



**Relationship Between Bullying and  
Academic Achievement  
and  
Direct and Indirect Impact of  
Olweus Bullying Prevention Program:  
A Brief Review of Literature**

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**Prepared by:  
Rob Lillis  
Evalumetrics Research  
58 Scotland Road  
Canandaigua, New York 14424  
585-394-5811  
[rlillis@rochester.rr.com](mailto:rlillis@rochester.rr.com)  
[www.evalumetrics.org](http://www.evalumetrics.org)**

**Summary** – Research on bullying, student intimidation and school violence demonstrates the negative impact of bullying on student achievement, dysfunctional behaviors such as substance abuse and mental health issues later in life. There is also substantial research support showing that evidence-based prevention programs, such as Olweus, when implemented with fidelity, can reduce bullying, increase student sense of school safety and attachment to school. Demonstrating a direct link between bullying prevention programs and changes in student achievement is problematic because of the large number of variables related to academic performance. However, the documented effects of bullying on achievement, as well as on many factors related to achievement, make a compelling logical argument for the value of bullying prevention.

## Review of Literature

**Relationship between bullying and other problems** - Numerous research reports document the relationship between bullying and a variety of academic, social and mental health issues. Eisenberg and Neumark-Sztainer (2003) found that peer harassment, i.e. bullying, is negatively related to connection to school and academic achievement. The authors point out that students who are bullied are more likely to miss school which in turn adds to being disconnected and missing educational opportunities.

*Bullying, is negatively related to connection to school and academic achievement.*

Harlow and Roberts (2010) found that bullying is predicted by the lack of the same protective factors as substance abuse. They also found that interventions that increase protective factors, such as impulse control and attachment to family, also reduce bullying victimization.

Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) reviewed the literature on bullying and interventions and concluded, “Bullying is a serious threat not only to those involved, but also to the entire school environment...” They also found that, “Bullying creates short- and long-term consequences for both the victim and the bully. Victims may suffer from low self-esteem, loneliness, depression, anxiety, absenteeism, and academic difficulties.”

Faith, Kenya and Malcom (2008) discuss the long-term negative effects of peer victimization, i.e. bullying. Bullying in elementary school is associated with a variety of negative outcomes. The authors discuss the potential of early interventions for reducing mental health issues and alcohol abuse in adults.

Gronna and Selvin (1999) analyzed achievement scores from 46 schools and found that after controlling for student characteristics, that school safety was significantly related to math and reading standard scores among eighth graders.

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**Impact of bullying prevention programs** - The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus & Limber, 2000) is a comprehensive bullying prevention program. Olweus trains school personnel to create a supportive school environment and establishes clear limits on unacceptable behavior, and consistently applies consequences for violations of rules. Adults in the school community act as authority figures and role models. The Olweus program has been associated with reductions in the frequency with which students reported being bullied and bullying others. In addition, Olweus (1993) reported significant reductions in students' reports of general antisocial behavior and significant improvements in the social climate of the school.

Vreeman and Carroll (2007) reviewed outcome studies from several types of bullying prevention programs. They found that programs using the “whole-school” approach and mentoring programs had the greatest impact of bullying.

***“Whole-school” approach  
and mentoring programs  
had the greatest impact of  
bullying.***

## **Conclusion**

This review of recent research on bullying indicates substantial evidence for the negative impact of bullying on student achievement, dysfunctional behaviors such as substance abuse and mental health issues later in life. There is also substantial research support showing that evidence-based prevention programs, such as Olweus, when implemented with fidelity, can reduce bullying, increase student sense of school safety and increase attachment to school. In general, environmental or “whole-school strategies” and mentoring programs showed the greatest impact.

Demonstrating a direct link between bullying prevention programs and changes in student achievement is problematic because of the large number of variables related to academic performance. Student characteristics, family functioning, as well as school and community resources all play a role in academic achievement. However, the documented effects of bullying on achievement, as well as on many factors related to achievement, make a compelling logical argument for the value of bullying prevention.

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