



SPR 18th Annual Meeting

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Using Web-based Systems to Inform Data-based Decision-Making in Schools: An Example of Bullying and Violence Prevention

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There is growing awareness that having valid and up-to-date data on bullying and school violence are critical to effective school-based prevention and early intervention efforts (Olweus, 1993). As the field of education moves toward web-based data collection and monitoring systems, there is an opportunity for prevention scientists to work collaboratively with community partners to create sustainable systems which benefit both practice and research. This paper describes a partnership between a large Maryland public school system and a university-based research team which aims to enhance the capacity of the district's 117 schools to monitor school violence through a web-based assessment system. We will describe the process of developing the web-based system for the district-wide collection of data from students, parents, and staff, and the creation of an online results reporting system for school- and district-level administrators. Some results from the survey will also be summarized.

The web-based system was developed in 2005 and has been administered 6 times over 5 years. Data are collected annually on approximately 25,000 students, 2,000 parents, and 3,800 staff regarding bullying, climate, prevention, and social-emotional factors.

Approximately 37% of the students reported some type of frequent involvement in bullying, with 17.5% as a victim, 11.7% as a bully, and 8.4% as a bully/victim. Over 60% of the students believed that the adults at their school were not doing enough to prevent bullying. There were great discrepancies between student, parent, and teacher perceptions of the prevalence of bullying, its severity, and the effectiveness of prevention efforts. Parents reported a strong desire to work with teachers and administrators to prevent bullying.

The ultimate goals of this partnership were to facilitate school- and district-level use of data in selecting evidence-based violence prevention programs and to develop a district-wide infrastructure to evaluate violence prevention efforts and monitor the rate of bullying, harassment, and peer victimization. The web-based system is used at the district level to monitor program outcomes and to inform the provision of training and professional development. The data are also used by the university-based research team to conduct research on the characteristics and effects of bullying and school violence. Training is provided to administrators on data-based decision-making for school improvement planning. Implications of this project for policy and future research on district-wide scale-up efforts and dissemination studies will be discussed.

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