Evidence-based prevention of school bullying: KiVa antibullying program

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School is not only about learning...
Students NOT feeling safe at school, % (Finland, 2009)
Not feeling safe at school

- Correlates significantly with being bullied by peers
Bullying

- Systematic aggressive behavior against a person who finds it difficult to defend him/herself against the perpetrator(s)
  - Repeated attacks and power differential are central features
Bullying

• Takes numerous forms
  – Most often verbal abuse, public ridicule
  – BUT many other forms as well: physical, social isolation, rumor-spreading, cyberbullying, …
Students targeted by different forms of bullying

A child who is bullied is typically targeted in multiple ways
The social architecture of bullying

8%  12%
The social architecture of bullying

- Participant roles in bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996)
The social architecture of bullying

- Participant roles in bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996)

- Assistants of the bully: 7%
- Reinforcers of the bully: 12%
- Outsiders: 24%
- Defenders of the victim: 17%
The social architecture of bullying

• Despite their anti-bullying attitudes, many students behave in ways which maintain, even fuel the bullying behavior.
The responses of peer bystanders *matter*

- **Individual effects: short term**
  - the defended victims are better adjusted than the undefended ones (Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing, & Salmivalli, 2010)

- **Individual effects: long term**
  - the most negative memory related to bullying is often “no-one cared” (Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2000)
The responses of peer bystanders matter

- Classroom level:
  - In classrooms where students tend to reinforce the bully, rather than support the bullied classmates...
    - Bullying occurs more frequently (Salmivalli, Voeten & Poskiparta, 2011)
    - Vulnerable children (e.g., socially anxious ones) are more likely to end up as targets of bullying (Kärnä, Voeten, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2010)
KiVa antibullying program

• The meaning of ”KiVa”
• Developed at the University of Turku with funding from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture
  – Program co-leaders: Professor Christina Salmivalli and PhD, special researcher Elisa Poskiparta
• In Finland, used by 90% of schools providing comprehensive education (basic education, grades 1-9)
• Now implemented in several other countries as well
In order to reduce bullying...

- We do not necessarily need to change the victims, making them "less vulnerable".
- Influencing the behavior of *bystanders* can reduce the rewards gained by the bullies and consequently, their motivation to bully in the first place.

However, *the victims* need to feel that they are heard and helped by the adults at school.
- *The bullies* need to be confronted for their unacceptable behavior.
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• The bullies need to be confronted for their unacceptable behavior
KiVa™ universal and indicated actions

- **Preventive**
  - Visible vests for persons supervising recess time
  - Student lessons and materials involved (teacher manuals, short films)
  - Online surveys with feedback of progress
  - Monitoring implementation and long-term effects

- **Interventive**
  - Online antibullying games
  - KiVa™ team Clear guidelines for tackling bullying

- **Monitoring**
  - Presentation graphics for student lessons, for the meeting of the school staff, and for meetings with parents
  - Parent materials
Activities included in student lessons

- Creating awareness of how the group might maintain and fuel bullying
- Providing safe strategies to support victimized peers
Oho, se pitääkin. Akun puolta.
Hei, se onkin mun puolella.
No niin, nyt ne rupeaa kiisaamaan sitäkin.

Mitä sanoit?
Inisikö hyttynen jossain?

Mitä teet nyt?
- Menan pois.
- Puhun äkiltä.
- Puhun demaille.
I don't want to come to school anymore. Other kids are not playing with me anymore...
Indicated actions: Tackling the cases of bullying
Monitoring tool: Annual school-based feedback
Parents’ involvement

- Information newsletter to parents (www)
- Parents’ guide (print/www)
- Back-to-school night
Indicated actions -
Tackling the cases coming to attention

- Individual discussions with the victim and with the bullying children

KIVA TEAM

- + utilizing prosocial, high-status peers
  - "your help is needed" CLASSROOM TEACHER
    - setting standards for others
    - making the victim feel better
    - protecting the victimized child from further attacks
Changes in being bullied by different forms during one school year, RCT 2007-2008

- **KiVa vs. Control**
Additionally KiVa...

- reduced students’ anxiety and depression and had a positive impact on their perceptions of peer climate  
  (Williford et al, 2011)

- positive effects on school liking and academic motivation  
  (Salmivalli, Garandeau & Veenstra, 2012)
KiVa also Influenced…

• children’s perceptions on their teachers’ attitudes and how well the teacher is able to do to reduce bullying

• teachers self-evaluated competence to tackle bullying, and teacher perceptions of bullying.

(Ahtola et al. 2012; Veenstra et al. 2014)
Long-term effects: Proportion of students who have been bullied / who are bullying others repeatedly in KiVa schools, 2009-2015
NOT feeling safe at school, %

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<th>Grade</th>
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• 2009 Roll-out in Finland: 1465 schools
• 2010 + 817 Finnish schools
• 2011 + 290 Finnish schools + Åland Island
• 2012 + 31 Finnish schools
• Evaluation studies in the Netherlands and in Delaware begin
• Pilots in Wales, Luxembourg, Sweden
• 2013 + 17 Finnish schools
• Evaluation studies in Estonia, Italy, Wales begin
• 2014 The 1st training for international trainers
• Implementation in Belgium, Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, UK, The European School Network
• 2015 The 2nd training for international trainers
• Implementation in Sweden
• 2016 The 3rd training for international trainers
• Evaluation study in Chile begins
• Implementation in Hungary
WHO study 2009/2010: being bullied by others

- HBSC Average (11 years):
  - Boys: 15%
  - Girls: 12%

- HBSC Average (13 years):
  - Boys: 13%
  - Girls: 11%

- HBSC Average (15 years):
  - Boys: 10%
  - Girls: 7%
Finland: Been bullied, %

Spring 2009, N > 150 000
Finland: Bullying others, %

Spring 2009, N > 150,000
Finland: Teachers can do "much" or "very much" to decrease bullying, % respondents
Proportion of students being bullied repeatedly, Finnish KiVa schools, 2009-2015
Proportion of students bullying others repeatedly, Finnish KiVa schools, 2009-2015