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ABSTRACT

Information regarding school-based programs designed to promote safety and civility as well as reduce violence and disrespect toward school personnel and fellow students is provided in this document. It describes primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions. Primary interventions are defined as universally administered to all students and are designed to protect children from the risk of developing antisocial behavior. School-wide programs that teach conflict management and anger fall into this category. Some of the primary intervention programs discussed here include: "Alternatives to Gang Membership," "Child Development Project," "Collaborative Student Mediation Project," "Law-Related Education," "Peace Education Foundation," "PeaceBuilders," "Peer Mediation in Schools Program," "Project S.T.O.P.(Schools Teaching Options for Peace)," "Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)," "Resolving Conflict Creatively Program," and "Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP): The Richmond Youth Against Violence Project." Programs that are designed for secondary intervention--strategies that target individual students known to be at risk for antisocial behavior--are also described and include: "Conflict Resolution Project," "First Steps," "Positive Adolescents Choices Training (PACT) Program," and "Self Enhancement, Inc." Some programs that combine primary and secondary interventions include "FAST Track," and "Metropolitan Area Child Study." Other types of school-based programs, such as "Educators for Social Responsibility" and "Preparing Instructional Teams to Teach Effective Citizenship Education," are also detailed. Tips for developing and implementing schoolwide programs, along with lists of considerations to be examined by policy makers, are provided. Contact information for each program is given. (MKA)

Policy Briefs

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School-Based Programs to Promote Safety and Civility

In a decent society that wishes to survive as a self-sustaining democracy, there must be a high degree of civility, because that mirrors the respect that we have not only for our constitutional order but for our fellow citizens.[1]

The democratic process depends on the practice of civility to negotiate differences among individuals and groups. However, disputes and insults increasingly trigger violent responses, especially among the young. Adolescent homicide rates have "more than doubled since 1988": 20 percent of suburban students in one survey endorse "shooting someone 'who has stolen something from you,' while eight percent believe it is acceptable to shoot a person 'who has done something to offend or insult you'"(p. 14).[2] Homicide is now the leading cause of death for African American and Hispanic young adults and the second leading cause of death for all 15- to 24-year-olds.[3]

The violence that plagues society at large is spilling over into schools. Approximately 3,000,000 crimes occur annually in the nation's 85,000 public schools.[4] Although most schools are safe, parents, educators, and students increasingly view school safety and order as major concerns. They complain that students lack civility and respect for teachers and classmates.[4,5]

Although the causes of violence are complex and varied, our youth clearly need to learn a basic prerequisite for civilized behavior—how to settle differences nonviolently. Their survival—and the survival of a democracy such as ours—depends on it.

In response, schools across the country are beginning to implement curricula and programs[6,7] to teach students how to behave respectfully and responsibly as members of a democratic society, who "express their concerns peacefully and seek resolutions to problems that take into account common interests and recognize the human dignity of all involved" (p. 1).[8] Many of these programs appear promising—based on program design, anecdote, or pilot or preliminary studies—but a lack of scientific evidence proving their effectiveness has left school personnel wondering what programs really work.[7,9,10,11,12]

To better inform schools and communities, the U. S. Departments of Justice and Education, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the General Accounting Office (GAO), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have funded studies of school-based interventions over the past few years. Data from these and other rigorous studies are providing evidence that training students to manage their emotions, to respect others' viewpoints, and to settle their differences peacefully can help reduce school problems of violence and disrespect.[9,8,13,14,15,16,11,16]

School-based programs to help students manage interpersonal conflict range from simple classroom curricula to comprehensive, schoolwide programs. Most teach a process that helps students "change from being adversaries in a face-to-face confrontation to being partners in a side-by-side search for a fair agreement that is advantageous to both" (p. 11).[8] Effective programs teach students how to separate people from the problem, focus on interests instead of positions, develop win-win options, and make decisions based on objective criteria. They also present a process for problem solving such as negotiation, mediation, or consensus-building. Finally, they help individuals develop the attitudes, values, and abilities—cognitive, social, and emotional—they need to negotiate disputes.[8]

Schools have traditionally expected discipline systems to correct behavior problems. However, punishment may exacerbate rather than eliminate violence and does not teach students to be prosocial.[17] Johnson and Johnson believe that teaching children the

three Cs—cooperation, civic values, and conflict resolution—can provide the structure and skills for creating safe, supportive school environments.[18] Hill Walker of the Social Learning Center, University of Oregon, also believes that schools should be proactive and "teach alternative, replacement behavior patterns that are adaptive and functional" (p. 55).[19] Drawing on his years of research, he says that "ultimately, students need to collectively care about and bond with their school and learn to respect the rights and well being of other students and staff" (p. 9).[20]

Levels of Intervention

Violence prevention strategies fall into one of three levels of intervention: primary, secondary, and tertiary. **Primary** strategies are universally administered to all students and are designed to help protect children from the risk of developing antisocial behavior; schoolwide programs that teach conflict management and anger control fall into this category. **Secondary** intervention strategies target individual students known to be at risk for antisocial behavior and include treatments such as social skills training, parent training, tutoring, and mentoring. **Tertiary** strategies provide comprehensive, wraparound interventions for students with severe and chronic behavior problems. They require collaboration with families, social service agencies, and possibly law enforcement, and can involve drug and alcohol counseling and placement in alternative facilities.[17] Although school efforts may focus on any level of intervention, most strategies described in this paper are primary interventions, some are secondary, and a few are a combination of the two. While most tertiary strategies have a school component, many are administered by social-service or other agencies. Because they often demand highly individualized responses to a student's specific problems, they are beyond the scope of this paper. The following models and projects, arranged by intervention level and listed alphabetically, are some that appear effective based on rigorous evaluation data.

Primary Interventions

- The **Alternatives to Gang Membership** program aims to prevent gang membership through a curriculum for 2nd, 5th, and 7th graders. A critical component is meetings with parents—in English and Spanish—in neighborhood locations such as churches, homes, and community centers. Evaluation shows the program to be effective in deterring gang membership, as determined by follow-up surveys of 9th graders as well as data from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.[9] The program was one of four featured in the GAO report on promising school safety programs.

Violence prevention strategies fall into one of three levels of intervention: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

- The **Child Development Project** uses knowledge of how elementary-age children develop ethically, socially, and intellectually to help classrooms and schools become "caring communities" of learners.[21,22] It involves three components: a classroom program featuring developmental discipline, cooperative learning, and literature-based reading instruction; a schoolwide program that focuses on policy and community-building events; and a family involvement program that builds linkages between homes and the school. Studies of the program found positive effects on students' attitudes, behavior, and social competence.[15] Participating children exhibited more prosocial behavior—consideration for others and understanding of others' perspectives—and scored higher than control groups on conflict-resolution skills.[22,23]
- The **Collaborative Student Mediation Project**, developed by Cunningham, Cunningham, and Martorelli, trains elementary school students to serve as mediators in playground conflicts. Research shows that adult playground supervisors notice and intervene in fewer than five percent of all aggressive playground incidents. In a study of three implementation sites, all 5th graders with parental permission received mediation training. From this pool, an effort was made to recruit mediators who represented the schools' various ethnic and peer groups, including children with behavior problems. At all sites, mediation resulted in abrupt, significant drops in aggressive incidents—reductions ranged

from 51 to 65 percent across the schools. Results held a year later in follow-up studies.[16]

- **Law-Related Education**, a national program for elementary and secondary students and youth in juvenile justice settings supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U. S. Department of Justice, and the American Bar Association, promotes good citizenship and respect for the law and the Constitution. Through role-playing, mock trials, debates, field trips, and persuasive-writing assignments, students learn why laws are important and how they relate to everyday life. Evaluation has shown that the program lowers risk factors associated with violence and helps to increase prosocial behavior and decrease delinquent behavior.[24,25]

- The **Peace Education Foundation**'s grade-specific curriculum for K-12 classrooms is designed to link to school improvement plans. Its goals are to improve school safety, discipline, and climate; make instruction more effective; and promote resiliency in children. The curriculum for Grades 4-12 teaches students Rules for Fighting Fair, as well as anger management, communication skills, problem solving, and mediation strategies. Evaluations have shown that the curriculum reduces behavior referrals, suspensions, and expulsions, and increases prosocial behavior.[10,8]

- **PeaceBuilders** improves school climate and supports the development of prosocial behavior in elementary school students by teaching and reinforcing five principles: (1) praise people, (2) avoid putdowns, (3) seek wise people as advisors and friends, (4) notice hurts we cause, and (5) right wrongs. Instructional materials and activities help build these principles into the daily school routine "to create a nurturing, nonviolent environment" (p. 37).[26] Important program components include parent and community education and public campaigns using mass media so that children's prosocial behavior is recognized and reinforced at home and in the community.[27] An evaluation funded by the CDC showed that the program reduced aggressive behaviors in males, prevented its growth in females, and increased prosocial behaviors for both sexes.[28] Other independent evaluations showed large reductions in violent behavior, vandalism, on-campus arrest rates, tardies, and absences, as well as increases in volunteerism and task-oriented behavior.[29] In addition, visits to the school nurse decreased 12.6 percent during the treatment period. The CDC has extended funding to collect longitudinal data over the next three years. PeaceBuilders is in 300 schools nationwide, and statewide implementation is underway in Arizona.[30]

Through role-playing, mock trials, debates, field trips, and persuasive-writing assignments, students learn why laws are important and how they relate to everyday life.

- The **Peer Mediation in Schools Program**, developed by the New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution, teaches all staff and students the basics of mediation and trains selected students to serve as peer mediators. The K-6 curriculum teaches communication and problem-solving skills; the 15-week secondary curriculum integrates problem-solving skills into social studies and English classes. Teachers in schools using the program reported significantly less violence, while similar non-program schools reported an increase in violence.[8]

- **Project S.T.O.P. (Schools Teaching Options for Peace)** is a curriculum and peer mediation program for middle school students, while the **Safe Harbour Program** assists victims of violence through a multifaceted program consisting of a curriculum, counseling, parent involvement, teacher training, and a schoolwide, antiviolence campaign. More than 2,000 students in four urban middle schools participated in one or both programs. An evaluation of the programs, sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, found that Project S.T.O.P. helped students use reasoning to solve conflict and reduced feelings of helplessness, while Safe Harbour made students less likely to suggest retaliation as a response to conflict. Exposure to both programs reduced students'

beliefs that respect is gained through violence.[14] The program was among the group evaluated with funding from the CDC.[31]

- **Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)**, a curriculum meant to foster emotional development in K-5 students, is taught by the classroom teacher three times weekly.[32] It aims to prevent violence by teaching self-regulation, emotional processing skills, social problem solving, and positive ways of relating to peers. Studies showed that the program helped children in regular and special education programs to develop cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills and to understand their own and others' emotional states.[15] An evaluation funded by NIMH found that the curriculum improved regular and special education students' understanding and management of emotions, social and cognitive problem solving, social competence, and behavior. Effects were greatest for at-risk students; children with the highest self-reported rates of conduct problems and depression showed significant reduction of symptoms two years after participation in the program.[33]

- The **Resolving Conflict Creatively Program**, an initiative of the Educators for Social Responsibility, consists of five components: professional development, a K-12 curriculum for regular and special education students, peer mediation, administrator training, and parent training. The curriculum helps children develop interpersonal communication skills through role-playing and experiential workshops. The mediation component is not begun until training is complete and the curriculum has been in place for at least one year.[2,15,4] An independent evaluation found that teachers participating in the program reported decreases in violent classroom incidents and improved self-esteem and conflict resolution skills in students.[2,13,9,15,8] The program was featured in the GAO report on school safety and a more rigorous evaluation of the program was funded by the CDC.[9,3,34]

- **Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP): The Richmond Youth Against Violence Project** uses a curriculum based on social-cognitive learning theory and Perry and Jessor's (1985) health promotion model to teach middle school students how to handle conflicts with peers and adults. The curriculum—described by its creator as a "good citizen program" (p. 36)[26]—is delivered in 25 weekly sessions of 50 minutes each. It is taught by specially trained prevention specialists rather than teachers. It is part of a comprehensive approach that includes staff development, parent training, and a schoolwide peer mediation program.[26,35] A review of school disciplinary records found significant differences between students who participated in the program and control groups: program participants had fewer violations for weapons and fighting, as well as lower rates of in-school suspension. They also reported fewer violence-related injuries and positive changes in self-esteem.[36,37] Because of positive initial results, the project is one of four evaluated with CDC funding[38] to receive extended support to collect longitudinal data.

The Second Step Curriculum, from the Committee for Children, aims to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior and to increase social competence in preschool to eighth-grade students.

- The **Second Step Curriculum**, from the Committee for Children, aims to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior and to increase social competence in preschool to 8th-grade students.[39,20] Designed to be integrated into the regular curriculum through 35-minute sessions once or twice a week, it can be implemented either in a classroom or schoolwide.[19] Evaluations have shown the curriculum to improve social skills, empathy, anger management, and interpersonal problem solving.[15,10,19] When compared to control groups, students receiving the curriculum demonstrated significantly less aggressive and violent behavior and more prosocial behavior—in classrooms, on the playground, and in the cafeteria.[40,41]

- **SMART Talk** is a computer program for middle school students that uses games, cartoons, simulations, and interactive interviews to teach

anger management, social skills, and peer mediation. An evaluation funded by the CDC showed that students with access to the program improved slightly but significantly in attitudes toward violence, self-awareness, and intent to use nonviolent strategies to solve conflict, compared to controls. However, no change in aggressive behavior was seen. Students rated the program as useful and fun.[42,43]

- **Teaching Students to be Peacemakers**, from the Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota, is a spiral curriculum for Grades 1-12 that teaches all students the negotiation process. Students rotate daily as classroom mediators. The curriculum employs cooperative learning strategies to reduce alienation and academic failure, two risk factors associated with violence. Johnson and Johnson's studies of program effectiveness at multiple sites found an 80 percent drop in discipline problems requiring intervention and a 95 percent decline in behavior referrals to the principal.[44,8]
- **Teens, Crime, and the Community**, developed by the National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law and the National Crime Prevention Council with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, helps middle school students develop awareness about the effects of violence and engage in activities that make their communities safer.[8] The curriculum materials are integrated into social studies and health classes. Evaluations showed the program increased students' knowledge about violence, their desire to participate in the community, and their levels of altruism.[45]

Secondary Interventions

- The International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Columbia University initiated the **Conflict Resolution Project** in a New York City alternative high school for at-risk students. Research shows the program had positive effects on at-risk students, including improved ability to handle conflict, increased self-esteem, improved academic performance, and decreased depression and anxiety.[8]
- **First Steps**, from the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, teaches at-risk kindergarten children the academic and social behaviors they need to succeed. The program has three components: universal screening to identify children showing early signs of antisocial behavior; a school component that involves teachers, parents, and the child's peers; and parent training to promote the child's skill development. The intervention lasts from two to three months and targets just one child at a time per classroom.[46] An evaluation funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U. S. Department of Education, showed that the intervention reduced aggressive and maladaptive behavior and promoted adaptive behavior and time on task in the classroom. These effects were still evident in follow-up studies two years after treatment.[47]

First Steps, from the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, teaches at-risk kindergarten children the academic and social behaviors they need to succeed.

- The **Positive Adolescents Choices Training (PACT) Program** specifically targets at-risk African American middle school students. Teachers refer students to the pull-out program, which uses African American role models and focuses on social skills training (giving and receiving negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, and negotiating), anger management, and violence education. Studies found participants to be significantly more skilled in social interactions and less involved in fighting and referrals to juvenile court than students in the control group.[10] PACT was featured in the GAO's school safety report.[9]
- **Self Enhancement, Inc.**, is a year-round, school-based program designed to build resiliency in students identified by staff to be at risk for violence and school failure. Coordinators are assigned to participating schools to mentor students selected to the program. They help students develop Individual Success Plans, which set annual academic and social goals, and deliver the curriculum, which teaches anger man-

agement, conflict resolution, and problem solving. Other program components include field trips to organizations and agencies that deal with violence—such as detention and trauma centers—and student-led media campaigns. A three-year evaluation of the program funded by the CDC found that it lowered the prevalence of physical fighting and weapon carrying in participants (African American adolescents), compared to matched comparison groups from the same schools.[48,49] The CDC has extended funding for another three years to gather follow-up data on the treatment and control groups.[50]

Combination Interventions: Primary and Secondary

- The **FAST Track** Program (Families and Schools Together), a multisite demonstration program funded by NIMH, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Public Health Service, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U. S. Department of Education, combines targeted interventions for students at risk for conduct disorder with whole-school implementation of the **PATHS** curriculum. Interventions begin in Grade 1 and continue through the transition to middle school. Program goals include reducing aggressive and disruptive behavior and improving social-cognitive skills, peer relations, academic skills (especially reading), and home-school relationships. Goals are addressed through specific program components: parent training, home visits, social skills training, academic tutoring, and the PATHS curriculum.[51] A strong family-based component equips parents with strategies to improve their child's academic and social performance.[32] Evaluation data from 150 classrooms showed significantly less aggression and disruptive behavior and a more positive atmosphere in PATHS classrooms than in control classrooms.[52,53] Follow-up studies of students who participated in the initial program are expected to continue through 2005.[19]

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- The **Metropolitan Area Child Study**, involving 16 Chicago elementary schools, aims to prevent the development of aggressive behavior through a two-year, three-pronged program. The first component is a general enhancement curriculum, "Yes I Can," presented to all students in biweekly lessons. The curriculum helps children develop the attitudes, understanding, and self-control to behave prosocially rather than aggressively. A second component provides weekly leadership training to small groups of children identified to be at risk for aggressive behavior. The third component teaches parenting and communication skills to families. Part of the CDC study, this program has also been awarded extended funding for continued evaluation. Preliminary results indicated that the classroom and small-group treatments reduced aggressive behavior, particularly in the most aggressive children, while family treatment increased the incidence of prosocial behavior. [54,55]

Other School-Based Approaches to Violence Prevention

Schools' first steps to violence prevention should include attention to organization, management, and the physical environment.[9,10] Interventions that focus on students, no matter how effective, are no substitute for a well-run school that engages students in learning and teaches caring and respect by example.

In a report on youth violence, the American Psychological Association concluded that several organizational features of schools help create an aggression-prone environment: overcrowding, building design, and imposed behavioral routines and conformity resulting in resentment and rejection.[4] Gottfredson's research shows that changes in school organization and management—governance, culture, and climate—can prevent problem behavior as effectively as individual treatment programs.[56,57]

Walker and colleagues stress that "every elementary school should consider having two components in place at all times: (a) a

well-thought-out and carefully implemented schoolwide discipline plan," developed and supported by staff and the principal, "and (b) systematic application of what has been learned over the past two decades about effective schooling and teaching" (p. 203).[17] By discipline plan, Walker does not mean a system of punishment but, instead, a system that helps promote student achievement and social development through positive, constructive, and proactive means. While punishment may suppress behavior through external control or coercion, it does nothing to teach students desired behaviors.[15,19]

The following programs in themselves do not constitute comprehensive approaches to school management, but rather can be used as tools to aid greater schoolwide management and organizational efforts.

- **Educators for Social Responsibility** is a professional development and support program that helps educators develop a repertoire of instructional and managerial strategies designed to promote safe, respectful, and productive learning environments. Follow-up studies showed that teachers who participated in the training helped create caring classrooms in which students were able to negotiate conflict. Greater effects occurred when a group of teachers in a school were supported by administrators, counselors, and parents.[8]
- **Preparing Instructional Teams to Teach Effective Citizenship Education** is a six-day training course that prepares school personnel and police officers to teach law-related education to 8th and 9th graders. Research showed that students who were taught a one-semester course by teams trained with this method exhibited both a reduction of antisocial behaviors and more positive attitudes about school and obeying the law.[58]
- The **School Management and Resource Team (SMART)** program is one management approach that appears to be effective in reducing graffiti, fighting, and defiance of authority. The heart of the program is a computerized database, the Incident Profiling System, which records discipline infractions and generates reports about incidents. Because the system has the ability to detect patterns, it can help target interventions to problem areas. The program involves (1) commitment from superintendents and principals; (2) a safety and security audit; (3) a team of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and law enforcement officials to analyze data, plan interventions, and monitor results; and (4) coordination with juvenile justice, social service, and law enforcement agencies.[9]

For any program to succeed, school staff need to believe that conflict can be resolved peacefully and to model this belief in classrooms and schools.

Tips for Developing and Implementing Schoolwide Programs

For any program to succeed, school staff need to believe that conflict can be resolved peacefully and to model this belief in classrooms and schools. Adopting a program may require a paradigm shift for personnel used to traditional behavior management systems, in which discipline is an externally imposed set of rules and consequences rather than a way to help students develop the values, attitudes, and inner discipline they need to regulate and control their own behavior.[8]

Key Characteristics of Effective Programs

A study by the General Accounting Office identifies seven key characteristics of effective violence-prevention programs:

(1) a comprehensive approach that recognizes the complexity of violence;

(2) an early start and long-term commitment (a K-12 approach);

(3) strong school leadership and clear, consistent discipline policies and procedures;

(4) training for administrators, teachers, and school staff in behavior management, mediation, and violence prevention strategies;

(5) parent training and involvement;

(6) links to law enforcement and social service agencies and the community; and

(7) culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate materials and activities for students.[9]

Steps for Implementation

The following implementation steps can also increase the chance of program success:[8]

- Assemble a planning team comprised of administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. Many schools already have school-based decision making teams that can fulfill this role.
- Determine the types of conflict in the school and ways conflict has been addressed. Support for the program will depend, in part, on how the program addresses perceived needs, builds on school strengths, meshes with existing school improvement plans, and promotes the school's educational mission.
- Develop goals and desired outcomes based on assessment of needs.
- Choose a program or curriculum that best matches school needs and goals.
- Select a staff development trainer, preferably one who helps the school build capacity to deliver its own continuing and future staff development.
- Seek administrative, faculty, and parental commitment and support. Building and district administrators can provide leadership and support by sharing the program's benefits and successes with local boards of education, faculties, students, parents, and civic groups; participating in training and teaching opportunities; and modeling the principles of conflict resolution with staff, parents, and students. They can also involve faculties in planning, ensure adequate staff development, inform parents about the program, and even provide parent training in conflict resolution techniques.
- Evaluate results. Evaluation measures progress toward program goals and provides data for continuous improvement. Evidence of success also helps sustain enthusiasm for the program.

The Cost of School-Based Interventions

Primary schoolwide interventions—which are adequate for 75 to 85 percent of students—average about $10 to $15 per child, annually. Secondary interventions—which can reach the majority of remaining students—cost more, since they include intensified program expenses as well as a screening process used to identify participants. Tertiary interventions, required for the smallest group of students, are much more expensive—costing up to $25,000 or more per child, depending on needed services and placement.[17] Obviously, early primary and secondary interventions that prevent the need for tertiary services are more cost effective for schools. Even tertiary treatment is cheaper for society than incarceration, which can run from $22,000 (not counting food or medical treatment) to $69,000 (for geriatric prisoners) annually for the length of the sentence, plus another $54,000 per bed for prison construction. These amounts do not include the financial and emotional costs to crime victims, the cost of supporting prisoners' children, or lost tax and Social Security revenues.[59]

Obviously, early primary and secondary interventions that prevent the need for tertiary services are more cost effective for schools.

Considerations for Policy Makers

Most violent and antisocial behavior results from a complex interaction of risk factors associated with individuals, families, schools, communities, and society.[60,19] Treatment, therefore, needs to be multimodal and delivered in multiple settings, such as home and school. Antisocial behavior also develops along an age-related trajectory: behavior patterns are established early (preschool to Grade 3), reinforced during late elementary and early middle school, and entrenched and resistant to change by high school. According to Walker, this developmental timeline speaks to the purpose and efficacy of school-based interventions (see Figure 1): prevention should be the focus of efforts for Grades preK-3, remediation for the late elementary grades, amelioration for middle school/junior high, and accommodation for high school and beyond.[19]

To interrupt the developmental course of antisocial, violent behavior, Walker and his colleagues recommend the following changes in or additions to school practices and policies:

- screen children early to identify those showing emerging signs of aggressive behavior;
- mount primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions to keep children from developing aggressive, violent behav-

iors that lead to involvement in the juvenile justice system;

- discontinue exclusion, suspension, and expulsion as the primary means of coping with problem behavior; and
- develop a continuum of alternative placements to deal with aggressive and violent students, to keep them engaged with school for as long as possible.[17]

Early identification of at-risk students is a critical component of any prevention effort. However, in order to conduct universal screening, schools must adopt

In other words, negative behavior gets attention and is reinforced, while good behavior goes unnoticed.

a valid, reliable screening instrument. Three such instruments for detecting antisocial behavior patterns in children Grades 1-6 are the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) procedure developed by Walker and Severson,[61] the Achenbach Behavior Checklist,[62] and the Student Risk Screening Scale.[63] The Early Screening Project screening procedure[64] is an adaptation of the SSBD for preschool and kindergarten children ages 3-5.[19]

Policies That Affect Program Outcomes

Psychologist Dennis Embry, developer of the PeaceBuilders program, cautions that certain policies and practices can affect program outcomes. He urges policy makers to encourage widespread implementation across districts and even states, to involve all groups of children if schools establish peer mediation programs, and to make sure school practices reinforce desired behaviors.[65]

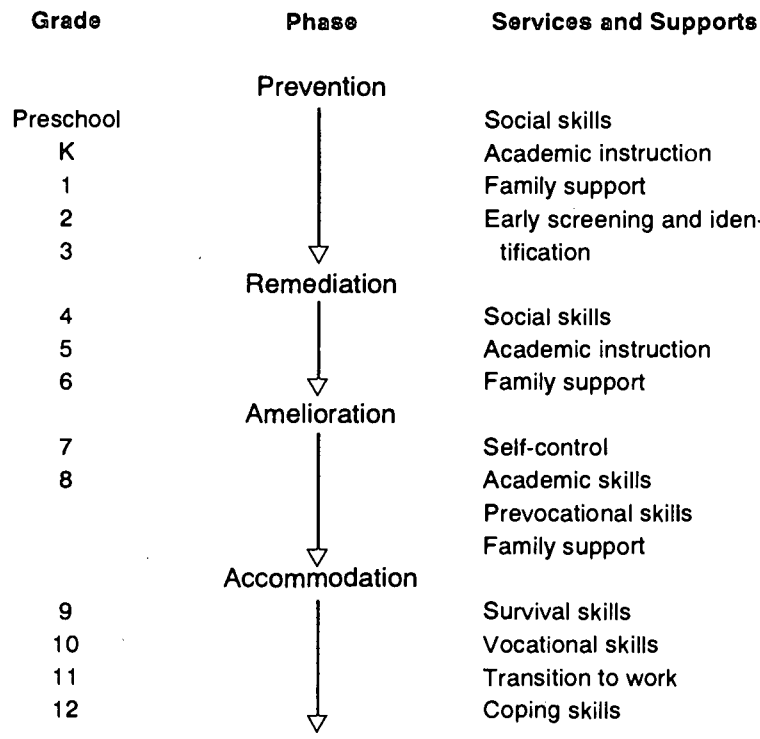

Figure 1. Developmental Continuum of Services and Expectations for Antisocial Behavior

Source: Bullis & Walker, as cited in Walker, H., Colvin, G., Ramsey, E. (1995). *Antisocial Behavior in School: Strategies and Best Practices.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co. Reprinted with permission of author.

Widespread implementation. At-risk students and families are often highly mobile, moving between schools and districts. Without widespread implementation, children do not get full exposure to any one program. In addition, limiting implementation to the poorest schools can reinforce biased and racist ideas that only certain groups of children need violence prevention programs. Finally, widespread implementation makes it easier to build enthusiasm and support for programs. Businesses are more likely to contribute to and parents are more likely to understand and buy in to programs that have widespread application and exposure. Policy makers and educators must therefore carefully weigh issues of local control with concerns for what's best for all children in a given area.

Involve all children. Selecting only the top students to serve as peer mediators can further alienate marginal students and make their behavior worse, whereas all students can benefit from the training and status afforded peer mediators. Mediators should represent the range of peer and ethnic groups in a school. Likewise, programs to reduce interpersonal conflict should promote understanding and respect for cultural and group differences.

Reinforce desired behaviors. Most educators are familiar with the phrase, "Catch them being good," yet in practice it's more likely that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. In other words, negative behavior gets attention and is reinforced, while good behavior goes unnoticed. Because of changes in the brain during adolescence, students of this age need higher levels of reinforcement. However, from middle school on, students are expected to behave properly and function independently so that teachers can get on with the job of delivering content. Walker contends that "one of the most critical mistakes made in classroom management is to take appropriate student behavior for granted" (p. 174).[19]

Summary

Because of the complexity and variance of violent behavior, policy makers, educators, and parents need to understand that no one school program can possibly eliminate it.[19] However, "aspects of emotional fluency and understanding can be successfully taught in the school environment by classroom teachers to both regular and special needs...children" (p. 13).[33] School-based programs can help students understand others' points of view, develop tolerance and self-control, and learn to settle their differences peacefully—in other words, help them learn civil, respectful behavior. Therefore, such programs not only play a useful role in more comprehensive efforts to reduce violence in schools and society, but they can also prepare students to be good citizens by fostering the attitudes and skills they will need as adults to participate in and sustain our democratic nation.

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