

**Peer-to-Peer Telemeeting:
Implementing the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
Thursday, March 31st, 2005, 2-3:30pm Eastern Time**

Grantee Site Participants

Johnson County Department of Education– Mountain City, TN (SS/HS)

- Rural site
 - Working with students K-12
 - Beginning the process of implementing the Olweus program
- Bridgette Hackett (*hackettb@jocoed.k12tn.net*)
- Roger Walters

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District– Fairbanks, AK (SS/HS)

- Population of 80,000 students in 31 schools, K-12
 - Will be implementing the Olweus program in three schools this year, seven by next year
- Traci Nero (*thero@northstar.k12.ak.us*)
- Margie Kurzbard (*mkurzbard@northstar.k12.ak.us*)

Puget Sound Educational Service District – Fife, WA (SS/HS)

- Launched the Olweus program in five elementary schools last fall
 - Working with an additional two elementary and three middle schools
- Jennifer MacKillop (*jmackillop@psesd.org*)

Russellville School District – Russellville, AR (SS/HS)

- In their second year of their Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant
 - Implementing Olweus in a middle school with 750 sixth- and seventh-grade students
- Sylvia Woods (*sylvia.woods@rsdmail.k12.ar.us*)

Franklin Special School District – Franklin, TN (SS/HS)

- Serving 25,000 students in 43 schools
 - Just beginning to implement the Olweus program throughout the system – K-12
- Susan Eades (*EadesSus@fssd.org*)
- Sherry Stewart
- Ashley Franklin
- Wanda Ridgeway
- Marlene Vergara
- Elaine Wilkins
- Hershel Hunter

Melrose Alliance Against Violence – Melrose, MA (YVPP)

- A community-based organization in their first year of SAMHSA funding
 - Implementing an Olweus-based bullying prevention model in a suburban middle school with 750 students.
 - Just completed teacher training
- Rebecca Mooney (*rmaav@gis.net*)

Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency – Bettendorf, IA (SS/HS)

- Implementing the Olweus program with kindergarten through middle school students
 - Just finished teacher training
- Bob Mata (*matar@davenportschools.org*)
- Yvonne Hamilton (*hamiltonty@mail.davenport.k12.ia.us*)
- Cindy Swanson
- Sue Morlock Putnam

DePelchin Children's Center – Houston, TX (YVPP)

- Will be implementing the Olweus program at a middle school with 85% Hispanic students
 - Will move into three elementary schools next fall, targeting grades 4-5
- Rebecca Skillern (*rskillern@depelchin.org*)
- Anna Abarquez (*aabarquez@depelchin.org*)

Bergen County Technical School District – Paramus, NJ (SS/HS)

- Still in the thinking stage, considering elementary through middle-school level
 - Work with alternative education students
- Lorna Smith (*lorsmi@bergen.org*)
- Keith Robinson (*keirob@bergen.org*)
- Elyse Schifrien (*eschifrien@emerson.k12.nj.us*)
- Barbara Costagliola (*bcostagliola@emerson.k12.nj.us*)
- Seema Lodhi (*seelod@bergen.org*)
- Bonnie Berkowitz (*bberkowitz@co.bergen.nj.us*)
- Janice Jevrud

YWCA of York – York, PA (YVPP)

- Implementing bullying prevention through a community agency, rather than a school
 - Will be starting student groups in April
 - Working with middle- and high-school students, mostly African-American
- Sandy Balkit (*sbalkit@ywcaofyork.org*)

Switchboard of Miami – Miami, FL (YVPP)

- Community agency implementing a bullying prevention program at an inner-city middle school
 - Mostly immigrant, African-American and Hispanic students
- Janet Mapp (*jmapp@switchboardmiami.org*)
- Nathan Gomez
- Jenny Aumoithe

Washington Elementary School District – Phoenix, AZ (SS/HS)

- Primary focus is grades 4-8
 - Training has been planned for four schools
- Robin Lewis (*rlewis@wesd.k12.az.us*)
- Mike Christensen
- Tamara Lockett (*tlucket@wesd.k12.az.us*)

Spokane School District #81 – Spokane, WA (SS/HS)

- Implementing bullying prevention per state requirement for the past four years
 - Grades K-12, diverse population
 - NOT using the Olweus program
- Suzanne Smith (*suzannes@spokaneschools.org*)
- Sallie Christensen (*salliec@spokaneschools.org*)
- Roger Moses (*rogerm@spokaneschools.org*)

Lawrence Unified School District – Lawrence, KS (SS/HS)

- In the process of building a commitment to the Olweus program
 - Probably will implement at the elementary level
- Chris Squier (*csquier@usd497.org*)
- Diane Ash

Proviso Township High Schools – Maywood, IL (SS/HS)

- Offering the Olweus program to elementary and middle schools
 - Has not yet been implemented
- Trina Bauling (*provisosshs@hotmail.com*)
- Michele Shade (*micheleshade@yahoo.com*)

National Center Staff Present

Anne Wang - *TA Specialist and Evaluation Specialist / Moderator*
Ron Slaby - *YVPP Team Leader*
Lauren Gilman - *TA Specialist*

Discussion:

Q: Have you experienced any problems with the implementation of the Olweus program?

- *Sylvia Woods – Russellville, AR:* Their main problem has been competition with academic priorities and the issue of benchmark testing (mandated by No Child Left Behind). Teachers liked the idea of the program but did not want to take time to focus on anything that didn't relate to test scores. Specifically, they did not want to spend class time on the classroom meeting component of the program – they thought they should stay focused on academic subject matter at all times.
- *Anna Abarquez – DePelchin Children's Center, Houston, TX:* They have had a difficult time with both teachers and administrators. They "want us to come in, do it, and leave" rather than taking ownership of the program themselves.
- *Jennifer MacKillop – Puget Sound, WA:* In their experience, the Olweus program will only work with a school that is at the point of "site readiness." All the time commitments are outlined for staff so they know what they are getting into. School personnel must sign a Memorandum of Agreement that states the level of commitment of the school, including: designating a coordinating committee that commits to monthly meetings; training for staff; administering questionnaires; regular classroom meetings; staff discussion groups; establishment of schoolwide rules; willingness to engage parents. At least 70% of the school staff has to say, "we want this."
- **Ron Slaby, National Center.** One way to confront the argument that this program will take away from time that needs to be spent on academics is to look at the research presented in a document developed by the Learning First Alliance and recommended by the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, entitled "Every Child Learning: Safe and Supportive Schools (2001)" (see <http://www.learningfirst.org/publications/safeschools/>). This booklet describes the relationship between academics and social programs. There is research to support the claim that social/emotional learning programs enhance learning and achievement, as well as school safety. In addition, it has been shown that bullying was a precursor to many of the school shootings.

The Olweus program is designed to be implemented on three levels: administration, teachers, and students. When I asked Dan Olweus which was the most important level, he said that the key to the program is the connection between students and teachers; however, without buy-in from administration, it will not work effectively.

- *Janet Mapp – Switchboard of Miami, FL:* Their agency was responding to data about a high level of bullying incidents at the local middle school. School violence is often a reflection of violence in the community, and in this case, it was becoming a serious problem in the school.

However, this school had very low state test scores and had recently been given an "F" by the state for student achievement. Thus, initially it was very difficult to get buy-in from teachers. Teachers were all working towards the goal of bringing up grades/test scores, and program staff had to adapt to this climate. As a YVPP site, they are not required to implement an EBI with fidelity, so they decided to adapt the Olweus model to meet the needs of their community. They were able to obtain an office in the school, and got the message across that it is a place where children can come to if they need support around the issue of bullying. Children are referred by teachers or administrators, and sometimes they self refer; a total of 10-20 students per day use this resource!

Project staff do a televised presentation in all classrooms once a week, and then work in individual classrooms as needed, per the requests of teachers or administrators. They have also set up a club for children to learn to be role models, and to empower them to take action as bystanders. They also provide mediation on a case-by-case basis, depending on circumstances and the victim's own wishes. Although this is not a practice that is part of the Olweus program, the staff of this project believes that it can be empowering to students. It teaches students tools that they can use in the future.

Q: How much time commitment is needed?

- *Jennifer MacKillop – Puget Sound, WA:* A great deal of time is needed at the beginning to get the program started. The coordinating committee does the planning, regarding disseminating surveys and getting parents involved. These components need to be established before the staff

training and kickoff. Specifically, time needs to be allotted for: (a) teacher discussion groups; (b) planning and implementing a parent event; and (c) faculty meeting sessions for teachers to learn intervention skills and get resources. Eventually, when the program becomes institutionalized, the time commitment diminishes and/or gets distributed differently.

- *Rebecca Skillern – DePelchin Children’s Center, Houston, TX:* Building and maintaining the community collaborative also takes time. It’s important to get buy-in from the community, not just school administrators.
- *Margie Kurzbard – Fairbanks, AK:* After they did their survey, they were deluged with incident reports that the staff had to respond to. Once you open up the topic of bullying, it is important to make the time to respond to whatever might come up.
- *Sylvia Woods – Russellville, AR:* They also had a large number of reports after the program began. There was some concern about an increase in bullying behavior, but it is likely that rather than a rise in incidents, there was a rise in awareness about what bullying is and what should be reported.

Q: The Olweus program and the issue of “difference”

- *Sallie Christiansen – Spokane, WA:* They have chosen NOT to implement the Olweus program because of this issue. One of the basic beliefs in the Olweus model is that bullying is not a result of differences (e.g., ethnic, racial, cultural), but rather about power. Their school district is extremely diverse, and they believe that these differences are at the root of conflicts among children. They felt that the Olweus program was not a good fit for their school district’s mission.
- *Margie Kurzbard – Fairbanks, AK:* Bullying is about power differentials. Olweus believes that people use differences as a fuel or an excuse for bullying, but that these differences are not the underlying cause.
- *Rebecca Mooney – Melrose, MA:* Their trainer/consultant (Stan Davis) has given them the message that children pick on other children who are isolated. It isn’t an issue of “differences.”
- *Jennifer MacKillop – Puget Sound, WA:* One of the schools they work with is a middle school that is struggling with academics. The school has a significant Latino population, students from 35 countries, and heavy gang involvement. They are implementing the Olweus program in this environment and are not sure of the impact yet, but so far it has been positive.

The key is to look at pro-social rewards for active bystanders, and to provide extra support for teachers as needed within a particular environment (cultural and otherwise). Students are rewarded informally by teachers with specific verbal praise. Students also get rewarded in groups. The Olweus program is on the agenda at every faculty meeting, and teachers are also rewarded for doing classroom meetings in the following manner. Teachers put their names in a hat if they have done the classroom meetings, and they talk to each their fellow teachers about the content of their meetings. Then two teachers names are chosen randomly from the hat to receive prizes (e.g., gift certificates).

Q: What is covered in the classroom meetings?

- *Rebecca Skillern – DePelchin Children’s Center, Houston, TX:* They cover a curriculum that involves watching a clip of a video and discussing an issue. The classroom discussion focuses on issues such as how to identify bullying, and how to intervene if you see it happening in your school.
- *Margie Kurzbard – Fairbanks, AK:* The purpose of these meetings is to build community, and they do not have to focus exclusively on bullying. There is not a required curriculum, but rather a series of support materials that teachers use to get the anti-bullying message across. They learn vocabulary, go over the rules, talk about the difference between tattling and reporting, etc. It is a time for the class to discuss safety issues as a community. Messages and language are age-appropriate, based on the grade level in which it is used.

Q: What curricula can be used for high school-aged children?

- *Margie Kurzbard – Fairbanks, AK:* “Bullyproofing Your School” provides good material to use at the middle through high school levels. (<http://www.hamfish.org/programs/313.html>)
- *Jennifer MacKillop – Puget Sound, WA:* “Gender Violence, Gender Justice” can be incorporated at the high school level. It addresses harassment issues for grades 7-12. (http://www.transformcommunities.org/tctatsite/tools/tgend_vil_gend_jus.html)
- **Ron Slaby – National Center:** This website has good materials for both children and adults is: <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/> It includes "webisodes" (cartoon vignettes to spur discussion) for children, as well as resources for adults.

Q: What about parent meetings?

- *Sandy Balkit – YWCA of York, PA:* We have not done one of these for the Olweus program yet. But based on experience, the best ways to get parents to attend are to include: 1) recognition of their children; and 2) FOOD!
- *Jennifer MacKillop – Puget Sound, WA:* SAMHSA materials have been useful as handouts at parent meeting (<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>).
- *Rebecca Skillern – DePelchin Children’s Center, Houston, TX:* There is no required number of parent sessions, and there is no penalty or compromise in fidelity if parent turnout is low.

Q: Did everyone go through the process of forming a committee and launching the program first in the community?

- *Rebecca Skillern – DePelchin Children’s Center, Houston, TX:* They first worked with the school as a whole, then worked with teachers, and finally with individual students. Teacher training came before the official “kickoff” in the schools.

Q: How does the bystander component fit in?

- **Ron Slaby – National Center:** Dan Olweus introduced the idea of the *relationship* between the victim and aggressor as the central issue to address. Since then, other programs have expanded the scope of bullying prevention by introducing the role of the bystander in preventing bullying (e.g., *Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders*, developed here at EDC by Ron Slaby, Renee Wilson-Brewer, and Kim Dash). Dan Olweus is working on incorporating this concept, which greatly expands the scope of the program.

Q: What evidence or studies support the Olweus program with different populations, particularly with multiple ethnic groups in the same school?

- *Jennifer MacKillop – Puget Sound, WA:* If you look at Blueprints Book 9 (<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/publications/blueprints/BP-009.html>), it sums up evaluation outcomes. Some research has been done with different populations, but primarily with white and African-American students. It is important to have a trainer who is experienced in working with different populations, and incorporates diversity into the training.
- **Ron Slaby – National Center:** This is a growing area of research. The field is shifting, and developers are looking for opportunities to test programs with different populations, and to show impact. The Colorado Trust has just awarded \$8.5 million to support 45 anti-bullying initiatives in the state of Colorado, and more data should come out of this and other initiatives.

Q: What should we expect from the training? Are trainings/trainers very different from one another?

- *Jennifer MacKillop – Puget Sound, WA:* She noted that she has become a certified Olweus trainer herself. This is what you can expect a trainer to do:
 - Order supplies
 - Work with school readiness
 - Get stakeholder combination, serve as consultant for coordinating committee
 - Conduct two-day training for committee (dealing with awareness; research; myths; prevalence data; school data; strategies to be used at the school; classroom and individual levels; practice interventions; and information regarding follow-up for individuals). Participants should leave with slides that can be used for training staff (4-6 hours).
 - Ongoing consultation – 12 month commitment

Unanswered questions:

- **Aside from the bullying questionnaires, what instruments are being used to evaluate these programs?**
- **What are the most important factors in achieving sustainability of the program?**
- **What experience have grantees had in implementing this program or others at the middle school level?**

To continue discussion of these and other issues, please go to:

http://www.promoteprevent.org/online_discussions/