REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Second Step® Middle School

■ **Recognizing Bullying & Harassment Unit**

Depending on the choices made by the school or district, this unit may or may not be included in a Second Step® Middle School implementation. It is supplemental and is meant to be taught after the main four units.

Second Step® Middle School's supplemental unit helps students learn to recognize bullying and harassment in the modern world and provides strategies for students to intervene and reduce these negative behaviors in a thoughtful, safe, and responsible way. By teaching this unit after the four main Second Step® units, students will progress from learning intrapersonal skills to interpersonal skills, which can produce better program results (Cipriano et al., 2023).

School bullying is "a damaging social process that is characterized by an imbalance of power driven by social (societal) and institutional norms. It is often repeated and manifests as unwanted interpersonal behaviour among students or school personnel that causes physical, social, and emotional harm to the targeted individuals or groups, and the wider school community" (UNESCO, 2023). Bullying can be physical (hitting), verbal (name-calling), or relational (social exclusion), and can happen both in person and online such as through texting or social media (Olweus, 2013). Research shows that all students involved in bullying—including the victims, perpetrators, and even those who only witness it—can suffer both short- and long-term behavioral, psychological, and academic

consequences (Camodeca & Nava, 2022; Halliday et al., 2021; Ttofi et al., 2011).

There is evidence that universal social-emotional learning (SEL) programs can reduce bullying and harassment in middle school (Espelage et al., 2013, 2015; Nickerson et al., 2019). Research shows that students' prosocial attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors can protect them from becoming victims or perpetrators of both traditional bullying and online bullying (Zych et al., 2019). Research also suggests that the prevention of bullying in middle school may prevent later sexual violence perpetration (Espelage et al., 2018).

Upstanders—those who intervene in bullying situations—can help reduce victimization (Salmivalli, 2014). Specifically, research shows that school-based bullying-prevention programs that target bystander intervention (such as raising awareness) can be effective in promoting positive intentions and behaviors from bystanders (Polanin et al., 2012). Raising students' awareness of bullying, harnessing important social-emotional skills, and teaching students how to safely intervene in bullying situations, therefore, can be effective ways to reduce victimization from aggressive behaviors (Pfetsch et al., 2011).

References

Camodeca, M., & Nava, E. (2022). The long-term effects of bullying, victimization, and bystander behavior on emotion regulation and its physiological correlates. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 37*(3–4). https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520934438

Cipriano, C., Strambler, M. J., Naples, L. H., Ha, C., Kirk, M., Wood, M., Sehgal, K., Zieher, A. K., Eveleigh, A., McCarthy, M., Funaro, M., Ponnock, A., Chow, J. C., & Durlak, J. (2023). The state of evidence for social and emotional learning: A contemporary meta-analysis of universal school-based SEL interventions. *Child Development*, 94(5), 1181–1204. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13968

Espelage, D. L., Basile, K. C., Leemis, R. W., Hipp, T. N., & Davis, J. P. (2018). Longitudinal examination of the bullying-sexual violence pathway across early to late adolescence: Implicating homophobic name-calling. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 47*(9), 1880–1893. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-018-0827-4

Espelage, D. L., Low, S., Polanin, J. R., & Brown, E. C. (2013). The impact of a middle school program to reduce aggression, victimization, and sexual violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 53*(2), 180–186. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.02.021

Espelage, D. L., Low, S., Polanin, J. R., & Brown, E. C. (2015). Clinical trial of Second Step® middle-school program: Impact on aggression & victimization. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 37*(1), 52–63. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2014.11.007

Halliday, S., Gregory, T., Taylor, A., Digenis, C., & Turnbull, D. (2021). The impact of bullying victimization in early adolescence on subsequent psychosocial and academic outcomes across the adolescent period: A systematic review. *Journal of School Violence, 20*(3), 351–373. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2021.1913598

Nickerson, A. B., Fredrick, S. S., Allen, K. P., & Jenkins, L. N. (2019). Social emotional learning (SEL) practices in schools: Effects on perceptions of bullying victimization. *Journal of School Psychology, 73*, 74–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.03.002

Olweus, D. (2013). School bullying: Development and some important challenges. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 9*(1), 751–780. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-050212-185516

Pfetsch, J., Steffgen, G., Gollwitzer, M., & Ittel, A. (2011). Prevention of aggression in schools through a bystander intervention training. *International Journal of Developmental Science, 5*(1-2), 139–149. https://doi.org/10.3233/dev-2011-11078

Polanin, J., Espelage, D. L., & Pigott, T. D. (2012). A meta-analysis of school-based bullying prevention programs' effects on bystander intervention behavior and empathy attitude. *School Psychology Review, 41*(1), 47–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2012.12087375

Salmivalli, C. (2014). Participant roles in bullying: How can peer bystanders be utilized in interventions? *Theory Into Practice, 53*(4), 286–292. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2014.947222

Ttofi, M. M., Farrington, D. P., Lösel, F., & Loeber, R. (2011). The predictive efficiency of school bullying versus later offending: A systematic/meta-analytic review of longitudinal studies. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 21*(2), 80–89. https://doi.org/10.1002/cbm.808

UNESCO. (2023, November 30). *Defining school bullying and its implications on education, teachers and learners.* UNESCO.org. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/defining-school-bullying-and-its-implications-education-teachers-and-learners

Zych, I., Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Protective factors against bullying and cyberbullying: A systematic review of meta-analyses. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 45*, 4–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.06.008