

A Model Bullying Prevention Program

PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTERISTICS

What helps make the Olweus program a model is that it builds on a few key principles that have been found to be important in research on the development and modification of problem behavior, especially aggressive behavior, like bullying.

First, it is important to create both a school and home environment characterized by warmth, positive interest, and involvement with adults.

Second, firm limits against unacceptable behavior need to be established.

Third, non-physical, non-hostile negative consequences (sanctions) must be applied if a youth breaks the rules that have been agreed upon.

Fourth, it is expected that the adults in the school and at home act as authorities, at least in some respects. The program is based on an authoritative (not authoritarian) model for the relationship between adults and children, where teachers are expected to be authorities with responsibility for the students' total situation, not just their learning.

For
additional information
www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

Subgoals

- 1 Increase awareness and knowledge of problems related to bullying as well as dispel a number of myths about the causes of bullying.**

The use of the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire in an anonymous survey is an important step toward the acquisition of more concrete information about the occurrence and forms of the problem in the individual school.

- 2 Get teachers and parents actively involved.**

This means that the adults must take responsibility for controlling what is going on among the students in the school, at least to a certain extent. One aspect of this is organizing good supervision of break times. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to intervene in situations that arouse suspicion and to give a clear message to the students: **We will not accept bullying in our school, and we will make sure it's stopped.** Teachers should initiate serious discussions with victims of bullying, bullies, and their parents if a problem has been identified or is suspected. Parents and teachers must closely follow up and monitor the measures taken. Otherwise, the situation of the victim can easily decline from "bad to worse."

- 3 Develop clear rules against bullying. The following rules have proven to be very useful:**

We will not bully other students.

We will try to help students who are bullied.

We will make it a point to include students who become easily left out.

When we know somebody is being bullied, we will tell a teacher and an adult at home.

These rules can provide the basis for class discussions about what bullying is and what negative consequences should be put into effect when students break the rules. Regular class meetings are a good forum for evaluating how students relate to the set rules and whether the planned measures are working. It is important that the teacher enforce the rules consistently and also give plenty of praise when the rules are followed.

4 Provide support and effective protection to the victim.

If the rules are followed, students who are easily bullied usually are provided reasonably good protection. In addition, the teacher can enlist “neutral” or “well-adjusted” students in different ways to improve the situation for victims of bullying. The teacher can use his or her imagination to help bullied students stand up for themselves in appropriate ways and make themselves useful and valuable in their classmates’ eyes. The parents of bullied children can motivate them to make new friends and show them how to get to know others and how to maintain good relationships with friends.

Even though many of the measures in this school-based program do not directly involve parents, parents should know that this kind of intervention program exists and that it works. This bullying prevention program does not require large-scale investments of time or money. It is first and foremost a question of the attitudes, behaviors, and routines of the teachers and school administrators. A dramatic reduction in the extent of bullying can be achieved with a relatively simple, but carefully developed bullying prevention program.

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Key Components

General Prerequisites

- Awareness and involvement on the part of adults

Measures at the School Level

- Questionnaire survey (answered anonymously by the students)
- Improved supervision of break time
- School conference day
- Establishment of one or more teacher discussion groups (at each school)
- Formation of a coordinating group

Measures at the Classroom Level

- Class (or school-wide) rules against bullying
- Regular class meetings (teacher and students)
- Class parent/teacher meetings

Measures at the Individual Level

- Individual meetings with children who bully
- Individual meetings with children who are targets of bullying
- Teacher and parent use of imagination to help solve the problem.