

School-Based Violence Prevention Programs To Reduce Bullying and Aggressive Behaviors

Review 7

Wilson, S. J., & Lipsey, M. W. (2007). School-based interventions for aggressive and disruptive behavior: Update of a meta-analysis. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 33(2, Suppl.), S130–143. PubMed abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17675014>.

Objectives	Evaluate the effectiveness of school-based psychosocial prevention programs for reducing aggressive and disruptive behavior; this review updated previous work by the authors (see Review 8) and further investigated which program and student characteristics were associated with the most positive outcomes.
Studies Included	Two hundred forty-nine U.S. and international studies published from 1950 to 2007
Participants in the Studies	Students in preschool through grade 12
Outcomes	Aggressive and disruptive behavior (e.g., negative interpersonal behaviors such as fighting, hitting, bullying, verbal conflict, disruptiveness, acting out), behavior problems that are closely related to aggression (internalizing and externalizing behaviors, activity level/attention problems, and anger/hostility/rebelliousness), social adjustment, school performance, and personal adjustment
Limitations of the Studies	The majority of the studies were research or demonstration programs, and program effects were smaller for routine practice programs. It may not be possible for schools to adopt the research or demonstration programs as successfully without the engagement and training of researchers.

Results

The studies examined universal programs, selective/indicated programs, those that were conducted in special schools/classes, and/or those with multimodal/comprehensive components.

Features of the various programs included:

- Cognitive behavior strategies such as problem-solving skills
- Self-control
- Anger management

- Social skills training, including communication skills and conflict management
- Rewards and incentives
- Parent skills training
- Capacity building for school administrators/teachers
- Counseling for individuals/groups/families
- Peer mediation

The program personnel included researchers, teachers, school administrators and counselors, and parents and peers. The extent of their training for the interventions was not specified. The programs were delivered to individuals, groups, classrooms (including “pull out” programs), and special or alternative schools. Program duration ranged from 1 week to more than 38 weeks.

Findings of the review were as follows: (1) The most common and most effective approaches were universal programs as well as selective/indicated programs for children who participated in the intervention outside of their regular classrooms. (2) Younger students showed larger effects from universal programming than did older students, and children with low socioeconomic status showed larger effects than did their middle-class peers. (3) Effects were larger for better-implemented programs and those involving students at higher risk for aggressive behavior. (4) The multimodal/comprehensive programs and those for special schools or classrooms were ineffective when compared with the universal and selective/indicated programs. (5) There was a lack of evidence that any modality (e.g., behavioral, cognitive, social skills) was significantly more effective at reducing aggressive and disruptive behavior than another. The authors suggest that schools might benefit most by considering ease of implementation when selecting a program and focusing on implementation fidelity.