



## School Climate Improvement and Breaking the Bully-Victim-Bystander Cycle: I. Research Support; and II. Summary of *What works?*

### I. Bully prevention research reports that provide the foundation for NSCC's Bully Prevention/Pro-Upstander Efforts:

Catalano, R. F., Haggerty, K. P., Oesterle, S., Fleming, C. B., & Hawkins, J. D. (2004). The importance of bonding to school for healthy development: Findings from the Social Development Research Group. *Journal of School Health*, 74, 252-261.

Cohen, J., Pickeral, T., & McCloskey, M. (2008). The Challenge of Assessing School Climate. [Online article]. *Educational Leadership*, 66 (4). (Available on: [www.ascd.org/publications/educational\\_leadership/dec08/vol66/num04/toc.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/dec08/vol66/num04/toc.aspx))

Davis, S. (2007). *Empowering bystanders in bully prevention*. Research Press

Espelage, D.L. & Swearer, S.M. (eds) (2008). *Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention*. Taylor & Francis.

Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2010). *School-based programs to reduce bullying and victimization*. Submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice for publication. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/229377.pdf> (PDF, 144 Pages)

National School Climate Council (2007). *The School Climate Challenge: Narrowing the gap between school climate research and school climate policy, practice guidelines and teacher education policy*. On: [www.schoolclimate.org/climate/policy.php/](http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/policy.php/)

Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.

Özdemir, M. & Stattin, H. (2011). Bullies, victims, and bully-victims: a longitudinal examination of the effects of bullying-victimization experiences on youth well-being. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol 3, 2, pg. 97-102

Pollack, W.S., Modzeleski, W. & Rooney, G. (2008). *Prior Knowledge of Potential School-Based Violence: Information students learn may prevent a targeted attack*. United States Secret Service and United States Department Of Education.

Slaby, R.G., Wilson-Brewer, R., & Dash, K. (1994). *Aggressors, victims, and bystanders: Thinking and acting to prevent violence*. (A violence prevention curriculum for grades 6 - 9). Newton, MA: Education Development Center.

Swearer, S.M., Espelage, D.L., & Napolitano, S.A. (2009). *Bullying prevention and intervention: Realistic strategies for schools*. Guilford Press

Swearer, S., Espelage, D. L., Vaillancourt, T., & Hymel, S. (2010). What can be done about school bullying? Linking research to educational practice. *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 38-47.

Twemlow, S.W. & Sacco, F.C. (2011) *Preventing bullying and school violence*. American Psychiatric Association

Twemlow, S.W. & Sacco, F.C. (2008) *Why school anti-bullying programs don't work*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

US Department of Health & Human Services in partnership with the US Department of Education and Department of Justice (2011). *Stopbullying.gov*

## II. What works and what does not work?

WORKS	DOESN'T WORK
<b>Overall Approach</b>	
<p><u>Policy</u>: Educational policy that promotes positive school climate or the norms, expectations, beliefs, teaching/learning and leadership practices that support safe, supportive, engaging, helpfully challenging school communities for students to learn and develop in healthy ways.</p> <p>This importantly includes meaningful guidelines that support educators, parents and mental health professionals recognizing students who chronically ‘fall into’ the role of bully and/or victim’ and address barriers to learning.</p> <p>National School Climate Standards:  <a href="http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/standards.php">www.schoolclimate.org/climate/standards.php</a></p>	<p>Educational policy that focuses on (i) identifying students who are bullies and (ii) punishing them.</p> <p>Consequences that are enforced as punishment exclusive of behavior modification strategies, programs, counseling, and/or parent/family involvement is assessing and promoting acceptable respectable behavior with peers, teachers and support personnel.</p>
<p><u>Mobilizing the “whole village”</u> - students, parents and school personnel understanding the schools strength and needs from a social, emotional and civic as well as intellectual/academic perspective and then using this data to develop instructional and systemic efforts that will – truly – make schools safer, more supportive, engaging, helpfully challenging (and as much as possible) fun: school climate reform.</p> <p>Redefining the role of guidance and other support staff to include providing strategies for teachers and others changing the behavior of students who exhibit bullying behavior.</p>	<p>Individual Counseling (in the absence of systemic interventions) and Mediation</p>

Redefining the role of some staff to include providing strategies for “upstander” behavior that include considerations of the safety of students who intervene on the behalf of other students.	
Whole School or Universal Social Skills Training	Assertiveness training for victims of bullying
Infusing bully-victim-witness learning objectives & activities into existing curriculum, morning meetings and advisories	Curriculum restricted to single subject or class
Consciousness raising about bully-victim-witness behavior	Exclusive focus on rules
Focus on human rights	Rights of passage orientation
Modeling supportive relationships: on the importance of being helpful “living examples”	Modeling intimidation or humiliation
Focus on role of witness as well as bullies and victims	Exclusive focus on bullies or victims
Educator-parent-mental health professional partnerships that support the (i) identification of students who chronically ‘fall into’ the role of bully and/or victim and (ii) addressing the needs of the student who do so.	
<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>	
Ongoing Efforts, Active Task Force or Coordinating Committee	Time-limited activities or one-time special events
Advocacy with School Board	Exclusive Focus on Teachers or Principal
Training which includes an ongoing commitment to pay attention to adult as well as student bullying	Assumption of Knowledge
Coordination with Parents	Parents as Passive Partners
Active Role for Students	Passive Role for Students
<b>Best Practices</b>	
School leaders support the development of a <b>‘shared vision’ about ‘what kind of school do we want and need ours to be?’</b>	One person or a small group of educators focus on bully prevention
Clear, committed, long term <b>leadership</b> from the Principal driven.	Short term, fragmented bully prevention efforts which may or many not be strongly and deeply supported by the Principal and/or all staff.
<b>School-wide</b> interventions that support safer, more supportive, engaging and helpfully challenging norms, expectations, beliefs, learning/teaching and leadership that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constructive sanctions, positive behavioral supports;</li> <li>• Dissemination of simple rules and rights</li> <li>• Graduated sanctions</li> <li>• Consistently enforced &amp; fair rules</li> <li>• Safe ways to report bullying as well as recognizing upstander behavior with focus on helping to make the school safer for all</li> <li>• Focus on all forms of bullying, including most prevalent types</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of systemic thinking and interventions</li> <li>• Shaming bullies</li> <li>• Complicated policies</li> <li>• Zero tolerance policies</li> <li>• Selective enforcement of rules and unreasonable rules</li> <li>• Unclear messages about reporting, associating reporting with snitching</li> <li>• Exclusive focus on physical/verbal bullying</li> </ul>
<b>Peer support networks</b>	Stigmatizing victims via specialized efforts
<b>Small group</b> (classroom; Advisory) interventions that promote awareness and skill building that supports upstander behavior, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students about bullying, rules, and the role of the witness: bystander or upstander</li> </ul>	Lectures or Preaching  Removing victim from familiar classroom setting with friends to a new setting without consideration of removing and/or changing bullying behavior.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social, emotional and civic learning: for students and the adults!</li> <li>• Creating a climate for learning</li> <li>• Providing opportunities for students to develop upstander skills and dispositions (role plays, excises, student led activities)</li> <li>• Infusing bully-victim-witness themes into the curriculum and life of the classroom</li> </ul> <p>Morning and afternoon meetings that promote relationships among students build confidence and explore concepts, ideas and thoughts about safety and caring.</p>	<p>Punishing victim for defensive behavior when being bullied. (No tolerance policy)</p>
<p><b>School-home-community partnerships</b> that are meaningful, engaged and reflect ongoing learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three essential questions that provide the foundation for school climate standards:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Our vision: what kind of school do we want?</li> <li>2) Policies/rules to support the vision</li> <li>3) Practices that actualize our vision and policies</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p>School-home-community partnerships that are not meaningful, engaging and reflective of ongoing learning</p> <p>Partnerships that are isolated and not necessarily connected to the vision, policies and implementation of vision and policies. (disjointed)</p>
<p><b>Focus on strengths</b></p>	<p>Focus on deficits</p>
<p><b>Individual considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing and addressing students who chronically ‘fall into’ the role of bully and/or victim</li> <li>• On the importance of parent-educator-mental health partnerships</li> <li>• On-the-spot interventions and follow-up</li> </ul> <p>Paring the victim with a caring adult in the building.</p>	<p>School-based mental health professionals that tend to react to problems and only focus on diagnosis and treatment of problems.</p> <p>Interventions may be postponed until the next day or even later.</p>
<p><b>Measurement and Assessment</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>An initial and comprehensive assessment:</u> School climate surveys that assess how students, parents and school personnel perceive the range of safety-related, relationship-related, teaching/learning related and environmental factors that define the quality and character of school life;</li> <li><u>Follow up assessments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Student led participatory action research</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Narrow focus on rates of physical violence</p> <p>Assumptions about what works</p>

(This grid builds on Dr. Michael B. Greene, Principal, Greene Consulting 2010 “Bullying Prevention: What Works, What Doesn’t Work”. I am grateful to Dr. Greene for this work. I am grateful to Joan Dawson, Ph.D. for her contributions to this work.)

**Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D.**

- President, National School Climate Center: Educating Minds and Hearts.....Because the Three Rs are Not Enough
- Adjunct Professor in Psychology and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University
- Adjunct Professor in Education, School of Professional Studies, City University of New York