# Social-Emotional Learning Approaches to Address Bullying & Promote Positive School Climate

**Dorothy L. Espelage, Ph.D.**

**Professor, Educational Psychology**

**Edward William Gutgsell & Jane Marr Gutgsell Endowed Professor**

**Hardie Scholar**

**University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign**

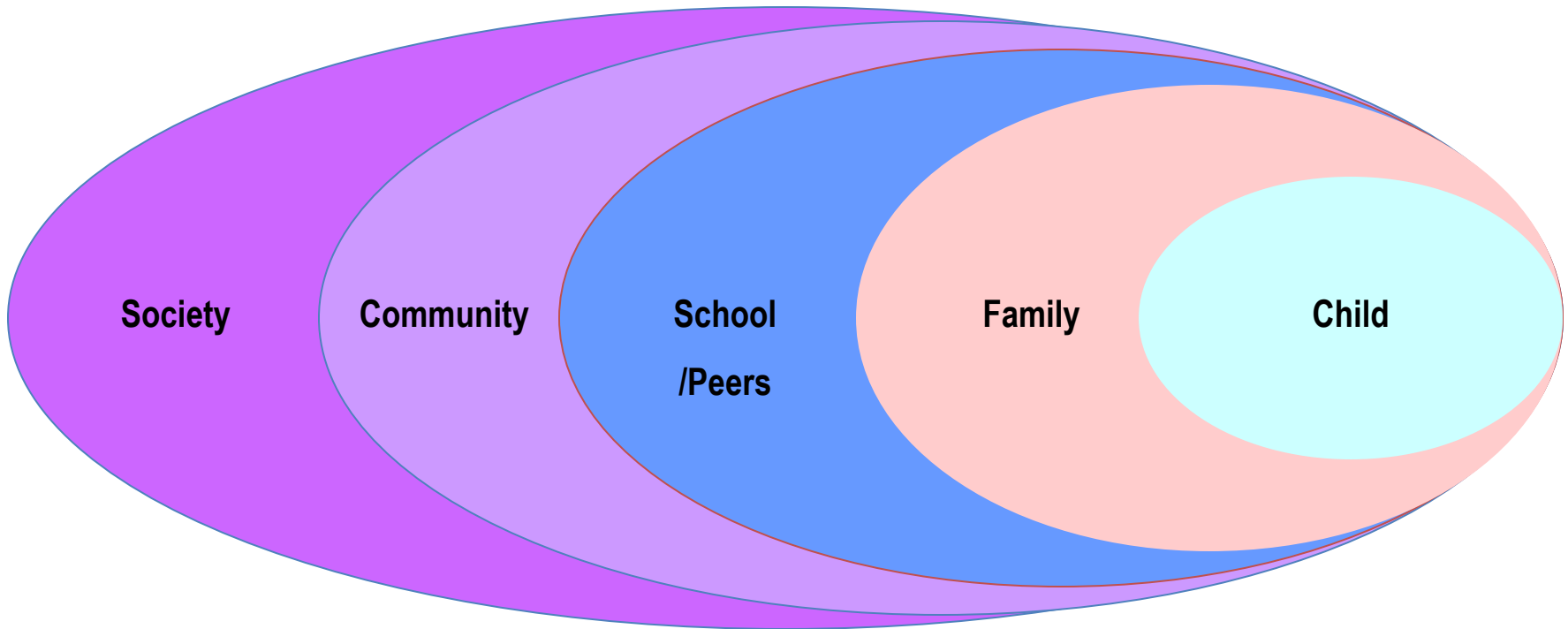**espelage@illinois.edu; dlespelage@gmail.com**

**www.dorothyespelage.com**

**Twitter: DrDotEspelage**

# Social-Ecological Perspective



**(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Swearer & Doll, 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)**

# Bullying in North American Schools

## Edited by Dorothy L. Espelage & Susan M. Swearer

*Bullying in North American Schools* is an exciting compilation of research on bullying in school-aged youth by a representative group of researchers, including developmental, social, counseling, school, and clinical psychologists across North America.

This new edition:

- illustrates the complexity of bullying behaviors and offers suggestions for decision-making to intervene and work to reduce bullying behaviors
- provides empirical guidance for school personnel as they develop bullying prevention and intervention programs or evaluate existing programs
- uses a social-ecological perspective in which bullying is examined across multiple contexts including individual characteristics, peer and family influences, and classroom dynamics
- includes basic research data from leaders in the field of bullying and victimization in the United States and Canada
- teaches practical implications of various types of programs and how to choose and implement one that fits their school ecology.

This text will help your students understand how to prevent bullying behavior and how to select and manage intervention efforts in schools and school districts.

### Table of Contents

Part I: Individual Characteristics Associated With Bullying
Part II: Peer Characteristics Associated With Bullying
Part III: Classroom Characteristics Associated With Bullying
Part IV: Beyond the Classroom: Considering School Climate, Family Relationships, Social Support, and Innovative School Partnerships
Part V: Effective Prevention and Intervention Programs
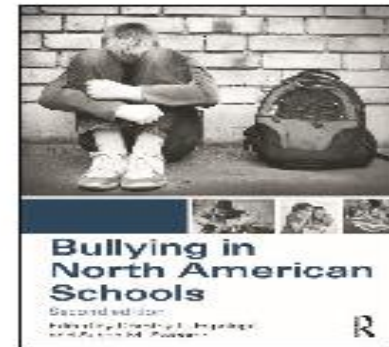
www.guilford.com

# Meta-Analyses & Systematic Reviews: Bully Prevention & Intervention

- **Six** meta-analytic studies published in peer-review publications that have focused on the efficacy of school-based bully prevention programs (Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Ferguson, San Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez, 2007; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008; Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Yeager, Fong, Lee, & Espelage, revise & resubmit)

- **Two** systematic reviews with no meta-analytic statistics (Smith, Schneider, Smith & Ananiadou, 2004; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007).

- These studies indicate that the efficacy of school bullying prevention programs have varied across countries and contexts (Espelage, 2012; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

# Merrell et al., 2008
## *School Psychology Review*

- Evaluated effectiveness of 16 bullying efficacy studies across some six countries (six studies in US; two published; Merrell, 2008).

- All showed small to negligible effects.

- Small positive effects found for enhancing social competence and peer acceptance, and increasing teacher knowledge and efficacy in implementing interventions.

- Reality—No impact on bullying behaviors.

# Ttofi & Farrington, 2011
## *Journal of Experimental Criminology*

- Most comprehensive meta-analysis that applied the Campbell Systematic Review procedures.

-  Reviewed 44 rigorous program evaluations and randomized clinical trials (RCT) (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

- Almost 2/3 of the studies were conducted outside of the US or Canada.

- 1/3 of the programs were based on the Olweus Bully Prevention Program (Olweus, 1999).

- Found that the programs, on average, were associated with a 20% – 23% decrease in bullying perpetration, and a 17% – 20% decrease in victimization.

- However, smaller effect sizes were found for RCT designs in comparison to non-RCT designs.

# Ttofi & Farrington, 2011
## *Journal of Experimental Criminology*

- Decreases in rates of *victimization* were associated with the following special program elements:
  - disciplinary methods
  - parent training/meetings
  - use of videos,
  - cooperative group work
  - greater duration and intensity of the program
- However, work with peers (e.g., peer mediation) was associated with an increase in victimization
- This iatrogenic finding is not new.  Scholars have argued for a decade that peer mediation is contraindicated for bully prevention (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

# Ttofi & Farrington, 2011
## *Journal of Experimental Criminology*

- Decreases in rates of *bully perpetration* for programs that included:
  - parent training/meetings
  - improved playground supervision
  - disciplinary methods
  - classroom management
  - teacher training
  - classroom rules
  - whole-school anti-bullying policy
  - cooperative group work
  - greater number of elements and the duration
- Programs - less effective in the US and in Canada
- Of note, programs inspired by the work of Dan Olweus (1993) had the highest effect sizes

# Bullying Prevention – Pushing The Field Forward

- Bullying co-occurs with other types of aggression and other risky behavior (delinquency, AOD).

- Overlapping risk and protective factors need to be targeted in school-based programs in order to address spectrum of problem behavior (Cataliano et al., 2002).

- Need to consider interventions that target multiple forms of violence and aggression that are salient for early adolescents, including peer victimization, homophobic teasing, and sexual harassment/violence (Espelage, Basile, & Hamburger, 2012; Hamby & Grych, 2013)

# Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

- SEL focuses on the systematic development of a core set of social and emotional skills that help youth more effectively handle life challenges, make better decisions, and thrive in both their learning and their social environments through a climate that supports the practicing of skills.

- A meta-analysis of 213 programs found that if a school implements a quality SEL curriculum, they can expect better student behavior and an 11 percentile increase in test scores (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2010).

# SEL Skills

1. **Self-regulation** (controlling impulses; focusing, sustaining and shifting attention; listening to and remembering information; empathy training)

2. **Perspective taking** (appreciating similarities and differences; recognizing and identifying feelings of others; understanding that feelings can change and are complex)

3. **Emotion management** (recognizing and identifying one's own feelings; learning strategies for calming down strong emotions; managing stress/anxiety)

# SEL Skills

4. **Problem-solving** (learning a process for solving problems; goal setting)

5. **Communication skills** (being assertive; being respectful; negotiating and compromising)

6. **Friendship skills** (cooperation, including others, joining in with others)

# Impact of a School-Randomized Trial of

# *Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention*

# *Program®*

## Eric C. Brown, Sabina Low, & Kevin P. Haggerty

**Social Development Research Group, School of Social Work**
**University of Washington, Seattle, WA**

## Brian H. Smith

**Committee for Children**
**Seattle, WA**

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION** AT ILLINOIS

# Study Design

- **School-randomized controlled trial**
  - Elementary schools matched on key demographic variables (size, %FRPL, mobility rates)
  - Randomized to intervention or wait-listed control
  - Selected four 3rd-5th grade classrooms to collect data
  - One-year, pre-post data collection from school staff, teachers, and students
- **Participants**
  - 33 elementary schools
    - ❖ in 4 counties in northern, central California
    - ❖ 25% rural, 10% small towns, 50% suburban, 15% mid-sized cities
    - ❖ Average $N$ of students = 479 (range = 77 to 749)
    - ❖ Average $N$ of teachers = 24
    - ❖ Average 40% of students receiving FRL

# Study Design

- **Participants**
  - School Staff
    - ❖ $N$s = 1,307 (pretest) and 1,296 (postest)
  - -Teachers
    - ❖ $N$= 128
  - Students
  - ❖ $N$ = 2,940 Students
    - ❖ 94% of target population
    - ❖ 51% Male
    - ❖ 52% White
    - ❖ 42% Hispanic
    - ❖ 6% Asian
    - ❖ 35% Other race/ethnicity
    - ❖ Age range = 7 to 11 years

# Measures

– School Environment Survey (SES)

❖ six subscales (Mean alpha = .91, range = .82 to .95)

– Teacher Assessment of Student Behavior (TASB)

❖ five subscales (Mean alpha = .87, range = .80 to .95)

– Teacher Program Implementation Log

❖ weekly online report of classroom curricula adherence and student engagement

– Student Survey

❖ 13 measures (Mean alpha = .79, range = .68 to .87)

# Results

- ## School Staff
    - **School Anti-Bullying Policies and Strategies (+)**
    - **Student Bullying Intervention (+)**
    - Staff Bullying Intervention
    - **Student Climate (+)**
    - **Staff Climate (+)**
    - **School Bullying-Related Problems (-)**

    ❖ Average $d$ = .296 (range = .212 for Staff Climate to .382 for Anti-Bullying Policies and Strategies).

*Note*: Bolded outcomes indicate significant ($p < .05$) intervention effects.

# Results

- **Teacher Report**
  - **Social Competency (+)**
  - Academic Competency
  - Academic Achievement
  - **Physical Bullying Perpetration (-)**
  - Non-Physical Bullying Perpetration

  - ❖ $d$ = .131 for Social Competency
  - ❖ AOR = .609 for Physical Bullying Perpetration

# Results

**Student Report**
  - – Student Support
  - – Student Attitudes Against Bullying
  - – Student Attitudes Toward Bullying Intervention
  - – **Teacher/Staff Bullying Prevention (+)**
  - – **Student Bullying Intervention (+)**
  - – **Teacher/Staff Bullying Intervention (+)**
  - – **Positive Bystander Behavior (+)**
  - – School Bullying-Related Behaviors
  - – Bullying Perpetration
  - – Bullying Victimization
  - – **Student Climate (+)**
  - – School Connectedness
  - – Staff Climate

*Note*:  Bolded outcomes indicate significant ($p < .05$) intervention effects.

# MULTI-SITE EVALUATION OF SECOND STEP: STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH PREVENTION (SECOND STEP – SSTP) IN PREVENTING AGGRESSION, BULLYING, & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

**Dorothy L. Espelage, Ph.D.**
**Professor, Child Development Division;**
**Educational Psychology,**
**University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign**
**espelage@illinois.edu**

**Sabina Low, Ph.D.,**
**Arizona State University**

**Josh Polanin, M.A., Loyola University, Chicago**
**Eric Brown, Ph.D., SDRG, University of Washington, Seattle**

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION** AT ILLINOIS

# Second Step



Committee for Children, 2008

# Second Step: Addresses Multiple Issues

Prevalence of aggression and bullying in middle schools

Substance abuse is a middle school prevention priority

Bullying program for middle school

*Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention*

One program that focuses on multiple issues

# Social-Emotional Learning

- **Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.**
  - Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.
  - Recognize personal qualities and external supports.
  - Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.

# Social-Emotional Learning

- **Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.**

    – **Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.**

    – **Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.**

    – **Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.**

    – **Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.**
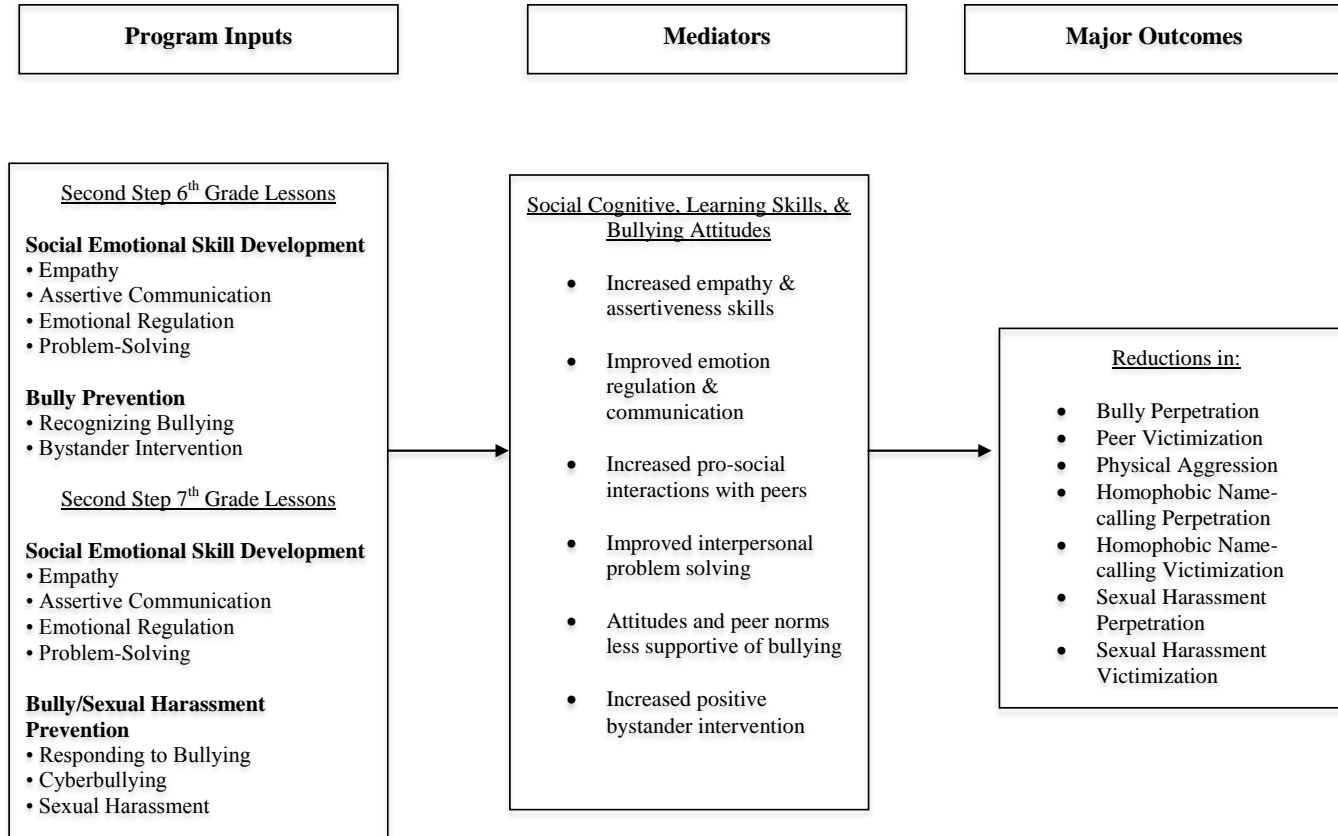
# Social-Emotional Learning

- **Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.**

  - **Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.**

  - **Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.**

  - **Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.**

# Second Step - Logic Model

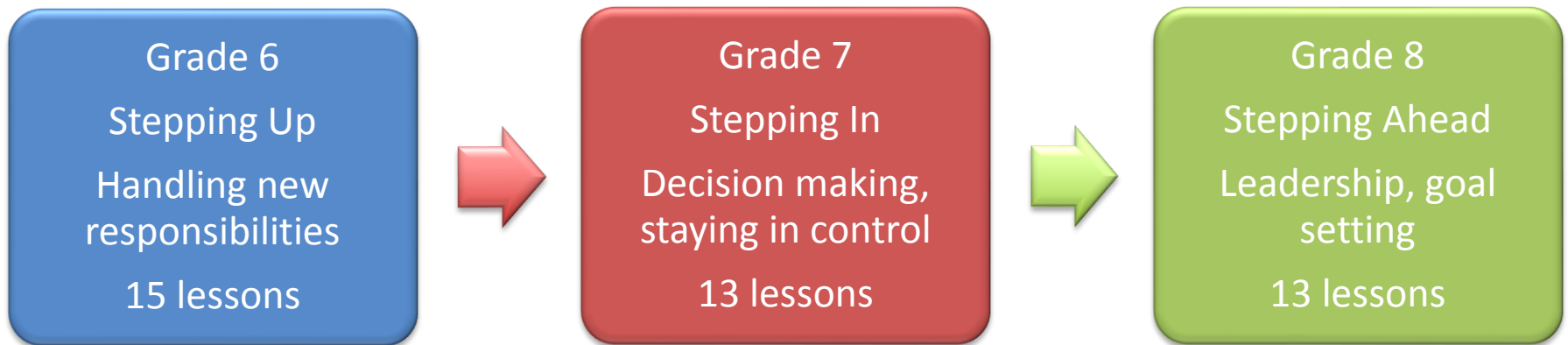Figure 1. Logic Model of Second Step Middle School Program

| Program Inputs | Mediators | Major Outcomes |
|---|---|---|

**Program Inputs**

Second Step 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Lessons

**Social Emotional Skill Development**
• Empathy
• Assertive Communication
• Emotional Regulation
• Problem-Solving

**Bully Prevention**
• Recognizing Bullying
• Bystander Intervention

Second Step 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Lessons

**Social Emotional Skill Development**
• Empathy
• Assertive Communication
• Emotional Regulation
• Problem-Solving

**Bully/Sexual Harassment Prevention**
• Responding to Bullying
• Cyberbullying
• Sexual Harassment

**Mediators**

Social Cognitive, Learning Skills, & Bullying Attitudes

• Increased empathy & assertiveness skills

• Improved emotion regulation & communication

• Increased pro-social interactions with peers

• Improved interpersonal problem solving

• Attitudes and peer norms less supportive of bullying

• Increased positive bystander intervention

**Major Outcomes**

Reductions in:

• Bully Perpetration
• Peer Victimization
• Physical Aggression
• Homophobic Name-calling Perpetration
• Homophobic Name-calling Victimization
• Sexual Harassment Perpetration
• Sexual Harassment Victimization

# Program Goals

## Research Foundations

- Risk and Protective Factors

- Bullying

- Brain Research

- Positive Approaches to Problem Behavior

- Developmental Needs of Young Adolescents

# Levels and Lessons

| Grade 6 | | Grade 7 | | Grade 8 |
|---------|---|---------|---|---------|
| Stepping Up | → | Stepping In | → | Stepping Ahead |
| Handling new responsibilities | | Decision making, staying in control | | Leadership, goal setting |
| 15 lessons | | 13 lessons | | 13 lessons |

- 50 minutes to teach a complete lesson
- Each lesson is divided into two parts that can be taught separately

# Teaching strategies
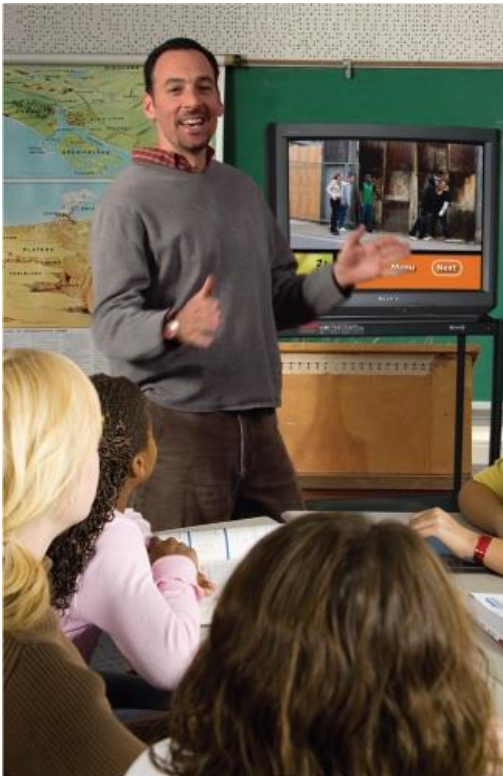


- Use of DVD with rich multi-media content to accompany each lesson
- Carefully constructed approach to partner and group work
  - Class discussion and activities
  - Partner or group exchanges
  - Individual, partner, or group activities
  - Partner or group skill practices
- Individual reflection
- Frequent review of core skills and concepts

# Increasing Student Exposure to Lesson Content

- Additional practice activity

- Reflective writing assessment

- Homework

- Integration activities

- Journal page

# Five Program Themes

- Each level includes the following five themes:
  - Empathy and communication
  - Bullying prevention
  - Emotion management
    - Coping with stress (grades 7 and 8)
  - Problem-solving
    - Decision-making (grade 7)
    - Goal-setting (grade 8)
  - Substance abuse prevention

# Bullying Prevention

- Recognizing bullying (all grades)
- Bystander responses (all grades)
- Grade 7
  - Sexual harassment
  - Cyberbullying
- Grade 8
  - Labels, stereotypes and prejudice
  - Bullying in friendships
  - Bullying in dating relationships
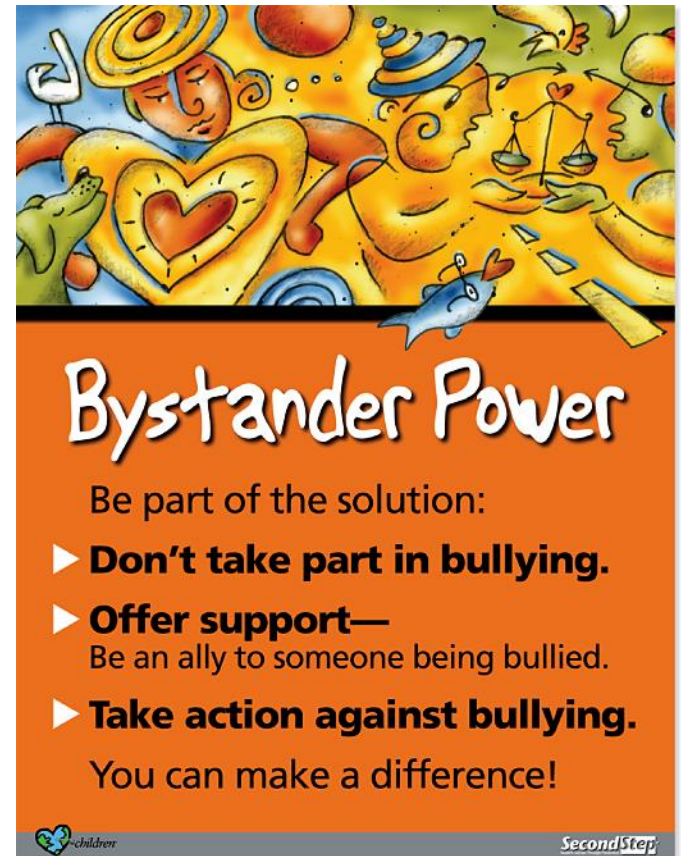
# Problem-Solving, Decision Making and Goal Setting

- Using the Action Steps for
  - Problem-solving (All levels)
  - Decision-making (Level 2)
  - Goal-setting (Level 3)

# Emotion Management



Staying in Control

Notice.
Recognize your physical and mental signs.

Pause.                Think twice.
Use your signal.       Use your brain.

Calm down if necessary.
Use your calming-down strategies.

Reflect.
How did you do?

- Staying in Control
  - Steps for Staying in Control (All grades)
  - Focus on anger and checking assumptions (grade 7)
  - De-escalating tense situations (grade 8)

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AT ILLINOIS

**Emotion Management**
# Coping with Stress

- Taught in grades 7 and 8



Coping with Stress
Coping means doing something positive.
▶ **Use positive self-talk to change your attitude:**
  • Say, "I can cope."
  • Ask, "What can I do?"
▶ **Three things to do:**
  • Use calming-down strategies.
  • Get support.
  • Use the Action Steps.
Sometimes you do all three.

36

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION** AT ILLINOIS

# Substance Abuse Prevention
## Tobacco, Marijuana, Alcohol and Inhalants

- Health, personal and social consequences of using alcohol and other drugs
- Preferred future
- Making good decisions about friends
- Normative education
- Resistance skills
- Making a commitment

# Major Study Objective

**To rigorously evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention program on impacting bullying behavior, peer victimization, and sexual harassment/violence among a large sample of 6th graders in a nested cohort longitudinal design.**

# Study Timeline

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Intervention Schools** | 6th Graders----------------7th Graders----------------8th Graders<br><br>$O_1$  $X_1$          $O_2$          $X_2$          $O_3$          $X_3$          $O_4$ | | | | | |
| **Comparison Schools** | 6th Graders----------------7th Graders----------------8th Graders<br><br>$O_1$                    $O_2$                              $O_3$                              $O_4$ | | | | | |
| | **Fall** | **Spring** | **Fall** | **Spring** | **Fall** | **Spring** |
| **O** = Assessment<br>**X** = Intervention | **Year 1<br>(2010-11)** | | **Year 2<br>(2011-12)** | | **Year 3<br>(2012-13)** | |

# Study Sample

- 36 middle schools successfully recruited from Illinois and Kansas

- 18 matched pairs:  matched on size, reduced lunch, type of school, ethnicity

- Randomly assigned to intervention (Second Step - SSTP) or low-dose control (Stories of Us)

- Student measures at 4 time points, teacher implementation logs after each lesson

# Results for Entire Sample

• The HGLM analysis indicated that students from the Second Step intervention schools had a significantly decreased probability of self-report fighting ($\gamma_{01}$ = -.36, *p* < .05, O.R. = .70) in comparison to students in the control schools.

• The adjusted odds ratio indicated that the treatment effect was substantial; **individuals in intervention schools were 42% less likely to self-report fighting other students after year 1; 53% less likely to report homophobic victimization and 36% less likely to report sexual harassment perpetration after year 2 (in Illinois schools only)**

• Further, schools where teachers used lesson content outside of lesson – greater reduction in global statistic of all seven forms of aggression/victimization (Polanin & Espelage, in press).

# Third Year Results

- No direct effects of Second Step on the outcomes (e.g., bullying perpetration) at Wave 4.

- Indirect effects of Second Step on outcomes Wave 4 by means of individual delinquency trajectories (Waves 1-3).

- More specifically, the Second Step intervention reduces delinquency across Waves 1-3, which in turn reduces bullying perpetration, and the indirect effect (intervention->delinquency->bullying) is significant.

- Decrease in delinquency may contribute to youth being in more prosocial peer groups; less likely to engage in bullying.

# Students with Disabilities –
# Bully Perpetration
# (Espelage, Rose, & Polanin, in press)
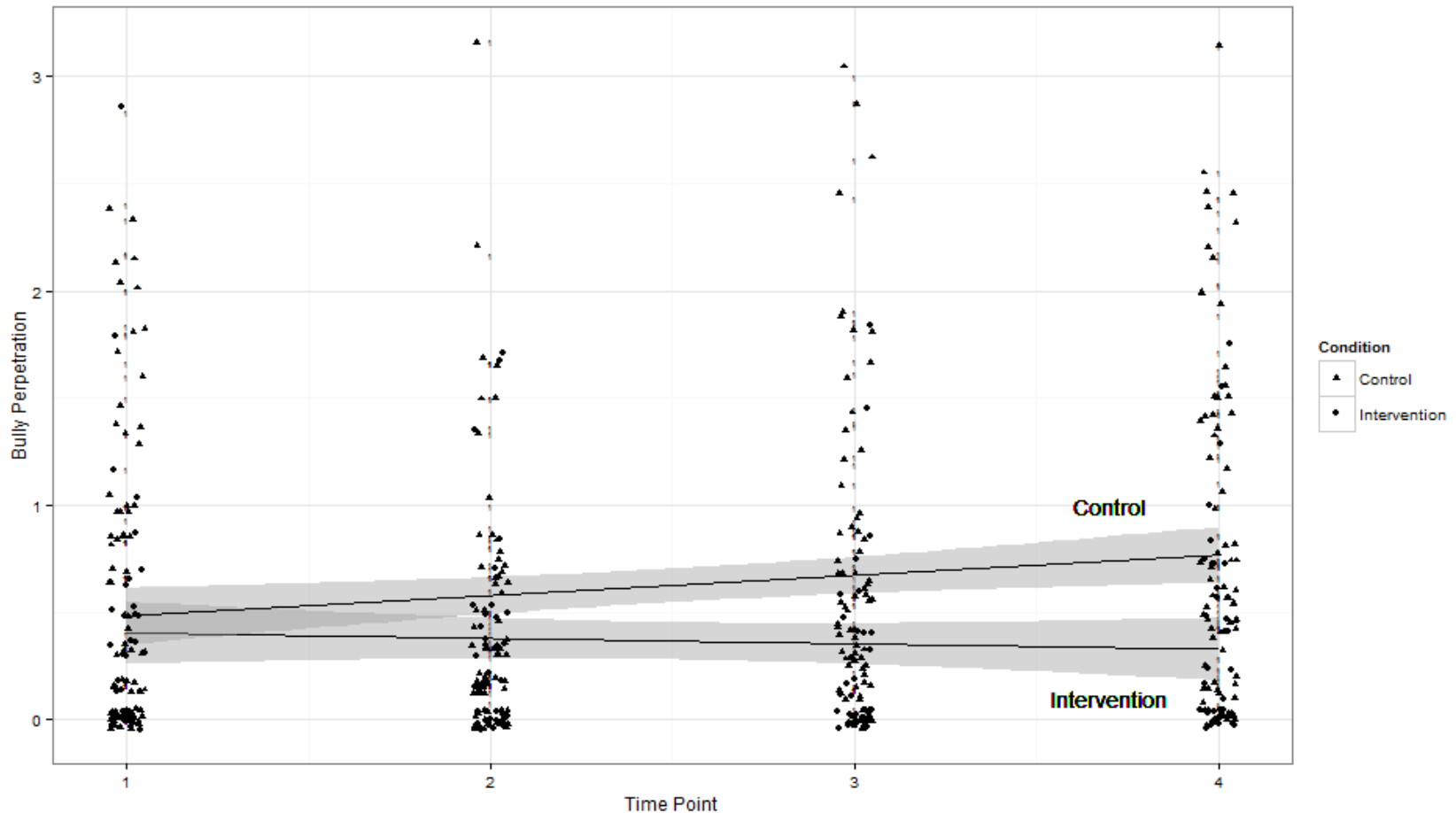
# Realistic Strategies

- Address problem behaviors through multi-tiered approach
- Make sure the adult workplace models healthy social relationships
- Work respectfully and collaboratively with families
- Use videos and classroom discussion guides to talk about the detrimental effects of bullying
- Use social-emotional learning activities to create a positive school climate
- Use a positive behavioral interventions and  supports to respond effectively to student behaviors