

# SCHOOLS CAN HELP

THERE ARE hundreds of violence prevention programs in existence, but how many are worthwhile—and how can you pick a good one? The problem is similar to that facing schools trying to select a new reading or math or science program. Praiseworthy goals and a good prospectus do not necessarily mean good results.

In 1996, the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado (CSPV) began a search for ten programs that would meet a high standard of effectiveness and would, people at the center hoped, “provide a nucleus for a national violence prevention initiative.” The criteria were rigorous: a strong research design; evidence that, when properly implemented, the program would deter delinquency, drug use, and/or violence to a significant degree; replication at multiple sites; and sustained effects. The center reviewed 450 programs using these criteria. The ten selected are extremely varied, and not all are school-based. Each is described in a separate book in the series “Blueprints for Violence Prevention.”

The brief descriptions that follow are of two Blueprint programs that are particularly appropriate for schools: Bullying Prevention and PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies), which helps young children learn how to understand and deal with their feelings. The descriptions are adapted from overviews that appear in the Blueprint books.

## The Bullying Prevention Program

The Bullying Prevention Program is a multilevel, multi-component program designed to reduce and prevent bully/victim problems in schools. School staff are largely responsible for introducing and carrying out the program, and their efforts are directed toward improving peer relations and making the school a safe and pleasant place to be. The Bullying Prevention Program attempts to restructure the existing school environment to reduce opportunities and rewards for bullying behavior.

**Program Targets.** Program targets are students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools. All students participate in most aspects of the program; students identified as bullies or victims of bullying receive additional individual interventions.

**Program Content.** Core components of the program are implemented at the school, the classroom, and the individual levels:

- School-level components include a student questionnaire, answered anonymously, which assesses the nature and prevalence of bullying at each school; a school conference day for discussing bullying problems and planning the implementation of the program; the formation of a Bullying Prevention coordinating committee to coordinate all aspects of a

school's program; and the development of a coordinated system of supervising students during break periods.

- Classroom components include establishing and enforcing classroom rules against bullying and holding regular classroom meetings with students to increase knowledge and empathy and to encourage pro-social norms and behavior. Meetings with parents to foster more active involvement on their part are considered highly desirable components both at the classroom and school levels.
- Individual-level components include interventions with children identified as bullies and victims and discussions with the parents of these students.

**Evidence of Effectiveness.** The program has been demonstrated to result in: (1) substantial reductions, by 50 percent or more, in the frequency with which students report being bullied and bullying others (peer and teacher ratings of bully/victim problems show roughly similar results); (2) significant reductions in students' reports of general antisocial behavior such as vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy; (3) significant improvements in the “social climate” of the class, as reflected in students' reports of improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude toward schoolwork and school.

**Costs.** In addition to costs associated with compensating an on-site coordinator for the project, the cost (which will vary with the size of the site) is approximately \$200 per school to purchase the questionnaire and computer program to assess bullying at the school, plus approximately \$65 per teacher to cover costs of classroom materials.

## PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)

PATHS is a comprehensive program for promoting emotional and social competencies and reducing aggression and behavior problems in children of elementary school age while simultaneously enhancing the educational process in the classroom. This curriculum is designed to be used by educators and counselors in a multiyear universal prevention model. Although primarily focused on the school and classroom, materials are also included for use with parents.

**Program Targets.** PATHS was developed for use in the classroom with all children of elementary school age. It has been field-tested and researched with children in regular education classroom settings, as well as with a variety of special needs students (including deaf, hearing-impaired, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and gifted). Ideally, children should begin the program when they enter school and continue through grade 5.

**Program Content.** The PATHS curriculum, taught three times per week for at least 20 to 30 minutes per day, provides teachers with systematic, developmentally based lessons, materials, and instructions. PATHS lessons include instruction in identifying, labeling, and expressing feelings, as well as assessing their intensity and managing them; understanding the difference between feelings and behaviors; controlling impulses and delaying gratification; reading and interpreting social cues; and understanding the perspectives of others. Teachers receive training in a two- to three-day workshop and in biweekly meetings with the curriculum consultant.

**Program Outcomes.** PATHS has been shown to improve protective factors and reduce behavioral risk factors. Evaluations have demonstrated significant improvements for children in the program (regular education, special needs, and deaf) compared to children in the control group in the following areas: self-con-

trol, understanding and recognizing emotions, ability to tolerate frustration, use of effective conflict-resolution strategies, thinking and planning skills. PATHS children have also demonstrated significant decreases in the following problems: anxiety/depressive symptoms (teacher report of special needs students); disruptive conduct (teacher report of special needs students); symptoms of sadness and depression (child report from special needs students); bad conduct, including aggression (child report).

**Program Costs.** Program costs over a three-year period would range from \$15/student/year to \$45/student/year (higher figure includes hiring an on-site coordinator).

**For material about these programs, including information on applying for a training and technical assistance grant to fund implementation, call CSPV, (303) 492-8465 or (303) 492-1032; or send an e-mail ([blueprints@colorado.edu](mailto:blueprints@colorado.edu)).**

## Some Resources for Dealing with Antisocial Behavior

THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY is by no means exhaustive, but it brings together a collection of publications on successful approaches to dealing with students who have behavior problems. They are not full-scale programs, like the ones described in the Blueprint series, but each is grounded in rigorous research and contains its own resource guide.

Among the interventions described are several that require intensive work and are, therefore, inappropriate for use in the regular classroom. To make sure they reduce classroom disruptions—rather than adding to them—intensive behavioral interventions should be undertaken only by experienced educators in an appropriate alternative setting.

The bibliography also includes several low-intensity intervention and prevention strategies, appropriate for use in class. Some of these interventions can also be carried out by a paraprofessional as small-group or pull-out programs for one or two students who are creating problems.

To prevent loss of valuable instructional time, these behavior management activities should be integrated with academic lessons, wherever possible.

- *The Tough Kid Tool Box* and *The Tough Kid Book* by William Jenson, Ginger Rhode, and H. Kenton Reavis. Published by Sopris West; (800) 547-6747. Hands-on, practical guides that provide day-to-day assistance with behavior problems.
- *The Acting-out Child: Coping with Classroom Disruption* by Hill Walker. Published by Sopris West. A more detailed discussion of acting-out behavior, with instructions for behavior management interventions and explanations of how and why they work. Includes advice on day-to-day classroom management and instructional practices that can, in many cases, prevent acting-out behavior from starting and minimize it when it does. Also provides suggestions for recognizing adult behavior that can be a catalyst for acting-out behavior.
- *Antisocial Behavior in School: Strategies and Best Practices* by Hill Walker, Geoff Colvin, and Elizabeth Ramsey. Published by Brooks/Cole; (800) 354-9706. Summarizes research in the field, providing a comprehensive description of interventions at all levels; offers guidance for getting families involved; and outlines a system-wide approach to school safety and students with difficult behavior problems.
- *Effective Strategies for Teaching Appropriate Behaviors to Children with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders* by Robert B.

Rutherford, Jr., Mary M. Quinn, and Sarup Mathur (Order #D5133); and *Teacher-Mediated Behavior Management Strategies for Children with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders*, by Sarup R. Mathur, Mary M. Quinn, and Robert B. Rutherford, Jr. (Order #D5135). Published by the Council for Exceptional Children; (800) 232-7323; fax (703) 264-1637. Summaries of research-based practice in easy-to-read format. The strategies are appropriate for all students with behavior problems, whether or not they are identified as disabled.

- *Techniques for Managing Verbally and Physically Aggressive Students* by Beverly Johns and Vivian Carr. Published by Love; (303) 221-7333; (Order #9505.) Hands-on suggestions for dealing with confrontations with students, including breaking up fights and defending oneself from less violent physical attacks such as hair-pulling.

### Organizations

#### Center for Effective Behavioral Supports at the University of Oregon

E-mail: [Ebsweb@darkwing.uoregon.edu](mailto:Ebsweb@darkwing.uoregon.edu)

Web site: <http://brt.uoregon.edu/ebs/>

#### Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice

(888) 457-1551; fax (202) 944-5454

E-mail: [Center@air-dc.org](mailto:Center@air-dc.org)

Web site: <http://www.air-dc.org/CECP>

#### The Council for Exceptional Children

(888) CEC-SPED; TTY (703) 264-9446; fax (703) 264-9494

E-mail: [service@cec.sped.org](mailto:service@cec.sped.org)

Web site: <http://www.cec.sped.org>

#### Council for Children with Behavior Disorders

Web site: <http://www.air-dc.org/CECP/CCBD>

#### Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior

E-mail: [lvdb@darkwing.uoregon.edu](mailto:lvdb@darkwing.uoregon.edu)

Web site: <http://www.interact.uoregon.edu/ivdb/ivdb.html>

#### Kentucky Center for School Safety

Web site: <http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/behave/homepage.html>

#### Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Web site: <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

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