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Pennsylvania
Positive
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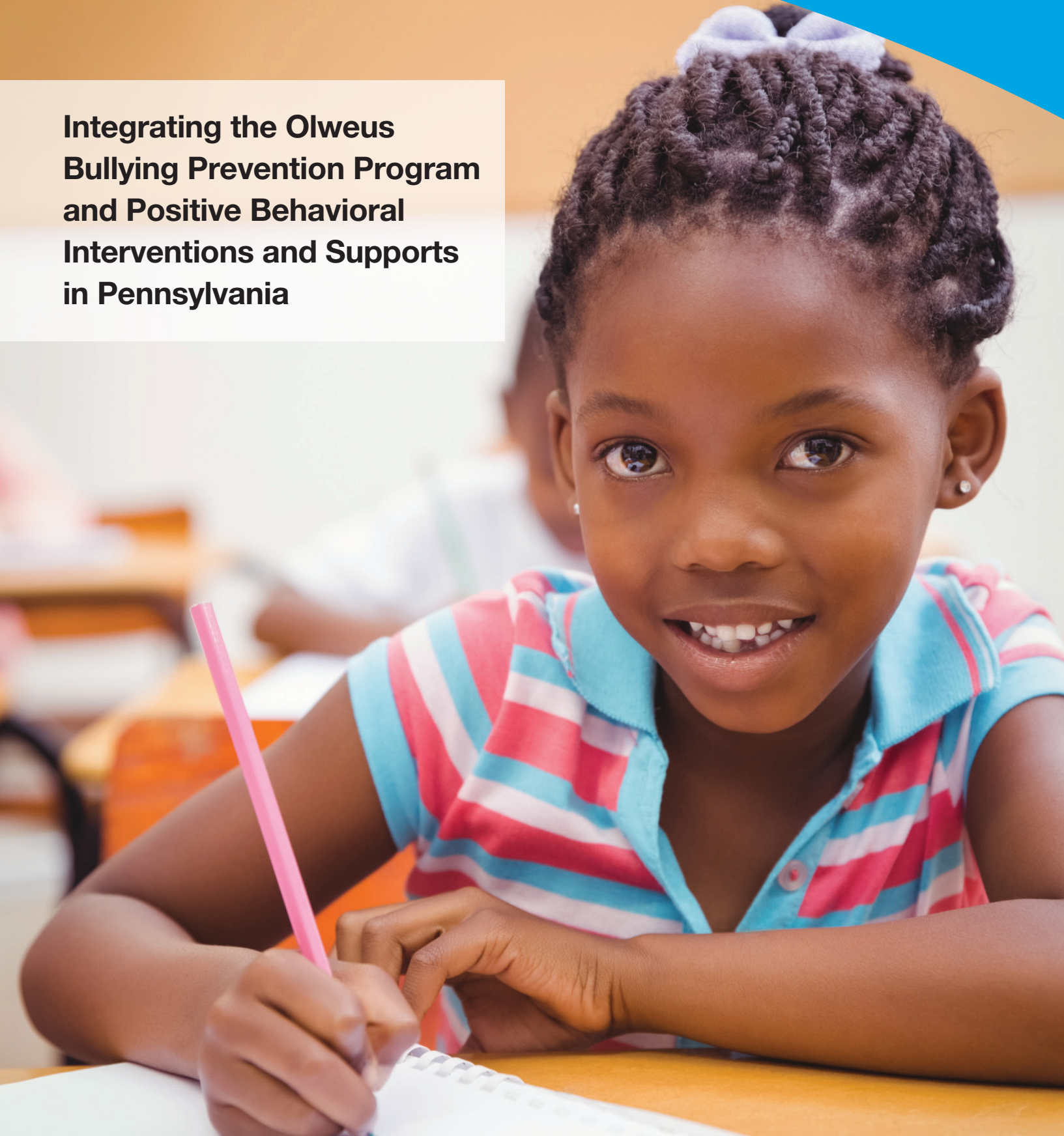# Integrating the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in Pennsylvania
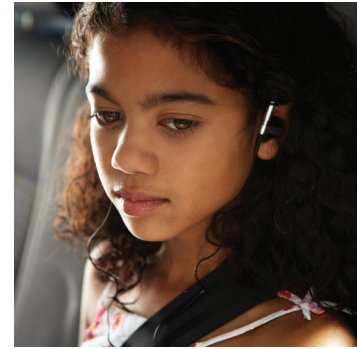
Overview of Workgroup and Method

This report was prepared with input from the Pennsylvania OBPP-PBIS workgroup. The workgroup included representation from statewide leadership organizations that support the dissemination of Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in the commonwealth, as well as leaders from schools that have experience with both programs/frameworks. The workgroup met on six different occasions and conducted site visits of model implementation sites.

This report was produced to summarize the workgroup's findings related to the following questions:

- Is it possible to implement both OBPP and PBIS in a school?
- What strategies support co-implementation of OBPP and PBIS?
- What considerations are warranted when a school is selecting an evidence-based school climate improvement program, such as OBPP or PBIS?

Definitions of Bullying Among Youths

Bullying is any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social or educational harm.
– *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Department of Education (2014)[1]*

Bullying is defined as an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act, or a series of acts: (1) directed at another student or students; (2) which occurs in or relates to a school setting; (3) that is severe, persistent or pervasive; and (4) that has the effect of doing any of the following: (a) substantially interfering with a student's education; (b) creating a threatening environment; or (c) substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.
– *Pennsylvania School Code (2012)[1]*

Why should schools be concerned about bullying and its prevention?

Educators and school leaders should be concerned about bullying prevention because bullying is a relatively common phenomenon among children and it is associated with negative and costly outcomes. National surveys suggest that bullying and peer victimization affect nearly one-third of youth on a moderate or frequent basis.[2] Further:

• Students who are bullied are more than twice as likely to experience depression and anxiety than students that are not bullied.[3,4] They also feel less connected to school and less safe at school.[5]

• School-age bullying is a strong predictor of delinquency, anti-social personality, depression and anxiety in adulthood.[6,7] These outcomes have high social costs, including the costs associated with incarceration and treatment.[8]

• Exposure to violence, including bullying, is associated with lower achievement among youth.[9] It also has a negative effect on school climate and contributes to lower levels of overall student engagement in school.[10] These effects appear to extend beyond the child that is bullied. For example, schools with high rates of bullying and teasing performed lower on AYP measures than other schools in one study.[11]

Social factors play a role in the bullying dynamic and can affect bullying outcomes. Peers and adults, for example, may reinforce or discourage bullying depending on how they respond to it.[12,13] Similarly, research suggests that social support may mitigate some of the negative effects of bullying.[14] Specifically when peers and adults demonstrate active support for children who are bullied, bullied students experience fewer emotional symptoms[15,16] and are more likely to disclose their bullying experiences to adults.[17]

How do OBPP and PBIS address school climate and bullying?

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports are two common schoolwide frameworks used in Pennsylvania to improve school climate and address bullying. Both frameworks are supported by research[18,19] and engage district and/or school based leadership teams in designing and implementing strategies to improve school climate through:

• School-level procedures and systems
• Classroom-level practices
• Targeted interventions for individual students

Both frameworks also share a common emphasis on engaging parent and community partners in activities that promote effective prevention, intervention and youth support. While OBPP and PBIS both provide a framework for organizing efforts to improve school climate, they are distinct in focus and offer different benefits to schools.

OBPP Framework

OBPP is grounded in research on peer aggression and bullying and emphasizes the importance of aligning policies, procedures and practices to ensure members of the school community respond in consistent ways to incidents of bullying and suspected bullying.[13] Program developer, Dan Olweus, was among the first to recognize the important role that bystanders play in violence prevention efforts. Thus, the program emphasizes training and ongoing engagement of staff, students and parents in bullying prevention strategies.

The implementation of OBPP is overseen by a leadership team, comprised of school staff and parents. Leadership teams use a range of data, including the results of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ), to inform school- and classroom-level strategies. Through ongoing training and implementation of the OBPP framework, OBPP teams focus on increasing adult and bystander responsiveness to peer aggression and bullying, while improving the quality of students' peer relationships. The latter is done through regular class meetings and the implementation of pro-social initiatives across the school.

The goals of the OBPP framework are to: reduce existing bullying problems among students; prevent the development of new bullying problems; and achieve better peer relations in the school.[20]

PBIS Framework

PBIS is a framework for decision making and organizational change that supports the installation of evidence-based, research-validated prevention and intervention strategies using a three-tiered approach to improving behavioral and learning outcomes for students. Primary prevention strategies (Tier 1) are evidence-based approaches applied consistently and systematically across the school population. These strategies aim to instruct all students in appropriate behaviors and skills to promote positive school climate and optimize learning. Secondary prevention strategies (Tier 2) are more focused and target specific groups of students whose behaviors are not responsive to Tier 1 strategies. Tier 2 interventions tend to be delivered in small group settings, using an evidence-based curriculum or program to build specific skills in students. Tertiary strategies (Tier 3), in contrast, are highly specialized interventions delivered to individual students with high risk behaviors. It is estimated that one to seven percent of a school's population will require specialized individual supports.[21]

PBIS emphasizes operationally defined and valued outcomes for students, which are linked to the school's annual improvement objectives and aggregated through data collection systems. Leadership teams at the school and district levels oversee implementation to PBIS, including selection of valued outcomes, monitoring of school-level data and implementation of primary and selected strategies. PBIS leadership teams work in collaboration with other school-level teams, including School Safety Teams, Student Assistance Teams and Instructional Support Teams, to minimize duplicity and streamline efforts.

The goal of PBIS is to increase student achievement through the use of research-based behavioral and instructional principles.

Are OBPP and PBIS compatible?

OBPP and PBIS share a number of common elements, making co-implementation possible for some schools. For example, both frameworks emphasize the importance of a simplified, common language for describing behavioral expectations to students. OBPP's behavioral expectations focus on bullying behavior specifically, while PBIS calls for behavioral expectations that can be applied more generally across contexts. Similarly, both programs require a leadership team to oversee schoolwide implementation and both require educators to spend class time teaching positive behaviors to students.

The following examples demonstrate how some schools have integrated these three components of OBPP and PBIS.

	Behavioral Expectations	Leadership Team	Instruction	Positive Consequences
OBPP Component	OBPP has four anti-bullying rules that emphasize helping behavior, as well as the expectation that students not bully others.	OBPP recommends that a bullying prevention coordinating committee be established in each school to oversee school climate improvement efforts.	OBPP requires that teachers conduct class meetings 1-3 times per week, for 20-30 minutes each.	OBPP recommends that teachers and other adults in the building provide abundant positive reinforcement when students act according to the (anti-bullying) rules.
	Schools are required to maintain the rule "I will not bully others."	This coordinating committee should include a school administrator, a teacher from each grade level, a school-based mental health professional, a non-teaching staff member, parent, a community representative and other school staff.	Class meetings should focus on teaching the anti-bullying rules, bystander roles and prosocial behavior. The class meetings are also designed to increase inter- and intra-personal awareness and build a sense of community in the classroom.	Specifically, teachers should reinforce students when they:
	Anti-bullying statements should be posted in every classroom.			• Try to help students who are bullied • Try to include students who are left out • Tell an adult at school and at home when someone is being bullied
PBIS Standard	PBIS requires schools to have 3-5 positively stated behavioral expectations.	PBIS requires that implementing schools convene a school-level core team at each of the levels (universal, secondary and tertiary) to oversee PBIS in the school.	PBIS schools implement consistent procedures for teaching expected behavior to students.	PBIS core teams develop a schoolwide reinforcement system and continuum of procedures for reinforcing expected behavior.
	Behavioral expectations are posted in every classroom and throughout the school.	The teams meet regularly to analyze data, monitor response to the implementation of preventing and/or intervening evidence-based practices, adjust system issues and communicate with staff.	Expected behaviors are explicitly taught in classrooms and in other settings as part of the universal prevention strategies. Such explicit instruction is best combined with a social emotional learning curriculum.	Within a 3-tiered approach, teachers and staff strive for a ratio of 6-8 positive to 1 negative adult-student interaction.
	Reducing bullying may be identified as a valued outcome by PBIS teams. However, the term bullying is not integral to PBIS fidelity.		Evidence-based interventions at the advanced tiers (secondary and tertiary) are provided for students requiring additional behavioral supports.	
Ideas for Integration	Schools have found it is possible to integrate PBIS schoolwide expectations and OBPP bullying rules.	Rather than convening two separate teams, it may be possible to have a single team coordinate both OBPP and PBIS.	PBIS expected behaviors may be taught during regular class meetings, where bullying awareness, community building and social and emotional learning is also emphasized.	Schools implementing both OBPP and PBIS may strive to explicitly teach and reinforce the anti-bullying behaviors listed above at a 6:1 ratio.
	For example, a school with the expectation, "I am respectful," can teach the four anti-bullying rules as examples of behaviors that support that expectation. The positive behavioral expectations and anti-bullying behaviors should then be posted in classrooms and other settings.	For example, a portion of the PBIS core team agenda could be dedicated to bullying/student relationships and a member of the OBPP could serve as a liaison to the PBIS core team.		

What do educators need to consider when adopting either framework?

Implementation fidelity is an important consideration for schools that choose to implement evidence-based programs. Implementation fidelity refers to the extent to which a program is implemented as designed and researched.[22] When programs are implemented with high levels of implementation fidelity, they produce better results than programs that are implemented with lower fidelity.[23,24] Considering this, any effort to integrate OBPP and PBIS should strive to maintain high fidelity to both models, as much as possible.

Members of the Pennsylvania OBPP-PBIS Workgroup concluded that OBPP and PBIS both require a significant level of commitment, readiness and effort to install in a school. Educators in schools that have implemented both models report that concurrent implementation can be difficult if both programs are initiated at the same time. A time-staggered implementation strategy may be more effective, as this approach allows a school to attain fidelity to one schoolwide model before adopting and integrating the other.

When selecting which model to install first, educators should consider the students' behavioral needs, as reflected by data from multiple sources, including school climate surveys and office discipline referrals. Educators may wish to implement PBIS first if data suggests that many different types of behavioral problems are impeding positive school climate and culture. If bullying is a primary issue of concern or a schoolwide approach to addressing other student behaviors is already in place, educators may wish to start with OBPP.

Acknowledgments

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CENTER FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

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