



RESEARCH-INFORMED BULLYING AMONG YOUTH: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT APPROACHES

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Bullying Prevention – Pushing The Field Forward

- Bullying co-occurs with other types of aggression and other risky behavior (delinquency, AOD).
- Overlapping risk and protective factors need to be targeted in school-based programs in order to address spectrum of problem behavior (Cataliano et al., 2002).
- Need to consider interventions that target multiple forms of violence and aggression that are salient for early adolescents, including peer victimization, homophobic teasing, and sexual harassment/violence (Espelage, Basile, & Hamburger, 2012; Hamby & Grych, 2013)

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Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

- SEL focuses on the systematic development of a core set of social and emotional skills that help youth more effectively handle life challenges, make better decisions, and thrive in both their learning and their social environments through a climate that supports the practicing of skills.
- A meta-analysis of 213 programs found that if a school implements a quality SEL curriculum, they can expect better student behavior and an 11 percentile increase in test scores (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

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**MULTI-SITE EVALUATION OF SECOND STEP:
STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH PREVENTION
(SECOND STEP – SSTP)
IN PREVENTING AGGRESSION, BULLYING, & SEXUAL
VIOLENCE**

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*Journal of Adolescent Health (2013), Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology (2015);
School Psychology Review (2015)*

Research supported by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (#1U01/CE001677)

SecondStep[®]
Student Success Through Prevention

Committee for Children, 2008

Social-Emotional Learning

Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

- Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.
- Recognize personal qualities and external supports.
- Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.

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Social-Emotional Learning

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

- Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.
- Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.
- Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
- Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.

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Social-Emotional Learning

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

- Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.
- Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.
- Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.

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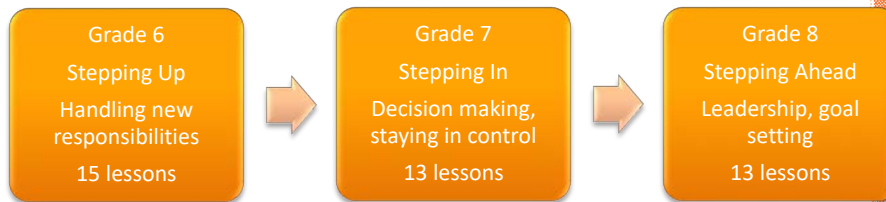
Program Goals

- **Research Foundations**
 - Risk and Protective Factors
 - Bullying
 - Brain Research
 - Positive Approaches to Problem Behavior
 - Developmental Needs of Young Adolescents

Grade Levels & Lessons

50 minutes to teach a complete lesson

Each lesson is divided into two parts that can be taught separately



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Major Study Objective

To rigorously evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention program on impacting bullying behavior, peer victimization, and sexual harassment/violence among a large sample of 6th graders in a nested cohort longitudinal design.

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Study Timeline

Intervention Schools	6 th Graders-----7 th Graders-----8 th Graders						
	O ₁	X ₁	O ₂	X ₂	O ₃	X ₃	O ₄
Comparison Schools	6 th Graders-----7 th Graders-----8 th Graders						
	O ₁		O ₂		O ₃		O ₄
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	
O = Assessment X = Intervention	Year 1 (2010-11)		Year 2 (2011-12)		Year 3 (2012-13)		

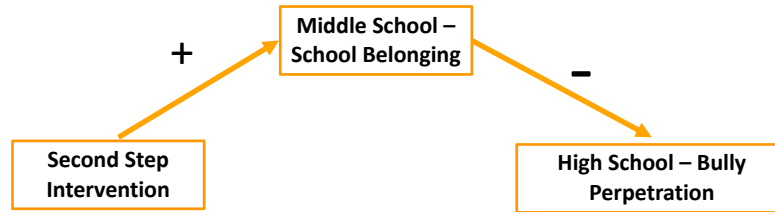
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Results – Middle School

- Reductions in physical aggression, bullying, cyberbullying, homophobic name-calling, & sexual harassment across three-year middle school study (Espelage et al., 2014, 2015, 2016).
- Greater reductions when teachers implemented with fidelity & engaged with program as they would academics (Polanin & Espelage, 2015).

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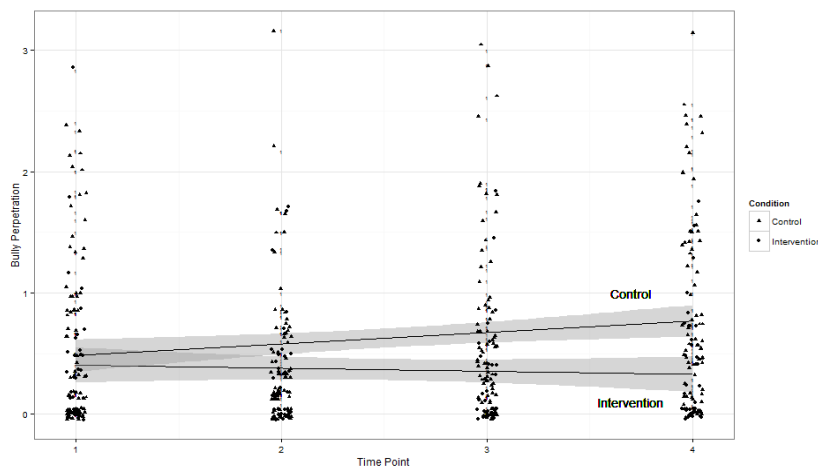
Results – High School Effects



Individuals in the treatment group reported significantly higher levels of growth in school belonging from T1 – T4 ($b = .013, p = .042$), growth in school belonging was in turn associated with reductions in growth in bullying perpetration from T5 – T7 ($b = -.147, p = .067$); Espelage et al., 2017.

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Students with Disabilities – Bully Perpetration (Espelage, Rose, & Polanin, 2015; 2016)



Teacher/Staff Perceptions of School Culture: Links to Student Reports of Bullying, Victimization, Aggression, & Willingness to Intervene

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Joshua Polanin, Ph.D.

Sabina Low, Ph.D.

School Psychology Quarterly (2014)

This research was supported by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (#1U01/CE001677) to Dorothy Espelage (PI)

School Culture Matters

- “school policies, attitudes and behaviors of teachers, administrators and the student body, and the overall atmosphere or school ethos, determine the internal life or social, emotional, and motivation climate of the school.” (Kasen et al., 2004).

School Environment Scale

Six scales emerged from factor analyses, measuring teacher/staff PERCEPTIONS OF:

- Student intervention (5 items; $\alpha = .83$)
- Staff intervention (5 items; $\alpha = .89$)
- Aggression being a problem (5 items; $\alpha = .80$)
- School is doing professional development/administrator support (8 items; $\alpha = .90$)
- Positive school climate overall (7 items; $\alpha = .85$)
- Gender Equity/Intolerance of Sexual Harassment (7 items; $\alpha = .79$)

Final Multi-level Model

Variable	Bullying Perpetration		Peer Victimization		Physical Aggression		Willingness to Intervene	
	β (SE)	B	β (SE)	B	β (SE)	B	β (SE)	B
Intercept	.39 (.03)**	-	.96 (.04)**	-	.96 (.05)**	-	2.03 (.04)**	-
Individual								
Female	-.03 (.02)	-.03	-.05 (.03)	-.05	-.20 (.03)**	-.21	.14 (.02)**	.14
Mother's Education	.01 (.01)	.01	.01 (.03)	.03	-.01 (.01)	-.03	.02 (.01)**	.08
White	.17 (.02)**	-.15	.11 (.05)*	.10	-.51 (.05)**	-.47	.18 (.03)**	.17
Hispanic	-.17 (.02)**	-.17	-.23 (.05)**	-.23	-.47 (.05)**	-.46	.09 (.03)**	.09
Asian	-.22 (.04)**	-.07	-.13 (.07)	-.04	-.64 (.06)**	-.21	.19 (.05)**	.06
Bi-racial	.11 (.03)**	-.08	-.01 (.08)	-.01	-.29 (.05)**	-.2	.12 (.03)**	.08
School-level								
Student Intervention	.15 (.14)	.04	-.03 (.18)	-.01	.19 (.20)	.05	-.07 (.10)	-.02
Staff Intervention	.15 (.10)	.04	.30 (.22)	.07	.02 (.19)	.01	-.02 (.11)	-.01
Aggression Problem	-.07 (.08)	-.04	-.14 (.12)	-.08	.09 (.12)	.05	-.18 (.06)**	-.10
School Commitment to Bully Prevention	-.20 (.06)**	-.13	-.42 (.09)**	-.27	-.17 (.08)*	-.11	.08 (.05)	.05
Positive Teacher-Staff-Student Interactions	-.01 (.11)	.01	.14 (.16)	.04	-.23 (.21)	-.07	-.13 (.08)	.02
Gender equity/intolerance of sexual harassment	-.23 (.10)*	-.08	-.71 (.20)**	-.24	-.13 (.14)	-.05	-.13 (.08)	-.05
State								
Free/Reduced Lunch	.01 (.01)	.05	-.01 (.01)*	-.14	.01 (.02)*	.26	-.01 (.01)*	-.12
% Female	-.66 (.29)*	-.07	-.71 (.32)*	-.08	-.45 (.42)	-.05	.17 (.25)	.02
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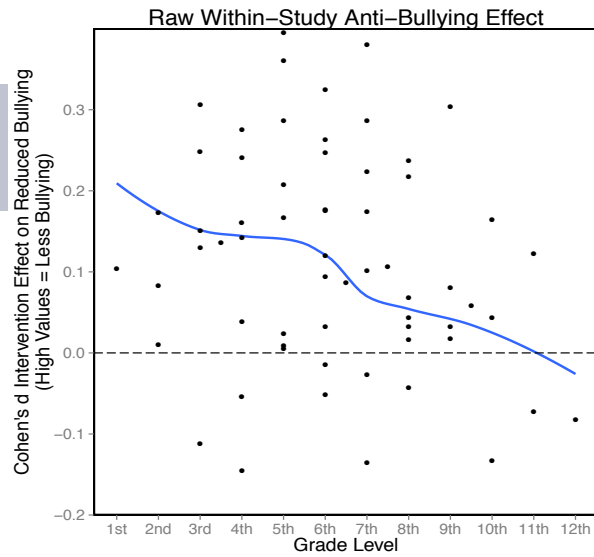
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Developmental Lens

Meta-Analysis:
Yeager, Fong, Lee, & Espelage (2015)



Youth-Driven Interventions

- Student voices - not incorporated into school safety planning efforts in spite of research clearly showing that someone (most often peers) often has prior knowledge of a planned tragic event.
- Students report a variety of reasons for not coming forward beforehand with that information (e.g., distrust, “snitching”).
- To take advantage of this critical information, schools need to:
 - a) involve students meaningfully in school safety planning efforts as co-equal partners along with school staff, administrators, and parents;
 - b) have an efficient, easy mechanism for reporting such information confidentially, &
 - c) assure students that their concern(s) will be promptly acted upon. In our view, such changes are likely to increase student investment and participation in keeping the school safe.

(Vincent, Espelage, Walker, et al., 2017, 2018)

Youth-Driven Interventions

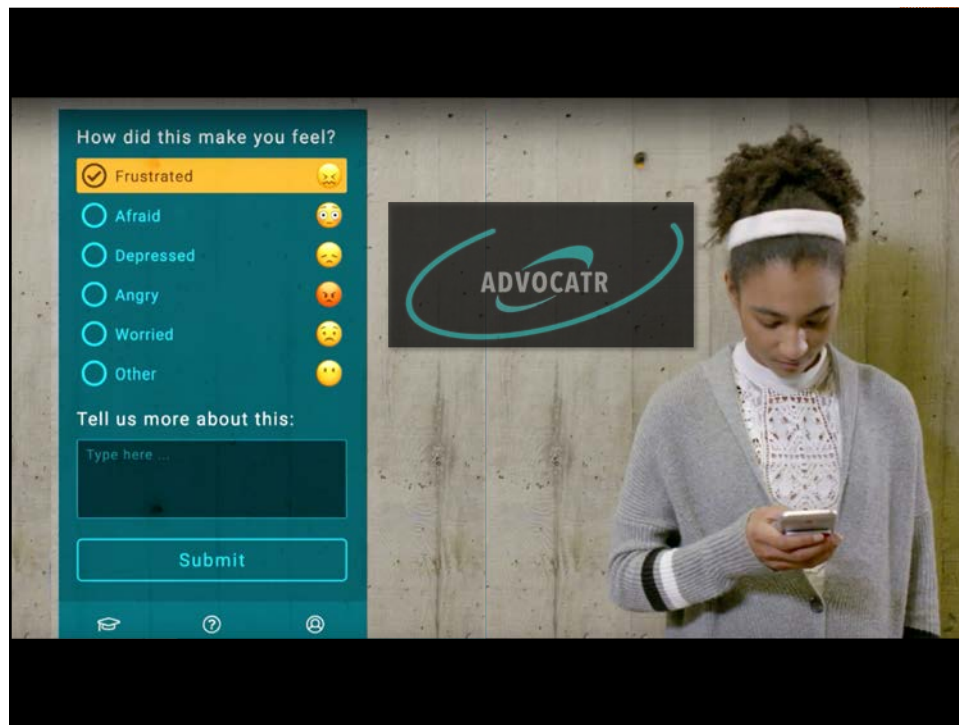
- Youth do feel that schools should work harder to establish a positive school climate.
- Adults need to pay attention to **emotional and physical safety**.
- **Youth indicated that fairness & equity issues need to be addressed directly.**
- Research shows that students in schools with positive climates are more likely to report on the situations, individuals and events that endanger a school’s safety.
- Such a climate can also improve student bonding and school engagement and serve as a protective factor against a host of negative outcomes over the long term within and beyond the school context.

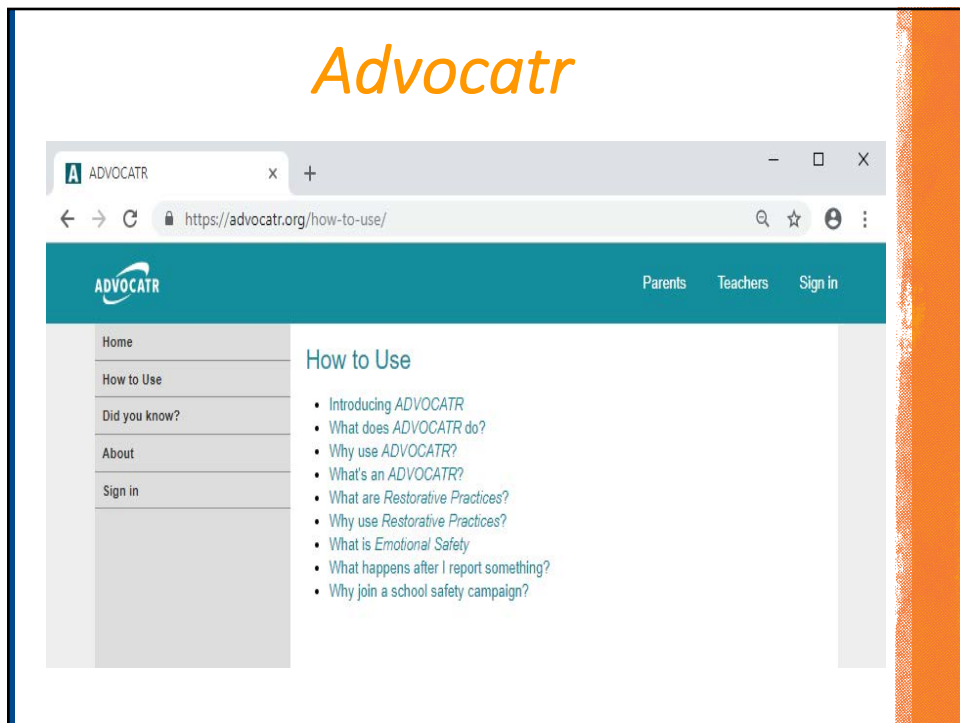
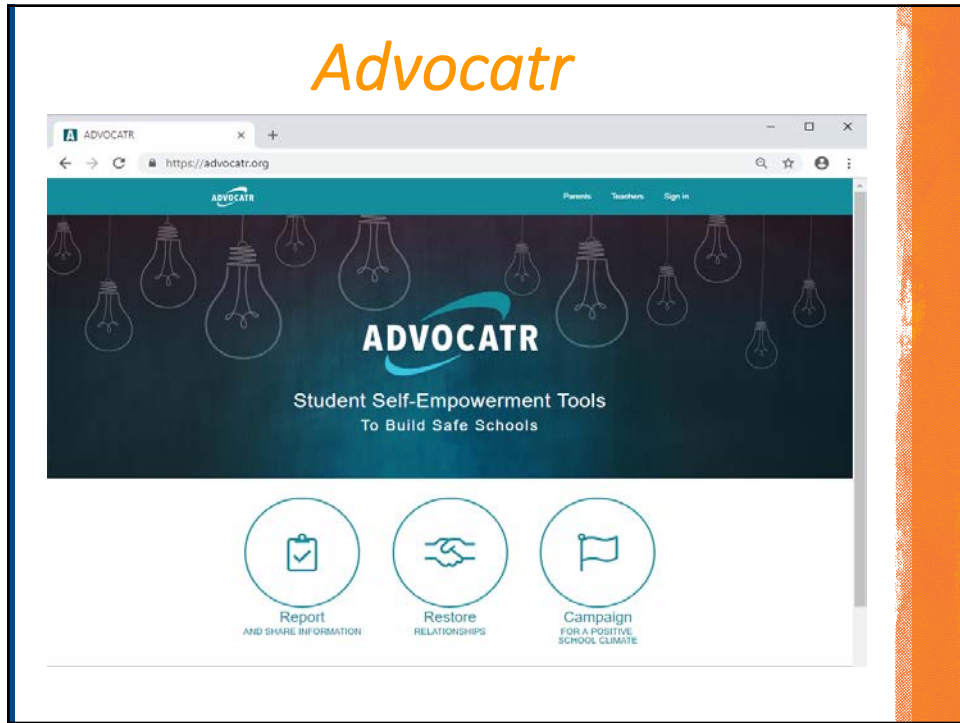
(Vincent, Espelage, Walker, et al., 2017, 2018)

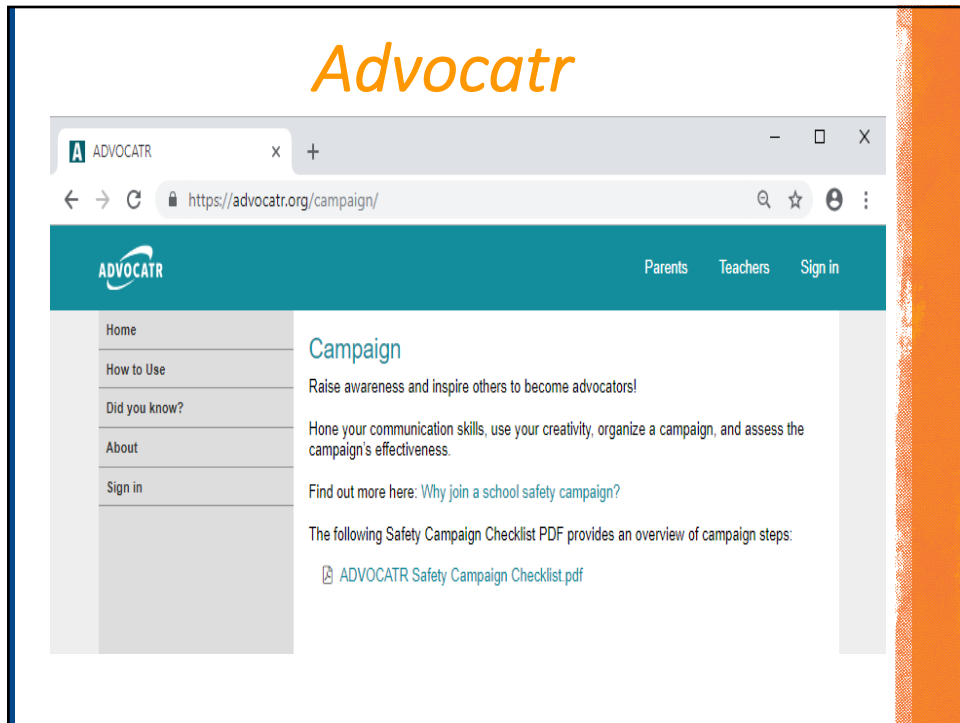
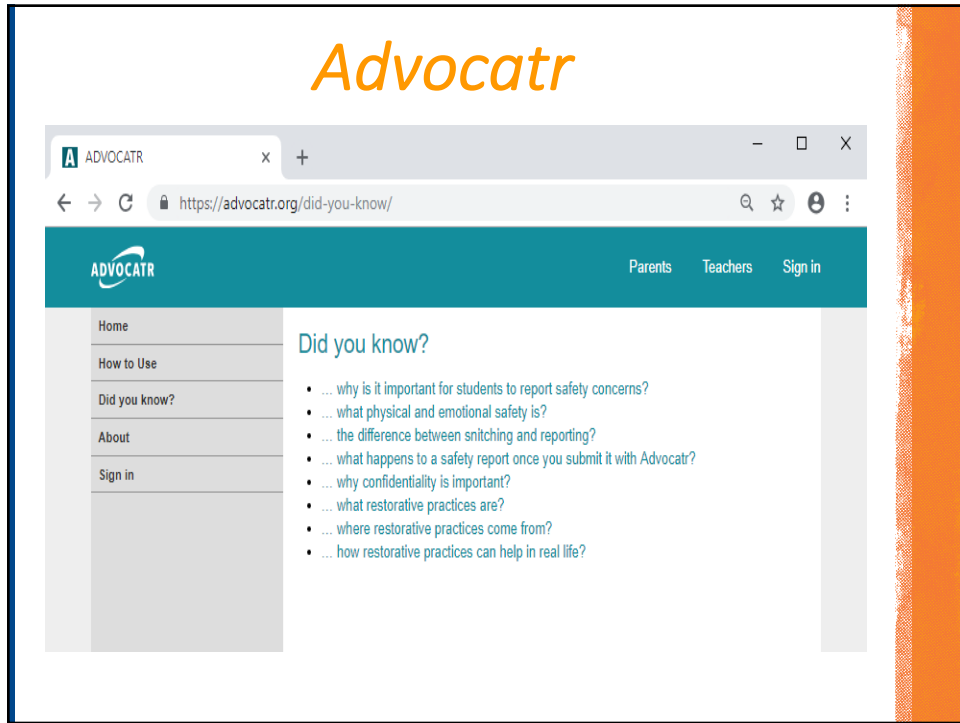
Barriers to Open Communication

- Focus groups with students identified key student concerns that participants see as threats to their school's safety & open communication with adults:
 - a) bullying, harassment and aggression,
 - b) weapons, drugs and alcohol on campus,
 - c) lack of supports for students with mental health issues,
 - d) overt discrimination among identified student groups sharing certain characteristics,
 - e) relational aggression and damaging reputation, and
 - f) inequity in all aspects of education.

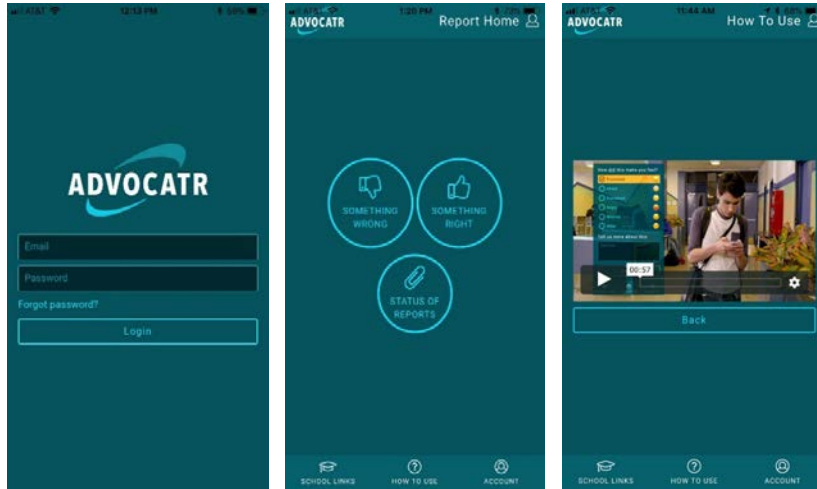
(Espelage et al., 2018; Vincent, Espelage, Walker, et al., 2017, 2018)







Advocatr



The Impact of Sources of Strength, a Primary Prevention Youth Suicide Program, on Sexual Violence Perpetration among Colorado High School Students

Dorothy L. Espelage, Ph.D.

University of Florida

Peter Wyman, Ph.D.

University of Rochester

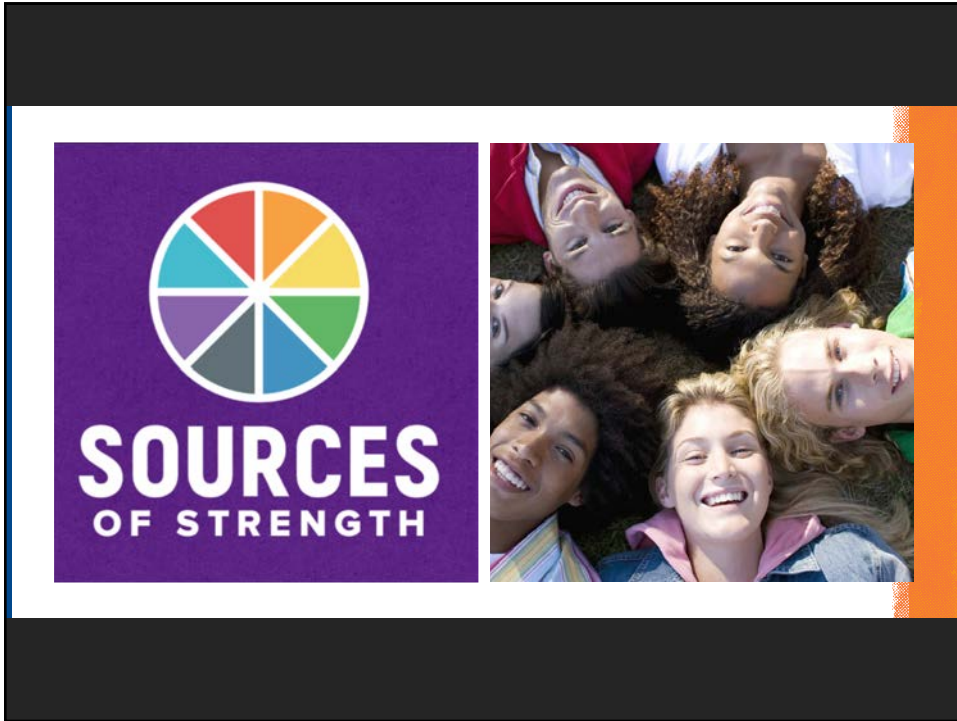
Tomei Kuehl, MPH

Colorado Dept. of Public Health

Todd Little, Ph.D.

Texas Tech University

This research was supported by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (#1U01CE002841) to Dorothy Espelage (PI)



Sources of Strength employs a radically strength-based approach to prevention in schools – PEER LEADERS.

Sources of Strength focuses on developing protective factors, using a model that is innovative, interactive, and radically strength-based.

Using an active learning model, incorporating art, storytelling, small group sharing and games.

Sources of Strength explores the eight protective factors, depicted in the wheel of strength, to develop resilient individuals and communities.



Program outcomes have shown:

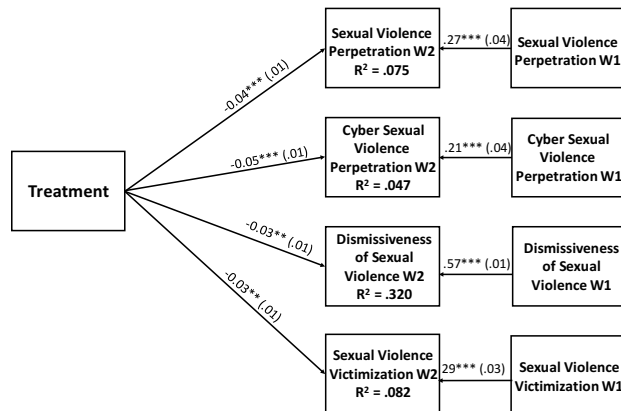
- Increase in connectedness to adults
- Increase in school engagement
- Increase in likelihood to refer a suicidal friend to an adult
- Increase in positive perceptions of adult support
- Increased acceptability of seeking help
- Largest increases amongst students with a history of suicidal ideation



Wyman, P. et al. (2010). An outcome evaluation of the Sources of Strength suicide prevention program delivered by adolescent peer leaders in high schools. American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 100: 1653--1661.

Sources of Strength Evaluation: Sexual Violence Outcomes

[(CDC Grant #1 U01 CE002841 - Espelage (PI))]



N = 4600



ENHANCING SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICERS' EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

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Funding Source: National Institute of Justice (January 2018 – December 2021)

School Resource Officers (SROs) = Police Officers

- SROs receive extensive training to address physical safety concerns and crime.
- Enhancing existing extensive training with training in competencies specific to **child development and youth behavioral and mental health** has potential to pave the way for nation-wide progress in SRO professional development.

Conclusions

- Prevention programs yield reductions in bullying and victimization, and gender-based aggression.
- Effects are strongest among elementary school children & diminish as youth mature.
- Perceptions of staff matter – intolerance for sexual harassment is critical to reduce gender-based bullying and other forms of aggression.
- Finally, to narrow the research-practice gap, the research must be **RIGOROUS & RELEVANT**

CONCLUSIONS

- Addressing school violence requires understanding the underlying etiology of this violence.
- Simply "hardening" of our schools has the risk of creating greater inequities, anxiety, and isolation of students, teachers, and families.
- Youth need to be authentically engaged in efforts to promote school safety, social justice, equity, and inclusion.
- All adults who interact with youth (e.g., SROs, guardians, security specialists) can benefit from training in trauma-informed approaches, restorative approaches, social-emotional learning, & cultural competence)