

# Making Australian Schools Safer

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ELABORATED THEMES	Page 2
Theme 1: Take a Whole-School Approach.	Page 3
Theme 2: Plan for and Create a Caring, Respectful, Inclusive and Supportive School Culture.	Page 8
Theme 3: Use Evidence-based Practice.	Page 16
Theme 4: Use a Risk Management Approach.	Page 20
Theme 5: Focus on Skill Development	Page 23
Theme 6: Plan for Sustainability.	Page 29
APPENDIX 2: A BRIEF SUMMARY OF NON-PUNITIVE AND RESTORATIVE APPROACHES	Page 33
Non-punitive Approaches	Page 34
The Restorative Approach	Page 36
APPENDIX 3: REFERENCES	Page 38

# APPENDIX 1: ELABORATED THEMES

## Theme 1: Take a Whole-School Approach

A consistent message from research is that adopting a whole-school approach is the most effective way to implement any school-based programme that aims to increase student wellbeing and safety and prevent anti-social behaviour (e.g. Battistich, Schaps, Watson et al., 2001; Briggs & Hawkins, n.d, 1999a; Elias, 2003; Hawkins, Guo, Hill et al., 2001; National Health and Medical Research Council, 1996; Scheckner et al., 2002; Skiba & Fontanini, 2000; Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004).

A whole-school approach to Safe Schools incorporates the following features:

There is a focus on policy, curriculum and changes in the physical and social environment of the school.

There is a focus on positive partnerships and all members of the school community (teachers, support staff, students and parents) have a role to play in addressing bullying and promoting a positive school culture (Greenberg et al., 2003).

All teachers accept responsibility for preventing and managing bullying situations in the school, even if they have no direct responsibility for the specific students involved.

There is a consistent approach by all members of the school community to addressing bullying.

All students at all year levels participate in developmentally appropriate 'Safe School' programmes, not just a few students who have been selected as being 'at risk' (Greenberg et al., 2001; Hawkins et al., 1999). However, some selected students may receive additional support.

Safe Schools programmes, practices and concepts are not just 'added on' but are integrated with other school programmes and embedded in relevant areas of the curriculum and the daily life of the school.

All teachers incorporate relevant dimensions of Safe Schools into their teaching strategies, curriculum and their formal and informal interactions with students, colleagues and parents.

The adoption of a whole-school approach was a key shared feature in the Australian study of schools that had been identified as having good student wellbeing outcomes and low levels of bullying (McGrath, Stanley & Craig, 2005). A whole-school approach was also seen by most of the schools in Rigby and Thomas's (2003) Australian study as very important to the success of anti-bullying initiatives.

### **Effective Leadership is Necessary**

Effective and firm leadership is an essential component of any successful whole-school Safe Schools initiative (Sharp & Thompson, 1994). In a study of 550 school districts in New Jersey, Gager and Elias (1997) found the key variable that contributed to successful implementation of well-validated prevention programmes was not the programme per se, but the conditions of implementation and, in particular, consistent support from the school principal.

A perceived lack of interest or awareness by leadership teams in a particular direction or initiative acts as a barrier to commitment and effective implementation. In their evaluation of the primary-school-based Friendly Schools and Friendly Families Project, Western Australian researchers Cross and her colleagues found that the principal's full involvement was crucial to a school's successful implementation of the programme (Cross et al., 2004a). Principal involvement was demonstrated in a number of ways such as attending the same professional development sessions as staff and being actively involved with the school's anti-bullying committee. In the Australian study by Rigby and Thomas (2003) strong leadership was seen by many schools as a pre-requisite for effective action in regards to bullying. Similarly, McGrath, Stanley and Craig (2005) found that one of the most significant characteristics of schools that had very low levels of bullying and high levels of student satisfaction and wellbeing was effective leadership.

Effective school leaders initiate the collaborative development of a long-term vision of their school as a 'Safe School' and then work towards ensuring that this vision is shared by staff, students and parents. They develop a detailed three- to five-year strategic implementation plan. Detailed planning is essential, as vague or tentative plans never lead to success (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1995). Before a new initiative is implemented, school leaders and their staff also need to take a close and honest look at the current capacity of the school (e.g. staff, skills, services and resources) to support the initiative (Elias, 2003).

Leaders can work towards the development of a supportive, collaborative, professional culture that promotes continuous improvement within an atmosphere of collegiality, trust and shared goals (Peterson, 1994). In a collaborative school culture teachers regularly discuss ideas, issues and problems with their colleagues, share information, skills and resources and participate in collaborative problem-solving (Peterson, 1994; Rosenholtz, 1989). Success is more likely when teachers work collaboratively on school improvement (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Failure, mistakes, and uncertainty are openly shared, discussed, and collaborative problem solving occurs. Staff broadly agree on what's important but disagreement is accepted as a way to foster improvement (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Fullan, 2001). Leadership is shared: many teachers are leaders in different ways, a process that is supported by the principal (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Collaborative schools are exciting and professionally rewarding workplaces for teachers (Peterson, 1994) and they contribute to a sense of teacher efficacy about their capacity to affect student learning (Rosenholtz, 1989).

Teacher support of any new programme is crucial (Botvinet al., 1995; Hunter, Elias & Norris, 2001) and effective leaders can engender staff enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the consistent implementation of 'new initiatives such as those that contribute to Safe Schools'. Elias (2003) has cautioned against underestimating the time needed at the beginning of a new initiative to both develop teacher capacity and build a staff who are committed to the goals and the process of change. Rigby (2006a) has noted that the available evidence suggests that better outcomes are achieved when an anti-bullying programme is implemented with the full and cooperative support of teachers. Safe Schools programmes and practices should also be regularly included in school planning and resource allocation so that time and funding are available for materials, personnel and professional learning that can help to maintain teacher commitment.

When school leaders make Safe Schools programmes and practices a priority, they are more successful (Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004). Priority is reflected in:

the level of awareness in the school community of the programmes and practices

perceptions by the school community that the programmes and practices remain fresh and active

the efforts that are directed towards ensuring that new staff receive appropriate materials and develop the necessary skills

the steps taken by the principal to build capacity by training key staff members for leadership roles as part of succession planning. This ensures that if the principal or another key staff member moves on, other skilled teachers could take on responsibility for coordination of different components.

When new initiatives are planned, most teachers initially respond with ambivalence and anxiety (Fullan, 1997). An effective leader can counter these initial reactions by engendering positive feelings such as interest, enthusiasm, confidence and trust, all of which contribute to a strong sense of hope and optimism, which Fullan (1997) has described as the capacity not to panic in difficult situations but rather to respond adaptively and resourcefully in finding new ways to address challenges. Part of this process requires the provision of opportunities for staff to express and reconcile their doubts, concerns and dissent.

*If you are sincere, you have legitimised dissent. You have made it easy for staff to speak up about concerns (which would have come out later anyway in more subtle and inaccessible ways). You listen carefully, suspending your own advocacy, because you know that some fundamental problems will be identified and that people's fears, real or imagined, will need to be examined carefully.* (Fullan, 1997, p. 222)

Leaders also have an important role to play in helping teachers to make the link between the psychosocial teaching and learning experiences they provide in a Safe Schools curriculum and their students' general wellbeing and academic outcomes (Nadge, 2005). The core business of teachers is to help their students achieve curriculum outcomes, and leaders can help their staff to see how components of Safe Schools initiatives, such as the development of social competencies, can also contribute to success in achieving curriculum outcomes (McGrath & Noble, 2003). A new term, 'academic care' has been recently coined to highlight how the creation of positive school environments contributes to academic progress and vice versa (Nadge, 2005).

### **A Safe Schools Policy is Essential**

All schools need a comprehensive, detailed and transparent Safe Schools policy developed collaboratively by staff, students and parents. This is a core document that identifies the aims of the school in relation to the prevention and management of bullying and other anti-social behaviours and the ways in which these will be supported by school systems, procedures, programmes and strategies (Smith, Ananiadou & Cowie, 2003).

The development of an effective policy can take up to two years (Smith et al., 2004). The policy should be widely communicated and easily accessible for all members of the school community. There are specific features that need to be included (e.g., see McGrath & Stanley, 2006b). A statement and description of the school's stand against bullying, violence and harassment, and the procedures and actions that are to be taken in its implementation, are indispensable features of any Safe Schools policy (Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004). The policy should highlight that bullying is everybody's problem and include clear and agreed definitions and terminology to support the communication of a consistent anti-bullying and anti-harassment message across the school community. Without a consistent message being delivered by everyone from the principal through to canteen staff, a cultural change is difficult to bring about (Pelton, 2002).

Relief teachers, school support staff, integration aides and those with close links with the school, such as bus drivers and canteen staff, need to have the same shared understandings. In their evaluation of the Sheffield Bullying Project in the UK, Smith & Sharp (1994) found that schools that had involved all teachers, parents/carers and others with student involvement such as school bus drivers and local shopkeepers in the whole process of policy development had the largest decreases in bullying behaviour.

### **Reviewing Other School Policies to Ensure Alignment**

Reviewing all current school policies, protocols and practices helps to ensure their alignment with the pro-social values and practices of a Safe Schools policy. In particular, there should be consistency between a school's Safe Schools policy and its welfare/wellbeing and discipline policies. If schools adopt a non-punitive approach (see McGrath & Stanley, 2006b) or a Restorative approach (see Armstrong & Thorsborne, 2006) to the management of bullying as a first-level action, these also need to be referred to in other related school policies. It is especially important to have policy continuity from primary to secondary schools to facilitate student transition (Donna Cross, personal communication, July, 2006).

### **Developing Partnerships with Parents**

The available evidence suggests that schools that work closely with parents to develop and implement school-based prevention programmes are more successful (Cross et al., 2004b); Dryfoos, 1990; Greenberg et al., 2003; Olweus, 1993; Scheckner et al., 2002). Such partnerships help schools to develop common definitions, models, language, and procedures (Greenberg et al., 2001).

In their evaluation of the effectiveness of school-based Protective Behaviour programmes, Briggs & Hawkins (1999b) found that parent participation was crucial to programme success; it was even more important for students from lower socio-economic areas than for those in higher socio-economic areas. They argue that if parents are not actively involved and informed, they can wittingly or unwittingly undermine what has been taught at school as they often do not accept or understand it (Kumpfer, 1997). Wurtele, Kast and Melter (1992) found that children who are taught personal safety skills by parents and teachers in a co-operative effort are much more likely to remember them than children who are taught only by their teachers.

Working effectively with parents involves finding positive ways to engage them in Safe Schools initiatives, keeping them informed and encouraging them to model respectful, pro-social and anti-bullying attitudes and behaviour for their children. Parents can reinforce important anti-bullying values and support the work of the school in addressing bullying. Strategies for engaging parents are more successful when they are based on two-way capacity building. This means increasing the skills and resources of everyone in the school community to manage school change (Epstein, 1995).

Like many of the research schools used by Briggs and Hawkins (1999b) in their evaluation of the effectiveness of Protective Behaviours programmes, many schools in this NSSF Best Practices Grants Programme found that it was not always easy to involve parents in their Safe Schools initiatives. Many parents seemed content for the school to take full responsibility for addressing bullying. Similarly, Cross et al. (2004a) found that many of the schools in their Friendly Schools and Friendly Families project reported that the use of whole-school strategies to engage parents were the most difficult component of the overall programme to implement due to factors such as:

the high numbers of parents for whom English was not their first language  
a lack of time to build rapport with parents  
poor appreciation by both teachers and the parent community of the benefits of parent involvement  
a perception by teachers that there was a low level of interest on the part of parents.

Schools in Briggs and Hawkins's (1999b) research that *were* successful in attracting parents arranged day and evening meetings, provided child care facilities and refreshments, and emphasised the importance of participation by both parents, not just mothers. Many schools in this NSSF Best Practices Grants Programme successfully attracted parents in similar ways and also involved parents on committees, encouraged them to attend programmes to develop their own social skills, promoted a topical aspect of bullying (e.g. bullying through text messages) and invited them to student performances about bullying.

### **Incorporating Student Ownership**

As Fullan (2001) has noted, more often than not students are typically perceived mainly as the potential beneficiaries of new programmes and practices rather than as participants in the process of change, and he has proposed that effective teachers are those who give students a 'voice' in their classrooms and school. The importance of student ownership of Safe Schools initiatives emerged as a reasonably strong theme in this NSSF Best Practices Grants Programme. Amongst other endeavours, students (independently or with a degree of teacher support), created case studies for teacher awareness, prepared peer tutoring sessions, created books and kits, developed dramatic performances and made DVDs. Many schools felt that these students were more effective than teachers in their promotion of anti-bullying messages to peers, and changed their own views and behaviours on bullying along the way.

Salmivalli (2001) evaluated a short intervention that involved a peer-led intervention campaign against school bullying carried out by a group of Year 8 students in a high school in Finland. They planned and delivered the campaign over one week to twelve classes of seventh and eighth grade students. They focused on convincing students that they had a role to play in either encouraging or discouraging bullying. The campaign was reasonably effective, especially with girls, and most students who had reported being bullied before the campaign thought it had been helpful.

When students 'own' a learning task they take charge of their own educational experiences in relation to that task. They explore options, make choices, set their own goals, pose questions, undertake research, solve problems and produce outcomes.

*A growing body of research indicates that when students are working on goals they themselves have set, they are more motivated and efficient, and they achieve more than they do when working on goals that have been set by the teacher. (Hom & Murphy, 1983, p. 104)*

Bandura (1997) and Perkins (1992) have argued that student ownership should lead to many positive outcomes for schools, such as more active student engagement in the learning process, increased student resilience and the further development of social competencies. The following quote from Jones, Valdez, Nowakowski and Rasmussen (1994) provides a clearer picture of this process.

*In engaged learning settings, students are responsible for their own learning; they take charge and are self-regulated. They define learning goals and problems that are meaningful to them; have a big*

*picture of how specific activities relate to those goals; develop standards of excellence; and evaluate how well they have achieved their goals. They have alternative routes or strategies for attaining goals – -and some strategies for correcting errors and redirecting themselves when their plans do not work. They know their own strengths and weaknesses and know how to deal with them productively and constructively. (p. 8)*

This type of self-directed learning within a Safe Schools context also has the potential to prepare students, and assist them to assume greater responsibility and accountability for their actions and become more adept at identifying and solving bullying and harassment problems and other interpersonal difficulties in their future personal and occupational lives.

### **Teaching a Safe Schools Curriculum**

A culturally appropriate anti-bullying and pro-social curriculum is a key component of a whole-school approach to preventing and managing bullying (Olweus, 1993; Ortega & Lera, 2000; Smith & Sharp, 1994). An effective Safe Schools curriculum is comprehensive, sequential and developmental, and provided to students at all year levels in the school every year. It includes drama and literature with bullying themes (Pepler et al. (1993, 1994; McGrath & Noble, 2003). It should not only raise awareness and explore issues such as peer pressure, but also encourage students to report bullying and mistreatment to adults whilst emphasising the difference between dobbing, asking for support and acting responsibly (McGrath & Noble, 2003).

### **Embedding Programmes and Practices**

School-based prevention programmes are more effective when they are embedded in the curriculum, practices and daily life of the school rather than being 'added on' (Briggs & Hawkins, n.d., 1999a; Davis, Hawley, McMullan & Spilka, 1997; National Health and Medical Research Council, 1996; Orr, 1992; Scheckner et al., 2002).

When a programme is embedded, the skills, concepts and understandings from the programme are located in other curriculum areas and programmes and applied in a variety of classroom and playground contexts. The values, skills and concepts are also supported by teaching practices, interactions and other school activities and experiences. Programmes are adapted to fit with other programmes and practices within the school.

Programmes for reducing bullying and promoting pro-social behaviour are less effective if they are perceived by teachers as 'add-on extras' rather than an integral part of their work (Galloway & Roland, 2004). Sellman (2002) has argued that if a programme or practice is just an 'add-on feature' that is easy to discard, then it is less likely to be sustained over time. Elias (2003) has also highlighted the danger of using narrow programmes and packages that don't take into account the context of a specific school and its students. Such decontextualised materials and directions are unlikely to be sustainable.

### **Involving the Local Community**

Involving the local community as much as possible in a school's Safe Schools initiatives can contribute to consistent anti-bullying, anti-harassment, anti-violence and pro-social messages and support ongoing school-based programmes (Briggs & Hawkins, 1999b; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998).

## **Theme 2: Plan for and Create a Caring, Respectful, Inclusive and Supportive School Culture**

Safe schools can most readily be developed within the context of a positive school culture. This kind of culture is characterised by:

- members of the school community caring about and supporting one another
- prevailing values of mutual respect, cooperation, inclusion and acceptance of difference
- everyone having a sense of belonging and safety
- the promotion of positive relationships and pro-social behaviours. Pro-social behaviours are those leading to harmonious co-existence and wellbeing.

Bullying, harassment and aggression are less likely to thrive in this kind of school environment (Olweus, 1993; Galloway & Roland 2004; Schaps & Lewis, 1999) and student wellbeing is more likely to develop (McGrath & Noble, 2003).

Schaps (2003) and Schaps & Lewis (1999) have argued that a positive school climate predisposes students to adopt the goals and values of the school and contributes to:

- higher levels of intrinsic student academic motivation and higher future aspirations
- more compassion and concern for others
- more preparedness and skilfulness in resolving conflicts fairly
- more altruistic behaviour
- higher levels of pro-social behaviour in class and in the playground (Hawkins et al.,1999; Schaps, 1999)
- an inclusive rather than exclusive attitude toward others
- more positive interpersonal behaviour.

Fullan (2005) has asserted the way forward in education is through creating conditions that develop the ability of both organisations and individuals to learn, and that this always entails changing the culture of classrooms and schools and the promotion of relationships and values. The culture of a school can be seen as the sum of the values, practices, traditions, behavioural expectations, relationships and organisational structures within a school that cause it to function and react in particular ways (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). It evolves over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. A school culture pervades and influences everyone within a school. It is an unobservable force behind school activities and a unifying theme that provides meaning, direction, and mobilisation for school members (Prosser, 1999). School culture influences the actions and the spirit of school life and the school's motivation, commitment, effort, and focus (Peterson, 1999). In particular, beliefs about what is worth striving for are a critical feature of any school culture (Maehr & Fyans, 1989). School culture also provides support, direction and identity for members.

Members of a school community and visitors to the school often have an intuitive feel for a school's culture but cannot always articulate how that perception is communicated to them.

School culture manifests itself in many different ways such as: physical environment and layout, interactions between members, customs, ceremonies, reward systems, celebrations and events, shared sayings, chosen heroes, methods of communication, symbols, the way in which teachers and students treat each other, collaboration, level of trust, rituals of staff and student exit and entry and how time and money are used (Stewart, 2000). 'The way we do things around here' demonstrates the values and beliefs to which members of the school community generally subscribe. They interpret their experiences in terms of the values the school holds most strongly,

and they will be committed to activities that are consistent with these values (Stewart, 2000).

Although the terms 'school culture' and 'school climate' tend to be used interchangeably (along with 'ethos'), school climate is used more often to refer to students' perception of the school and its effects on them while the term 'school culture' (and 'ethos') is more often used to refer to the way teachers and other staff members behave and work together and the school's organisational structures (McBrien & Brandt, 1997; Stolp & Smith, 1994).

Sustaining a new approach or programme always requires changing aspects of a school's culture and this is usually a slow and complex process (Patterson, Purkey & Parker (1986). Fullan (1992) has argued that the most important thing that school leaders do is to create and manage the school's culture whilst also facing the challenge of being part of that culture through their attitudes and relationships with others within the school. Peterson (1999) advocates that the first step in changing a school's culture is for leaders to take the time to fully 'read' the current culture and history of the school.

### **The Development of a Collaborative Vision**

The second step is for leaders to work collaboratively with teachers, students and parents to develop a long-term vision for creating a positive school culture in a multi-faceted way (Stolp, 1994). Many studies have found that sharing a common vision increases the likelihood that school improvement efforts will succeed (Beer, Eisenstat & Spector, 1990; Deal, 1985; Miles & Louis, 1990; Norris & Reigeluth, 1991; Schlechty & Cole, 1991). Without a shared vision, students, teachers, administrators, and parents struggle to identify what is expected of them (Smey-Richman, 1991). A 'vision' is a picture of what the school could look like. This vision provides direction and energy for making changes and determines the criteria for selection of new components. A vision should also include a plan for strategies or change that will be needed to support the picture. A shared vision helps to identify what is important to further develop and protect in the school, and planning should include strategies to identify and strengthen aspects of the culture that already fit with the vision.

The third step is to gain the commitment of all staff to new initiatives and identify key teachers who will be assets to a positive school culture.

There are three especially 'active ingredients' of a school culture which numerous research studies and meta-analyses have identified as producing the greatest outcomes in terms of safety, wellbeing and academic achievement for the greatest number of students (Battistich et al., 2001, Catalano et al., 2002; Flannery et al., 2003; Frey, Hirschstein & Guzzo, 2000; Greenberg & Kusche, 1998; Hawkins et al., 1999; Krug et al., 1997; Mytton et al., 2002; Resnick et al., 1997; Solomon et al., 2000; Wilson et al., 2001). These are:

- the development of a caring community of learners which creates connectedness and a sense of belonging
- the teaching and development of pro-social attitudes/values and social competencies
- extensive classroom use of cooperative learning.

### **Positive Relationships**

Schools should plan for and promote the development of positive relationships across the school. This includes same-age and cross-age peer interactions, staff-student interactions and staff-staff interactions. Strategies and structures for ensuring that every student feels that he or she has a

trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult at school also need to be part of planning for a safe school (Fein et al., 2002).

All members of a school community want to have a sense of belonging and safety, and to experience positive relationships with others in the school community. Teachers, students and parents alike need to believe they are being treated with respect and fairness by peers and those at other levels (Firestone & Wilson, 1991).

The systematic promotion and facilitation of positive relationships at school have been identified by many researchers in the area of student resilience as the key to improving school culture, preventing school violence and bullying, successfully engaging students' intrinsic motivation to learn and improving student academic outcomes (Benard, 2004; Battisch, 2001; Battisch et al., 1995; Resnick et al., 1997). Students' sense of interconnectedness with other students and their teachers appears to be critical to their acceptance of their responsibility for the wellbeing of others (Noble, 2006).

The relationships that teachers develop with their students are also very significant. Many different research studies are remarkably consistent in their conclusions about students' ideas about the qualities of a 'good teacher'. These qualities are listening, noticing when they are absent and being interested in them – in other words the students tend to focus most on the interpersonal quality of their relationship with their teachers (Trent, 2001; Werner, 2000; Dornbusch, 1999; Ruddick et al., 1997). Fullan (2001) has written of the powerful positive effect on students of having three such good teachers in three successive years.

### **Pro-Social Values**

The direct teaching and promotion of pro-social values within the curriculum and daily life of the school supports the development of a positive school culture. Pro-social values are those that align with and lead to pro-social behaviour that creates harmonious co-existence. They include care and support (compassion), inclusion and friendliness, acceptance of differences, cooperation and respect. Explicitly teaching values to students develops habits of thinking, feeling and acting that positively influence how they make decisions about the way they treat others.

A second part of a values education approach involves the identification and direct challenging of those values that are anti-social in that they reflect a lack of respect and consideration for others, underpin behaviour that causes distress to other people and/or violates their rights, and creates resentment, conflict and disharmony. These include values that discriminate against and vilify people with different sexual preferences (homophobic values), from different racial and cultural backgrounds (racist values) and those of a specific gender (sexist values).

Values are the basis of any school culture, and they articulate the essence of the school's philosophy, its goals and how it goes about achieving them. Many researchers have included the teaching of pro-social values as part of their overall and moderately successful anti-bullying, anti-violence or student wellbeing interventions (Battistich et al., 2001; Cowie & Olafsson, 2000; Cross et al., 2004a; Flannery et al., 2003; Frey et al., 2000).

The National Framework for Values Education in Schools (2005) and the Values Education Study Final Report (Zbar et al., 2003) are good starting points for developing a values programme (<http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/>).

### **Practices that are Congruent with Policy**

A very large amount of what students learn occurs in the informal and social aspects of their experiences in school. Congruence is apparent when their daily experiences are consistent with what is being formally taught in the curriculum and promoted as school policy. Congruence also occurs when teachers interact and teach in accordance with the values they promote and the school's structures and systems reflect the school's anti-bullying and pro-social messages.

There needs to be whole-school agreement by teachers to model respectful, accepting and caring attitudes and behaviour in their teaching, their interactions with students and the strategies they use for classroom management. When teachers act in accordance with the expectations and values that are being communicated to students, they are more effective positive role models for respectful, inclusive and accepting behaviour (Prosser & Deakin, 1997). Teachers also need to think carefully about their public conversation with colleagues that may be overheard by students at excursions, sporting events etc., and refrain from making homophobic, sexist or racist remarks or comments that vilify or ridicule particular students.

Cross et al. (2004a) found that one of the outcomes from their Friendly Schools and Friendly Families research project in WA was a number of requests by teachers for help with dealing with bullying colleagues. Teacher bullying of co-workers should be monitored and addressed just as it is for students. If students pick up these undercurrents they are likely to take the school's messages less seriously.

Teachers who use behaviour management behaviours that are based on dominance and submission are also acting inconsistently with Safe Schools policies and practices. Examples of this abusive behaviour include being sarcastic or unfair, making fun of or ridiculing a student, regularly threatening a student with punishments, and forcing a student into a submissive posture or response. Students who are already prone to bullying classmates may feel that not only are they justified in their own bullying behaviour but that these behaviours are tacitly sanctioned.

Similarly, teachers need to avoid behaviours that may provoke or exacerbate a conflict situation (Mitina, 1991) such as:

- applying rules inconsistently
- applying sanctions immediately or indiscriminately
- ignoring incidents that need to be dealt with.

Students can also bully teachers by selectively and repeatedly undermining, ridiculing or showing disrespect to a particular teacher over time (Terry, 1998). Such patterns need to be identified, monitored and addressed by senior staff. The issue needs to be firmly discussed with the students involved. Some teachers may also need extra support with classroom management issues.

### **Peer Support Structures**

Peer support systems always involve the participation of students in rejecting bullying and other forms of mistreatment behaviour (Hobden, 2003). Although there is some overlap between peer support structures, they can be collapsed into the following three types (Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Stanley & McGrath, 2006):

*peer counselling support structures* in which students are trained to assist other students in distress using simple counselling skills such as listening, showing understanding and offering support, and helping with problem solving

*peer mediation support structures* in which students are trained to mediate conflict between peers or younger students

*befriending peer support structures*, in which students are asked to act as a temporary friend towards another student (mostly a younger student) and offer support and friendship. This is the easiest approach to implement in a school because it is not as structured and complex as the other forms of peer support (Gini, 2004). Examples include buddy programmes and peer mentoring systems.

However, in some studies these distinctions have not always been clear and it has not always been possible to identify the kind of peer support that was provided. In some studies the peer support system used combines two or more of these categories. Cowie and Hutson (2005) have highlighted the continuing evolution of different and hybrid forms of peer support

#### *Peer Counselling Support*

Studies indicate that peer counselling systems can help some students to feel more empowered to protect themselves from bullying, encourage students to report bullying and enhance the social skills and responsibility of the students who take on the role of peer counsellors (Cowie & Wallace, 2000; Naylor, Cowie & del Rey, 2001). Cowie et al. (2002) also identified that many students appreciated the provision of a peer support service that was established to protect their safety, and viewed its presence as a sign that the school was caring. Likewise, teachers frequently reported that their school environment had become safer and more caring following the introduction of a peer support scheme, and that peer relationships improve (Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Cowie et al., 2002). Cowie and Hutson (2005) have also proposed that peer support systems can lead to more students intervening in bullying situations. Peer counselling support systems are more likely to be effective when students have been trained in the required skills and staff and students are committed to the success and long-term maintenance of the programme (Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Hobden, 2003; Karcher, 2005).

Peer counselling support structures appear to be more attractive to and effective with girls than boys, especially in mixed-sex secondary schools (Cowie, 1998; Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Menesini & Benelli, 2000).

However peer counselling schemes may also place a heavy burden on peer supporters if they are faced with supporting a peer in a difficult and complex personal situation. Schools need to be realistic about what peer supporters can be expected to do (Baginsky, 2004), as well as sensitive to potential ethical and legal situations that could arise.

#### *Peer Mediation Support*

Although conflict is an inevitable consequence of human interaction, violent or bullying responses to conflict are not acceptable in school communities. Conflict occurs when there is mutual disagreement, argument or dispute over an issue that is important to those involved. Peer mediation programmes involve trained student mediators being available to assist students who are in dispute with each other. The underlying principles used in peer mediation include each party listening to the other without interrupting, avoiding the use of blaming language and negotiating mutually acceptable solutions.

Peer mediation is usually used to enhance the overall disciplinary system of a school, not replace it, and it is not an appropriate way of responding to bullying situations. However, more skilful ways of managing conflict may enable students to manage and defuse tense situations and avert potentially aggressive ones or those that could lead to bullying situations. Poorly managed conflict situations which involve issues such as unfairness or broken friendships can lead to situations of bullying or verbal or physical aggression 'justified' in the minds of the students by feelings of resentment and a desire for revenge. Strumpf, Crawford and Bodine (1997) have pointed out that 'diversity' plays a major role in student conflict, with many conflicts underpinned by bias or prejudice, often reflecting inequality of privilege or status in relationships.

Over the last decade, many schools in the UK and the USA (and to a lesser extent in Australia) have implemented school-wide programmes that combine conflict resolution training and peer mediation structures as a response to all forms of student aggression (Bentley, 1996; Shepherd, 1994). Research studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of peer mediation programmes have identified positive outcomes such as improved social skills (especially for the peer mediators), increases in school connectedness and reduced aggression, but not necessarily a direct reduction in bullying behaviour (Bell et al., 2000; Bickmore, 2002; Crawford & Bodine, 2001; Smith SW et al., 2002).

Research by Silcock and Stacey (1996) has suggested that peer mediation structures are more successful if elements of a cooperative school culture are already in place. Sellman (2002) has further argued that there is a strong link between successful implementation of a peer mediation programme and the prevailing school culture, particularly the ways in which teachers deal with conflict. A study by S.W. Smith et al. (2002) evaluated a combined conflict resolution-peer mediation programme across three middle schools in which 1800 students were taught conflict management skills over five lessons each year across a two-year period. They found that the programme led to a reduction in disciplinary problems and high levels of student satisfaction with the school.

In summary, peer mediation per se is not an appropriate strategy for directly dealing with bullying situations and it has not been associated with direct reductions in bullying. However, it appears to have some potential to contribute to a more harmonious and safe school culture. It may be particularly appropriate for secondary schools because older students typically rely more on their peers for social and emotional support and welcome opportunities to function independently of their parents and teachers (Chittooran & Hoenig, 2005).

### *Befriending Peer Support*

The key characteristic of most buddy/peer mentoring systems is the participation of (usually) older students in positive, supportive, structured and facilitated one-on-one relationships with younger students. Buddy systems can create feelings of connectedness that enable both older and younger 'buddies' to bond more closely with their school within a psychologically safe environment, thereby increasing the likelihood of more positive school behaviour and less bullying (Schaps & Battistich, 2002; Schaps, 2003). A buddy system can also help schools to cultivate respectful and supportive relationships between students and teachers as they share a common purpose and common goals, incorporating fairness, empathy, responsibility and concern for others (Developmental Studies Center, n.d.).

Rigorous research into the effects of buddy systems is difficult to find. Most often, buddy systems are one component in multi-faceted student wellbeing programmes or general peer support

systems, and the effects of that specific component is not assessed. However buddy systems have been shown to contribute to the development of stronger pro-social values and improved social skills in all students who are involved, especially the skills of listening and conflict management (Solomon et al., 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Pierce, Stahlbrand & Armstrong, 1984). Older buddies are more likely to accept some responsibility for the behaviours of their younger buddies and be more motivated to behave well and act kindly in order to impress their younger buddy and be a positive role model (Pierce, Stahlbrand & Armstrong, 1984).

Stanley (2005) conducted an investigation into the perceptions of primary teachers and senior staff in 12 schools of the advantages they had observed from their experiences of using buddy systems. The main advantages of a buddy system that were identified were the way in which they help to build positive relationships and connectedness within the school, help younger students experience a sense of belonging and feel supported and safe, and assist older students to develop responsibility, self-esteem, confidence, leadership behaviours and social skills. Teachers frequently report that their school environment becomes safer and more caring following the introduction of a befriending scheme, and that peer relationships in general improve (e.g. Menesini, Codecasa, Benelli & Cowie, 2003).

## Relationship-based Teaching and Learning Strategies

The two most significant forms of relationship-based teaching and learning are cooperative learning and problem-based learning in a small-group context.

### *Cooperative Learning*

Over a thousand research studies have documented the many benefits of cooperative learning (Benard, 2004; Marzano, 1998). In studies with matched control groups, researchers have identified that cooperative learning leads to increases and improvements in academic outcomes, social skills, empathy, motivation, acceptance of diversity (ethnic, racial, physical), conflict resolution, self-esteem, self-control, positive attitudes to school, and critical thinking (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Johnson, Johnson & Stanne, 2001; Slavin, 1995). Cooperative learning and cooperative group work have also been associated with lower levels of bullying, an increased ability to tolerate different perspectives on the same issue and increased levels of assertive problem-solving skills (Johnson & Johnson & Stanne, 2001; Ortega & Lera, 2000). Cowie, Smith, Boulton & Laver (1994) reported that there had been a small reduction in bullying in schools in their study that had introduced cooperative learning.

The key principles that characterise cooperative learning groups and make them different from unstructured group work are:

*Positive interdependence.* Members of the group have a shared goal and no-one succeeds unless everyone succeeds. All group members share their work and resources.

*Individual accountability and responsibility* to the group. Everyone does their share of the work towards the group's goal and (in most cases) each member has a specific responsibility as well.

*Social skills* are taught, practised and reflected on within the group.

A straightforward example of cooperative learning is when students work in a group of four to solve a complex maths problem. All students contribute to the problem-solving but additionally each student is allocated one of four roles: Notetaker, Spokesperson, Decision Coordinator and Timekeeper. A specific social skill such as 'active listening' is nominated, practised and reflected on at the end of the task.

### *SOLAR Tasks and Problem-based Learning*

SOLAR tasks (**S**tudent **O**wned **R**esearch and **L**earning **T**asks) incorporate the following features:

The task is authentic in that the group's product, solution, outcome or recommendation really matters to the school community. An example would be asking each group to make recommendations as to how the school could reduce its ecological footprint.

The process is characterised by student ownership, goal-setting and student-direction plus teacher facilitation. For example students would decide on which resources to use and whether their final product was in the form of a presentation, booklet or a poster.

Students need to use research and skills and skills and knowledge from several discipline areas (eg writing, costing, collecting statistics) to complete the task

The assessment and feedback on the product/outcome/solution is provided by people with relevant expertise (eg members of a local conservation group) or the power to make decisions (eg school council).

Social skills are intentionally practised and reflected on (eg using a teamwork rubric)

More details about and examples of SOLAR tasks can be found at <[www.bounceback.com.au](http://www.bounceback.com.au)>

Problem-based Learning (PBL) is another teaching and learning strategy that incorporates student ownership, cooperative small-group work, self-directed learning, goal setting, problem solving and research skills. Although it may take many forms, the key distinguishing feature of PBL is that a relevant problem or task, which requires collaborative research to solve, is used to drive the learning process (Delisle, 1997; McGrath & Noble, 2005; Stepien & Gallagher, 1993). PBL tasks has much in common with SOLAR tasks but the focus is only on solutions to problems and the problem, although sometimes authentic, can also be a hypothetical one or based on a case study.

### **Theme 3: Use Evidence-based Practice**

The term 'evidence-based practice' means that schools adopt programmes and approaches on the basis that there is some evidence support for them. This differs from the term 'best practice', which implies that there is one most effective way. The term 'evidence-informed practice' may be preferable in that it acknowledges that what works in one social context or school environment may not be appropriate in a different context (McGrath & Noble, 2006). As Smith (2001) notes, it is vital to adapt approaches to suit the conditions of the particular school.

Evidence-based practice is based on a critical synthesis of relevant, recent and credible research and theory to make decisions about school-level actions and programmes. Evidence-based practice considers research that has been carried out in different countries, cultures, school systems and student populations, but recognises that this may need to be evaluated for appropriateness for Australian culture and educational systems, and to particular school contexts.

Evidence-based practice avoids 'faddism', a tendency towards adopting new programmes and discarding them for even newer ones. A main cause of 'faddism' appears to be the reluctance of educators to wait for, or ask for, a reasonably sound theoretical framework and convincing evidence before adopting new practices and programmes (Slavin, 1989).

It is also important to consider factors that affect implementation such as the appropriateness of the programme for the school's needs (especially cultural appropriateness), adequate stakeholder involvement, school readiness, teacher skills and programme fidelity (Greenberg et al., 2003).

### **What Constitutes 'Evidence'?**

Evidence is needed about:

- the logical links between any new programme or approach and theory
- the content or components of a programme or approach
- the method used to deliver the programme or approach. Many developers of programmes or approaches do not state the underlying theory of learning but it is apparent in the design of lessons, their sequence, duration and structure, and in the way in which staff training and support is provided
- the overall effectiveness of the programme or approach or similar programmes or approaches

Evidence, with differing levels of rigour, can be obtained from many sources such as:

- meta-analyses or reviews of research that summarise large amounts of relevant research information concisely and accurately

individual and replicable scientific studies that have been carried out on either the effectiveness of the programme or its various components  
research studies that support the 'big ideas' that a school is trying to work towards  
published case studies and narratives  
teachers' own action research within their school (Davies, 1999; Groundwater-Smith, 2000).  
Although teacher action research does not claim to be transferable to other contexts in the accepted ways, it can be transferred into other classrooms (and schools) where the ideas can be tried and then adapted to the new context (Evans, Lomax & Morgan, 2000)  
school-based evaluations of the effectiveness of a new initiative.

Hammersley (2005) and others (e.g. Pring, 2000) have identified some limitations that need to be kept in mind when schools adopt an evidence-based approach:

Knowledge derived from research studies may not be sufficiently up-to-date to meet the pressing needs of schools.

Research studies sometimes generate too much information or information that is too detailed for practical purposes. This occurs because researchers mostly study particular issues in depth, whereas teachers usually have to respond to many issues simultaneously, and often quite quickly.

Large scale quantitative research across a number of schools can over-focus on the big picture and 'miss' the data from individual schools that may be most relevant to a specific school with similar context or issues.

On the other hand, much of the available research may be fragmented and piecemeal. It can be difficult for a school to put it all together and construct the big picture (Pring, 2000).

Under some circumstances, highlighting the complexity and uncertainty of an issue may demotivate teachers or dissuade them from taking any action at all on that issue.

Very different interpretations about implications for practice can be drawn from the findings of the same research study.

Much educational research is rarely cumulative, i.e. it doesn't continue to build a strong case over time and across studies that support particular practices.

It can be more difficult in education than in most other professional practice to establish fixed, universal causal patterns.

### **Real-life School Implementation Vs Implementation Under Ideal Conditions**

Bauman, Stein & Ireys (1991) and Elias (2003) have noted that many 'ideal' programmes are developed, trialed and maintained under almost-perfect conditions, with high levels of ongoing funding, excellent and skilful staff and high motivation, and that they are therefore unlikely to transfer successfully to real school conditions. Schools can become discouraged when they do not obtain the same level of positive outcomes as were identified under the original ideal conditions.

Seligman (1995) introduced the terms 'Efficacy Research' and 'Effectiveness Research' to help explain why it is not always possible to base sound 'practitioner' decision-making solely on available empirical evidence.

*Efficacy Research* is the term Seligman uses to describe research studies that seek to determine whether a relatively simple intervention is successful in an ideal environment. Many factors such as reliability of implementation can be more readily controlled for in this type of research study. It attempts to identify the specific features that have contributed to or hindered successful implementation and compares the group receiving the interventions with control groups who do not receive it.

*Effectiveness Research* is the term he uses to describe research studies that seek to determine whether an intervention of the type that will ultimately find its place in real practice is reasonably successful when implemented in a real-life and less-than-ideal normal settings.

Seligman argues that practitioners should pay particular attention to research studies in the *Effectiveness* category, which often have a higher likelihood of capturing the essence of effective real-life practice in which:

Interventions do not have a fixed duration but are ongoing and evolving.  
Teachers use self-correction to adjust an intervention to suit the needs of a specific class, group, student or setting as well as their own way of teaching.  
Interventions are implemented within a diversity of school settings, teachers and student variables.

Interventions are rarely delivered as planned (Elias, 2003). Greenberg et al. (2005) have noted that many real-life variables can affect the implementation of an intervention such as: the intervention as planned; the actual system set up to implement the intervention; the intervention as delivered; and the intervention as received. If students are inattentive or disengaged, a classroom is poorly managed or material is not at the right developmental level, then even the most accurate programme implementation may not be successful.

Over the last decade, there has been a research shift from focusing on the short-term effectiveness of innovations and towards focusing on a deeper level understanding how to create conditions for success in 'normal' school circumstances (Elias, 2003; National Health and Medical Research Council, 1996). Seligman (1995) has argued that empirically validated effectiveness can also be achieved by putting together the results of a number of less-controlled and less robust studies of real-life innovations.

Information that can guide decisions about the principles and practices that relate to prevention and management for Safe Schools can also be drawn from a variety of theoretical and evidence-based sources such as:

directly focused anti-bullying initiatives in schools  
school-based wellbeing programmes  
school-based anti-violence prevention programmes  
school-based substance-abuse prevention programmes  
school-based social and emotional learning programmes  
school-based peer support initiatives  
research into school change and school improvement processes.

## **Critical Programme Evaluation**

A critical evidence-based approach should be used to evaluate both the content and procedures of a new programme, practice or approach as well as its underlying assumptions about pedagogy and student learning. Many programme developers do not explicitly state the programme's underlying theory of learning but it is embedded in the design of lessons, their sequence, duration and structure, and in the way in which staff training and support is designed.

Given that individual schools and clusters are not in a position to easily access the range of available programme options or critically evaluate an innovation, it can be helpful to seek guidance from educational systems and appropriate professionals.

Schools are increasingly becoming aware of the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of a new initiative through the collection of appropriate and teacher-friendly data. This can include establishing baseline data, using focus groups and conducting structured surveys. Hargreaves & Fullan (1998) have argued that teachers need to become 'assessment literate' because evaluation is essential for examining and improving school situations and practices.

### **Multiple Components**

Most research studies that have evaluated school-wide prevention programmes have identified that using multiple components rather than relying on a single approach or programme is more effective in producing the desired positive student outcomes (Blum, 1998; Greenberg et al., 2001; Kellerman et al., 1998; Resnick et al., 1997; Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992; Scheckner et al., 2002; Greenberg, Domitrovich & Bumbarger, 2001).

Smith, Pepler & Rigby (2004) confirm that the more programme components and actions are included in a school's anti-bullying initiative, the more readily students perceive that the school is making a difference. Catalano et al. (2003) concluded that effective school-wide prevention programmes usually contain at least five different aspects of social and emotional learning.

However schools also need to monitor the implementation of any multi-component programmes so that the 'most active ingredients' can be identified. Removing components that are not really working in a school's programme can take pressure off staff (Donna Cross, personal communication, July, 2006).

### **Customising Programmes**

Although some researchers espouse strict adherence to a published programme or curriculum (Elliott & Mihalic, 2004), others are moving towards a more flexible model that acknowledges the need to tailor programmes to districts' and students' unique needs (Ringwalt et al., 2004). Published programmes can be a sound starting point for a Safe Schools initiative, but they cannot just be 'plugged in' to a school setting and expected to work effectively. Programmes and innovative practices also need to be adapted to the school's circumstances in order to meet the needs and priorities of the school (Elias, 2003). This means assessing the needs of the school and ensuring that programmes are culturally appropriate for all members of the school community and the needs of a diverse range of students.

However, Briggs and Hawkins (n.d.; 1999a; 1999b) have also sounded a note of caution about teachers using aspects of prescribed materials too selectively and hence inadvertently omitting the most 'active' ingredients in the programme. Class discussions about bullying may be an 'active ingredient' that could be omitted, as Limber et al. (2004) reported that many teachers in their study found class discussions about bullying uncomfortable.

## **Theme 4: Use a Risk Management Approach**

The adoption of an ongoing risk assessment and management approach increases student and staff safety and places schools and teachers in a more defensible legal position.

Because a school authority has a duty to provide safe premises and a safe environment, they may be sued for failure to exercise their duty of care. This duty of care probably extends to the use of school email systems and bus stops outside or near a school (Nicholson, 2006). A school authority may also be held liable for an individual teacher's negligence in failing to keep a student safe when he or she had prior knowledge of that student being bullied or mistreated in other ways (Nicholson, 2006).

Students can currently take out an apprehended violence or intervention order to restrain a bullying student from coming to or within a specified distance of them and from harassing them by telephone or electronic means (Nicholson, 2006). This has serious implications for a school in terms of reorganising timetables and space in order to ensure that the order is complied with.

### **Secure Reporting Systems**

The establishment of secure reporting systems that enable students easily to inform teachers about bullying situations minimises the risk of a student continuing to be bullied and of the school being unaware of a bullying situation that needs to be managed. Many project schools chose to use a dedicated email address.

### **Ongoing Data Collection and Systematic Record-keeping**

The starting point should be an initial full Safe Schools assessment, which can include an evaluation of school culture, the physical layout of the school, hotspots where more bullying is occurring, policies, procedures, levels of bullying, attitudes towards different aspects of bullying, level of homophobic, racist and sexist attitudes. This can be carried out using observations, surveys and focus group discussions with parents, students and staff (McGrath & Stanley, 2006b). The results of a thorough assessment can more systematically guide the development of the school's future Safe Schools changes and initiatives.

Collecting ongoing data on behaviour and attitudes that relate to safe schools enables a school to continue to identify patterns and improvements. This shows more clearly what work the school needs to do and in what areas and Safe Schools plans can be adjusted accordingly each year. Data can include:

- number of reported incidents/situations, suspensions, exclusions
- attendance data
- survey data, which can include self reports of being bullied, attitudes to bullying, perceptions of bystander behaviour etc.

Regular and ongoing records of bullying situations, actions taken, follow-ups and outcomes should be maintained in a safe and confidential manner. It is possible that they could be needed if legal action were to be taken against the school many years in the future.

### **High Risk Times and Places**

Soutter and McKenzie (2000) and Rivers & Soutter (1996) have stressed the importance of the context of behaviours, arguing that bullying is in part a response to a set of circumstances. It is important to identify specific school locations or times that are associated with higher levels of bullying in the school and implement more vigilant supervision in those locations and times.

Although it is more difficult to specify times and locations in which indirect bullying occurs, research tells us that students in primary schools tend to be more directly bullied more in the playground (Blatchford & Sharp, 1994; Boulton, 1994; Charach et al., 1995; Craig et al., 2000b; Cross et al., 2003; Olweus, 1991; Pepler et al., 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993). In the UK's Sheffield Anti-bullying Project (Smith & Sharp, 1994), improvements in playground design and supervision and providing stimulating activities helped to reduce bullying. Increasing the visibility of playground supervisors during lunch and recess breaks has been shown to help reduce bullying in Australian studies (Cross et al., 2004a; 2004b) and Canadian studies (Pepler et al., 1993; 1994). Many of the lunchtime changes made by project schools and described earlier in this report can offer possible directions.

Cross et al. (2004b) suggest that it is also important to review the length of the lunch break to ascertain if certain times during the lunch break are linked to more bullying. For example if more bullying occurs near the end of the break, schools can consider the group dynamics or group contexts that appear to be contributing to this behaviour and identify possible ways to address these. As a last resort schools can consider shortening the lunch break and adding this time to another break in the day (e.g. recess).

Students in secondary schools are bullied in the yard, too, but they are also likely to be bullied in the corridors and classrooms (Ahmad & Smith, 1994; Olweus, 1991; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Increasing corridor supervision, being more vigilant in the classroom in relation to potential bullying situations and arriving at the classroom on time can make a positive difference.

Bullying is also more likely to occur during more competitive or aggressive activities (Murphy et al., 1983) and these situations need to be well supervised by teachers. If they cannot be well supervised they may need to be minimised. Insufficient play and game equipment (e.g. too few balls) may also increase the likelihood of bullying. Those students who have the limited equipment may also have more power (Cross et al., 2004a).

In an Australian study by Rigby & Thomas (2003) some schools indicated that one high-risk situation for bullying occurred when students were moving from one class to another in different parts of the school. One solution involved making class periods longer, thereby reducing the need for movements between classes. Schools also need to consider ways of redesigning or reorganising schools (e.g. by locating lockers to allow enough space for students to pass without bumping) to reduce the likelihood of bullying (Donna Cross, personal communication, July, 2006).

### **Early Intervention Support for 'At Risk' Students**

Ensure early supportive intervention for specific students whose behaviour identifies them as being more likely to engage in bullying or other anti-social behaviour. Similarly, identify students at risk for social isolation and possible victimisation and provide them with early supportive intervention as well. Most recent reviews of preventive research have stressed that interventions that are implemented when these students are very young are more likely to be effective (e.g. Greenberg et al., 2003; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2002; Severson & Walker, 2002).

### **New Student Arrivals**

The provision of anti-bullying education and Safe Schools programmes as early in students' school life as possible minimises the risk of higher levels of bullying. Ensure that all new students

who arrive at the school are made aware of the school's policy, values and expectations in regards to bullying and harassment. They may not have had the opportunity to participate in Safe Schools programmes.

Similarly, new students who arrive during the school year, especially when they arrive as a group (e.g. as refugees), will probably be unaware of the school's Safe Schools policy and its implications. This lack of awareness can become a risk factor that can be quickly addressed through the development and provision of peer support and induction processes.

### **School Level**

It could be argued that being a student at a secondary school is a risk factor for bullying. There are conflicting statistics in Australia as to whether or not there is more bullying in primary schools than in secondary schools. Rigby (2006a) found that there was less bullying in Australian secondary schools than in primary schools. However in a study involving over 9000 students and conducted in Victoria (where transition to secondary school occurs in Year 7), McGrath, Stanley & Craig (2005) found the opposite pattern, with more bullying occurring in secondary schools. However the distinction between primary school data and secondary school data is, at best, a rough one (J.D. Smith et al., 2004) because the transition to secondary school occurs at different ages in different states and territories, and there appears to be an increase in bullying behaviour when students make that transition (Rigby, 1996).

Primary students who bully are at higher risk for bullying others in secondary schools (Mechthild et al., 2005). Many anti-bullying initiatives and programmes have been more successful in primary schools than in secondary schools (J.D. Smith et al., 2004; Smith, Ananiadou & Cowie (2003). Other school-based prevention research has also identified this trend towards any kind of preventive programme being more effective in primary schools than in secondary schools (Weissberg, Caplan & Sivo, 1989). Many explanations for this pattern have been proposed including:

Younger students may be more responsive to teacher-directed initiatives and more willing to accept teacher authority than older students.

Peer group attitudes towards victimised students appear to become more negative as students become older, especially in boys (Olweus & Endresen, 1998). Boys approaching adolescence may readily adopt a more contemptuous attitude as part of a strategy to enhance their own status in a competitive peer group environment.

The structure of secondary systems makes it more difficult to develop positive ongoing student-to-student relationships and a positive pro-social school climate.

It is more difficult to integrate welfare initiatives into the more fragmented secondary curriculum (Stevens, et al., 2004). Safe Schools programmes and initiatives in secondary schools are more likely to be limited to a specific discipline area such as Health or Pastoral Care rather than be integrated across a range of curriculum areas as can more readily occur in primary schools.

Secondary schools have more complex timetables, more complex organisational structures and there is more staff from whom to gain commitment and cooperation (Stevens, et al., 2004). Older students who are victimised may be less likely to seek help due to an increasing sense that they need to solve their own problems unaided by others.

Compared with primary schools, secondary schools may constitute less of a community in which people feel an obligation to assist each other if they need support.

Secondary schools are advised to conduct a thorough assessment of the current strengths of and gaps in their Safe Schools programmes and practices. Changing bullying behaviour in secondary schools needs to be recognised as being more complicated and requiring more time, effort and programme components (Stevens et al., 2004). Secondary schools also need to focus more strongly on the development of a positive school culture and identify appropriate Safe Schools programmes. There are particular benefits to be gained in secondary schools from strong student ownership of Safe Schools initiatives.

## **Theme 5: Focus on Skill Development**

A skill development approach assumes that although *some* members of the school community may respond to encouragement to behave in ways that contribute to a safe school, most will need to be directly taught the skills that underpin those actions. Skilling also makes it more likely that such behaviours will be maintained over time. Effective skill development may also require opportunities to challenge and change attitudes.

### **Social Skills and Resilience Skills**

The concept of 'Social and Emotional Learning' usually includes:

- pro-social attitudes and values
- empathy skills
- social skills
- resilience skills
- emotional literacy skills (eg managing strong feelings).

There is an increasing body of evidence that suggests that learning outcomes and student wellbeing are strongly linked to school environments that foster social and emotional learning (Brandt, 2003). Elias (2003) argues that social and emotional curriculum programmes are a high priority for education. Elias & Weissberg (2000) explain it thus:

*Social and emotional development and the recognition of the relational nature of learning and change are the fundamentals of human learning, work and accomplishment. Until this is given proper emphasis, we cannot expect to see progress in making schools safer, drug-free, with fewer students who don't care and want to drop-out, or with better tolerance of people who are different.*  
(Elias & Weissberg, 2000, p. 264)

Positive peer relationships are more likely when students are directly taught the skills for empathic responding and pro-social behaviour, and when students have opportunities to practise them in authentic and naturally-occurring settings over time rather than simply being urged to use them. Prevention programmes that focus on teaching social skills and social perspective taking have shown considerable promise in promoting student wellbeing, and reducing anti-social and bullying behaviours (Tolan & Guerra, 1998; Dryfoos, 1990). Systematic programmes for teaching social skills and empathy can help to reduce aggression and contribute to higher levels of achievement and resilience (Caprara et al., 2000; Catalano et al., 2003; Hawkins et al., 2001; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2003; Wentzel, 2003; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002).

Roland and Galloway (2002) identified that bullying was lower in schools in which there was a pro-social classroom climate and pro-social attitudes and students were encouraged to develop social skills that led to positive relationships with each other.

There are over thirty social skills that students need to learn, but the six that warrant most attention in schools are (McGrath, 1996; McGrath & Francey, 1991; McGrath & Noble, 2003):

- Negotiation
- Active listening
- Respectful disagreeing
- Managing conflict
- Cooperating by sharing resources and workloads and taking turns
- Positive tracking.

Conflict resolution education teaches a set of skills that help students to manage conflict in a non-violent, constructive way (Gilhooley & Scheuch, 2000). Although conflict is not the same as bullying, poorly resolved conflict situations between friends and classmates can lead to bullying situations. Teaching students conflict management skills as part of an overall approach of teaching social skills helps to create a positive culture of harmony and acceptance of difference, rather than a negative one of intimidation and prejudice. Effective conflict resolution is underpinned by an attitude towards conflict that emphasises that it is a mutual problem to be solved.

Research studies (e.g. Scheckner et al., 2002; Gresham, 1997; McGrath, 1996, 1998) have consistently demonstrated that the most effective practice in teaching social skills to students involves the use of the following cognitive-behavioural steps (McGrath & Francey, 1991):

- a class discussion of the reasons for learning this skill
- identification and verbal rehearsal of the steps of the skill
- dramatic role plays where students practise the skill and receive constructive feedback from teacher and peers
- realistic school or class-based games and cooperative tasks and activities that allow regular and naturalistic practice of the skill
- briefing and debriefing of each practice opportunity to facilitate students' reflection on their use of the skill
- targeted positive reinforcement for their effective use of the skill for those students who need more practice, feedback and support.

Elias (2003) has advocated the teaching of social competence through natural contexts and relationships and the use of a strengths-based approach. He cites the example of involving students in a newspaper club in which they can display their individual strengths in graphics, writing, production etc, whilst practising social skills such as listening, negotiating and resolving disagreements at the same time.

Teaching students the skills related to perspective-taking and empathy is another positive direction in social and emotional learning. Students are less likely to cause distress to others when they can understand how it feels to be on the receiving end and when they recognise the pain and hurt of another.

Research suggests that younger children, especially, can be helped to become more empathic

(McMahon et al., 2000). *Roots of Empathy* is a classroom programme that teaches young children empathy through structured class involvement with a baby. Evaluations have shown that the programme reduces levels of aggression and violence and increases empathy skills and social skills (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2003).

Students who are often involved in bullying others tend to have lower levels of empathy than other students (Olweus, 1993) and teaching them perspective-taking skills also holds out some promise, especially in secondary school settings (Stevens et al., 2004). Many students who are ringleaders in bullying are quite skilful at influencing and manipulating others but lack real social skills. 'Real' social skills require a respect for the rights and feelings of others (McGrath, 2005).

As all students may encounter bullying during their time at school, they need to be taught the personal skills associated with resiliency, such as coping skills, optimistic thinking and emotional management. As part of their Friendly Schools and Families research programme Cross et al. (2004a; 2003) included the teaching of resilience skills to help children to cope if they were bullied. Resilient children feel less helpless when faced with adversity, are more likely to adopt more effective emotional coping skills, and may be more likely to ask for support as an adaptive strategy (Kobasa, 1979; Sadowski et al., 1983; Skinner, 1995). There is also a strong focus in resilience research on the power of coping by moving on after mistreatment (Benard, 2004).

### **Student Skills for Responding to Bullying and Harassment**

All students can benefit from learning constructive and effective skills for responding to being bullied or harassed. Research studies (e.g. Salmivalli, Karhunen & Lagerspetz, 1996; Schwartz, Dodge & Coie, 1993; Sharp, 1996; Soutter & McKenzie, 2000; Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor & Chauhan, 2004) suggest that the most effective ways to respond to harassment or victimisation are:

- responding actively rather than passively but avoiding an aggressive response
- seeking social support by talking to family and friends
- talking to a teacher about what is happening.

Bryant's (1992) research indicated that students who respond calmly and assertively to both bullying and conflict are preferred by their peers. Although assertiveness training appears to be of help to some students (Ross, 2003; Smith & Sharp, 1994), it rarely stops peers from continuing the bullying once a pattern has become established. Fox & Boulton (2003) found that victimised students who participated in a Social Skills Training programme were still victimised after the programme. However, there was an increase in their self-esteem. Perry, Hodges and Egan (2001) have proposed that while many victimised children are able to generate effective solutions to social problems and may have effective social skills, they experience excessive emotional arousal when they are confronted in a bullying situation and this interferes with their ability to enact the appropriate skill.

O'Moore (2000) has cautioned about the unfairness of teaching response skills to victimised students as a way of managing a bullying situation and sensibly argues that teachers should avoid an approach that blames the student who is being bullied for their own abuse. Fox and Bolton (2003) found that teaching assertiveness skills and other social skills to victimised students did not reduce the bullying they were receiving although the students reported that they felt more confident. Teaching these skills should be seen as additional support and not as a main strategy for managing a bullying situation.

Students can also be encouraged to change their attitude towards talking to a teacher about being bullied or about a classmate's being bullied. Many students believe that this is unacceptable in the peer culture. To this end they can be taught how to differentiate between dobbing, asking for support and acting responsibly (McGrath & Francey, 1991; McGrath & Noble, 2003).

### **Student Bystander Skills**

Salmivalli (2001) has identified some of the underlying group dynamics that can lead to bullying. She identified that students take on different participant roles in bullying situations. These roles can be divided into two categories: the first category includes students who assist or reinforce the student who is bullying. The second category includes the student who is bullied and the students who defend them. Schools should consider how they can change both the attitudes and the skills of students to enable them to become helpful bystanders and defenders.

Positive and supportive behaviour by students who witness bullying (referred to as bystanders) appears to have some potential to defuse a bullying episode and make it less likely to happen again (Andreou & Metallidou, 2004; Cross et al., 2004b; Menesini, Codecasa & Benelli, 2003; Salmivalli, 1999; Sutton & Smith, 1999). Hawkins, Pepler and Craig (2001) found that 57% of attempts by student bystanders to discourage bullying were successful. However, it would appear that a large number of students are reluctant to become involved when they are bystanders in a bullying situation, but passively watch and do nothing to help the victimised student.

An Australian study by Rigby and Johnson (2006) found that when late primary and early secondary students watched a cartoon-style video depicting episodes of bullying and different bystander reactions, only 43% of the students indicated that in a similar situation they would be likely to help the victimised student. In practice, the number of students who would intervene as bystanders is probably much lower than this, as observational data from other studies suggests that students do not necessarily act as they predict they would in a bullying situation (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Many students may find it difficult to do what they see as the 'right thing' when they are faced by the potential threat in doing so, especially in more complex and subtle bullying situations. In an Australian study, Lean (1999) found that more primary-aged students were more prepared to intervene and support in situations of physical bullying than in verbal or indirect bullying situations (e.g. social exclusion) but in their study, Rigby and Johnson (2006) found that students were more prepared to intervene in verbal bullying than in physical bullying.

The following kinds of students have been identified as being more likely to demonstrate positive and supportive bystander behaviour:

Younger primary students are more likely to offer bystander support (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). There is a consistent age-related trend in research studies towards a decline in empathy for victimised classmates as students get older, and possibly a related decline in preparedness to help victimised students (Henderson & Hymel, 2002; Menesini, Codecasa & Benelli, 2003; Olweus & Endresen, 1998).

Girls express more empathy for victimised students and are also more likely to support and intervene (Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Salmivalli, 1999). Boys' responses may be influenced by the social context in which bullying is occurring. They appear to be more inclined to express contempt for vulnerable boys when there are girls nearby or when in the presence of more aggressive male peers (Cowie, 2000; Naylor & Cowie, 1999).

Students who believe that their parents and friends expect them to help victimised peers are more likely to do so (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Previous research (e.g. Cairns & Cairns, 1994 and Salmivalli, 2001) has found that students who bully others are likely to be part of social networks of students who bully, and therefore it would be reasonable to assume that positive peer networks work in the same way. Astill, Feather and Keeves (2002) have identified that friends strongly influence students' values, and their views and expectations can have a significant impact on behaviour.

Studies of general bystander behaviour suggest that people who have made a public commitment to assist others in distress, those who believe that their actions will motivate others to do the same, and those who expect positive outcomes from their behaviour (e.g. a good result for the victim, freedom from guilt, feeling good about their own altruism, and approval from others) are more likely to act as supportive bystanders (Baron, Kerr & Miller (1992); Brewer & Crano, 1994; Deaux et al., 1993).

Atlas and Pepler (1998) have argued that one of the most important reasons for developing a school-wide anti-bullying programme is to engage and empower 'the silent majority'. This includes the large percentage of students who regularly witness bullying at school but do not know what they can do to help.

Terasahjo & Salmivalli, (2003), in a study of 74 students in Years 4, 5 and 6, found that even when students held anti-bullying attitudes, they could engage in what the researchers termed 'the discourse of harassment'. This involves the conversational sharing of attitudes about bullying situations that assert that what is happening is acceptable and indeed justified and is not really bullying. Through their conversation they minimise the level of mistreatment they deliver and perceive it as relatively harmless. They share their beliefs that the victimised student is odd, different or deviant and therefore deserves what is happening (and thus is also partly responsible for it). These shared 'harassment' discourses help to diminish the sense of responsibility of the students involved in the bullying and exaggerate the role of the victimised student as an outsider. The researchers also found that, in some cases, the victimised students used some of this 'harassment discourse' in explaining to themselves and others why they were being bullied.

Terasahjo & Salmivalli (2003) concluded that their findings support the view of bullying as a group phenomenon which is often constructed in the interchanges of the whole class. The challenge for schools is to openly address and discuss in class the attitudes that underpin such discourse.

The implications from studies that have focused on bystander behaviour are:

The development of positive bystander behaviour that includes students' standing up for what is right should be part of any Safe Schools approach (Carney, 2000; Salmivalli, Karhunen & Lagerspetz, 1996; Soutter & McKenzie, 2000).

Although teacher expectations have not been shown to predict bystander intervention (Rigby & Johnson, 2006), nonetheless they should continue to communicate their expectation that students will act supportively as bystanders, and should also consider encouraging parents to communicate similar expectations.

If students are encouraged to have a more compassionate attitude to students who are unfortunate enough to be victimised they may be more likely to act as supportive bystanders.

Encouraging students to act supportively when they witness bullying or harassment is not enough. Students need opportunities to develop skills that help to will empower them to act as supportive bystanders in a way that does not endanger them. Carney (2000) found that bystander students often feel powerless, their inaction leading to a covert loss of self-respect. Such skills include being able express disapproval of bullying (Rigby & Johnson, 2006), defusing a bullying situation and supporting a victimised student. Surprisingly, confidence in one's ability to act assertively was found not to be associated with bystander intervention in a study of Greek students by Andreou and Metallidou (2004). Stevens, Van Oost & De Bourdeaudhuij, (2004) have argued for the use of a rule-focused approach with younger students.

There are many variables that affect whether or not an individual student will take supportive action, such as the relationship they have with the students involved in the situation (both the recipient and the attackers). An anti-bullying curriculum can provide students with opportunities to explore these variables.

### **Teacher Management Skills**

Teachers need adequate preparation to undertake initiatives that contribute to Safe Schools (Briggs & Hawkins, n.d.; 1999a; Elias, 2003; National Health and Medical Research Council, 1996). They need professional learning opportunities both before the innovation and during it (Fullan, 1991) or sustainability may be limited. Howard, Horne, and Joliff (2003) have shown that teachers whose self-efficacy had been raised through a staff training programme subsequently acted more effectively in reducing the rate of bullying incidents at school.

For Safe Schools initiatives, teachers need professional learning opportunities to develop skills in:

- teaching skills related to social and emotional learning to students
- effective classroom management
- responding to bullying situations.

#### *Teaching Skills Related to Student Social and Emotional Learning*

Ortega, Del Rey and Mora-Merchán (2004) assert that successful anti-bullying initiatives ensure that teachers have the necessary skills for managing the social environment and the ways in which students interact within the classroom, and for fostering pro-social values and social and emotional learning.

#### *Effective Classroom Management Skills*

Effective management of classroom behaviour appears to be a prerequisite factor for preventing bullying. In their evaluation of an intervention in Norwegian schools, Roland and Galloway (2002) found that less bullying occurred in classrooms with the following features:

- The teacher was perceived by students as being caring and supportive of students with problems.

- The teacher was perceived by students as being competent.

- The teacher was perceived by students to closely monitor expectations such as homework and rule-following.

- The teacher intervened when student behaviour was unacceptable.

The classroom was characterised by pro-social relationships and support between students.

### *Skills for Responding to Bullying Situations*

Research suggests that many teachers now have a reasonable *knowledge* base about bullying but still do not feel confident that they have the skills to tackle it (Craig, Henderson & Murphy, 2000a; Kalliotis, 1994; O'Moore & Hillery, 1991; Nicolaides, Toda & Smith, 2002). However they tend to perceive that they effectively manage bullying situations more often than they actually do (Craig, Henderson & Murphy, 2000a; Pepler et al., 1994).

The main conclusion from research is that many students are reluctant to tell anyone that they are being bullied, and especially reluctant to tell a teacher (O'Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997; Rigby & Slee, 1991; Whitney & Smith, 1993). This appears to be a result of students lacking trust in teachers' motivation and competence.

Students need to trust that they will be listened to by a supportive (non-judgemental) teacher when they are distressed. When there is a teacher whom they know they can talk to and who will listen, students are more likely to tell them about being bullied. Many students have a difficult time finding the words to articulate their hurt and fear. Not knowing how to express their problems and feelings and not having anyone they can guarantee will listen supportively to their feelings may prompt some students to take aggressive action. Listening skills involve actively listening (i.e. summarising what they heard the student say), empathic validation (i.e. letting the student know they understand and their feelings are okay) and offering help with solving the problem.

A consistent and positive response from all teachers towards bullying behaviour is needed in schools if students are to develop trust in teachers and the school (Cross et al., 2004a) and teachers need to feel empathic towards victimised students. This requires teachers to have skills for recognising and responding to bullying situations. It is important that all teachers in the school accept that they are responsible for bullying in the school even if they have no direct responsibility for the students involved. They need to be familiar with school policy and procedures, and this is more likely to be the case when they have participated fully in the initial development or refinement of the policy and procedures.

Teachers also need an understanding of the strengths and limitations of the punitive, non-punitive and restorative options that are available for managing bullying situations (McGrath & Stanley, 2006a; Rigby, 2005). As there is some evidence support for all three types of management it make sense to ensure that teachers in the school also have skills in all three approaches and can make informed management choices appropriate to the situation. (Refer to Appendix 8 and Appendix 9 for details.)

## **Theme 6: Plan for Sustainability**

A key principle that has emerged from the research literature on school-based prevention programmes is the importance of long-term planning and building capacities that will allow change efforts to persist over time and through changes in leadership (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1995; Diebold et al., 2000).

It takes time, persistence, commitment and effort to sustain Safe Schools programmes and practices (Patterson, Purkey & Parker, 1986). Maintaining the momentum of anti-bullying initiatives is crucial (J.D. Smith et al., 2004). They need to be kept 'alive and active after the initial

impetus has receded' (J.D. Smith et al., 2004, p. 118).

### **Teacher Commitment**

Gaining staff commitment is necessary process at the start of a new initiative and maintaining that commitment over time is also essential. Teacher commitment appears to be an important factor that influences effectiveness and/or sustainability of Safe Schools initiatives along with time, effort and consistency (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2006a; Smith et al., 2003). However, levels of staff of commitment can vary according to the point at which teachers become involved in an initiative. Not all roles in an innovation process are equally rewarding, and becoming involved after an initiative has already started and the initial excitement has lessened may be less satisfying and lead to lower levels of commitment by new staff (Elias, 2003). Previous new programmes may have left a legacy of negative teacher attitudes and perceptions and these may act as a barrier to the acceptance of a new initiative regardless of its content or quality (Corbett, Dawson & Firestone, 1984; Fullan, 1991). The degree to which teachers perceive that they are managing their professional commitments can also affect their commitment to a new initiative; those who are not may feel overwhelmed and unwilling to take on more potential stress (Day, 1999).

#### *Lack of Programme Clarity*

Programmes that are unclear or lack detail attract less teacher commitment (Fullan, 1991). A limited knowledge base and lack of technical support from specialists are cited by Wiggins (1991) as two factors that contribute to teachers' reluctance to commit to the adoption of new programmes.

### *School Norms*

Certain school 'norms' have been identified as facilitating teacher commitment and programme sustainability (Druian & Butler, 1987; Saphier & King, 1985; Staessens, 1991). These include norms about the importance of reflection, positive and constructive dissent, collegiality, high expectations, experimentation and continuous enquiry, shared involvement in decision making, tangible support, appreciation and recognition, caring, celebration, humour, honesty, open communication, continuous improvement and a shared sense of vision.

### *Alignment with the Priorities of the Local Educational System*

New programmes that are close to the objectives and priorities of the relevant local educational system have a greater likelihood of being sustained (Corbett, Dawson & Firestone, 1984). Knight and Sked (1998) have identified that schools experience more difficulty in gaining endorsement for new approaches and programmes that they learn about from interventions introduced by providers who are external and not connected to the educational system. Elias (2003) believes that a barrier to sustainability is the failure of much external training to give sufficient attention to how programmes can be maintained in schools.

### *Teacher Time*

A teacher's attitude towards new programmes reflects the degree to which it will affect them directly (Fullan, 1991) and in particular, how it will affect their time and workload. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) and others (e.g. Jasman, Cooper & Klemm, 2001; Day, 1999) have identified work overload as one of the greatest barriers to successful reform endeavours. Lack of time was also identified as a factor that undermined full implementation of the Friendly Schools and Friendly Families Project (Cross et al., 2004a). Different phases of a project can make different demands on participants (Adelman, 1997) and at various points the workload and time demands may be excessive. Teachers may be able to take on something 'extra' for a short period of time but may be unable to sustain that increased workload over a longer period of time (Galloway & Roland 2004). Making significant adjustments to workloads to ensure that staff who take on extra work as part of a new initiative are not disadvantaged is one way of addressing potential overload.

### *Positive feedback*

Positive feedback about their efforts in relation to new programmes and how they have contributed to successful and desirable outcomes can help to maintain teacher commitment (Barth, 1990; Corbett, Dawson & Firestone, 1984; Fullan, 1991). Acknowledgement of the extra efforts by teachers can be done within the reward structure of a school. Little (1982) suggests that collegiality can be developed through teachers having opportunities to talk about their practice and observe each other's practice, working together on curriculum planning, design, and evaluation, and teaching each other what they know about teaching, learning and leading. Sergiovanni and Corbally (1986) have argued that supporting collegial interactions between teachers is an important leadership responsibility. In their study of teacher commitment, Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) found that professional learning opportunities for teachers were one predictor of increased commitment.

### **Multi-Year Programmes**

Research into school-based prevention programmes confirms that multi-year programmes that last longer have more impact and are more likely to sustain over time (Greenberg et al., 2003; Greenberg, Domitrovich & Bumbarger, 2001; Scheckner et al., 2002; Catalano et al., 2002). Long-term programmes create more opportunities for students to understand, practise and apply key

values, concepts and skills in different situations and contexts, and for the underlying principles to become embedded in the school.

### **School Ownership**

When schools feel a sense of 'ownership' of their Safe Schools programmes, they are more likely to be effective and sustainable. Rigby (2006b) has suggested that a key factor in the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions is the extent to which schools take ownership of their anti-bullying work, whatever form it takes, and push it forward effectively and persistently. A sense of ownership emerges from participation in processes of decision-making and planning, as teachers are more likely to support most what they believe they have had genuine input in creating (Day, 1999). Sarason (1982) has noted that genuine collaboration is a form of collective ownership and it takes time to develop.

The term 'magic bullet programmes' was coined by Beer, Eisenstat & Spector (1990) to describe 'quick fix' programmes that are isolated from the rest of what happens in the school and are usually ineffective. Schools that adopt such programmes run the risk of promoting parent, student and teacher scepticism and cynicism that may inhibit future possibilities and limit commitment. It can take schools a considerable amount of time to work out how programmes fit together (Elias, 2003), but 'customising' by adapting and integrating compatible programmes and resources to form a school 'tapestry' of programme also contributes to a sense of school ownership that makes sustainability more likely.

### **Regular Reviews and Continuous Improvement**

Safe Schools policies and programmes are more likely to maintain over time if they are regularly reviewed using a process of a continuous refinement and improvement (Elias et al., 1997; Eslea & Smith, 1998; Sharp & Thompson, 1994). This process can be facilitated and supported by a formal review timeline built into school policy.

### *Access to Varied, Sound and Engaging Resources*

One of the themes that emerged from many schools in this NSSF Best Practice Grants Programme was the importance of having access to a variety of sound and engaging resources to support Safe Schools initiatives. The importance of access to good resources (based on appropriate and sound teaching and learning strategies) for sustaining school-based prevention programmes is echoed in the research literature (e.g. Briggs & Hawkins, n.d., 1999a; Elias, 2003; National Health and Medical Research Council, 1996). Resources need to be powerful enough to shift teachers' practice, schools' current practices, policies and ethos (Hatch, 2000) and maintain momentum.

Schectman (1999) found the use of relevant literature and videos to be effective enough in a violence prevention programme for selected at-risk students to reduce levels of aggression and increase pro-social behaviour, at least in the short term. In their evaluation of Protective Behaviour programmes, Briggs and Hawkins (n.d., 1999a) identified several features of resources that contributed to more effective learning outcomes, for instance the use of activity methods such as engagement in role-play and puppetry with younger students, and the absence of American terminology which is not part of students' everyday language. They also noted that students with learning disabilities often need repetition and many opportunities to practise newly learned skills, suggesting that good resources build this factor in whilst avoiding disengagement.

### **Staff Turnover**

The loss of momentum that occurred in response to the loss of key staff and the arrival of new staff emerged as a strong theme in this NSSF Best Practice Grants Programme. Many researchers who have studied why some school-based prevention programmes do not continue over time have identified staff turnover as an obstacle to sustainability (Conklin & Olson, 1988; Elias, 2003; Pink, 1990). Cross et al. (2004a) found that the loss of staff who had been trained in the Friendly Schools and Friendly Families Programme (especially principals) challenged staff commitment and continuity. Hatch (2000) has pointed out that schools need to find solutions to staff turnover problems so that eventually there is a critical mass of teachers who support the programme and have the necessary skills to implement it. He notes that higher than normal levels of staff turnover may be symptomatic of other problems in the school that still need to be addressed.

The departure of a respected teacher who strongly advocates a programme or approach may dampen enthusiasm for it among the remaining teachers (Corbett, Dawson & Firestone, 1984). This is especially true if a leader who supports a project leaves and is replaced by another with different priorities (Corbett, Dawson & Firestone, 1984). Fullan (1992) has argued that this is a more predictable outcome when especially high-powered and charismatic leaders leave the school without having built capacity in one or more 'understudies' as part of a 'succession planning' approach. He argues for focusing less on the leader as the solution compared to the leader as the enabler of solutions.

When a programme is complex or contains many unfamiliar aspects, it is even harder to develop a stable knowledge base. The resultant lack of clarity, in turn, can reduce teachers' motivation to carry it out. On the other hand, simpler programmes are likely to produce short term but limited gains because they are easier to explain, promote and manage, but less likely to be effective.

Succession planning is one potential solution to the problem of losing key staff. Fullan (2002) has argued that effective leaders have the capacity to create the conditions under which other leaders will flourish, leaving a continuing effect beyond their term. Another potential solution to staff turnover is to plan to collect the knowledge and expertise of all staff in case they do leave (Hatch, 2000) so that it can be distributed to new staff or those who take over their roles. This could be achieved through documentation and materials kept in open files, induction processes and staff mentoring. New staff need to be given the opportunity to undertake professional learning to ensure that they have the same skills as others in the school. It is important to ensure that 'tacit' (or unspoken and undocumented) knowledge is also transmitted, and new staff are not left floundering or being forced to make their own unskilled adaptations.

Building capacity to enable a wide distribution of responsibility amongst as many teachers as possible is another way of offsetting the loss of momentum due to staff turnover. This can be done through the development of leadership skills, and by providing opportunities for more staff to undertake advanced skills training in specific areas.

# APPENDIX 2: A BRIEF SUMMARY OF NON- PUNITIVE AND RESTORATIVE APPROACHES

## NON-PUNITIVE APPROACHES

A non-punitive approach involves the use by a school of a collaborative problem-solving process, which involves the students who have been involved in the bullying, as a way of stopping the bullying and improving the situation for the victimised student. This is in contrast to a more traditional punitive approach in which a school would respond to bullying behaviour with negative consequences for those involved in exactly the same way as they do to students' violation of any other school rules such as stealing, swearing or fighting. The basic assumption of non-punitive methods is that punishing students who are bullying a classmate makes things worse rather than better for the victimised student.

### **The Two Main Non-punitive Methods**

The two main non-punitive methods are:

the No Blame Method developed in the UK by Barbara Robinson and George Maines  
the Method of Shared Concern, developed by Anatol Pikas in Sweden.

The No Blame Approach has some similarities to the Method of Shared Concern and, either accidentally or intentionally, many schools confuse or merge the two methods. Some schools also add elements of other approaches to the mix.

In the No Blame Approach, problem solving occurs in a small group over several weeks. These meetings are only held if the student who is being bullied agrees. The starting point is an individual meeting between the student who is being bullied and the teacher, so that the student can explain the circumstances and suggest group members. The group consists of the students who have been named as bullying plus other classmates who are perceived as empathic and who do not take part in bullying. The purpose of the group meeting is to develop empathy for the plight of the victimised student without accusing anyone, and to suggest ways in which the victimised student's situation could be improved. The group meets several times across a number of weeks to monitor progress and the teacher meets separately with the victimised student to do likewise.

The process is teacher-facilitated throughout. During the time between the meetings the teacher keeps an eye on events and is in frequent (daily, sometimes) contact with the victimised student who can also seek help. The support students during the week all enact the solutions to the victimised student's problems that they came up with in the group. The victimised student might now be included in play, etc. The aim of the process is to stop bullying, not address psychological issues in the bullying student.

The Method of Shared Concern utilises a similar process but the problem-solving process occurs in a one-on-one situation between each bullying student and a teacher/coordinator. The victimised student is not involved in most of the process but may become involved at a later stage. They may be unaware that the process is occurring, but the teacher checks with them to see if their peer situation is improving.

### **Arguments For and Against**

Arguments against non-punitive approaches include: a possible perception by teachers, students and parents that the approach is unjust; the amount of time taken to implement the approach and level of teacher skill required (McGrath & Stanley, 2006).

Arguments in support of the non-punitive approach include: not having to build an airtight case before intervening, as the focus is more on the overall negative situation that needs to be changed; students are more likely to privately accept personal responsibility for their role in the bullying rather than become defensive; the victimised student is less likely to be put at further risk from retaliation.

### **Evidence Support**

The arguments over the use of these approaches can be very emotional. Some researchers and writers have been highly critical of them whilst others see great benefit in them.

There is some research support for the effectiveness of both the No Blame Approach and the Method of Shared Concern, mainly from studies in the UK. For more information on research support for the non-punitive approach and details of how to use it in the school see:

McGrath, H. & Stanley, M. (2006). 'A comparison of two non-punitive approaches to bullying', in H. McGrath & T. Noble, *Bullying solutions: evidence-based approaches for Australian schools*. Sydney: Pearson Education.

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## The Restorative Approach

The restorative approach has sometimes been categorised as a non-punitive approach, but this is incorrect. The underlying philosophy behind the restorative approach is reparation rather than retribution. The term 'restorative' is used to stress that the process is designed to 'restore relationships'. It is an approach in which there is a very strong focus on the importance of students accepting *responsibility* for any bullying or harmful behaviour in which they have taken part, and *making amends*.

A description of the strategies and processes that are categorised under the umbrella of restorative practices is made difficult by the variety of strategies that have been included in the category. The terms 'restorative practices' and 'restorative justice' are sometimes used interchangeably, and several different models have been proposed.

Some of the practices that have been proposed are preventative. Others are focused on management of bullying situations or other situations where students have been harmed by the actions of other students.

### Restorative Questions

These are questions used by a teacher in discipline situations where a student's behaviour has harmed or inconvenienced another. For example:

*To the person who has caused the harm or inconvenience:*

- Please tell me what happened.
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What thoughts about the situation have you had since then?
- Who do you think has been affected by your behaviour?
- How do you think they have been affected?
- What would you like to see happen to repair the harm?
- Is this fair? Is this realistic and achievable?

*To the person who was affected by the behaviour:*

- What was your reaction at the time of the incident?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- What did you think at the time?
- What have you thought since then?
- How have you been affected?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What would you like to see happen to repair the harm?
- Is this fair? Is this realistic and achievable?

*To both people:*

- How shall we document this agreement?
- Is there anything else that either of you would like to say?
- Thank you for your cooperation in working through the issues.

### **Circle Time**

Circle Time is a broad general strategy that has been used for a variety of purposes, eg social and emotional learning, peer mediation training and restorative practices. It has been popularised especially in the UK by Barbara Maines and George Robinson, the developers of the No Blame Approach, and Jenny Mosley (<http://www.circle-time.co.uk/site/home/>). Within the context of Restorative Practices, Circle Time is used predominantly to discuss classroom-related issues and concerns. It has similarities to classroom meetings. Some schools use the term 'Community Circles' for this concept.

### **Small Group Conference or Whole Class Conference**

A small group conference (eg consisting of a teacher and 4 or 5 people) who are involved in an incident) can be used to resolve the incident. Everyone has a chance to speak and the restorative questions form the basis of the discussion. The small group then works together to work out what needs to be done to make amends, repair the harm and restore relationships. An agreement is reached between all of the parties. It is sometimes based on negotiation or mediation, but when one student in this group has clearly been the person harmed or victimized the agreement will strongly reflect their preferences. This process can also be used to resolve issues that involve the whole class (eg if the class has misbehaved for a replacement teacher)

### **Community Conference**

Community Conferencing can be used to resolve an incident of serious harm. The people involved in a community conference usually include the student(s) who caused the harm, the student who has been harmed, their families or supporters and appropriate school personnel. It is most often conducted by a trained facilitator. A series of scripted questions are used to agree on what has happened and to ensure that the students who caused the harm are aware of the impact of their behaviour and take responsibility for it. All members of the conference assist in the process of working out what needs to be done to make amends, repair the harm and restore relationships. An agreement is reached which reflects primarily the preferences of the victimised student but is negotiated until all parties are satisfied that it is fair.

### **Evidence Support**

There is some support for aspects of the restorative approach, but the variety of strategies that have been the focus of evaluation studies make it difficult to come up with firm conclusions about the effectiveness of the approach.

Details of Australian studies can be found in Armstrong, M. & Thorsburne, M. (2006). 'Restorative responses to bullying', in H. McGrath & T. Noble, *Bullying solutions: evidence-based approaches for Australian schools*. Sydney: Pearson Education.

In the UK an evaluation was undertaken by the Youth Justice Board (2005) of a three-year restorative justice programme in 26 schools (20 secondary and 6 primary). Each school took a different approach to their implementation of restorative practices and the researchers who undertook the evaluation noted that this was problematic. Their conclusions were that, when implemented correctly, restorative justice approaches can improve the school environment, enhance learning and encourage young people to become more responsible and empathic. The majority of teachers believed that their school had benefited from restorative justice approaches. Most of the students involved in the processes thought they were fair. However the number of school exclusions did not decrease nor did the level of bullying.

# APPENDIX 3: REFERENCES

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