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New U.S. study first to show less physical bullying in schools

33 schools take part in study of Steps to Respect program

SEATTLE – Schools using a bullying prevention program saw significantly less physical bullying and fewer teachers reporting fighting as a big problem, according to a University of Washington study to be released this week.

“Outcomes from a School-Randomized Controlled Trial of *Steps to Respect: A School Bullying Prevention Program*” compared schools using Committee for Children’s *Steps to Respect* program with control schools and found:

- 33 percent less physical bullying;
- 35 percent fewer teachers reporting fighting as a major problem;
- And 20 percent more staff members reporting that their school is promoting a positive environment.

Steps to Respect schools also saw gains in bullying prevention factors like positive bystander behavior and student climate.

The year-long study, to appear in the Fall 2011 issue of *School Psychology Review*, was funded by the Raynier Institute & Foundation and conducted in partnership with investigators Eric C. Brown, Ph.D. (University of Washington Social Development Research Group) and Sabina Low, Ph.D. (Wichita State University).

“This study fills an important gap in the literature because it’s the largest, most rigorous study to date of a school-based bullying prevention program that shows significant reductions in aggression,” says Dorothy Espelage, a professor of educational psychology at the University of Illinois and an expert on bullying.

The *Steps to Respect* program is used by thousands of schools nationwide and aims to prevent bullying by helping elementary schools create a safer environment through planning, staff training, and teaching students skills for friendship, assertiveness, reporting, and being responsible bystanders.

Participating in the trial were 33 California elementary schools, 1,296 staff members and 2,490 students. Schools were randomly selected to either implement the program immediately or wait a year. Researchers gave schools *Steps to Respect* kits, staff training and data collection reminders, but were otherwise uninvolved in implementation, mirroring the way the program is typically delivered in schools across the country.

“Since 1981, we’ve been working to help children get along, keep themselves safe, and become caring, responsible members of their families, schools and communities,” says Committee for Children’s executive director, Joan Duffell. “This study really shows that we’re making progress toward our goals.”

To learn more about Committee for Children, go to www.cfchildren.org.

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About Committee for Children

Seattle-based nonprofit Committee for Children is the world’s leading provider of educational programs that teach skills to prevent violence, sexual abuse and bullying to more than 9 million students in 25,000 schools in 26 countries around the globe. To learn more, go to www.cfchildren.org.