

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

Jenna Strawhun

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Overview

- School-wide program designed for elementary, middle, and junior high school students (grades 3 through 10)
- Program goals:
 - reduce existing bullying problems among students
 - prevent the development of new bullying problems
 - achieve better peer relations at school
 - create safer, more effective learning environments



Overview (continued)

- Goals are met through restructuring students' social environments at school
 - In particular, through reducing reinforcement and opportunities for bullying behaviors
 - Prosocial behaviors are encouraged and rewarded
 - Implementation of the intervention at various levels (school, classroom, individual, and community) is intended to build a sense of collaboration and unity between students and adults within the school (Olweus & Limber, 2010)



Bullying Definition

- “The repeated exposure of one child to intentionally harmful actions of one or more youth” (Olweus, 1993)
- In order technically label an interaction as bullying, there also must be a power imbalance
- Ecological framework that includes school, classroom, individual, and community level bullying interventions
- Basic principles of the intervention program:
 - Create school and home environments that are exemplified by warmth, positive interest, and involvement from adults
 - Low tolerance for inappropriate behavior.
 - Inappropriate behavior should be responded to with nonviolent and nonphysical consequences
 - Adults at school and home should act as authority figures (Olweus, 1995)



Audience

- OBPP is designed for students in grades 3-10
- All students participate in universal aspects of the program, while bullies and victims receive individualized interventions
- The program *can* be adapted for use in high schools, however research has not measured the program's effectiveness past 10th grade



Overview of the Core Intervention Program

- **General prerequisites**
 - Awareness and involvement on the part of adults
- **School-level Components**
 - Establish a bullying prevention coordinating committee (BPCC)
 - Conduct committee and staff trainings
 - Administer the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire school-wide
 - Hold staff discussion group meetings
 - Introduce school rules against bullying
 - Review and refine school's supervisory system
 - Hold a school kick off event to launch the program
 - Involve parents
- **Classroom-level Components**
 - Post and enforce school-wide rules against bullying
 - Hold class meetings
 - Hold meetings with students' parents



Overview of the Core Intervention Program

- **Individual-level Components**

- Supervise students' activities
- Ensure that all staff intervene on the spot when bullying occurs
- Meetings with students who are involved in bullying
- Meetings with parents of involved students
- Individual intervention plans for involved students

- **Community-level Components**

- Involve community members on the Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee
- Develop partnerships with community members to support your school's program
- Help spread anti-bullying messages in the community (Hazelden, 2011).

- Not a school curriculum, thus the program's principles and materials can be adapted for use by other institutions, such as after school programs, camps, and other youth programs

- Although empirical research has not explored the effectiveness of the OBPP integrated into other youth programs, appropriate staff training can help the OBPP principles generalize to other settings in student's lives



BPCC Composition

- School administrator (principal or assistant principal)
- Teachers from each grade level
- A school counselor, school psychologist, or other school-based mental health professional
- A representative of the nonteaching staff (for example, playground monitors, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, or custodians)
- One or two parents who are not employed by the school system
- Representatives from the community (if possible), such as after-school or youth program staff or representatives from the business or faith community who might have a stake in the results of the program
- Other school personnel (for example, a nurse or school resource officer) who may bring particular expertise to the committee



Bullying Prevention Coordination Committee (BPCC) Training

- Critical to ensuring that the OBPP is implemented with fidelity
- Ongoing consultation is provided by a certified Olweus Trainer in order to troubleshoot problems that arise during intervention implementation
- 2 day training session for all BPCC members
- Training objectives for the BPCC:
 - define bullying behavior and how it differs from other acts of aggression among children and youth
 - state six specific reasons why educators should be concerned about bullying
 - distinguish between facts and myths about the nature and prevalence of bullying
 - list common characteristics of students involved in bullying situations
 - list risk factors for bullying behavior as individuals, families, and school systems



Program Materials

- Olweus Bullying Questionnaire
 - 42 questions
 - Most questions refer to a specified period of time, such as “In the past few months” making it easy for students to recall their experiences
 - Other specific response options, including “once a month” or “once a week” to eliminate subjectivity
 - Gauges the student’s perceptions of peers, teachers, and parents reactions to bullying
 - Provides information to guide the implementation of the Olweus Bullying Intervention Program and baseline data which can be used to measure progress over time



Program Materials

- Olweus Bullying Prevention Schoolwide Guide with CD and DVD
 - Used by the school's Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee
 - \$90 each! It is recommended that each member of the committee obtain a Schoolwide Guide
- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Teacher Guide with CD and DVD
 - \$55 each
 - At minimum, one guide should be provided for every three teachers or staff members



Recommended Materials

- **Class Meetings that Matter: A Resource Guide for Grades K-5 and Grades 6-8:**
 - Manual including a year's worth of age-appropriate ideas for class meetings for students in grades K-5 and grades 6-8
 - \$70 each
- **Class Meetings and Individual Interventions DVD Set:**
 - Demonstrates how to intervene when bullying occurs and follow up with students and parents
 - Aims to increase fidelity of the intervention program
 - Supplemental materials to conduct class meetings with elementary and middle school students
 - \$175 each



High Costs

- Overall, purchasing program materials can range from \$1,500 to \$3,200 plus the cost of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (~\$250)
- No workbooks, therefore program materials usually only need to be purchased once
- However, proponents argue that implementing the program will
 - Protect schools from legal actions related to bullying
 - Reduce staff burnout
 - Decrease “costs to society” caused by the effects of bullying on bullies and victims



OTHER COSTS

- 2-day training of the BPCC members by a certified Olweus trainer
 - **single certified Olweus trainer may charge no more than:**
 - \$3,000 for a two-day training involving one or two schools' Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committees.
 - travel costs for the certified Olweus trainer, including airfare (if appropriate), lodging, meals, and local transportation.
 - \$1,500 (\$125/month for twelve months) for telephone consultation for each school site for one year. This price includes the cost of the phone call
- Supplies for your school kick-off event
- Optional program promotional materials (posters)
- Ongoing program evaluation costs (processing and reporting questionnaire results on an annual basis)
- “Booster” training for staff
- Materials for students (including bullying-related literature or videos)
- Substitute teachers so teachers can attend an all-staff, full-day training



Costs of a costly program

- Hong (2009) indicates that although children living in lower socioeconomic conditions may have higher rates of bullying and antisocial behaviors than upper/middle class schools, implementing an expensive program at the individual, classroom, school-wide, and community levels is not always feasible



Sources of Funding

- In the past, however, schools have sought funding through
 - U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools
 - U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
 - School district funds
 - County health department funding



Basis for the OBPP

- In 1983, three adolescent boys committed suicide in Norway, “most likely as a consequence of severe bullying by peers” (Hazelden Foundation, 2011).
- In response, Norway’s Ministry of Education launched a national campaign against bullying in schools
- Olweus’ initial program was evaluated by examining
 - 2,500 students across 112 classrooms in grades 4-7 in 42 primary and middle schools in Bergen, Norway
 - Longitudinal study in which participants were followed for 2.5 (1983-1985) years



Basis for the OBPP (continued)

- Initial evaluation of the program in Bergen, Norway showed:
 - 50% or more reductions in student reports of being bullied or bullying others.
 - Reductions in antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, truancy, drunkenness, and fighting
 - Improved school climate, including more positive social relationships, attitudes towards school, outlook on schoolwork, and increased satisfaction with school life
 - Students in grades 4-7 showed positive results after 8 months of intervention, while students in grades 8-10 did not display positive outcomes until after 2 years of intervention
 - Reduced the number and percentage of new victims of bullying
 - Olweus concluded that significant differences were not due to underreporting by students, changes in students' attitudes towards bully-victim problems, repeated measurement, or general time trends



Basis for the OBPP-Controversies?

- A second evaluation of the nationwide program in the neighboring county of Rogaland published conducted by Roland in 1986 actually found INCREASED levels of bullying in some schools (O'Moore & Minton, 2005).
- Olweus argued that the studies in Bergen and Rogaland were fundamentally different (methodologically and planningwise) and were conducted one year apart.
- However, the Rogaland study also measured bullying in roughly 40 Norwegian schools using the same definition of bullying and similar questions addressing prevalence rates as Olweus' survey
- Olweus' study was conducted 1 and 2 years after program implementation, while Roland's was conducted 1 and 3 years after
 - Olweus' research staff provided ongoing support for the Bergen schools during the experiment, whereas Roland provided no additional support to Rogaland schools.



Early Program Implementation in the U.S.

- Evaluation results of the program amongst 18 middle schools (Grades 6, 7, & 8) in South Carolina after one year of implementation indicated:
 - Decreases in both boys' and girls' reports of bullying others
 - Decreases in boys' reports of victimization and social isolation (Limber, 2004).
- Implementation of the program with “moderate fidelity” in 12 elementary schools in urban areas of Philadelphia, PA demonstrated:
 - decreases in self-reports of bullying and victimization
 - significant decreases in adults' observations of bullying in the cafeteria and on the playground (Black, 2003).



Some of the Many Research Findings

- Kallestad & Olweus (2003) examined a sample of 37 schools and 89 teachers in Bergen, Norway to determine implementation predictors of the OBPP according to two dimensions
 - Classroom Intervention Measures
 - Role play
 - Literature
 - Class rules
 - Class Meetings
 - Video
 - Information folder delivered to parents
 - Other actions
 - Individual Contact Measures (measuring contact with students and parents of involved students)



Some of the Many Research Findings

- Kallestad & Olweus (2003) assessed
- **Potential teacher level predictors** (perceived level of bullying, perceived staff importance, having read program information, readiness to intervene, affective involvement, information about break time, victimized as a child, teacher background variables)
- **Potential school level predictors**
 - School climate
 - Teacher-leadership collaboration
 - Teacher-teacher collaboration
 - Openness in communication
 - Orientation to change
 - School attention to bullying problems
 - Had the administration shared results of OBVQ to staff?



Some of the Many Research Findings

- Kallestad & Olweus (2003) found that
 - Overall, more demanding classroom measures were implemented less often, including role plays, class rules, and class meetings
 - **Perceived level of bullying** was an important predictor of classroom intervention measures and individual contact
 - **Perceived staff importance** strongly predicted classroom intervention, but only moderately predicted individual contact
 - **Affective involvement** was also a significant predictor of classroom intervention



Some of the Many Research Findings

- Kallestad & Olweus (2003) found that
 - Schools with a higher degree of openness in communication among teachers implemented more classroom intervention measures
 - Teacher-teacher collaboration was negatively correlated to the implementation of classroom intervention measures
 - Teacher collaboration, in some cases, may just intensify negative stereotypes of victims or reinforce the decision not to intervene
 - School attention to bullying problems predicted classroom intervention measure implementation as well.



Some of the Many Research Findings

- Lee & Cornell (2010) explored the concurrent validity of the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (BVQ) using 202 middle school students in central Virginia
 - Self reported bullying on the BVQ was only modestly correlated with peer nominations ($r=.12$) and academic grades ($r=.15$), and not at all with disciplinary infractions
 - Self reported victimization on the BVQ was significantly correlated with peer nominations ($r=.42$), but only moderately ($r=.12$) with academic grades
- The researchers determined that further research is necessary on self-report measures, especially the BVQ due to its use in guiding OBPP intervention



Some of the Many Research Findings

- Elkblad & Olweus (1986) used the Olweus Aggression Inventory to assess 155 boys and 135 girls in a 4th grade Chinese sample
- The researchers sought to validate the OAI (an instrument designed to evaluate aggression and aggression control in western cultures) on a traditionally collectivist sample
- Results:
 - Measurable and distinct differences between participants in the domain of aggressive behavior ((verbal aggression, physical aggression, and aggressive impulses)
 - Negative correlation between positive attitude towards school and aggressive behavior
 - A positive, but weaker correlation, was established between aggression and negative relationships with parents
 - Aggression control (aggression inhibitory responses) was positively correlated with the Chinese children's perceived popularity of themselves among peers



Some of the Many Research Findings

- Amundsen & Ravndal (2010) found that students (grades 7-9) in four schools in Oslo, Norway that implemented the OBPP showed lower levels of alcohol intoxication and cannabis use than control schools
- The researchers found no differences in frequency of overall alcohol consumption between the two schools, however.
- Although the OBPP does not directly target substance abuse, a positive school climate and clear boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behavior are key intervention principles that may lead to reductions in substance abuse



Program Strengths

- Community involvement component
- Overall preventative emphasis on an ecological framework
- Program effectiveness is not limited to bullying
- Inclusion of multiple perspectives on BPCC teams
- BPCC training, if money and time allows for it, appears to be comprehensive and promote implementation of the program with fidelity



Program Weaknesses

- High costs of program materials and training sessions
- Indirect consultation services delivered to only a single member for ONE year
- Although parents may be involved in the BPPC and individual parent meetings, specific ways to generalize prosocial behaviors to the home was not emphasized
- Lack of research on implementation of the OBPP at the secondary level
 - Lack of strategies presented to junior high students on how to cope with future instances of bullying in high school
- Minimal research in the United States and other nonEuropean nations
- Little attention devoted to addressing coping skills and regulating internalizing emotions if bullying does occur
- Academic time must be sacrificed in order to conduct classroom level interventions



Conclusions

- The OBPP is an ecological, evidence-based intervention (complete with bells and whistles) that has been proven to decrease bullying and antisocial behaviors, as well as promote a positive school culture
- Current barriers to implementation include high costs and the loss of academic time that may be necessary to implement the intervention
- Future research on the effects of the intervention across time, cultures, home settings, and socioeconomic statuses needs to be investigated
- Future studies should also target high school bullying behaviors and how the intervention can be adapted to older students





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