What Is the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program?

As stated earlier, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) is the most researched and best-known bullying prevention program available today. With over thirty-five years of research and successful implementation all over the world, OBPP is a whole-school program that has been proven to prevent or reduce bullying throughout a school setting.

OBPP is used at the school, classroom, and individual levels and includes methods to reach out to parents and the community for involvement and support. School administrators, teachers, and other staff are primarily responsible for introducing and implementing the program. These efforts are designed to improve peer relations and make the school a safer and more positive place for students to learn and develop.

What Are the Goals of OBPP?

The goals of the program are

• to reduce existing bullying problems among students
• to prevent the development of new bullying problems
• to achieve better peer relations at school
For Whom Is OBPP Designed?

OBPP is designed for students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools (students age five to fifteen years old). All students participate in most aspects of the program, while students identified as bullying others, or as targets of bullying, receive additional individualized interventions.

With some adaptation, the program can also be used in high schools, although research has not measured the program’s effectiveness beyond tenth grade.

What Are the OBPP Materials?

Teacher Guide
This Teacher Guide, with accompanying DVD and CD-ROM, serves as the primary program implementation tool for teachers and other classroom support staff. It highlights the important role you will play both in the classroom and in schoolwide efforts in preventing and addressing bullying. All the resources you need to implement the program, except for the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, are provided in this guide or on the accompanying DVD and CD-ROM.

Ideally, every teacher should have a copy of this guide. If this is not possible, we recommend that each Teacher Guide be shared among no more than three teachers. (If at any time you need to reorder a Teacher Guide, contact Hazelden Publishing at 1-800-328-9000 or 1-651-213-4000.)

Schoolwide Guide
OBPP is used both in individual classrooms and throughout your school. It will be important that you participate at both levels. For the schoolwide effort, a Schoolwide Guide, with accompanying DVD and CD-ROM, is available to provide step-by-step instructions on how to implement the program in the entire school setting.

The power of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program lies in staff and students using common language to address bullying situations.

A message is carried out to students saying bullying will not be tolerated here.

— A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR
The Schoolwide Guide is used mainly by your school’s Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee, the group that is established to guide schoolwide implementation. However, the Teacher Guide you are now reading does provide an overview of the schoolwide components in which you will participate.

**Olweus Bullying Questionnaire**

The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire is administered to all students in grades 3–12 before the program begins and at regular intervals (ideally each year) from then on. Your schoolwide program leaders coordinate the implementation of this questionnaire.

If you teach grades K–2, you will not administer the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire because the reading and conceptual levels are beyond that of most young students. However, if you would like to use the questionnaire with students in grades K–2, we recommend that your school’s Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee consult with your certified Olweus trainer about the best way to do this.

**What Are the Components of the Program?**

*OBPP* is not a classroom curriculum. It is a whole-school, systems-change program at four different levels. Here are the program components for each of these levels. Each component is discussed in more detail in later chapters.

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<th>GENERAL REQUIREMENTS</th>
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<td>Generate awareness and involvement on the part of the adults in the school.</td>
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<tr>
<th>SCHOOL-LEVEL COMPONENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Establish a Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee.</td>
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<td>• Conduct committee and staff trainings.</td>
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<td>• Administer the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire schoolwide.</td>
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<td>• Hold staff discussion group meetings.</td>
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<td>• Introduce the school rules against bullying.</td>
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<td>• Review and refine the school’s supervisory system.</td>
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<td>• Hold a school kick-off event to launch the program.</td>
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<td>• Involve parents.</td>
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<tr>
<th>CLASSROOM-LEVEL COMPONENTS</th>
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<td>• Post and enforce schoolwide rules against bullying.</td>
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<td>• Hold regular class meetings.</td>
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<td>• Hold meetings with students’ parents.</td>
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<th>INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL COMPONENTS</th>
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<td>• Supervise students’ activities.</td>
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<td>• Ensure that all staff intervene on the spot when bullying occurs.</td>
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<td>• Hold meetings with students involved in bullying.</td>
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<td>• Hold meetings with parents of involved students.</td>
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<td>• Develop individual intervention plans for involved students.</td>
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<th>COMMUNITY-LEVEL COMPONENTS</th>
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<td>• Involve community members on the Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee.</td>
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<td>• Develop partnerships with community members to support your school’s program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Help to spread anti-bullying messages and principles of best practice in the community.</td>
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What Are the Effects of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program?

*OBPP* has been more thoroughly evaluated than any other bullying prevention/reduction program so far. Six large-scale evaluations, involving more than 40,000 students, have documented results such as the following:

- Average reductions by 20 to 70 percent in student reports of being bullied and bullying others. Peer and teacher ratings of bullying problems have yielded roughly similar results.
- Marked reductions in student reports of general antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy.
- Clear improvements in classroom social climate, as reflected in students’ reports of improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and more positive attitudes toward schoolwork and school.

For students in grades 4–7, most of the positive results can be seen after only eight months of intervention work, given reasonably good implementation of the program. For students in grades 8–10, it may take somewhat more time, maybe two years, to achieve equally good results.

The program design has also been influenced by detailed OBPP research on how teacher and school factors affect implementation of the program. Interested readers are referred to the article “Predicting Teachers’ and Schools’ Implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: A Multilevel Study” by Jan Helge Kallestad and Dan Olweus.²

What Is the History behind the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program?

Although bullying problems among students have been around for centuries, it wasn’t until the early 1970s that Dr. Dan Olweus initiated the first systematic research study in the world on these problems. The results were published in a Swedish book in 1973 and in the United States in 1978 under the title *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys*. For a considerable period of time, up to the early 1990s, there was very little attention to and research on the topic of bullying outside of Scandinavia.
In 1983, after three adolescent boys in northern Norway committed suicide, most likely as a consequence of severe bullying by peers, the country’s Ministry of Education initiated a national campaign against bullying in schools. In that context, the first version of what has later become known as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program was developed.

The program was carefully evaluated in a large-scale project involving 40,000 students from forty-two schools followed over a period of two and a half years. The program has since been refined, expanded, and further evaluated with successful results in five additional large-scale projects in Norway. Since 2001, as part of the Norwegian government’s plans for the prevention and reduction of delinquency and violence among children and youth, OBPP has been implemented on a large-scale basis in elementary and lower secondary schools throughout Norway.

Dr. Olweus has for a long time seen the phenomenon of bullying in the context of human rights. As early as 1981, he proposed enacting a law against bullying in schools. He argued that it is a fundamental human right for a student to feel safe in school and to be spared the repeated humiliation implied in bullying. In the mid-1990s, these arguments led to legislation against bullying by the Swedish and Norwegian parliaments. Similar legislation has been adopted in more than thirty states (at the date of publication) in the United States and in several other countries.

During the 1990s, Dr. Olweus worked closely with American colleagues, notably Dr. Susan P. Limber, now at Clemson University in South Carolina, to implement and evaluate the program in the United States, also resulting in positive though somewhat weaker outcomes. Since then, hundreds of schools in most every state in the United States have used the program, and the number is growing. Additional studies of these efforts are being conducted by the authors of this guide and other researchers. For summaries and citations of this research, visit www.clemson.edu/olweus.

At our school, we have seen amazing results after the first year—
increased attendance, increased student achievement,
and decreased incidents that lead to suspensions.

— ELEMENTARY MATH AND SCIENCE COORDINATOR
Is the **Olweus Bullying Prevention Program** a Nationally Recognized Program?

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* has received recognition from a number of organizations including the following:

- Blueprints Model Program, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado at Boulder  
  www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/programs/BPP.html
- Model Program, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
  www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov
- Effective Program, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice  
  www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org
- Level 2 Program, U.S. Department of Education  
  www.helpingamericasyouth.gov

*Note:* “Level 2” programs have been scientifically demonstrated to prevent delinquency or reduce risk and enhance protection for delinquency and other child and youth problems using either an experimental or quasi-experimental research design, with a comparison group.

For more information about the authors and other awards received for their work, see About the Authors on pages 122–124. For more information on the research behind the program, see the list of research articles provided on the Teacher Guide CD-ROM.

What Type of Support Is Available as You Implement the Program in Your Classroom?

*OBPP* is a program that is implemented throughout the entire school setting. As a classroom teacher, you will have a variety of responsibilities for this implementation, including supervising students in and outside of the classroom, teaching and talking with students about bullying, and intervening in bullying.

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The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* is one of the few programs that seems to energize staff as opposed to making it feel like it is “one more expectation or one more burden.”

— SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
situations in your classroom and elsewhere in the school. Because these tasks are crucial to the success of OBPP in your school, it is important that you feel supported in your efforts. If you have any questions or concerns, take advantage of the following resources:

- **Your School’s Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee**
  A committee made up of school staff, administrators, teachers, and parents has most likely been established at your school to oversee the program. Committee members have been trained in the implementation of OBPP and can serve as a resource to you. Don’t be afraid to ask questions or request that a committee member serve as a guide in your classroom as you get started.

- **Staff Discussion Groups**
  Your school will likely establish one or more staff discussion groups for classroom teachers and other staff. These groups meet with some regularity; there you can learn more about the program and its use at your school as well as discuss potential challenges to using OBPP, possible solutions, and other related topics in a safe context. Take advantage of this opportunity by participating regularly.

- **Your Certified Olweus Trainer**
  Most likely your school has contracted with an outside certified Olweus trainer or has had a staff member certified as an Olweus trainer. This person will have a wealth of knowledge about the program and is available for ongoing consultation via telephone and/or Internet contact (or in person, whenever possible) with your school administrator, your school’s OBPP coordinator, and members of your Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee. Check with a committee member about how to raise questions and concerns with this trainer.

- **Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Web Site**
  [www.clemson.edu/olweus](http://www.clemson.edu/olweus)
  This Web site provides background information about the program, implementation strategies, training information, current evaluation research, and other related resources.

- **Hazelden Publishing Web Site**
  [www.hazelden.org/olweus](http://www.hazelden.org/olweus)
  This Web site provides background information about the program and specific information about purchasing program materials.