Bullying Prevention and Support among School-aged Children and Youth:

A Review of the Literature

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Prepared on behalf of: The Bullying Prevention Task Force
Our Kids Network, School Years Committee

Executive Summary

Introduction

Bullying among school aged children and youth has garnered growing attention over recent years, providing a strong impetus to address this complex social issue. The complexity of such issue however, warrants greater insight and understanding into the contextual factors surrounding bullying, such as contributing factors, impacts on involved parties, and most importantly, the aspect of prevention and support in bullying incidents.

Among community stakeholders across Halton Region, there exists a strong shared interest in addressing issues of bullying for school aged children. This has culminated into the emergence of a Bullying Prevention Task Force, a sub-committee of the Our Kids Network. This task force is committed to facilitating a co-ordinated community approach in addressing bullying issues for children and youth across the region.

To guide the work of this task force, a literature review was conducted to provide a foundation of current evidence and knowledge around the context of bullying and most importantly how to prevent its occurrence, intervene appropriately, and support those involved in cases of bullying among school aged children and youth. The results of the literature review provide a common understanding of this social issue to assist in moving the task force's agenda in engaging community stakeholders across Halton Region toward an effective, synergistic and coordinated approach to bullying prevention and support.

Key Findings

Definition and Framework
In committing to the agenda of bullying prevention, the literature emphasizes that a common definition and use of a socio-ecological framework are necessary to guide a focused and comprehensive approach. Bullying is extensively defined across much of the literature as encompassing three primary characteristics: Intention to harm, repetition of behaviour over time and a perceived or real power imbalance between two or more individuals. While historically, bullying may have been associated only within a physical context; other distinct forms have also surfaced including verbal, relational/social, and more recently cyber-bullying, with the continuous emergence of advancing technology. The use of a socio-ecological approach to address bullying provides the understanding that varying spheres of influence contribute to its manifestation. This validates a need to consider individual context, family, peer, school, and larger community engagement and accountability when addressing bullying.

Prevalence
Prevalence data captured at a national, provincial and local level validate the existence of bullying across the school years ages. Canadian rates of bullying vary across ages with ranges from 9%-21% (World Health Organization, 2008). Ontario provincial rates from 2009 identify a much higher percentage of students being bullied (29.8%). Locally, in Halton Region, the average bullying rates reported by grade 7 and grade 10 students were 39% and 28% respectively between 2009 and 2010.

Impacts
There is extensive literature identifying many impacts for those who participate in bullying, those who are considered victims, and the school environment. Research demonstrates a strong correlation between bullying, victimization, and mental illness. Depression, anxiety, low self-

esteem, and suicidal ideation have been reported by both bullies and victims. Furthermore, bullies have reported participating in substance use behaviours. The existence of bullying also lends itself to cultivating climates of powerlessness, fear, low student perceptions of school safety and a lowered student commitment to school.

Risk and Protective Factors

Across the literature, risk factors for bullying and victimization can be classified according to individual and environmental contexts. Within an individual context, particular attention has been paid to social competence. Some authors contend that risk for engaging in bullying increases when one possesses ineffective communication, self-regulation and problem-solving skills in social situations. Contrary to this, other literature states that it is an increased social competence that allows for a use of power to manipulate and target vulnerable individuals.

While, risk for continued victimization is perpetuated by victim response, particularly a response that is emotionally passive or aggressive. In addition, the inability of a victim to verbalize emotions with subsequent internalization of emotions and coping behaviours may encourage repeated bullying.

Greater insight into environmental factors that create risks for participating in bullying behaviours and becoming a victim include consideration of school climate, parenting, and peer relationships. The literature strongly conveys that a poor school environment fraught with conflict, limited structure and supervision, and an inconsistent and dismissive approach to address bullying creates the opportunity for bullying to begin and continue.

Outside of the school setting, parenting approaches have the potential to increase risk for both bullying and victimization. Bullying behaviours of children are highly influenced by an authoritarian parenting style which includes aggressive punishment, limited freedom and a highly structured environment for children. On the other end of the parenting continuum, a low authoritative parenting style which does not afford children opportunities to develop decision making skills or voice opinions, may increase a child's risk of becoming victimized.

Peer relationships are also highly influential in bullying or victimization. A lack of positive peer relationships and an increased number of friends could create a sense of popularity and position of power. For victimization, low social status or stigmatization by peers increases one's risk.

Protective factors very clearly align with the aforementioned risk factors. Parenting approaches and a school climate that include positive communication, self-expression, co-operation and connectedness facilitate the development of pro-social behaviours that serve as strong protective factors against both bullying and victimization. New literature also has identified some evidence of a positive relationship between developmental assets and decreased risk for bullying and victimization.

Programs/Initiatives

There is a significant body of literature that focuses on evaluation of bullying prevention programs based primarily in school settings. Such literature has identified varied results which have included positive, negative, positive but negligible outcomes or no changes at all. Authors are very clear in identifying that mixed results are likely due to an issue of varying contexts. Successful programming in one school does not necessarily translate into success with subsequent replication because of so many confounding factors in school settings.

Approaches explored across the literature that have produced modest positive results in either bullying, victimization or both within school settings include:
- Whole-school approach
- Strength-based approach
- Social-emotional skills training
- Inclusion of bystander intervention
- Clear and consistent processes for intervention by teachers, students and parents are identified and followed
- Parental and teacher training and engagement
- Peer/youth engagement
- Creation of positive social environment

Additionally, many authors contribute to a list of considerations when developing initiatives or programs in schools which include:
- Evaluation component to determine effectiveness
- Integration of multiple elements/strategies
- Consideration of developmental stages and cultural context
- Longer duration for implementation time
- Establishing a clear definition of bullying

Most notably absent from the literature is evidence pertaining to whole community approaches, involving diverse stakeholders. While many authors advocate for a comprehensive community strategy to bullying prevention, there is limited information on what this entails. Of the limited information on whole community approaches, only anecdotal information has been published.

Final considerations
Greater awareness, education, and engagement targeted at the broader community are needed to address the complexity of bullying among children and youth. Recognition that bullying is not solely a school issue needs to be acknowledged. Thus, the whole school approach can be used to guide a community approach. That is, community approaches to bullying prevention need to involve multiple stakeholders and target varying contextual factors. A multi-tiered approach to bullying is necessary to address primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention levels. It is important to distinguish the activities that represent each level in order to prevent future bullying behaviours and also to address and provide support within existing cases. Guiding principles for initiative and/or program development can include: Youth engagement, a strength-based approach, restorative practice, social-emotional learning, and the development of positive social environments.

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SEARCH STRATEGY AND CRITERIA

Databases: ERIC, CINAHL, MEDLINE, Nursing & Allied Health Collection, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Academic Search Premier, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts, Health Business Elite, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection, ScoINDEX, Child Development & Adolescent Studies

Search criteria:
- Between 2005 – 2012; seminal articles to be included if identified
- Population: School aged children ages 4-18
- Community and school based literature
- English literature
- Key words: community, bullying, bullying prevention, intervention, school, children, youth, victimization, bully, risk factors, protective factors, bullying programs, bully, victim
- Reference lists from identified articles were also hand searched

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

Key findings:

- Bullying is defined as aggressive behaviour that encompasses the following three characteristics:
    - **Intention** to harm
    - **Repetition** of behaviour over time
    - **Power** imbalance
    (Barboza et al., 2009; Craig, Pepler, & Blais, 2007; Liu & Graves, 2011)

- Different forms of bullying include:
    - **Physica**l (e.g. hitting, tripping)
    - **Verbal** (e.g. slander, name-calling, threats of intimidation)
    - **Relational or Social** (e.g. impairing one's social reputation, damage to peer relationships through rumour spreading, social exclusion)
    - **Cyber-bullying** (e.g. using social networking sites to damage one's reputation, use of text messages, email to spread rumours or intimidate)
    (Liu & Graves, 2011; Craig et al., 2007)

Detailed information on cyberbullying:
- Cyberbullying should not be considered a separate phenomenon but recognized as another form of bullying
- One out of 4 students has experienced being cyberbullied (Beran & Li, 2005).
- Cyberbullying peaks in the middle school years (i.e. grade 7-8) and declines in high school. This includes both perpetration and victimization.
- Bullying in cyberspace and face-to-face bullying at school are interrelated
- Majority of students that report being bullied through the use of technology also report being bullied in other ways. A small percentage of students are being bullied solely through electronic means.
- This provides implications for interventions related to cyberbullying. It is important for interventions to focus on the wider definition of bullying rather than hone in on the particularities of cyberbullying alone (i.e. whole school context)

- According to Willard (2007), cyberbullying/electronic bullying can be recognized in different forms:
1. **Flaming:** Angry or vulgar messages about a person are sent to an online group or to that person via email or text messaging.
2. **Online harassment:** Sending offensive messages via email or other text messaging to a person repeatedly
3. **Cyberstalking***:* Online harassment including threats of harm or excessive intimidation
4. **Denigration (put-downs):** Sending untrue, or cruel statements about a person to other people or posting such material online.
5. **Masquerade:** Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material that creates a poor image of another person
6. **Outing:** Sending or posting material about a person that contains sensitive, private, or embarrassing information, including forwarding private messages or images.
7. **Exclusion:** Cruelly excluding someone from an online group.

Need for greater research on:
- Effectiveness of cyber safety education
- Effectiveness of school policies on technology use
- The role of bystander intervention in cyberbullying

Frameworks:

- Various frameworks have been proposed to conceptually define bullying including an ethological approach (e.g. aggression is innate or instinctive) or a cognitive and social-cognitive approach (e.g. neuro-anatomical deficits; Liu & Graves, 2011).

- Research on prevalence, risk and protective factors for bullying has indicated that the evolution of bullying behaviours is multifaceted. A common recommendation from the literature is to conceptually define bullying using a **Socio-ecological framework** (Barboza et al., 2009; Liu & Graves, 2011; Pack et al., 2011; Swearer et al., 2010).

- A socio-ecological perspective on bullying assumes that varying spheres of influence impact bullying and victimization including:
  - **Individual characteristics** (e.g. race/ethnicity, self-confidence)
  - **Local context:** (e.g. school policies, parental relationship)
  - **Distal context:** (e.g. societal attitudes toward violence, aggression, cultural expectations)

  (Barboza et al., 2009; Swearer et al., 2010)

Considerations:

- Using a socio-ecological framework to understand bullying allows for a more comprehensive response to bullying prevention that includes consideration of individual context, family, peer, school, and larger community engagement and accountability.

- A theoretical framework is necessary to guide development of an initiative/program for bullying prevention. Swearer et al. (2010) propose that one of the primary reasons for program ineffectiveness in bullying prevention is due to the lack of a guiding theoretical framework.

- Defining the concept of bullying is a necessary foundation when developing a response to bullying. It provides the necessary foundation for proper evaluation. Swearer et al. (2010) also indicate that not having a clear definition of bullying has become a deterrent for bullying prevention program effectiveness.

PREVALENCE

National: (World Health Organization, Health Behaviour in School Aged Children   Survey [HBSC], 2008)

Percent of children and youth who <u>have been bullied</u> at school at least twice in the past couple of months (Canada)

Age	% of Boys	% of Girls	Comments
11 year olds	21	19	• Canada ranked 10th highest out of 39 countries • HBSC average (gender): Boys: 16% Girls: 13%
13 year olds	18	13	• Canada ranked 13th highest • HBSC average (gender): Boys: 13% Girls: 15%
15 year olds	9	9	• Canada ranked 19th highest • HBSC average (gender): Boys: 11% Girls: 8%

Percent of children and youth who <u>have bullied</u> others at school at least twice in the past couple of months in (Canada)

Age	% of Boys	% of Girls	Comments
11 year olds	10	6	• Canada ranked 20th highest • HBSC average (gender): Boys: 12% Girls: 6%
13 year olds	13	8	• Canada ranked 20th highest • HBSC average (gender): Boys: 15% Girls: 9%
15 year olds	13	5	• Canada ranked 24th highest • HBSC average (gender): Boys: 16% Girls: 7%

*Approximately n = 4,500 per country

Provincial: (CAMH, Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey [OSDUHS], Mental Health and Well-being Report 2009)

Victimization:
- **29.8%** of grade 7 to 12 students report that they have been bullied since the beginning of the school year (2009)
- Reported rates for different types of bullying experienced:
    - Verbal: **23.6%**
    - Physical: 2.9%
    - Theft/vandalism: 2.4%
- Frequency
    - 8.1% are bullied daily or weekly
    - 19.7% bullied monthly or less often
- Students in grades 7 to 10 more likely to be bullied
- Females more likely to report bullying than males

Bullying:
- **25.1%** reported bullying others at school
- Reported rates for involvement in different types of bullying:
    - Verbal: **21.3%**
    - Physical: 3.5%
- Males more likely to report involvement in bullying than females

Trends between 2003-2009:
- Slight decline in prevalence of bullying (not statistically significant)
- 2003: 29.7%   versus   2009: 25.1%

Local: (Our Kids Network Report Card 2011)

2009/2010	Female	Male	Halton Grade 7
Students who have been bullied at school	42%	36%	39%

2009/2010	Female	Male	Halton Grade 10
Students who have been bullied at school	30%	26%	28%

Settings
- One-third of children and youth report that bullying they have experienced has taken place outside of school (Fekkes et al., 2005 as cited in Bullying in Different Settings fact sheet retrieved from: http://prevnet.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=k6nMw2H%2fWQk%3d&tabid=392)

Specific populations

- **Ethnic/race**: Prevalence research is inconsistent and may be attributed to varying cultural conceptions of what bullying means (Liu & Graves, 2011)

- **Sexual orientation**: LGBTQ students are at greater risk of experiencing bullying as compared to heterosexual peers (Swearer et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2005). These students identify bullying not only from peers but from administration, teachers, and other support staff as well (Swearer et al., 2010).

- **Disabilities**: Children and youth who have a physical, behavioural, developmental or learning disability are at greater risk of being victimized as compared to those without an identified disability (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). The victimization typically consists of name calling, imitation, social exclusion or physical bullying (Swearer et al., 2010). In some instances, the response of victims may include the development of aggressive behaviours to cope with the bullying (Carter & Spencer, 2006; Swearer et al., 2010). Isolation from general education students may play a predictive factor in victimization (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011).

- **Middle childhood and adolescence:** Literature is very clear in indicating that bullying often increase between grades 6-8 (Rawana et al., 2010). Bullying has also been identified as decreasing with age and declining more so throughout highschool (Liu & Graves, 2011; Pepler et al., 2008).

Considerations:

- Findings emphasize the importance of considering developmental stages at which bullying peaks and declines. Farmer et al. (2011) contend that the middle grade years are a time of transition and development of peer social structures which may increase risk for bullying and victimization as children determine their role or status in social circles. Consideration of this is important in determining the high risk age groups and emphasizes the need to begin bullying prevention at an earlier age.

- Bullying incidents are not exclusive to school settings. This brings attention to the need for greater accountability and engagement of the larger community.

- Understanding there are gender differences in terms of assuming bullying behaviours may warrant further exploration of community programs focused on social skill development, positive relationship building, and emotional regulation specifically for boys.

- As there is a higher risk for victimization for specific populations (i.e. children and youth with disabilities and LGBTQ), this speaks to the need to develop climates in schools and the community that integrate a culture and language of inclusivity, diversity, and respect. This may also speak to a need to include representation of youth from these special populations when developing bullying prevention strategies.

IMPACTS ON BULLY AND VICTIM

Key findings:

- There is strong literature identifying the extensive impacts of bullying on both the perpetrator and victim, and school environment.

- Impacts on **victims**:
    - Depression (Raskauskas et al, 2010; Rigby, 2003)
    - Anxiety (Rigby, 2003)
    - School avoidance/absenteeism resulting in an inability to fulfill optimal academic potential (Rigby, 2003)
    - Suicidal ideation (Swearer et al., 2010)
    - Low self-esteem (Ebensen & Carson, 2009; Rigby, 2003)
    - Physical symptoms (e.g. stomach aches, headaches, difficulty sleeping; Due et al., 2005)
    - Feelings of loneliness, helplessness, nervousness (Due et al., 2005)

- Impacts on **bullies**:
    - Criminal activity/delinquency in adulthood (Sourander et al., 2007)
    - Poor academic achievement (Swearer et al., 2010)
    - Suicidal behaviour: Completed and attempted suicides (Klomek et al., 2009)
    - Depression, anxiety (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen and Rimpela, 2000)
    - Excessive drinking, marijuana use (Ebensen & Carson, 2009; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000)

- Impact on **school climate**:
    - Repeated bullying contributes to a climate that is accepting of aggression
    - Powerlessness and fear are cultivated that promote tolerance of such behaviours (Swearer et al., 2010)
    - Victims identify high levels of perceived fear, low levels of perceived school safety, and low commitment to school (Esbensen & Carson, 2009)

Considerations:

- Research demonstrates a strong correlation between bullying, victimization and mental illness. Varying levels of prevention (i.e. primary, secondary, tertiary) are necessary to preserve mental wellness among bullies, victims, and bystanders.

- Addressing bullying behaviours through prevention also serves to address prevalence of other risky behaviours related to substance use and criminal activity.

RISK FACTORS

Key findings:

1. Risk factors related to **Individual** context**:**
- **Risk for bullying:**

- o Ineffective communication and regulation of emotions (Baldry & Farrington, 2005; Garner & Stowe Hinton, 2010)
  - o Limited problem solving skills in social situations (Garner & Stowe Hinton, 2010)
  - o Gender: Boys are more likely than girls to assume the role of bully and bully/victims (Jansen et al., 2011)
  - o Being a victim of bullying (Barboza et al., 2009)
  - o Lack of empathy (Barboza et al., 2009)
  - o Low self-esteem may be linked to susceptibility to peer pressure (Pepler et al., 2008)
  - o Increased social competence allows for use of power to manipulate and target vulnerable individuals (Pepler et al., 2008)
- **Risk for victimization:**
  - o Victim response to bullying determines progression of bullying behaviour:
    - ▪ Emotional responses that are passive or aggressive lead to continued bullying behaviours (Craig et al., 2007)
  - o Internalization of emotions and coping behaviours (Baldry & Farrington, 2007)

2. Risk factors related to **<u>Environmental</u>** context:
- **School Climate:**
  - o Lack of structure and limited supervision (Swearer et al., 2010)
  - o High rates of peer-peer and student-teacher conflicts (Swearer et al., 2010)
  - o Inconsistent and mild measures used by teachers to address bullying (Raskauskas et al., 2010)
  - o Feeling disconnected to one's own school (Barboza et al., 2009; Raskauskas et al., 2010)

- **Parenting:**
  - o Lack of caring child-parent relationships (Barboza et al., 2009; Swearer et al., 2010)
  - o **Risk for bullying** (Baldry & Farrington, 2005; Barboza et al., 2009):
    - Use of authoritarian parenting style
    - Use of aggressive punishment or reinforcement of aggressive behaviour
    - Outward conflict between parents escalating to violent or aggressive interactions
  - o **Risk for victimization** (Baldry & Farrington, 2005; Barboza et al., 2009):
    - Low authoritative parenting style
    - Use of aggressive punishment
    - Overly permissive parenting
    - Overly protective parenting

- **Peer Relationships:**
  - o **Risk for bullying**
    - Few positive peer relationships (Swearer et al., 2010)
    - Increased number of friends creates sense of popularity and position of power (Barboza et al., 2009)
  - o **Risk for victimization**
    - Low social status or stigmatization by peers (Barboza et al., 2009)

<u>Considerations:</u>

- This literature indicates a need to develop bullying strategies that target both the individual and social contexts within which children and youth live, learn, and play.

- There is need to develop within children and youth the necessary social skills to respond positively within peer interactions. Such may include: prosocial, conflict resolution, problem solving skills, and empathy.

- There is importance in helping children and youth learn positive ways of coping with and expressing both negative and positive emotions.

- Parent engagement is key in addressing bullying prevention. Education, awareness and skill building can be used to promote positive parenting and role modelling that encourages self-confidence, autonomy and social competence in children and youth.

- The social environments within which children and youth live, learn and play need to reflect a sense of inclusion and connectedness. This identifies a need to re-structure social cliques within learning, home, and recreation environments by encouraging diverse interaction among children and youth.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Key findings:

1. Protective factors related to **Individual** context**:**
   - **Protective factors reducing risk of becoming a bully:**
     - Prosocial behaviours (Raskauskas et al., 2010)
     - Empathy (Raskauskas et al., 2010)
   - **Protective factors against victimization:**
     - Victim responses involving problem solving and conflict resolution techniques de-escalate bullying behaviours (Craig et al., 2007)

2. Protective factors related to **Environmental** context:
   - **School Climate:**
     - Teachers role modelling prosocial behaviours (Raskauskas et al., 2010)
     - Positive school climate buffered against potential negative impact of low parental caring and low positive peer influences (Swearer et al., 2010)
     - School environments that promote positive self-expression, co-operation, and equity (Barboza et al., 2009)
     - Perceived school connectedness (Raskauskas et al., 2010)

   - **Parenting:**
     - Maximum cognitive stimulation and emotional support from parents in early childhood (Zimmerman et al., 2005)
     - Positive communication with parents (Spriggs et al., 2007)
     - Supportive and authoritative parenting (Baldry & Farrington, 2005)

3. Protective factors including **both individual** and **environmental** context:

- Possessing a high number of development assets/strengths was correlated with a decreased risk for engaging in bullying behaviour and being a victim (Donnon, 2010)

Considerations:

- Relationship building with positive adult role models would be an essential consideration in the development of a bullying prevention initiative.

- The use of a problem-focused approach may be counterproductive to preventing bullying behaviours. The use of a strength based and developmental asset approach would be better suited to develop positive social behaviours.

- Early intervention in relation to parenting is an important consideration for protecting against bullying/aggressive behaviours.

PROGRAMS/INITIATIVES

The literature identifies many studies that have evaluated school-based bullying prevention programs internationally. While school-based programs have been heavily dissected and discussed, there is an evident lack of literature surrounding community approaches for bullying prevention. While community components are certainly integrated in some of the school-based programs, the evaluation of these particular activities is not elaborated on. When a community approach is discussed in the literature, the dialogue is purely opinion-based or anecdotal.

The following provides a summary of findings first from evaluated school-based programs/initiatives and follows with a compilation of community-based recommendations.

School-based programs/initiatives:

- Varied results across studies evaluating school-based bullying prevention programs. Findings have concluded: positive outcomes (i.e. decreased bullying and victimization rates); negative outcomes (i.e. increased rates of bullying and victimization); positive but negligible outcomes, or no changes in outcomes (Swearer et al., 2010; Ttofi & Farrington, 2010).

- Those that did produce modest positive results in either bullying or victimization rates or both included:

1. **Whole-school approaches** (Allen, 2010; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007)
    - A school wide approach that includes all staff and students
    - Components may include: Bullying prevention activities integrated into curriculum, conflict resolution skills training, teacher and parent training, school wide policies on bullying prevention and intervention

2. **Strength-based approach** (Rawana et al., 2011)
    - Includes training of school staff on strength/asset based approach
    - School staff and students use strength based approach in all peer or teacher interactions

- Students conduct inventory of personal assets
- Allows students to gain more awareness about own and others' assets
- Encourages more school/community involvement

3. **Use of social-emotional skills training** (Jenson & Dieterich, 2007)
   - Role playing, circle discussions, group work related to bullying scenarios
   - Reflective activities that help students develop skills related to empathy, resolving peer conflict, problem solving, coping with emotions, and self-awareness related to role they play in bullying

4. **Inclusion of bystander intervention**
   (Jenson & Dieterich, 2007; Pack et al, 2011).
   - 85% bullying cases occur in front of peer bystanders (Swearer et al., 2010)
   - Bystander intervention highly related to social resistance and social emotional skills
   - Training students in acceptance of diversity, intervention skills and strategies to support victims
   - Developing their self-efficacy to use social emotional skills in peer conflict
   - Inclusion of peer mediation system: Involve highly influential peer leaders or have all student body assume accountability

5. **Clear and consistent processes for intervention by teachers, students, and parents are identified and followed** (Allen, 2010; Bowlan, 2011)
   - Clear protocols and policies on how to report bullying, intervention strategies, and resolution practices are important in engaging the school community in bullying prevention, maintaining consistency in bullying responses, and promoting a culture that is intolerant of such behaviour
   - Protocols need to be communicated regularly to school community

6. **Parental and teacher training and engagement**
   (Bowlan, 2011; Karna et al., 2011; Rawana et al., 2011)
   - Consistent implementation of bullying prevention policies and protocols are contingent upon staff training
   - Regular communication with parents regarding bullying initiatives and their role in bullying prevention
   - Some programs included the establishment of school personnel teams who were designated as bullying prevention champions. Their role included supporting other colleagues in bullying interventions (secondary level) or would be solely responsible for addressing each bullying case with individual or group meetings with bully and/or victim.
   - Educating/training parents and staff to provide positive reinforcement to students when they exhibit prosocial skills
   - Professional development opportunities for teachers in primary and secondary prevention of bullying behaviours (i.e. fostering positive school climate, promotion/role modelling of social emotional skills, and intervention skills)

7. **Peer/youth engagement** (Cunningham et al., 2010; Rawana et al., 2011)
   - Allow students opportunity to dialogue about factors that contribute to bullying at their school and preferences for effective bullying prevention measures. Many have the lived experience to provide greater insight into the issue.
   - Examples of youth engagement activities include: Interactive assemblies and school wide projects to raise awareness about diversity, inclusion, and bullying; peer mediation system; social support group to discuss and problem solve through climate issues.

8. **Creation of positive social environment** (Bowlan, 2011; Kilian et al., 2006)
   - Program that acknowledges students who practice prosocial behaviours
   - Use of co-operative learning, buddy systems and pairing up diverse students
   - Stigmatizing aggression and bullying through education and awareness about its negative impacts
   - Create classroom or school philosophies reflective of positive school norms

- Other important considerations when developing initiative/program in schools:

  - **Varying contexts**: The success of a program in one school does not necessarily translate into success with subsequent replication in another setting (Swearer et al., 2010)
  - **Definition of bullying**: A clear definition must be identified for raising awareness and educating the school community
  - **Evaluation:** A strong evaluation component is key to identifying potential outcomes
  - **Length of time:** Shorter duration of programming produces negative results or no change in bullying/victimization rates (Leadbeater, & Sukhawathanakul, 2011; Rawana et al., 2011; Ttofi & Farrington, 2010)
  - **Integration of numerous elements:** Greater number of strategies/activities included in approach, the greater the likelihood of impacting rates (Swearer et al., 2010; Ttofi & Farrington, 2010).
  - **Developmental stages**: The same strategy may not necessarily resonate the same with different age groups
  - **Cultural considerations**: Race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc. need to be considered (Swearer et al., 2010)

Community components within school-based programs:

- Community organizations can be used as a source of sustainable funding or sponsorship for programming (Bowlan, 2011)
- Involvement of community partners (e.g. police liaison officers, paramedics, athletes, firefighters) can lend credibility to the program and keep the momentum sustained through follow-up visits to schools (Leadbeater & Sukhawathanakul, 2011).
- Community organizations can run annual contests that align with school-based programs to maintain connection to the community (Leadbeater & Sukhawathanakul, 2011).
- Community engagement is easier when underlying philosophies of all stakeholders are aligned (Rawana et al., 2010)

Community approach:

- Many sources (Allen, 2010; Liu & Graves, 2011) identify that community involvement is key to addressing bullying prevention and support however there is little elaboration on what this involvement entails.

- Srabstein et al. (2008) propose a community approach to bullying prevention:
- **Primary prevention:**
    - Awareness raising/education of bullying by diverse institutions
    - Integration of anti-bullying policies into diverse institutions (e.g. aftercare programs, summer camps, religious institutions, sport programs, etc.)
    - Cultivate physical and emotional safety in community organizations through programs or value statements that reflect acceptance of diversity, respect, and sensitivity
- **Secondary prevention:**
    - Use of restorative justice in bullying cases
    - Normalize reporting behaviours: Adults need to role model intolerance of bullying behaviours through regular monitoring and reporting of bullying behaviours
    - Encourage peer support to victims
- **Tertiary prevention:**
    - Social skills development
    - Behavioural cognitive therapy
    - Intensive counselling

Considerations:

- A systemic approach is necessary to address the different contextual factors influencing bullying behaviours and victimization. In particular, individual skill development, the restructuring of peer social structures and enhancing a positive school and community climate are essential to addressing bullying behaviours.

- Sustainability planning is key given that impact is contingent upon longer duration of program/initiative implementation.

- Key adult role models (e.g. school staff, parents) and even children and youth themselves need more direction and education about how to intervene in a bullying incident and greater self-efficacy in using these intervention skills.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A multi-tiered approach would address primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention levels. It is important to distinguish the activities that represent each level in order to prevent future bullying behaviours and also to address and follow-up on existing ones.

- The whole school approach can be used to guide a community approach. That is, community approaches to bullying prevention need to involve multiple stakeholders and target varying contextual factors.

- Guiding principles for initiative/program development can include: youth engagement, a strength-based approach, restorative practice, and social-emotional learning.

- There needs to be greater awareness and education targeted at the broader community about their own accountability in bullying prevention and intervention. The larger community needs to be aware that bullying is not solely a school issue. Individuals in the community (e.g. parents, religious leaders, community leaders, daycare providers) need to be educated about what bullying entails, what their role is in bullying prevention and how to respond to it.

- The social-ecological framework can provide a strong foundation to guiding a synergistic community response to bullying prevention that can involve unique inter-sectoral partnerships.

- When engaging youth in developing strategies, ensure there is representation of children and youth from special populations (e.g. ethnic groups, LGBTQ community, students with disabilities).

- Inclusion of an evaluation component coupled with a clear definition of bullying will help to monitor progress and outcomes.

- The peaking rates of bullying and victimization throughout the middle grades provide direction in terms of early intervention prior to these ages.

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