

Anti-Bullying Programs and Their Effectiveness In Schools and Components of an
Effective Program
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ADP 673: Research Evaluation

I am examining the topic of the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs in public schools and what components of the programs make it successful. Through everything in the news media regarding how bullying affects students in and out of school, I wanted to see how effective are the programs that schools have developed and implemented so far. By seeing how effective certain programs are, I also wanted to examine what about these specific programs make it so successful. Do all successful programs contain certain components? What constitutes a successful program? All of this is relevant in schools today as they struggle to provide a program to combat bullying so students feel safe and secure in school.

Keywords: bully, bullying, bullying+in+schools, bullying+programs, anti+bullying+programs

Some of the key questions to be answered in this research project are:

1. What constitutes a successful anti-bullying program?
2. Do all successful anti-bullying programs contain certain components- or the same components?
3. How effective are the programs in place in school districts now?
4. What changes are necessary to implement into the current programs to make them successful and effective?

Bauer, N., Lozano, P., & Rivara, F. (2007). The effectiveness of the Olweus bullying prevention program in public middle schools: A controlled trial. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 40*(3), 266-274.

This article discusses the effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in middle schools. As a direct result of the program, there was no decrease in the actual bullying behavior, however students felt more compassionate toward victims and want to be able to help them. Students also perceived themselves as intervening when there was a problem.

Rating: 2. While this article evaluates one of the most highly regarded anti-bullying programs, there is no mention as to what components may have been most effective in it.

Beck, A. (2013). An econometric analysis of anti-bullying program factors on bullying in public American middle schools and high schools. *Undergraduate Economic Review, 9*(1), 1-13.

This article looks at data available from 2008 to examine what factors appear to be most effective in an anti-bullying program in schools. Two major effective components are the volume of parent volunteers in the building and the school not suspending the students for all bullying offenses. It is clear that the school must find ways to properly utilize and mobilize parents and find ways to discipline the students for the bullying offense without using suspension. The data in the article also shows that if the school puts a greater emphasis on the academic work, the incidents of bullying appear to decrease.

Rating: 4. This article analyzes the data that is essential to the research questions presented and states clearly what effective components have been proven to work.

Goodwin, B. (2011, 9). Research Says.../Bullying is Common-and Subtle. *Educational Leadership, 69*, 82-83.

Educators only see approximately 4 percent of the actual bullying in their schools, making it seem like a small problem when it is really a larger problem. In a recent survey, 50 percent of high school students admitted to bullying someone in the past school year and 47 percent admitted to being bullied during the same time span. That leaves 3 percent of students not involved in bullying. Less than 30 percent of the bullying was a physical type, leaving many psychological incidents, which is more devastating to a child. Effective programs for anti-bullying use the whole community and not just the school. They also allow for more supervision and providing harsh punishments for bullying. Successful programs also work to change the entire culture of the school through effective communication to make bullying "socially unacceptable."

Rating: 4. The data presented in this article is very important to understanding bullying and what causes it. This information is essential to designing an effective anti-bullying program.

Hahn Fox, B., Farrington, D., & Ttofi, M. (2012). Successful bullying prevention programs: Influence of research design, implementation features, and program components. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 6(2), 274-282.

In this research article, the researchers determined the most effective components of an anti-bullying program to be “firm disciplinary methods and improved playground supervision (Hahn Fox, Farrington & Ttofi, 2012).” It was also found that there is more likely to be a positive outcome when parents and the community are involved in the program. Training of parents can significantly reduce the bullying behavior and help make the program a success. Effectiveness for most programs is reducing the behaviors by between 17-23 percent (Hahn Fox, Farrington, and Ttofi, 2012). It was also found that programs that are more intense and have a long duration are more effective. Using peer mediation is not an effective strategy in a program.

Rating: 4. This article contained all of the important information regarding what components make a program effective.

Hirsch, L., & Santorelli, D. (2012). *Bully: An action plan for teachers, parents, and communities to combat the bullying crisis*. New York, NY: Weinstein Books.

This book is a companion book to movie of the same title. It introduces several children who have had to deal with the bullying crisis firsthand in their schools and how they have learned to deal with it. It also has valuable resource chapters for teachers on how to handle situations in bullying in the classroom and other areas. It also revisits the staggering statistic of 13 million children facing the bullying problem in America today.

Rating: 2. This book provides great resource material for any school employee implementing a program, but is not research based in its strategies.

Karna, A., Voeten, M., Little, T., Alanen, E., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2013). Effectiveness of the kiva antibullying program. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(2), 535-551.

The KiVa anti-bullying program, from Finland, means “Against Bullying.” It works to teach the social behaviors required to prevent bullying and make bullying a behavior that is no longer socially acceptable. The program consists of 10 double period length lessons given throughout the school year, including discussions, role playing, group work, and videos. To review cases of bullying, first the school decides whether it is actually a case of bullying or not. Next, the victim is interviewed. Next, the bullies are interviewed separately, but at the same time to avoid agreeing on a same story. Next, all the bullies are interviewed together to discuss differences in their stories and finally, the victim is interviewed again at a later date to confirm the behavior has stopped. Overall, the study found that bullying incidents have reduced using this anti-bullying program.

Rating: 3. The material was extremely helpful in seeing the components of the program and discussion of the results of the program. It would have been more helpful to see the results for grades 4-6 in the same document to make a determination about the effectiveness for all elementary grades.

Limber, S. (2011). Development, evaluation, and future directions of the Olweus bullying prevention program. *Journal of School Violence*, 10(1), 71-87.

This article addresses the future direction for studies concerned with the Olweus bullying program. While it is the most common program, the effective components of the program have not been studied in depth and future studies should be conducted in the United States to determine the effective components. However, schools with programs have reported a downturn in the bullying behavior.

Rating: 1. This article did little more than report that further studies need to be conducted to determine any type of effectiveness.

Minton, S., O'Mahoney, M., & Conway-Walsh, R. (2013). A 'whole school/community development' approach to preventing and countering bullying: the erris anti-bullying initiative. *Irish Educational Studies*, 32(2), 233-249.

In this study conducted in Ireland, students were administered the Olweus anti-bullying program questionnaire before the program to measure bullying incidents and their intensity. They were also administered the assessments after to measure any differences as a result of the program. This program utilized the community and school for an approach to immerse the child wholly. The results did show a decrease in the amount of bullying by the end of the program, demonstrating some effectiveness in the program.

Rating: 2. There was not a lot of description as far as the effective elements of the program so that it could be copied into other programs.

Olweus, D., & Services, H. P. A. E. (2008). *Olweus bullying prevention program, teacher guide*. New York, NY: Hazelden Publishing Services.

In this teacher's guide, lessons are presented for the teacher to guide their students through. The manual contains different scenarios and talking points for the class to facilitate discussion. This teachers guide contains all of the necessary work to conduct the program. It also includes a DVD that contains three scenarios for students to view, discuss, and role play.

Rating: 2. While this book contains all of the important lessons, it is biased toward a particular program so it is difficult to evaluate it's true effectiveness.

Olweus bullying prevention program evidence of effectiveness. (2013, 01 28). Retrieved from <http://www.clemson.edu/olweus/evidence.html>

The webpage for the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has compiled statistics to bolster it's effectiveness in schools. As part of it's statistics, they advertise they increase reporting of bullying behavior by up to 50% and reduce victimization of students by up to 42% for trials held internationally. For trials held in the United States, it only states that there has been "significant decreases" in reporting of bullying incidents.

Rating: 2. The page gives basic statistics, but no firm numbers for programs in the United States and makes no mention of the effective components of the program.

Padgett, S., & Notar, C. (2013). Anti-bullying programs for middle/high school students. *National Social Science Journal*, 40(2), 88-93.

This article discusses several different programs that can be used in the middle school or high school for anti-bullying. First, it discusses the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, which it calls the most famous of them all. Some of the advantages of the Olweus program are that it truly does involve all members of the school community, staff and parents, and that it is a school-wide program. Another program is Zero Tolerance, which is basically just punishing a student for conducting the bullying behavior. There is no program to support it and students learn nothing about the bullying behavior. Positive Behavior Supports has been a more effective way to solve the Zero Tolerance issue by using behavior contracts and less punitive actions such as Saturday school detention. Stop Bullying Now! is a national led program using

social media and advertising and utilizes an “interagency approach.” There is no individual school supports, however. Youth Voice uses a discussion format among middle and high school students to talk about the problem. Getting Beyond Bullying and Exclusion PreK-5 is a resource material teachers can use to see bullying styles between boys and girls and methods to manage the situations, but there is no supported curriculum. Steps to Respect is a bullying prevention program that teaches students about how harmful it is to talk about someone behind their back and start rumors and also how harmful it is to exclude students. It is a bullying prevention program. Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies is also a program that teaches about feelings and managing them.

Rating: 3. This article has listed many different programs that can be individually researched for their validity and effectiveness.

Perron, T. (2013, 2). Peer victimisation: Strategies to decrease bullying in schools. *British Journal of School Nursing*, 8, 25-29.

This journal article focuses on how school nurses can act in a bullying situation and what roles and responsibilities they have. However, it also discusses some very pertinent information when it comes to anti-bullying programs and components of a successful program. First, strong communication between parents and school staff is a critical component. It is also proven to have a whole school program, rather than classroom specific programs. The school also must have strong disciplinary actions against the bully. Increased supervision on the playground is also proven to reduce bullying incidents.

Rating: 3. The information in this article is important because it has some of the components that can be developed into an effective anti-bullying program, including roles and responsibilities of non-instructional staff.

Phoenix, J. (2012, 08 28). Our children face a bullying epidemic. *USAToday.com*, Retrieved from <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/story/2012-08-28/joaquin-phoenix-bullying-epidemic/57379318/1>

This article from USA Today discusses the statistics of bullying incidents in the United States. It also discusses that to combat the bullying problem in the United States, a two pronged approach should be used including prevention and intervention. It also discusses how putting more money into the education of faculty and staff in the schools will eventually deliver better anti-bullying programs.

Rating: 2. While this article did contain statistics that are very important for usage in designing an anti-bullying program, it does not include any of the effective components of a program.

Raynor, S., & Wylie, A. (2012). Presentation and management of school bullying and the impact of anti-bullying strategies for pupils: A self-report survey in london schools. *In Public Health*, 126(9), 782-789.

In this article, the authors conducted a study between two schools in London at opposite ends of the socioeconomic ladder. Each school was selected to participate based on it's student population and affluence level, purposely selecting opposite ends to identify commonalities and factors. Students were surveyed by an online questionnaire to keep themselves anonymous. Some of the interesting findings were that if students knew or realized the school would take action against incidents of bullying, the students were less likely to engage in the behavior. Students in areas of higher "deprivation" were less involved in bullying incidents than students in areas of less "deprivation." Actions that students reported were most effective and used were hitting back and calling names back to the bully. Successful components of a program include making consequences clear for students.

Rating: 3. This article clearly questioned students on effective management techniques that they perceive as effective in managing the bullying culture.

Roberts, E. (2011). Teachers perceptions of anti-bullying interventions and the types of bullying each intervention prevents. *Annual Review of Education, Communication & Language Sciences*, 8, 75-94.

This was a research study done using questionnaires to teachers regarding perceptions and attitudes towards bullying in their school. This study set out to see if teachers or non-teaching staff were more effective in preventing the actual bullying. As a result of the study, teachers indicated that they felt that interventions performed by non-teaching staff were more helpful in preventing bullying. It also found that student led interventions were least effective. Some of the non-teaching staff positions included counselors and outside agencies.

Rating: 2. This has some good information regarding what staff members are most effective in preventing the bullying behaviors, but would have been more helpful to have information regarding support staff in specific programs.

Rodkin, P. (2011, 9). White House Report/ Bullying- And the Power of Peers. *Educational Leadership*, 69, 10-16.

In this article, the author examines a report prepared for the White House Conference on Bullying Prevention on March 10, 2011. It examines how peers play a

huge role in allowing the bullying to actually occur and enable him to continue. Bullies base their power on who they target, the reactions of their classmates who can see the bullying, and the characteristics of the actual bully. It also looks at how students who are bullied and have a friend who is not can deal with the problem better and don't take it as personally. The study also finds that students are less likely to be bullied in a classroom structure that is democratic rather than a traditional authoritarian structure. Most interestingly, using peers as mediators ended up causing more harm than good. When students intervene in the actual bullying, there appeared to be an actual increase in the bullying. As long as the "popular" kids continue to engage in the bullying process, it will continue. Educators must "recognize, understand, and help guide children's relationships."

Rating: 3. This article has some important information regarding the actual bullying behavior, which is important to understand in order to begin to develop an effective program to combat it.

Seaman, M. (2012). Beyond anti-bullying programs: Learn how to foster empathy within your curriculum to increase the emotional intelligence of middle schoolers. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review*, 78(1), 24-28.

In this article, the author approaches the anti-bullying program curriculum as being integrated into different lessons already being taught, rather than a stand alone program. He gives the example of using the Holocaust to teach intolerance of individuals and the results. The article discusses how these lessons can be integrated into almost any subject area and easily taught. He also talks of how it is important to stress that bystanders must act and to teach students how to be compassionate in order to combat and undermine the bullying problem.

Rating: 2. This article gives a completely different approach to studying the anti-bullying program movement and would reduce costs to districts, as there is no program to implement. It simply involves looking for deeper meaning in the lesson plans already developed.

Skolnik, D. (2013, 3). Bullying backlash. *Parenting School Years*, 27(2), 76-79.

This magazine article addresses the situation of kids being labeled a bully for conducting one incident. Therefore, it goes into detail regarding the definition of a bully, which is essential to know before developing and implementing an anti-bullying program. Next, the author details the components of how parents can combat the bullying program, which can be an extension of an effective anti-bullying program. First, parents should keep an eye on their child's friends and homework. Second, parents should keep their child's health and hygiene a priority. Next, they should help their child

find sports and activities that they enjoy and praise them for doing them doing to build self-esteem. Parents should also be heavily involved in the process for selecting and developing an anti-bullying program for the school. This keeps them involved at home also. Parents should also lobby for character education over traditional anti-bullying instruction, as it can help kids think more about other kids and their qualities. Finally, parents should not be afraid to speak out against an anti-bullying program that does not seem to be doing its job.

Rating: 2. While this article does give information about how to keep parents actively involved at home, which would be an extension into the community, it does not directly relate to what is effective in a school-wide program.

Welcome to antibullying programs. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://antibullyingprograms.org>

This webpage discusses some of the key effective components of an anti-bullying program, which include collaboration between the parents, educators, and community members. The strong connections help foster the anti-bullying sentiment. It is also important to include students in the process so they feel empowered through the process.

Rating: 4. This webpage addresses the major research question of effective program components.

Before beginning to address the effectiveness of an anti-bullying program in schools, the data of bullying in schools has to be considered. “Educators only see 4 percent of bullying (Goodwin, 2011).” Also, in a survey conducted among high school students, “50 percent admitted to bullying somebody in the past year (Goodwin, 2011).” And, “47 percent admitted to being bullied in the same time span (Goodwin, 2011).” That only leaves 3 percent of students not admitting to being involved in the bullying process. Almost half of high school students responded that they were bullied. Statistics were not readily available for elementary school programs, as studies in schools in the United States are few and far between. With statistics like these, it has actually become an “epidemic.” According to an article in USA Today, “It is estimated that 13 million American children are teased, taunted and physically assaulted by their peers, making bullying the most common form of violence our nation's youth experience in 2012. Every day, about 160,000 of American children miss school because of fear of physical and psychological attacks on the basis of their skin color, ethnicity, physical or mental abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity or religion (Phoenix, 2012).” With an epidemic like this in the country, it is only natural that a cure went into development. Many different organizations began to develop materials to combat bullying in schools, leading to schools adopting different curriculums with varying levels of success. That then leads someone to ask the question: Which program is most effective?

When addressing the effectiveness of an anti-bullying program, one of the main points has to become what defines effectiveness? There is a definite trend when searching for what effectiveness is. One point of defining an effective program is demonstrating that the program has reduced bullying as a result. In all of the research articles that explore the effectiveness of the anti-bullying programs, no parameters were actually set up to define the effectiveness. This may be something that needs to be looked at in further studies.

Another major point has to look at how bullying is conducted. According to Mr. Goodwin, “educators only see approximately 4% of bullying” (Goodwin, 2011). That leaves 96% of actual bullying not seen by an adult. This statistic is staggering. He also goes on to say that “less than

30% of bullying is physical in nature” (Goodwin, 2011). So much of the bullying being conducted in schools is largely unseen by adults and is psychological in nature. This type of bullying is very difficult to manage. Bullying is found to occur less in highly structured situations, such as a classroom with a very high structure and management level (Rodkin, 2011). This is most likely due to the fact that the teacher is constantly supervising students and the students are so involved in their work, there is no time for the bullying behavior to occur. Locations such as a cafeteria or playground do not have as much structure and supervision, leading to students having the opportunity to conduct bullying on each other.

A successful anti-bullying program seems to contain very few actual components. The first is increased supervision in high risk areas, such as a playground. Many different sources indicate that this increased supervision can result in less incidents of bullying. The second key component is to include the community in the process of creating and implementing the program. Family members want to have a voice in the program. So do students. This gives them a voice and allows them to develop ownership. The third component includes providing harsh sanctions against the bully for the bullying actions (Goodwin, 2011). These findings were affirmed by Ms. Perron in an article regarding school nurses and combating bullying. These universal components give the best results when implemented into an anti-bullying program. As a matter of components of an anti-bullying curriculum, it is interesting to note the results found by Mr. Seaman. His approach is that the traditional anti-bullying curriculum approach should be scrapped to allow teachers to teach character development included in their normal lesson plans. He uses an example of teaching about the Holocaust to a junior high/high school social studies class. This could lead into a discussion about how intolerance of a person lead to mass extermination and worldwide hatred. The discussion could also include ways that it could have been better handled (Seaman, 2012). One of the great points about this approach is that it could be implemented for all grade levels.

It is also interesting to note one other finding. In multiple surveys conducted, it appears using peer mediators only strengthens the bullying problem instead of eliminating it (Rodkin, 2011). This is not the finding one would think would be the result when thinking of using a peer mediation

system. When surveyed, teachers also felt that peer mediation in their schools was the least effective part of an anti-bullying program (Roberts, 2011). This component is universally considered not an effective piece of the anti-bullying program.

There are so many different anti-bullying programs out there, it is difficult to start when looking for a program. Many different organizations offer some type of anti-bullying program, lesson plans, curriculum, or support structure. The different programs out there have a wide range of inclusion of some or all of these components.

The most popular and famous program is that of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP). This program gives support to teachers through classroom lesson guides and support videos and role-plays for students so that they can have an opportunity to practice what is learned. The program provides supports also for the community including meetings and suggestions for curriculum development. As part of the Olweus webpage, they offer the statistic that reporting of bullying in schools with their programs increased by 42% (Olweus, 2013). However, it does not include the statistic of bullying in the United States. This would be an interesting study to conduct, as there is no official research conducted on Olweus programs in the United States (Limber, 2011). Mr. Bauer conducted a survey among American middle school students to measure the effectiveness of the OBPP. According to the results, there was no decrease in the amount of bullying after the program had concluded (Bauer, 2007). However, as a result of the program, students felt more compassion for a student being bullied and perceived themselves as more likely to intervene (Bauer, 2007). This increased awareness of the bullying problem may eventually lead students to some form of action against the bullying behaviors. In Ireland, high school students were administered a survey regarding the number of bullying incidents and their intensity before and after the Olweus program in the school. By comparing the answers on the surveys, the number and intensity of bullying incidents had reduced after the conclusion of the program (Minton, 2013).

In Sweden, the KiVa program has had some reported success. In addition to using classroom lessons, they use a school-wide support. First, the bullying incident is reported. Next, the victim is interviewed by an anti-

bullying team at the school to determine whether it was an actual case of bullying. If it is found to be a bullying case, the bullies are interviewed individually, but at the same time to avoid them conferring with each other to make sure they have their stories straight. Next, the bullies are interviewed together to compare the stories for inconsistencies. Finally, the victim is interviewed at a later date to ensure the bullying incident has stopped. Using this approach, the KiVa program has reported success in reducing the amount of bullying incidents in the school (Karna, 2013). However, this program has not been piloted in the United States, so no data can be used for American schools.

In conclusion, much research still needs to be conducted on anti-bullying programs in the United States. In European countries, the research conducted over surveys and studies demonstrate an overall positive effect on students. It's interesting that so many studies have been conducted overseas, but the United States has not truly studies the effects of the anti-bullying programs in the schools. While many statistics are presented, this data could be easily translated into studies regarding the effectiveness of a program. However, it is evident through the several studies conducted on the programs that there are effective pieces of an anti-bullying program. The most effective pieces are providing enough supervision in high risk locations and including the community and members of the school in developing and implementing the anti-bullying program. Multiple studies and articles have confirmed that these two components are the most essential to the success of the program. While much work still must be done to combat the bullying epidemic, important work as already been performed to make sure that a cure will eventually be developed.