forms of bullying.9,11,19,53

*Grade level and age:* Research results on bullying are mixed regarding grade level and age differences, with some studies showing that bullying tends to be more frequent in secondary compared to elementary school23,62 and highest in middle school.1,9,68 However, others have found greater bullying, in general, in elementary school.69 Studies also have indicated that grade level differences depend on the type of bullying, with physical bullying being more common in elementary school and indirect bullying more common in middle school and high school.106 Within the same grade level, younger children tend to be bullied more than older ones.36

*Race:* Studies that have examined racial differences have yielded mixed results, and, when differences are found, they tend to be slight. For example, although some studies show that African-American students report greater bullying victimization and bullying,53,62-64 other studies have reported less frequent victimization of African American students compared to students of other races.65-66 Still, others have reported no differences in bullying victimization among students of varying races.7

*Religion:* Although few studies have examined religion and bullying, and results have been mixed, in general studies have found that religious beliefs are one reason why some students are bullied,10,113 with Muslim and Jewish students more likely to be victims (and less likely to be perpetrators) than students of other religious affiliations.114-116

**Classroom, School, and Teacher Characteristics**

Less bullying occurs in schools and classrooms characterized by the following:

* Positive teacher-student relationships and teacher support.27,44,47,65,70-73 This includes:
* Students viewing teachers as clearly disapproving of bullying36
* Students believing that teachers will respond immediately and effectively to bullying when it occurs74-75
* Students believing that teachers are aware of peer group interactions, address instances of peer aggression and bullying, and make efforts to mitigate status extremes among students52,75
* Students willing to seek help from teachers or adults at schools for bullying and threats of violence76
* Students believing that teachers encourage them to express their points of view.21 This would include speaking out about bullying.
* Positive student-student relationships, especially peer support.71,77-78 Research shows:
  + When bystanders have more positive feelings toward the bullying victim, they are more likely to act against the bullying and intervene.79
  + When bystanders believe they will not be punished or penalized by peers for defending bullying victims they are more likely to intervene.36
  + Overall school connectedness (i.e., a sense of belonging in school) is associated with lesser amounts of bullying.60
* Student self-determination, or encouragement of student autonomy, in the classroom.80
* Greater student respect for diversity and other differences.71
* Classroom and school-wide practices, often referred to as *structure*, in which behavioral expectations, rules and consequences are perceived by students to be clear, fair, and against bullying,81-83 and thus promoting students to feel safe and supported.24,84 Structure also is seen in additional techniques that help manage student behavior and prevent behavior problems, such as routines, procedures, and monitoring and supervising students.
* An authoritative, as opposed to authoritarian, approach to classroom management and school discipline, characterized by a balanced combination of structure and support.38,70,75,85-86 Whereas structure is seen in the above, support is seen in close and responsive teacher-student and student-student relationships.
* In general, norms that do not support bullying.23,50,77 Such norms would be grounded largely in the characteristics mentioned above, especially supportive teacher-student and student-student relationships, and other aspects of an authoritative approach to discipline.

**Bullying Prevention Curricula and Programs**

Nearly all states, including Delaware, require that schools implement programs to prevent and respond to bullying. To meet this requirement, most schools adopt a packaged program consisting of curriculum lessons and staff development. Unfortunately, reviews of the literature show that many of those programs are not effective, especially when implemented in heterogeneous schools in the United States (compared to more homogeneous schools in Northern and Western Europe).87-91 When effectiveness is found, it is more likely to be in elementary than middle or high school.106

To help understand why some programs are effective and many are not, researchers have identified program features associated with more positive outcomes. In their reviews of the literature, Ttofi and Farrington90-91 and Vreeman and Carroll92 identified the following:

* A whole-school, multidisciplinary anti-bullying approach with high intensity (i.e., several components implemented regularly over a long period of time).
  + Programs inspired by Dan Olweus (but especially when implemented in homogenous schools).
  + An authoritative approach to classroom management and school discipline (as found in the Olweus program), characterized by a balance of support (positive teacher-student relations) and structure (clear rules and expectations about non-bullying)
  + Information/meetings for parents
  + Use of videos in lessons
  + Improved playground supervision in elementary school
  + Teacher training
  + Counseling for students who bully
  + Conflict resolution training

**Recommended Evidence-Based Strategies for Decreasing**

**Bullying and Bullying Victimization**

In this section, evidence-based strategies and interventions are presented for decreasing bullying and bullying victimization at Tiers 1, 2, and 3. First, Tier 1 strategies and interventions are presented, which consist of those designed to be implemented for all students at the school-wide and classroom levels. For heuristic purposes, they are grouped into seven general categories:

1. Collect data to determine needs, strategies, and interventions;
2. Establish a common school-wide understanding of bullying, and strong school-wide anti-bullying expectations;
3. Teach students how to respond to bullying, including how to report it;
4. Implement classroom management strategies for prevention and promotion of positive relationships and behavior;
5. Employ strategies and provide opportunities that build and maintain positive teacher-student relationships;
6. Use corrective strategies that focus on the impact of the behavior on others, as well as the consequences to oneself, that emphasize replacement behaviors, and help prevent negative teacher-student relationships; and
7. Implement a universal evidence-based bullying prevention or social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum shown to reduce bullying.

Next, Tiers 2 and 3 strategies and interventions are presented, which are designed for individual students and small groups of students who are at greatest risk for being bullied and for bullying others.

*Note*: The strategies and interventions presented below are based on research at all grade levels. In light of recent research noted previously as to grade level differences in effectiveness of prevention programs,106 the strategies and interventions are likely to be more effective in elementary schools than middle and high schools.

**I. Collect data to determine needs, strategies, and interventions**

I.1. It is strongly recommended that interventions for decreasing bullying are guided by a needs assessment that includes a comprehensive school climate survey, such as the *Delaware School Climate Survey*. The survey should be completed by students, teachers/staff, and parents, while recognizing that all three may not agree. Among the three sources, however, it is *students’* perceptions that matter the most when assessing bullying victimization. This is because teachers/staff and parents fail to observe many acts of bullying, but also because it is students’ perceptions that relate most highly to important outcomes such as school climate, academic achievement, and social/emotional adjustment.

Results of the surveys would help answer the critical question:

* *Are school-wide bullying and individual bullying victimization perceived as occurring infrequently across students, teacher/staff, and parents, and across subgroups within those respondents, including grades (e.g., third versus fifth grade), racial/ethnic groups, and gender?* 
  + Scores indicating infrequent occurrence across all subgroups would indicate little or no need for the interventions that follow or for related staff development.
  + Scores indicating frequent occurrence across multiple subgroups would indicate the need for comprehensive and sustained interventions, including related staff development.
  + Scores indicating frequent occurrence for specific subgroups would indicate the need for more targeted interventions for those subgroups (e.g., African American students in the school, male students in fifth grade)
  + The Delaware School Climate Survey Interpretation Worksheets are designed to help schools determine the above. See http://wordpress.oet.udel.edu/pbs/school-climate/use-of-school-climate-data/

I.2. Be sure to examine not only scale and subscale scores, but also responses to specific survey items, especially student responses to items on the Bullying Victimization Scale and the School-wide Bullying subscale of the DSS. Whereas the former consists of 16 items that assess 4 different types of bullying (verbal, physical, relational, and cyber) experienced by the individual student, the latter consists of 4 items that assess bullying in general and school-wide (e.g., “Bullying is a big problem in this school.”). A score is provided for each type of bullying. Comparing scores between the four types of bullying, as well as responses to the individual items, should help determine the type of bullying that occurs most frequently, and which interventions might be most appropriate.

I.3. If data indicate that bullying victimization is an area of need, other scores on the surveys and additional data, such as office disciplinary referrals, should be examined to help determine *why* respondents view bullying victimization as a problem. For example, low scores for Student-Student Relationships, Clarity of Expectations, and SEL competencies would indicate a need to address those areas in preventing bullying.

I.4. Share results of the survey(s) and other data with focus groups comprised of representatives of subgroups that responded unfavorably to the items. For example, if fifth grade teachers or Hispanic/Latino students responded particularly negatively, consider meeting with those groups to gain insight into their perceptions of bullying victimization, as well as which of the interventions recommended below are likely to be effective.

**II.** **Establish a common school-wide understanding of bullying, and strong school-wide anti-bullying expectations**

II.1. Ensure that your school has a clear understanding of bullying that centers on a legal definition, where applicable, used in one’s district and/or state. The definition should be taught to students, and shared with teachers, staff, and families. This is to ensure that the school community has a common understanding of bullying. Such an understanding should emphasize each of the core aspects of the definition, as presented previously: *intentional harm, repetition, and imbalance of power*.

II.2. Be sure to include cyberbullying and the responsibility of the school in cases of cyberbullying that occur either on or off-campus. Although state laws vary regarding the school’s responsibility, courts tend to rule that although a student’s right to free speech is protected under First Amendment, that right is lost when such speech creates, or is very likely to create “substantial disorder and disruption” at the school or “substantially interferes with requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school.”117

II.3. In discussing the aspects of bullying, teachers and staff should reflect upon their own attitudes toward bullying (and their own behavior) and how they might influence bullying in their school. For example, the attitude that on-going teasing that causes a student to cry is just “boys being boys” or “girls being girls” is likely to foster bullying. Likewise, teachers and staff, as well as students and parents, should recognize what acts, including aggressive acts, are undesirable but at not necessarily bullying (e.g., fighting, teasing that is not hurtful).

II.4. During discussions of bullying, as well as when implementing other recommendations listed below, it is important to emphasize not only the consequences of bullying for those who bully (e.g., suspension), but more importantly the impact of bullying on the victim and school climate (including safety and interpersonal relationships). This is especially important to avoid some students thinking “bullying isn’t a problem unless you get caught.”

**III. Teach students how to respond to bullying, including how to report it.**

III.1. Teach students how they might best respond to bullying when it occurs, while recognizing that there are no methods that always work. This includes teaching them how to respond when they witness or are aware of acts of bullying (including cyberbullying). Despite a lack of empirical research supporting their effectiveness, commonly recommended ways for students to respond to bullying are:118

* + Assert yourself, telling the bully in a calm and clear voice to stop
  + Respond as if the bully is joking.
  + Ignore, and/or walk away (ignoring might be most effective for cyberbullying).
  + Tell a teacher or someone else who might help stop the bullying.
  + To also prevent future occurrences of bullying, avoid the bully and seek support from others, try to stay around adults and friends when the bully is nearby.

III.2. Develop an anonymous process by which students can report all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying. Ensure that teachers, staff, students, and parents are familiar with this process and teach students how to use it.

III.3. Develop school-wide expectations that promote prosocial behavior and that prevent bullying, aggression, and peer rejection. These expectations should be reviewed frequently with students to ensure their understanding and to help integrate these expectations into the culture and social norms of the school.

III.4. Develop clear and consistent consequences for students who bully others. Hold students accountable when these instances occur and ensure that students know what the consequences are. In responding to bullying, however, be sure to respond immediately and focus not only on punitive consequences for the bully, but also the impact of the behavior on the victim (and class) and on teaching and reinforcing replacement behaviors (see Section VI below).

III.5. Communicate and collaborate frequently with students’ families to make them aware of procedures and policies. This would include parent training/meetings and information sent home. When bullying incidents occur, meet separately with the families of the student exhibiting the bullying behavior and of the victim to discuss how future incidents might be avoided, as well the need of counseling, parent management training, and other supports.

III.6. Guided by office disciplinary referrals and reports from students, identify non-classroom areas of the school where bullying is most likely to occur, such as the playground, bus, hallways, and cafeteria, and provide increased supervision in those areas.

III.7. Encourage school staff to seek out victims of bullying so that they receive help. Many victims are ashamed or embarrassed by bullying victimization, so they may not seek out help themselves without ample support from peers or their teachers assuring the class and individuals that it is best to report bullying.8

**IV.** **Implement classroom management strategies for prevention and promotion of positive relationships and behavior.**

Strategies for promoting prosocial behavior and preventing/managing student misbehavior are listed in detail in the Student-Student Relationships module, and some of those strategies are repeated below. Please refer to the Student-Student Relationships module for greater descriptions.

IV.1. Model prosocial behaviors, especially behaviors that convey social support and positive relationships, such as caring and respect.

IV.2. Use praise and rewards wisely and strategically, to teach and reinforce prosocial behaviors, emotions, and cognitions.

IV.3. Ensure that there are clear behavioral and academic expectations, routines, and procedures; fair rules and consequences; and close monitoring and supervision of student behavior.

* + - Apply the above to help prevent cyberbullying. This might include signed contracts that clearly define school rules and consequences of cyberbullying and that govern the use of school computers, cellphones, and other electronic devices in school (and when their use impacts school discipline, as noted in II.2).
    - Highlight prosocial behavior and the absence of bullying in these expectations.

IV.4. Communicate the importance of social acceptance, the consequences of bullying, including its harmful impact on victims, and the role of bystanders in supporting or stopping bullying. This should be communicated throughout the curriculum, in classroom meetings, school-wide activities, morning announcements, pep rallies, media (e.g., newsletter, website), etc. To be effective, especially during adolescence, such communication activities must be viewed by students as credible and engaging, and not consist primarily of repetitive negative messages (e.g., rules and laws about bullying); otherwise they might trigger increased bullying.106-107

IV.5. Observe peer interactions and affiliations during structured and unstructured activities, and especially any bullying behaviors. Discuss them with past and current teachers. Based on such information, take steps, where appropriate, to prevent bullying such as by providing increased supervision.

IV.6. Arrange students’ seating to promote opportunities for positive social interactions and social acceptance, and to avoid bullying.

**V.** **Employ strategies and provide opportunities that build and maintain positive teacher-student relationships**

Strategies for building these relationships are listed in detail in the Teacher-Student Relationships module. Some of these strategies are repeated below. Please refer to the Teacher-Student Relationships module for greater descriptions of these strategies.

V.1. Spend time individually with students. Get to know *every* student individually, including their interests, preferences, talents, skills, families, cultural values, etc.

V.2. Greet students when they come into school every day. Be in the classroom before class starts so students can speak with you.

V.3. Notice when students are having difficulties (academically, socially, or otherwise). Listen to them and show concern.

V.4. Treat students equally and do not indicate “favorites” (or “non-favorites”) in the classroom.

V.5. Communicate your own experiences, thoughts, and feelings to allow your students to get to know you better. Students may identify shared interests with you, which may help them relate to you.

V.6. Have fun and use humor, when appropriate. Play games, tell jokes, and read funny stories.

V.7. Attend sports/extracurricular activities in which your students participate (and let them know you watched them).

V.8. Make every effort to ensure that all teachers/staff model prosocial behavior (including absence of what might be perceived by students as adult bullying behavior), especially respect toward all students, including those who are the most challenging behaviorally and academically.

**VI. Use corrective strategies that focus on the impact of the behavior on others, as well as the consequences to oneself, that emphasize replacement behaviors, and help prevent negative teacher-student relationships.**

The following strategies might help when minor bullying behaviors are observed, such as verbal and relational bullying behavior that do not justify an office disciplinary referral (see section on Tiers 2 and 3 for more serious actions).

VI.1. Where feasible, correct the bullying behavior immediately. Depending on the situation (including grade level), this might best be done privately, publicly, or both. Generally, a public statement should be made against bullying when it occurs. However, care must be taken not to promote peer rejection toward the perpetrator or to increase the risk of future victimization (e.g. the bullying retaliating toward the victim for embarrassing him/her in front of the class).

VI.2. When correction is used, *always* combine it with recognition of positive behaviors.

VI.3. Use inductive discipline, which emphasizes the impact of the student’s behavior on the victim, as well relations with others (e.g., a focus less on punitive consequences and more on empathy and social perspective taking).

VI.4. Communicate that it is the misbehavior that you dislike and find unacceptable – *not* the student. For example, one should state “we don’t tolerate hurting others” instead of “we don’t like bullies.”

VI.5. Communicate that it is a shared responsibility to help improve the misbehavior – shared by you and the student (and in many cases also classmates and family). Although you will help avoid the behavior being repeated, further bullying behaviors will not be tolerated.

VI.6. Communicate that you are optimistic that the bullying behavior will not be repeated and will be replaced by more appropriate behavior when the student faces similar problem situations in the future. Teach/rehearse replacement behaviors, as needed.

**VII**. **Implement a universal evidence-based bullying prevention or social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum shown to reduce bullying.**

It is recommended that lessons about bullying be integrated into the general curriculum, especially lessons on its impact on victims. This might best be done in language arts, social studies, and health. In addition, schools should consider adopting an evidence-based packaged curriculum.

The following recommended packaged programs are available for purchase and/or training and are supported by at least some research showing they reduce bullying victimization in elementary schools. (*Note*: Other popular programs that have been shown to lead to positive outcomes but not reduced bullying victimization are the SWPBIS approach, the Restorative Justice approach, and Bully Proofing Your School).87

* + Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
    - <http://www.violencepreventionworks.org>
    - Comprehensive program for students ages 5-15 that includes lessons and additional components at the school, classroom, individual, and community levels.
    - Programs inspired by this approach had the most positive effects according to one meta-analysis.91 However, it should be noted that most of the Olweus studies have occurred in other countries, and fewer have indicated reductions in bullying and exclusion in the U.S.97-98,119-120
  + Second Step
    - [http://www.cfchildren.org/](http://www.cfchildren.org/XXXXXXXX?.aspx)
    - Designed for preschoolers and students grades K-8. This program aims to teach students social-emotional skills that help prevent aggression and other antisocial behaviors and to promote prosocial behavior, such as managing emotions, resisting peer pressure, coping skills, and respecting others.
    - Studies evaluating this program have found reduced physical aggression, homophobic name-calling, delinquency, and general anti-social behaviors, as well as increased social competence and prosocial behavior.121-129
    - As with other programs, effects tend to be greater with students high in bullying or bullying victimization before the program begins.
  + Second Step: Bullying Prevention Unit
    - http://www.secondstep.org/bullying-prevention
    - Part of the Second Step suite of programs, designed for students grades K-5.
    - Comprehensive program that consists of age-appropriate lessons, activities, and take-home activities for elementary classrooms with the aim of teaching students how to recognize, report, and refuse bullying.
    - Consists of staff training to help staff develop ways to effectively identify and deal with bullying throughout the school. Training includes teaching staff how to work with all students involved in bullying, including bystanders.
    - Materials for families are also available to extend lessons beyond the classroom.
    - The impact of the program on bullying and peer victimization is currently being assessed via a randomized controlled trial in 108 classrooms.
  + KiVa Bullying Prevention Program
    - <http://www.kivaprogram.net/program>
    - Comprehensive program for students ages 6-12 that includes training materials and lessons, videos, online games, and a parents’ guide.
    - Places a greater focus than other programs on supports/interventions for the victims and bullies, including a KiVa team intervening with students involved and encouraging prosocial peers of the victim to provide support to the victim.
    - This program is supported by multiple studies showing reduced bullying, victimization, and cybervictimization, although primarily in Finland.74,93-96, 132-133 However, the program is now being implemented in other countries130-131 and throughout the U.S., including in Delaware (school in the Red Clay School District).

**Strategies and Interventions for Students at Tier 2 and 3**

The following strategies and interventions are for students who are at greatest risk for being bullied and for bullying others. This may include students who have high levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors, low social competence, difficulty making and keeping friends, and low social support.

**I. Apply the strategies and interventions listed above, as appropriate, at the universal level and for all students.** However, for improving peer relations and reducing bullying at Tiers 2 and 3, those interventions should be:

* Of greater frequency and intensity. For example, praise, monitoring, and supervision should be more frequent, and efforts to provide opportunities for peer interactions should be more deliberate and closely supervised.
* More comprehensive, including multiple components. This would include not only targeting multiple areas, such as the development of a range of social, emotional, and cognitive skills, but also their delivery across multiple settings and providers other than the school, especially the home.
* More individualized and guided by a more thorough assessment of the student’s needs, especially individual and environmental factors that might help explain and contribute to bullying and bullying victimization. For example, where appropriate, an individual assessment might be conducted by a school psychologist and others to identify:
  + Specific social skills deficits. Identifying those deficits would help determine the social skills to be targeted, such as managing emotions, social perspective taking, communication skills, and prosocial skills.
  + Individual strengths that might be used to help foster peer acceptance and reduce bullying or bullying victimization.
  + Social networks in the student’s classrooms and in the school, such as determining which peers are bullying, rejecting, or otherwise communicating non-acceptance, which peers are potential close friends for a student lacking a friend, etc.
  + If classroom management practices need improvement.
  + Systems of social support and resources, including those in school, home, and the community, that might be needed and useful in fostering positive student relations. Strategies and interventions would be individualized and aligned with the assessment results.

**II. Provide social skills/SEL training (in addition to that provided in the regular classroom) that targets specific prosocial skills and antisocial behaviors related to social acceptance, friendships, and bullying victimization that are linked to results of an individual assessment of needs.** Such additional training might be provided in small groups or individually by the school psychologist or school counselor.

* This might be done using lessons from a universal (i.e., Tier 1) bullying prevention or SEL curriculum, such as Steps to Respect or Second Step that are taught not only when lessons are taught to the entire class, but also to selected individuals before (pre-teaching) or afterwards (booster sessions).
* It also might be done using evidence-based curriculum lessons that are designed more specifically for use at Tiers 2 and 3 instead of Tier 1, such as Incredible Years (preschool-grade 2; see incredibleyears.com), Coping Power (grades 4-6; see Copingpower.com), PEERS (middle and high school; see semel.ucla.edu/peers). Each of these programs includes training for targeted students *and* their parents.

*Important Note: Care must be taken, especially for Tier 2 interventions, in grouping students together, who share similar antisocial behaviors such as bullying, as this may result in “deviancy training” with peers modeling and reinforcing antisocial behavior.*104-105

**III.** **Help ensure that targeted students (particularly victims of bullying) have a close, supportive relationship with at least one other student in the school.** This close friendship may protect the student from further instances of bullying and help alleviate negative outcomes associated with being bullied.

**IV.** **Individual counseling may be appropriate for students experiencing bullying victimization.** This may help the student learn and practice coping strategies andeffective ways to respond to this victimization.

**V.** **Work closely with students’ parents to target social-emotional skills at home.**

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