Leveraging Technology & Engaging Youth to Promote Behavioral Health and Educational Success

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Policies & Procedures – Behavioral Expectations (PBIS)

Effective Bully/Violence Prevention

Social-Emotional Competences

Ongoing ALL-Staff Training

Espelage 1995-2022
Interconnected Risks

Trusting Relationships

Supportive Schools

Student Well-Being/Mental Health

Prosocial Peers

Suicide Prevention

Espelage 1995-2022
Youth-Driven Interventions

• Youth do feel that schools should work harder to establish a positive school climate.

• Adults need to pay attention to emotional and physical safety.

• Youth indicated that fairness & equity issues need to be addressed directly.

• Research shows that students in schools with positive climates are more likely to report on the situations, individuals and events that endanger a school’s safety.

• Such a climate can also improve student bonding and school engagement and serve as a protective factor against a host of negative outcomes over the long term within and beyond the school context.

(Vincent, Espelage, Walker, et al., 2017, 2018; Espelage et al., 2019, 2020, 2022)
How did this make you feel?

- Frustrated
- Afraid
- Depressed
- Angry
- Worried
- Other

Tell us more about this:

Type here...

Submit
Virtual Reality Bully Prevention Approach

- Original curriculum: *Stand Up: Virtual Reality to Activate Bystanders Against Bullying*
  - Informed by the empirical base (e.g., Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012), developed by an advisory board of youth aggression experts and professional GoogleVR screenwriters.

- 6 sessions delivered by a study staff member once per week

- 3 embedded VR experiences (created for Daydream) focusing on (1) the feelings of victims (2) the role of messages youth get about bullying in allowing it to continue and (3) being a change agent against bullying through small, realistic steps

- Each lesson also included processing discussions and perspective taking activities

Virtual Reality Bully Prevention Approach

• Results of small scale RCT (two classrooms) – significant increases in empathy & willingness to intervene

• Youth liked the 5-6 minute VR experiences, but found the curriculum less attractive

• ...This pilot justifies further exploration of incorporating VR to reduce youth violence

BullyDown: Social-emotional Learning App

Ybarra, Espelage, Valido, & Hong, 2019; Espelage et al., 2020

NICHD R21HD104369
Suicide Ideation 2021

Seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
Serious considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months.

**Suicide Ideation 2021**

Serious considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months.

**Sex of Sexual Contacts (%)**
- Opposite sex only: 26
- Any same sex: 58

**Sexual Orientation (%)**
- Heterosexual (straight): 15
- LGBTQ+: 45

**Source:** Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
Suicide Attempts 2021
One or more suicide attempts during the past 12 months.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
Suicide Attempts 2022

One or more suicide attempts during the past 12 months.

Sex of Sexual Contacts (%)

- Opposite sex only: 12%
- Any same sex: 33%

Sexual Orientation (%)

- Heterosexual (straight): 6%
- LGBTQ+: 22%

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
Bullied at School 2021

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
Bullied at School 2021

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
Sexual Violence 2021

Experienced sexual violence from anyone during the past 12 months.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
Sexual Violence 2021

Experienced sexual violence from anyone during the past 12 months.

Sex of Sexual Contacts (%)

- Opposite sex only: 17%
- Any same sex: 39%

Sexual Orientation (%)

- Heterosexual (straight): 8%
- LGBTQ+: 22%

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
School Connectedness 2021
Felt Close to People at School.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
School Connectedness 2021
Felt Close to People at School.

**Sex of Sexual Contacts (%)**
- Opposite sex only: 61%
- Any Same Sex: 52%

**Sexual Orientation (%)**
- Heterosexual (straight): 65%
- LGBTQ+: 52%

**Source:** Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)
Sources of Strength employs a radically strength-based approach to prevention in schools – PEER LEADERS/TRUSTED ADULTS.

Sources of Strength focuses on developing protective factors, using a model that is strength-based.

Using an active learning model, incorporating art, storytelling, small group sharing and games.

Sources of Strength explores the eight protective factors, depicted in the wheel of strength, to develop resilient individuals and communities.
High school program outcomes have shown:

• Increase in connectedness to adults
• Increase in school engagement
• Increase in likelihood to refer a suicidal friend to an adult
• Increased acceptability of seeking help
• Largest increases amongst students with a history of suicidal ideation (Wyman et al., 2010)
• Decreases in sexual harassment/violence & dismissiveness of sexual harassment (Espelage et al., 2023)
• Decreases in 2nd suicide attempt (Wyman et al., 2023)

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Resources (espelage@unc.edu)

The Choose Kindness Project
- https://www.thechoosekindnessproject.org/resources-support/

Making Caring Common
- https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-by-topic/bias-bullying

Facing History and Ourselves
- https://www.facinghistory.org/upstander

StopBullying.gov
- https://www.stopbullying.gov