

University of Denver bullying victimization study

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A University of Denver study shows a curriculum-based bullying prevention program reduced incidents of bullying by 20 percent, twice as much as in the study control group.

Jeffrey M. Jenson and William A. Dieterich of the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work studied more than 1,100 students in 28 elementary schools in Denver public schools. One group was exposed to a bullying prevention program called "Youth Matters" (YM). A second "control" group of students was not.

Self-reported bully victimization among students taking the "Youth Matters" curriculum decreased at 20 percent compared to a 10 percent drop from students in the control group.

"By the end of the study bully victimization was significantly lower in the YM group relative to the control group," Jenson reports. "This outcome is encouraging because the curriculum modules tested in the study focused on teaching the social and emotional skills necessary to avoid becoming a bully victim."

The results are detailed in a paper, "Effects of a Skills-based Prevention Program on Bullying and Bully Victimization among Elementary School Children," published in the December 2007 issue of *Prevention Science* by the Society for Prevention Research.

Previous research has shown that about 25 percent of elementary students either bully or are victims of bullying. Studies also suggest that both bullies and victims are at risk for later mental health problems and involvement in anti-social activities. Educators have focused attention on bullying in the wake of school shootings over the last decade. In some of those cases there were indications that the shooters had themselves been bullied as young children.

Students in the Jenson-Dieterich study who participated in the "Youth Matters" curriculum received training in four 10-week modules over the course of two academic years. The curriculum focused on two themes: issues and skills related to bullying and other forms of early aggression.

In skills instruction, students learned how to use social and interpersonal skills to decrease the likelihood of being bullied by classmates. They also were taught ways to stand up for themselves and others, and instruction in asking for help when confronted by a bully. The goal of the training was to teach students how to use these skills to stay out of trouble, build positive relationships, make good decisions, and avoid anti-social behavior.

Source: University of Denver

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