Enclosure

Effective Evidence-based Practices for Preventing and Addressing Bullying

There is no one-size-fits-all or simple solution for addressing bullying behavior. Rather, efforts to prevent and address bullying behavior should be embedded within a comprehensive, multitiered behavioral framework used to establish a positive school environment, set high academic and behavioral expectations for all students, and guide delivery of evidence-based instruction and interventions that address the needs of students, including students with disabilities. In such a framework, policies and practices would be aligned and consistently implemented school wide; that is, across general and special education, each grade level, and in all school settings and activities. Data-based decision making would be used to identify needs, analyze problem situations, outline clear evidence-based practices to be used in delivery of instruction and implementation of interventions, and monitor progress toward clear, positive academic and behavioral outcomes as part of an ongoing, continuous improvement model.

When deciding which strategy or strategies to use to address bullying behavior, each school needs to consider the relevant factors given its school environment, students' social and cognitive development, and the evidence on programmatic prevention and intervention. Teachers, administrators, and staff understand that students' social behavior affects their academic learning. In many high-performing schools, academic instruction is combined with effective behavioral supports to maximize academic engagement and in turn, student achievement. That is, successful schools focus on decreasing academic failure and problem behaviors, including bullying, and increasing opportunities for all students to fully participate in learning. There is a growing body of research on promising school bullying interventions that can inform practice. For example, a meta-analysis of research across a 25-year period found that school bullying prevention programs led to changes in knowledge, attitudes, and self-perceptions of those targeted by bullying, engaging in bullying, and bystanders.[1] Another meta-analysis of school-based programs implemented in the United States and internationally to reduce bullying concluded that overall school-based antibullying programs were often effective in reducing bullying, and identified program elements (*i.e.,* critical practices or strategies) associated with effective programs; but results varied based on context.[2] Experimental research has also demonstrated lower rates of bullying and peer rejection when critical practices or strategies were used within a multitiered behavioral framework.[3]

The following effective evidence-based practices are found in many multitiered behavioral frameworks. We encourage you to carefully consider each of these practices as part of any bullying prevention and intervention program you undertake to help ensure that your school and classroom settings are positive, safe, and nurturing environments for all children and adults.

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[1] Merrell, K. W., Gueldner, B. A., Ross, S. W., & Isava, D. M. (2008). How effective are school bullying intervention programs? Meta-analysis of intervention research. *School Psychology Quarterly, 23*, 26-42.

[2] Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2009). School-based programs to reduce bullying and victimization. *Campbell Systemic Reviews, 2009:6.*

[3] Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). Examining the effects of school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports on student outcomes: Results from a randomized controlled effectiveness trial in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 12*, 133-148.

Use a comprehensive multitiered behavioral framework

Just as important as determining which strategies will be used is knowing how, when, and by whom those strategies will be implemented. Evidence-based instructional and intervention strategies for preventing and addressing bullying of students, including students with disabilities, are most effective when used as part of a comprehensive multitiered behavioral framework that engages the whole school community, and establishes and maintains positive, safe, and nurturing school environments conducive to learning for all students. Providing clear and formal instruction for all students, and staff on how to behave in respectful and responsible ways across all school settings and activities is a vital component of this approach.

Issues related to the bullying of students with disabilities should be included in the topics addressed by the school's comprehensive multitiered behavioral framework, and also as a specific area of focus in policies and practices addressing behavioral expectations. In addition to implementing certain steps for the whole school (*e.g.,* consistent rules and rewards for good behavior), a comprehensive multitiered behavioral framework of instruction and interventions also includes using strategies that address bullying and other problematic behaviors, such as steps for groups of students exhibiting at-risk behavior and individual services for students who continue to exhibit troubling behavior.

Using a comprehensive multitiered behavioral framework for making decisions on identifying, implementing, and evaluating effective evidence-based practices helps schools to: (a) organize evidence-based practices, including those that will be used to address bullying of students with disabilities; (b) support the use of evidence-based practices according to the practice guidelines; and (c) monitor the outcomes for students to determine the effectiveness of the evidence-based practices and need for any additional instruction and intervention. Preventing and addressing bullying of students with disabilities needs to be aligned with, and embedded as part of each school's comprehensive multitiered behavioral planning, and given explicit consideration to ensure that the individual needs of each student with a disability are addressed fully in the school-wide plans for creating and sustaining a positive, safe, and nurturing school environment.

One example of a multitiered behavior framework that school personnel can use to plan, implement, and evaluate evidence-based instruction and intervention practices is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The PBIS framework can help to create an appropriate social culture, learning and teaching environment, achieve academic and social success, and minimize problem behavior, including reducing the risks and decreasing the occurrence of bullying. Using this multitiered framework, school personnel establish a continuum of evidence-based behavioral practices that include school-wide strategies, more intense strategies for groups of students exhibiting at-risk behaviors, and individual services for students who continue to exhibit problematic behavior and need additional support.[4] Rather than offering a packaged curriculum, a manualized strategy, or a prescripted intervention, PBIS provides school personnel with a decision-making structure that they can use to identify, implement, and evaluate effective evidence-based instruction and intervention strategies within a comprehensive multitiered framework to prevent and respond to bullying in their school setting.[5] By outlining a comprehensive school-wide approach

[4] Bradshaw et al. (2010).

[5] Sugai, G., Horner, R.H., Algozzine, R., Barrett, S., Lewis, T., Anderson, C., Bradley, R., Choi, J. H., Dunlap, G., Eber, L., George, H., Kincaid, D., McCart, A., Nelson, M., Newcomer, L., Putnam, R., Riffel, L., Rovins, M., Sailor, W., &

with multitiered instruction and intervention, schools work to create school cultures that prevent the development and reduce the occurrence of bullying. In addition, schools are prepared to respond to problematic behavior using a team-based, data-driven problem-solving process when needed.

The following are practices found in many effective, evidence-based behavioral prevention and intervention school-wide frameworks.

Teach appropriate behaviors and how to respond

Preventing bullying begins by actively and formally teaching all students and all school personnel: (1) what behaviors are expected at school and during school activities; (2) what bullying looks like; and (3) how to appropriately respond to any bullying that does occur. Specifically, clear behavioral expectations are taught to students and adults in the same manner as any core curriculum subject.[6] Consistency in behavioral expectations from class to class, adult to adult, and across settings is very important in establishing shared and predictable expectations that both students and school personnel understand and follow.

Provide active adult supervision

Adults play an important role in actively supervising and intervening early to correct behavior problems, especially in common areas (*e.g.,* hallways, cafeteria, playgrounds, and extracurricular events). By moving continuously throughout an area and having positive interactions with students, adults are able to teach and model expected behavior and routines, notice and reward appropriate behavior, and intervene early so that minor rule violations are handled effectively before problematic behaviors escalate.

Train and provide ongoing support for staff and students

Training, ongoing professional development, and support, including coaching, to all personnel on the use of effective evidence-based strategies for responding to inappropriate behavior, including bullying, as well as evidence-based instruction and classroom management practices, are important tools to ensure that school staff are equipped to effectively address bullying. In addition, clear guidance on legal requirements, policy, and practice implications for students with disabilities needs to be explicitly provided in training.

School personnel need to be aware that students with disabilities are significantly more likely than their peers without disabilities to be the targets of bullying.[7] Any number of factors may explain their increased risk of being bullied, including but not limited to the student's physical

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Simonsen, B. (2010). *School-Wide Positive Behavior Support: Implementers' Blueprint and Self-Assessment*. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon.

[6] Sugai et al. (2010).

[7] Young, J., Ne'eman, A., & Gelser, S. (2011). *Bullying and Students with Disabilities. A Briefing Paper from the National Council on Disability*. Washington, DC: National Council on Disability (available at: http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2011/March92011http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2011/March92011).

characteristics, processing and social skills, or simply being in environments with others who are intolerant.[8]

Training is essential in helping school personnel recognize the different forms of bullying that may be directed at students with disabilities, and the unique vulnerabilities these students may have to social isolation, manipulation, conditional friendships, and exploitive behaviors. Students, with and without disabilities, do not always recognize problem behaviors as bullying, or may be reluctant to stand up for themselves or others, seek help, or report bullying due to fear of retaliation, particularly if adults are involved. Due to the complexities of their disabilities, students with intellectual, communication, processing, or emotional disabilities may not understand manipulation or exploitive behavior as harmful, or have the knowledge and skills to explain the situation to an adult who can help.

All students should receive clear, explicit instruction on how to respond to and report bullying. For students with disabilities, instruction on how to respond to and report bullying needs to be provided in a manner consistent with their IEPs and any accommodations that are provided to support learning. In addition, school staff should monitor for bullying and its possible effects on FAPE for students with disabilities, as it is not sufficient for school personnel to rely only on students to report bullying or identify how the bullying is interfering with FAPE.

Develop and implement clear policies to address bullying

We encourage schools to develop clear policies and procedures, consistent with Federal, State, and local laws, to prevent and appropriately address bullying of students, including students with disabilities.[9] In these antibullying policies, schools may want to include a reminder that harassment against a student on the basis of disability and retaliation against any student or other person are also prohibited under Section 504, Title II, and other Federal civil rights laws enforced by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.[10]

Schools should widely disseminate their antibullying policies and procedures to staff, parents, and students, and post the policies in the school and on the school's website. Any published policies and procedures must be accessible to students with visual or other disabilities. Schools should provide ongoing training to staff, parents, and students on their antibullying policies and procedures so that everyone in the school community is aware that bullying behavior will not be tolerated.

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[8] Young et al. (2011).

[9] Under Title II and Section 504, school districts must notify students, parents, and school personnel (including persons with impaired vision or hearing) that the district does not discriminate on the basis of disability; must adopt grievance procedures providing for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging disability discrimination (including harassment); and must designate at least one person to coordinate compliance with those laws. See 28 C.F.R. § 35.106; 28 C.F.R. § 35.107; 34 C.F.R. § 104.7; 34 C.F.R. § 104.8.

[10] It is unlawful to retaliate against an individual for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by Section 504, Title II, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (Age Act), or the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act (BSA Act). See 34 C.F.R. § 100.7(e) (Title VI); 34 C.F.R. § 104.61 (Section 504) (incorporating 34 C.F.R. § 100.7(e) by reference); 28 C.F.R. § 35.134 (Title II); 34 C.F.R. § 106.71 (Title IX) (incorporating 34 C.F.R. § 100.7(e) by reference); 34 C.F.R. § 110.34 (Age Act); and 34 C.F.R. § 108.9 (BSA Act) (incorporating 34 C.F.R. § 100.7(e) by reference).

When bullying occurs, school personnel need to respond quickly, to act in accordance with school policies and procedures, and to address the issue in a professional manner. School personnel should be sure to document the response to a bullying incident in writing.

Monitor and track bullying behaviors

Collecting and analyzing data on bullying behaviors can provide a clearer picture of what is happening in school and school activities, guide planning of prevention, instruction, and intervention efforts, and inform decision making on the effectiveness of current policies and practices over time. Adults tend to underestimate the rates of bullying because students rarely report it, and it often happens when adults are not around.[11] Thus, data collected from multiple sources, including surveys of students, will help establish a more accurate understanding of bullying behaviors occurring in school and school activities. Data collection should be linked to existing data systems (e.g., attendance, discipline) when possible, and include information such as the frequency, types, and location of bullying behavior, other contextual factors, adult and peer responses, and also perceptions of safety and school climate.

Notify parents when bullying occurs

Parents or guardians should be promptly notified of any report of bullying that directly relates to their child in accordance with Federal, State, and local law, policies, and procedures. Clear and accurate communication is needed to inform the parents or guardians of both the student who was the target of bullying behavior and the student who engaged in the bullying behavior.[12] Parents and guardians should also be encouraged to work with their child's teachers and other school personnel to determine the steps that need to be taken to address the bullying and prevent its recurrence.

Address ongoing concerns

Expected school behaviors and routines should be taught to and known by all students and staff. Students whose school behavior is not safe, responsible, and respectable, and consistent with the established school expectations may need: (a) more focused social skills instruction; (b) frequent, specific feedback on their behavior, or (c) increased adult engagement.[13] School personnel should use data measuring an individual student's responsiveness to antibullying instruction and intervention to determine the need for continued, more intensive, and specialized assistance for each student.

Additionally, if a school suspects that bullying is becoming a problem school-wide, a team-based and data-driven problem-solving process should be initiated. Such an approach should examine discipline and performance data to determine: (1) the current status of bullying, including how

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[11] Cohen et al. (2009).

[12] The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, restricts the nonconsensual disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student's education record, including information on disciplinary actions taken against a student. State and local officials are encouraged to seek guidance to be sure that all policies are implemented consistent with these provisions.

[13] Sugai et al. (2010).

often, when, and where specific bullying incidents occur, how many and which students are involved, including whether any are students with disabilities, and which adults, if any, are involved; (2) the extent to which positive school-wide behavioral expectations have been explicitly taught, as well as the extent to which students easily and naturally meet those expectations by routinely behaving in a manner consistent with the expectations at school and school activities; and (3) whether all students are actively academically engaged, successful, and appropriately challenged. Based on the data, a common strategy should be outlined to address the settings (*e.g.,* hallways, cafeterias, and buses) and situations (*e.g.,* unstructured class time, transitions, field trips, and during assemblies) in which bullying frequently occurs. The strategy should include certain steps that will be taken for the whole school (e.g., consistent rules and rewards for good behavior), more intense steps that will be taken for groups of students exhibiting at-risk behavior, and individual services that will be provided for students who continue to exhibit problematic behavior.

Sustain bullying prevention efforts over time

Prevention of bullying should be ongoing, and accepted as an integral component of the school's overall behavioral framework that delineates a school's environment and routine operation. We must remain mindful of the importance of providing positive, safe, and nurturing environments in which all children can learn, develop, and participate. Just as each year schools work to maximize academic engagement and learning outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities, we also must take steps to prevent and address bullying behavior. Effective, evidence-based practices created and sustained within a comprehensive multitiered framework will prevent the occurrence and reduce the impact of bullying in our schools, and also enhance learning and developmental outcomes for all students.

Resources on Preventing and Addressing Bullying

Additional information about preventing and addressing bullying behavior is available from the resources listed below.

- **StopBullying.gov** - This U.S. government website is hosted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education. It provides information on how kids, teens, young adults, parents, educators, and others in the community can address bullying behaviors. Information about cyberbullying also is available. http://www.stopbullying.gov

- **PACER.org/bullying/** - This National Parent Center funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) supports families with children with disabilities by providing assistance to individual families, conducting workshops, and providing information through materials and websites. PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center educates communities nationwide to address bullying through creative, relevant, and interactive resources. PACER's bullying prevention resources are designed to benefit all students, including students with disabilities. PACER also hosts TeensAgainstBullying.org, created by and for teens to address bullying. In addition, PACER hosts KidsAgainstBullying.org, designed by and for elementary school students to learn about bullying prevention. http://www.pacer.org/bullying/

- **PBIS.org** – The Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), funded by OSEP, gives schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective school-wide disciplinary practices. It also: (a) provides technical assistance to encourage large-scale implementation of PBIS; (b) provides the organizational models, demonstrations, dissemination, and evaluation tools needed to implement PBIS with greater depth and fidelity across an extended array of contexts; and (c) extends the lessons learned from PBIS implementation to the broader agenda of educational reform. http://www.pbis.org

- **NICHCY.org** - This national dissemination center funded by OSEP provides a wealth of information on disabilities in children and youth; programs and services available for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities under IDEA; and research-based information on effective practices for children with disabilities (birth through 21 years of age). Information and links to resources that address bullying relative to children with disabilities are also provided. http://nichcy.org/schoolage/behavior/bullying/

- **FindYouthInfo.gov** - This U.S. government website was developed by 12 Federal agencies, including the Department of Education, in partnership with the White House, to disseminate information and to leverage resources to support programs and services focusing on positive, healthy outcomes for youth. The website provides facts and information on a wide range of topics including bullying, cyberbullying, and positive youth development. It also contains information on assessing community assets, generating maps of local and Federal resources, searching for evidence-based youth programs, and keeping up-to-date on the latest, youth-related news. Information is provided on funding opportunities available to those interested in addressing bullying and related topics, as well as on Federal funds awarded to states and communities for use in locating potential resources or partners already available. http://www.FindYouthInfo.gov/

- **Safesupportiveschools.ed.gov** - The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help schools and communities contend with many factors that impact the conditions for learning, such as bullying, harassment, violence, and substance abuse. The Center provides resources, training, and technical assistance for State and local educational agency administrators, teachers, and staff; institutions of higher education; communities, families, and students seeking to improve schools' conditions for learning through measurement and program implementation, so that all students have the opportunity to realize academic success in safe and supportive environments. http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=01