WELLBEING
AT SCHOOL

Building a safe and caring school
climate that deters bullying

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The Wellbeing@School website

This booklet is a summary of an extensive review of research and other literature undertaken to guide the development of the Wellbeing@School website self-review process, survey tools and content. This website is being developed by NZCER.

The *Wellbeing@School* website is one component of the Ministry of Education's *Positive Behaviour for Learning: Action Plan 2010–2014,* developed in response to concerns about student behaviour and school bullying. It is also supported by the New Zealand Police.

The *Wellbeing@School* website is being designed to support school communities to build safe and respectful school environments in which learning can flourish. The website will be able to be used in a number of ways. It will provide tools and resources for schools to examine their activities and practices in light of what research tells us about how to create a safe and caring school climate that deters behaviours such as bullying. The *Wellbeing@School* website and tools have a particular focus on exploring how caring and helpful (prosocial) behaviours can be enhanced and bullying behaviours diminished in ways that build students' skills, strategies and resilience.

Survey tools will collect, collate and provide schools with data that will allow them to monitor change over time—but will do so in a way so that each school's data can only be seen by that school. The website will also provide resources and information for schools planning their next steps.

The website will include a suggested self-review process for schools. The process starts with awareness raising and a needs assessment. Two tools will be provided to support schools to collect data for the needs assessment—a *School Self-Review Tool* and a *Student Survey*. The *School Self-Review Tool* helps leaders and teachers to review the whole school system, identify areas of strength and work out what else could be done to promote a safe and caring climate that deters bullying. The *Student Survey* is a means of collecting data systematically from students. Two surveys will be available, one designed for younger students in Years 5–8, and the other for older students in Years 7–12. These surveys will collect students' views on the social climate at school and will explore their experience of helping and caring and bullying behaviours. They will also identify the strategies used by students and schools to promote helping and caring behaviours.

NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
TE RŪNANGA O AOTEAROA MŌ TE RANGAHAU I TE MĀTAURANGA

Positive **Behaviour** *for Learning*

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1 Introduction

Providing a caring, safe and respectful school environment in which learning can flourish is a key priority for educators. This need is reflected in policy through National Administration Guideline 5(i) which states that each school's board of trustees is expected to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students.[1] Other policy documents also comment on the need to support students to develop skills and competencies for managing their social environment, future learning and life in general.

The New Zealand Curriculum[2] aims to assist young people to develop as confident, connected, actively-involved lifelong learners. The *Curriculum* says that for students to lead full and satisfying lives, among other things, they need to be supported to build resilience, to learn how to co-operate and negotiate and to develop competencies for mental wellness and safety management. For this reason it is vital that we equip young people with the skills they need to function in their communities and to engage in caring and helpful (prosocial) interactions, as well as identify and address behaviours, such as bullying, that are less positive influences in their social environment.

This booklet is aimed at school leaders. It could also be of interest to those working with schools such as Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs), educational psychologists or Police Education Officers. It is a summary of an extensive review of research and other literature undertaken to guide the development of the *Wellbeing@ School* website content and survey tools. It focuses on what is known in New Zealand and internationally about how to promote a safe and caring social and emotional environment that addresses bullying behaviours in schools.

The focus of the review was on taking what can be learned from international research and other evidence and examining what it means for New Zealand schools, pedagogy, curriculum and practice. The review, in line with the literature, takes a systems approach to thinking about bullying behaviours as well as how to address these behaviours. This is the idea that schools are complex systems and to bring about change we need to understand the contribution of, and relationship between, the different parts of the system.

2 What we know about bullying

Researchers consider we now know much about the negative and long-term consequences of bullying but less about how to translate these understandings into effective interventions for schools.[3] Internationally, there is a wealth of information, programmes and resources available for schools but also a lot of misinformation about bullying. Researchers say that educators need to be aware of current views about bullying and the different types of interventions designed to address it.

2.1 What bullying is, and is not

There are many different definitions of bullying but almost all of them include three distinct elements:

- bullying is **deliberately harmful** aggressive behaviour
- bullying is behaviour that is **repeated** over time
- bullying involves a **power imbalance** between those who bully and those being bullied.

Types of bullying behaviour

It is widely accepted that there are different types of bullying. These fall into four main groups:

- **verbal** bullying—repeated mocking, name-calling, unwanted teasing, homophobic or racist remarks
- **physical** bullying—repeated hitting or kicking, taking or threatening to take possessions
- **social or relational** bullying—repeated exclusion, spreading rumours or gossiping, withholding friendship, pulling faces
- **cyber** bullying—repeated threats, criticism or unkind comments or images sent by text, email or posted on social networking sites.

Swearer, Espelage, and Napolitano (2009) identify eight common myths about bullying, and these, along with a comment about the findings that debunk each myth, are presented in the box on the right.

— **MYTH 1.** Bullying is an isolated, individual aggressive action
Definitions of bullying emphasise that it includes the intent to harm, repetition and an imbalance of power—it is not a single act.

— **MYTH 2.** Bullying occurs between a bully and a victim
Bullying is a dynamic social interaction often carried out in the presence of others which can be influenced by peers, schools, families and communities. People can move in and out of the role of bully, victim or bystander.

— **MYTH 3.** Bullying is a normal part of growing up
Bullying is not a normal or inevitable part of childhood. Many children do not experience bullying and do not bully others.

— **MYTH 4.** Physical bullying is more damaging than social or verbal bullying
Social and verbal bullying can be just as harmful as physical bullying. Adults may be unaware of social bullying and newer forms such as cyber bullying.

— **MYTH 5.** It's impossible to stop bullying
Bullying occurs in varying degrees in most schools, but there are many schools and classrooms in which bullying is rare. It takes a co-ordinated effort to stop bullying.

— **MYTH 6.** Anti-bullying policies are ineffective
Policies are important as they increase awareness of healthy social behaviours, signify intention and lay a foundation for change.

— **MYTH 7.** Bullying prevention and intervention are complicated and expensive
Stopping most bullying is about developing healthy social relationships. There are many strategies that schools can use to do this.

— **MYTH 8.** Figuring out how to evaluate anti-bullying efforts is too complicated
Schools have access to staff who are experienced in assessing change and students can be involved in this process.

(Adapted from pp. 5–6, Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009)

Not all acts of aggression are bullying. For instance, a one-off physical fight between students of similar size and strength is not bullying. A New Zealand publication *Responsive Schools* can help schools to clarify what is and is not bullying, and to develop their own definitions.[4]

Some researchers express a concern that many anti-bullying interventions address all incidents of bullying behaviour as if they were equally severe.[5] They suggest that, instead, bullying behaviours sit along a continuum from mild to high severity. Research shows that most incidents are mild and severe cases occur much less frequently. Many mild bullying episodes can be addressed by approaches such as informal teacher intervention or through training student bystanders to intervene. Moderate cases may need a more formal method such as a restorative justice conference, and severe cases of bullying or other behaviours such as assault may require the involvement of the police. For these reasons it is important that schools define what they consider to be a mild, moderate or severe incident.

2.2 Is bullying a concern in New Zealand?

Many New Zealand children experience bullying in some form. By the age of 14, two-thirds of young people involved in the Competent Learners study had reported either experiencing and/or engaging in bullying.[6] Other recent surveys also suggest that there is a small but significant number of students (around 6 percent) who say they are bullied at school on a weekly basis.[7] This figure is similar to international data.[8]

New Zealand studies indicate that, as in other countries, most bullying behaviour happens at school, particularly in the school playground. Boys tend to engage in more physical bullying while girls are more likely to be involved in social or relational bullying.

Bullying seems to reduce in nature and intensity as students move into the upper teenage years and the literature suggests that the most effective interventions are targeted at students aged from around seven to 14. In this review, most attention is focused on programmes and activities aimed at this group.[9]

Impacts of bullying

It is clear that bullying can have a detrimental impact on young people's health, wellbeing and learning. New Zealand data from the *Youth2000 and Youth '07* health surveys showed that students who had been frequently bullied were also more likely to avoid going to school, to have significant depressive symptoms or to attempt suicide.[10]

There is also considerable evidence that **both** experiencing bullying and engaging in bullying are associated with poor long-term health and education outcomes. In New Zealand, the Competent Learners study found that involvement in some form of bullying was one of the factors associated with early school leaving.[11]

Changes over time

Both New Zealand and international surveys suggest that there might have been a slight reduction in bullying over the last 10 years. However, what has changed in that time is how we view bullying and our awareness of the harm that it can do. We are also less accepting of any kind of aggression or violence towards children and there is an increasing understanding that being bullied is a violation of a person's human rights.

Understanding bullying

Understanding why people engage in bullying can be useful as schools explore ways to build a safer and more caring school climate. Understandings about bullying behaviour have changed over time as new research evidence has emerged. It seems now that rather than there being one definitive explanation for this behaviour, different or multiple explanations can be meaningful in different contexts. Earlier explanations tended to see bullying as an individual or family "deficit", whereas more recent research shows the role of the wider social environment in shaping and influencing behaviour.

Common explanations for bullying include:

- **Bullying as a developmental process** as young children start to assert themselves and establish their social dominance. Ryan suggests that this raises the question of whether bullying behaviours should be seen as "normal" or 'abnormal",[12] and in answer, some researchers describe bullying as a "normal but unacceptable" power relationship.

- **Bullying as a personality trait in children** with low empathy or a predisposition towards aggressive behaviour. Studies have found that a small proportion of children who engage in bullying at school continue on to commit violent acts as adults. These people appeared to have a predisposition towards violence. Studies also show that many of the people who engage in bullying as children often grow out of it. For this reason, writers caution about labelling a student a bully as it implies a stable personality trait.[13]

- **Bullying as learned family behaviour** in children from families with particular characteristics and ways of dealing with things.

- **Bullying as a social phenomenon** which reflects patterns of dominance of some groups over others. Prior to the 1980s, bullying was mostly understood as an interpersonal interaction between a perpetrator and a victim. Since then, research has increasingly viewed bullying as a social phenomenon operating within a peer group. A key change in thinking about bullying occurred when researchers found that bullying behaviours often occur in the presence of peers or bystanders who participate either directly or indirectly. They found that when peers intervene, bullying stops faster.[14] These studies have resulted in more focus on ways to support peers to intervene, as well as ways in which teachers can create prosocial norms in classrooms.

- **Bullying as a socio-ecological phenomenon** which draws on systems thinking and considers the "ecology" of the system within which behaviours occur.

Variables in the wider environment that are known to influence the cause and expression of bullying behaviours include individual, peer, family, school, community and societal factors.[15] In essence, the socio-ecological perspective combines and builds on the earlier perspectives and includes a wider consideration of the types of factors that might influence bullying behaviour; for example, societal norms or aggression on television.

While all of these explanations will be valid in some situations, consensus is forming around this last one—bullying as socio-ecological phenomenon. This perspective allows for multiple explanations for bullying behaviours that look beyond the individual and explores the multiple risk and protective factors that exist within individuals, peer groups, families, schools, communities and the wider social environment.

3 Creating a safe and caring school climate

As bullying is seen increasingly as an ecological and multifaceted problem that requires a multifaceted solution, addressing bullying behaviours is just one side of the coin. The other side is fostering a safe and caring school climate through which prosocial behaviours are promoted and students are offered opportunities to build their social competence.[16]

Researchers who work in the area of addressing bullying are starting to turn their attention to the relationship between the wider ecology of a school and the level of bullying behaviours.[17] Swearer and colleagues note that recent research has focused on how factors such as school policies, teacher attitudes and the general ethos of a school can be predictors of students' social and emotional development as well as of their academic development.[18]

There is a growing evidence base which shows an association between positive perceptions of school climate and a range of positive teacher and student outcomes, including outcomes specifically related to school safety. For example, a recent summary of research shows that students who perceive their school climate to be positive are also less likely to experience bullying behaviours or engage in high-risk behaviours.[19]

The New Zealand *Youth '07* survey explored the social climate of secondary schools and found considerable variation in the amount of bullying occurring in schools. This survey also found that some schools are successfully creating a climate that encourages both staff and students to actively discourage and address bullying behaviours.[20]

3.1 What schools are doing now

New Zealand schools have worked to address bullying for a number of years. A 2007 Education Review Office (ERO) report noted that many schools have safe school policies, plans, strategies and programmes which teachers generally consider to be having a positive effect.[21] While acknowledging the effort being put in, ERO found that much of schools' evidence around bullying was anecdotal and recommended that schools gather data more systematically through monitoring incidents of bullying and by surveying students and parents.

3.2 **What works in schools**

This review examined seven international meta-analyses and literature syntheses which compared the effectiveness of school-based programmes to address bullying.[22] Their key findings are presented here.

The findings about what is effective in preventing and addressing bullying are not clear cut and suggest there is still much to be learned about what works best, for whom and in what situations.

Overall, there seem to be two main approaches favoured by Western countries. Both are whole-school approaches. European countries and the USA favour more traditional, teacher-led and discipline-focused approaches with rules and consequences for those who engage in bullying. The UK, Australia and New Zealand also use whole-school approaches, but these tend to include youth development and problem-solving processes that more actively engage students in the creation of solutions, and can be adapted to suit the context and values of particular schools. There is some evidence that either approach can be successful given the right conditions.

Given the diversity of schools in New Zealand, rather than attempting to identify a particular programme that is more effective than others it may be more useful to identify the principles common to effective approaches and processes.

Effective approaches

Effective approaches:

- have staff commitment
- use a whole-school approach
- promote prosocial behaviour along with addressing bullying
- take a multifaceted approach that works at different layers in the school system
- select activities that fit the context and goals of the school

- include universal strategies that build all students' skills and competencies along with targeted strategies for some students
- use programmes that can be adapted to the school
- use strategies and components that have been evaluated and shown to work
- think about what is age and developmentally appropriate
- target younger students
- plan and implement activities thoroughly and well.

Effective processes

Effective processes:

- build awareness of bullying behaviour
- work collaboratively with the school community, including parents and students
- develop a school-wide policy
- have a continual and intensive focus rather than short bursts
- provide ongoing training for staff
- provide information or training for parents
- monitor changes and make adjustments.

4 A whole-school approach

Current thinking sees bullying as a socio-ecological phenomenon which is influenced by multiple factors. For this reason, evidence suggests that bullying is best addressed through a multifaceted, whole-school intervention rather than through programmes delivered as part of the curriculum, or through being delegated to be the responsibility of pastoral care staff.

Two studies that specifically compared whole-school approaches to other interventions found that, while other options may be attractive because they require less commitment of resources and personnel, whole-school approaches are currently the most effective way schools can address bullying behaviour.

Whole-school approaches have two key parts. One is a *way of thinking* about schools and the other is a *process for change* in school settings.

4.1 A way of thinking about schools

A whole-school approach views a school as a system made up of interconnected parts. A common whole-school approach used in New Zealand and internationally is Health Promoting Schools which defines three interconnected layers in a school system. A key premise of whole-school approaches is that the different activities of each layer can be aligned so that they support and build on each other:

- *The ethos and environment*. This includes school policies and ethos, leadership practices, teacher modelling, the physical environment along with student management and support systems.

- *Curriculum, teaching and learning*. Curriculum delivery, teaching and learning, student skill development and teacher professional development.

- *Community connections*. Connections with parents and caregivers, education and health agencies and community groups.

The table on the right shows different aspects of school life that could be included in each layer of the school system noted above. These have been identified in the literature as aspects of school life that could be reviewed by schools as they work to build a safer and more caring climate that deters bullying.

School ethos and environment

School ethos and culture
- School activities model a caring and respectful climate which celebrates prosocial behaviours.
- School activities acknowledge and affirm students' different cultures and backgrounds.
- The school is a safe place for students and staff.
- Students and staff have a sense of belonging to school.
- The leadership team models a caring and collaborative approach.
- Effective and collaborative processes are used to implement new practices.
- There are systems in place for seeking student input and working collaboratively with students.

Physical environment
- School buildings and the physical environment are safe spaces.

Student support structures and behaviour management processes
- Staff have shared expectations and approaches to promoting desired behaviours.
- There are well-understood policies and strategies for monitoring and addressing behaviour incidents.
- Approaches for managing behaviours are fair, consistent and collaborative.
- Systems are in place to enable students to offer social support to their peers and problem solve social situations.
- Break-times are effectively managed.
- Student support is provided (to all students as well as those who are new to school or vulnerable).
- At-risk students are identified and supported.

Curriculum, teaching and learning

Teacher modelling
- Teachers model caring and respectful interactions and have a respect for diversity.
- Teachers have high expectations.
- The curriculum programme provides opportunities for students to engage in tasks that are likely to enhance their social and emotional competencies.
- Teachers use strategies that are likely to enhance students' social and emotional competencies.
- Student input is sought in developing social problem-solving strategies.

Student culture
- Students are supported to develop a caring and positive peer culture.
- Students are encouraged to show a respect for others' cultures and backgrounds.
- Students are supported to learn strategies for managing their emotions and behaviour (including social problem solving and help seeking).

Teacher learning
- Professional learning experiences support teachers to manage student behaviour in ways that are effective and draw on student input.
- Professional learning experiences support teachers to offer classroom programmes that enhance students' social and emotional competencies.
- School professional learning processes are effective.

Community connections
- The school provides information and training to parents and whānau about school approaches.
- The school works with parents and whānau to improve social and emotional wellbeing at school.
- The school makes strategic connections with community groups, health and education professionals and external providers with the aim of improving social and emotional wellbeing at school.

4.2 A process for change

The rationale for a whole-school approach is that change is more likely to occur when the whole school community shares a vision about what it wants to achieve and acts in ways that are consistent with that vision. Whole-school approaches usually start with the school community engaging in a review to raise awareness, identify needs, create a shared vision and commit to action.

It is important to note that, as each school community is different, each will have different needs and how these needs are addressed will also vary between schools. For this reason, a whole-school approach is a way of working rather than a defined programme. Components will vary, reflecting the unique nature of each school.

4.3 The origin of whole-school approaches

Since the 1950s there has been a change in how people think about health and wellbeing and a corresponding development in models and theoretical approaches to health education and promotion.

These theoretical approaches tend to fall into three categories that can be located on a continuum between individual and group approaches. Each theory is based on different assumptions about what it means to be healthy and each suggests different actions needed to support health and wellbeing. The table on the right shows the three categories, the assumptions that underpin them and how each conceptualises and addresses bullying behaviours.

Until the 1980s, individual and interpersonal theories were most common. Over time there has been a shift in emphasis away from prioritising the individual perspective towards emphasising the group perspective.

Although ecological and whole-school approaches take a group perspective, they can also include components that are based on individual and interpersonal approaches and current good practice is to employ multifaceted approaches.[23] For example, a whole-school approach could include some strategies that address school-wide practices, others that address teacher modelling and others, student skill development.

In New Zealand, as well as Health Promoting Schools, initiatives such as Kia Kaha and Eliminating Violence use whole-school approaches.

Links to the *Curriculum*

All four of the underlying concepts at the heart of the Health and Physical Education learning area of *The New Zealand Curriculum*—hauora, attitudes and values, the

socio-ecological perspective and health promotion—have strong connections with the philosophy and processes of a whole-school approach. Both whole-school approaches and the *Curriculum* encourage school communities to engage in health promotion to "develop and maintain supportive physical and emotional environments".[24]

New Zealand research[25] suggests that use of whole-school approaches can assist schools to meet the intent of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The community and student-empowerment processes that are part of a whole-school approach support students to learn about, and to be, active citizens who are working towards making meaningful changes to their environment. Student leadership in health and wellbeing through roles such as health team leaders and peer mediators also potentially offer rich opportunities for students to demonstrate and build on the key competencies in the *Curriculum*, such as managing self, relating to others and participating and contributing.

Working for Māori success in school

Māori students are overrepresented in New Zealand schools' stand-down and suspension statistics. Frameworks, strategies and actions designed to create a safe and caring school climate need to recognise that current approaches to behaviour management have not served Māori well and ensure that new approaches are culturally responsive and align with Māori worldviews.

Given their holistic nature and focus on community development, whole-school approaches appear to be well aligned with a Māori view of health and wellbeing.

Knowing, respecting and valuing who students are, where they come from and what they bring is essential to schools forming productive partnerships with Māori students and their whānau.

The principles of a culturally responsive approach are enshrined in *Ka Hikitia—Managing for Success—The Māori Education Strategy*. In brief, the principles suggest a need to focus on:

- realising potential
- identifying opportunity
- investing in people and local solutions
- tailoring education to the learner
- indigeneity and distinctiveness
- collaborating and co-constructing.[26]

Theories of health and wellbeing

THEORIES			
	Individual	Interpersonal	Group or whole school
Focus	Physical health	Physical and social	Interaction between physical, social, emotional and the environment
Assumptions	People have control over their behaviour and will change behaviour with the right information	Individual health behaviours are influenced by • relationships • social interaction • social norms	Individual behaviours are influenced by the social and physical environment. There are different layers of interaction within a group that require different strategies to change
View of bullying	Bullying as an individual action	Bullying as an interaction between two people that also involves bystanders	Bullying is a systemic process that involves those who bully, those who are bullied, teachers and the school, home and wider societal environment
Approach to addressing bullying	Educates "about" bullying by providing information about harmful effects and intervening in behaviour incidents	Educates "for" health and wellbeing by developing individuals' skills in addressing interactions	Develops the skills of groups through multifaceted approaches to address different layers within the school. Seeks student and community support and involvement

5 A whole-school approach—how to start

To be effective, a whole-school change process needs to:

- **Consider the bigger picture**. Any approach or intervention to create a safer school environment needs to fit the ethos, values and goals of the school.

- **Undertake a self-review**. A process of self-review led by representatives of stakeholder groups will raise awareness, identify what is known already and assess what other information is needed.

- **Involve all stakeholders in the process**. Getting students, staff and members of the wider school community involved is integral to a whole-school approach as it strengthens links to potential resources, increases the sense of ownership and supports sustainability.

- **Develop a plan of action with multiple components**. Once information has been gathered, the next step is to develop an action plan which details actions for the year ahead based on what the review has shown about the needs in the school.

- **Monitor change and make adjustments**. Needs assessment as part of self-review will provide some baseline data against which the effectiveness of

strategies can be assessed. Other forms of stakeholder feedback could also be collected to assist continual reflection and improvement.

5.1 The big picture

Anti-bullying initiatives have the best chance of success when they are grounded within a wider framework. Any approach a school takes to reduce bullying must be consistent with, and mutually reinforce, the other values, goals and priorities of the school. Depending on how recently they have been reviewed, an examination of those values, goals and priorities may be something a school chooses to do as part of its self-review process.
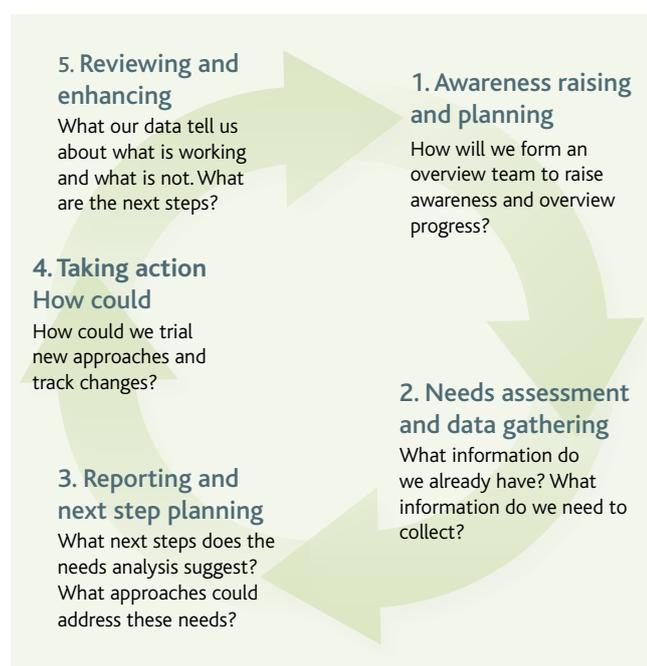
5.2 Use a self-review process

Evidence suggests a crucial factor in reducing bullying is the commitment of staff to implementing activities. Rigby (2002) says that the **process** that is used to develop an anti-bullying initiative may be just as important as the **content**, and that it is vital that members of the school community are engaged in the implementation.[27] Most anti-

bullying interventions suggest a process to engage students, staff and the wider community in change and self-review.

This process commonly starts with awareness raising, needs assessment and by forming a team that plans and progresses activities that are designed, monitored and improved. The diagram below provides an example of what this could look like. The process outlined in this diagram is similar to processes advocated in resources designed to support the New Zealand Health and PE learning area and those suggested by Health Promoting Schools. Fundamental to the process is a focus on data, a community development model and the use of both community knowledge and data to design initiatives that work best for each school setting.

An example of a school self-review process

5. Reviewing and enhancing
What our data tell us about what is working and what is not. What are the next steps?

1. Awareness raising and planning
How will we form an overview team to raise awareness and overview progress?

4. Taking action How could
How could we trial new approaches and track changes?

2. Needs assessment and data gathering
What information do we already have? What information do we need to collect?

3. Reporting and next step planning
What next steps does the needs analysis suggest? What approaches could address these needs?

Leadership and raising awareness

One of the first steps in a health promotion and self-review process is to raise awareness of concerns or issues. Often the team leading the initiative will develop a plan of how to do this. A common form of awareness raising is a community event, such as an assembly, in which a focus on anti-bullying is announced and another is a staff training session. Given what research tells us about the key role of school leaders, it is important that leaders actively support this stage of the process. Information about effective leadership can be found in *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying what works and why. Best evidence synthesis*.[28]

Needs assessment and data gathering

A needs assessment, which involves collecting data from stakeholders, is a common starting point for many anti-

bullying initiatives. Student, staff and parent surveys are often used for this purpose.

The results of surveys and consultation are usually shared with members of the wider school community. The sharing and discussion of this sort of data is an important component of awareness raising and can act as a catalyst for further action. It is common for the student data to be different from teacher perceptions in that students often report more bullying than staff are aware of, and processes need to be in place to support staff to understand and accept this.

5.3 Involve all stakeholders

Forming a team

Once school data are shared, a team to take responsibility for keeping the review cycle moving can be formed. This team commonly includes school leaders, teachers, students, parents and whānau, and may include education and health professionals from outside the school. A common early focus for the team is developing school policies in consultation with the whole school community, and later monitoring activities and reporting back to stakeholders. Having a team both ensures that representatives of all stakeholder groups are involved and supports sustainability through embedding practice and reducing the vulnerability of initiatives if members leave.[29] A team approach also develops a wider sense of ownership over proposed changes.

Students as key stakeholders and leaders

Over time, recognition has grown that when peers intervene, bullying stops faster. Accordingly, the anti-bullying literature now places more emphasis on student involvement in the development and implementation of solutions. A traditional approach to health is for students to "learn about" the factors that influence health and wellbeing. Current research on health promotion, and the Health and PE learning area of the *Curriculum*, both place more emphasis on students actively "learning for" their health through "learning by doing" health promotion activities that improve their social and physical environment. Actively engaging students in the design and review of initiatives is one way to do this. Creating opportunities for students to learn skills and lead approaches is another way. For example, students can develop strategies for managing conflicts or train as peer mediators. Developing students' skills and leadership abilities appears to be well aligned with the intent of the key competencies, principles and values at the heart of the *Curriculum*.

5.4 Plan and take action

Once a team is formed, the next step is usually to develop a plan which contains detailed actions for the next year. The data from the needs assessment process can be used to identify areas of focus and may suggest activities. It is important that schools select activities that fit with the wider school focus and culture of the school. Some suggestions are outlined later in this document.

5.5 Monitor and adjust

The New Zealand Curriculum says that curriculum design and review are continuous, cyclic processes.[30] In the same way, researchers note that anti-bullying activities are best developed through a continual process of monitoring and making adjustments.[31] Many researchers also suggest that activities need be implemented thoroughly or with "fidelity".[32] These statements are in some ways contradictory, as the act of making adjustments challenges the idea of implementing a programme consistently in the way it was intended. Some of the whole-school approaches address this by offering schools choices of different sorts of activities, with the selection to be made on the basis of their fit with school culture and ethos.

To ensure that decisions about adjustments are informed by evidence, data that were gathered during awareness raising can also form a baseline against which change can be monitored. This can help schools to determine the effectiveness of their approaches. The data can also feed into a continual improvement process as refinements are made to school activities. Other forms of stakeholder feedback can also be collected.

6 A whole-school approach—what to include

Having broadly outlined the process of a whole-school approach in Section 5, this section looks at some of the different components that could be included, and the evidence base for them.

These components are in five groups:

- school-wide policy development
- teacher professional learning
- working with parents and whānau
- working with students
- gathering and analysing data.

6.1 School-wide policy development

One of the most common starting points for anti-bullying strategies and initiatives is the development of school-wide policy. There are a number of reasons why this is considered so important:

- It is a starting point for raising awareness of the issue.
- It establishes a shared language to talk about bullying behaviours.

- The consultation needed for policy development starts to engage stakeholders and thereby to create a sense of shared ownership.

In its 2007 report, *Safe Schools: Strategies to prevent bullying*, the ERO found that many schools already have safe school policies and plans.[33] However, this review suggests that for maximum effect these policies need to be located within a wider frame, and should sit alongside the development or review of school values.

6.2 Teacher professional learning

Research suggests that the commitment of teachers to implementing initiatives[34] may be as important as the content of those initiatives. Providing good opportunities for teacher professional learning is essential to effective whole-school approaches.[35] Professional development usually starts by raising awareness of the different types of bullying and by building understanding of bullying as a social behaviour. As learning progresses, teachers often find they need to rethink long-held views on behaviour management and to

develop new skills. Research found that without adequate professional development, teachers in schools that adopted new approaches—such as restorative justice—had mixed understandings about the principles and practices of the new approach.[36]

Teachers and others school leaders are also very important in modelling a safe and caring social climate and may need to examine whether their own practices reinforce or condone bullying behaviour.

6.3 Working with parents and whānau

The international literature suggests that the involvement of parents and whānau in anti-bullying activities is essential. There are a number of avenues through which this can happen. They include:

- keeping parents and whānau fully informed through newsletters, school events and information evenings
- involving parents and whānau in visioning and planning groups
- providing education and training for parents, whānau and students
- monitoring and evaluating initiatives by gathering feedback from parents and whānau
- involving parents and whānau in designing behaviour management or social problem-solving approaches.

The *Curriculum* also sets up an expectation that schools will work in partnership with parents and whānau on the basis that when school practices are supported by the wider school community they can enhance students' wellbeing beyond the classroom.
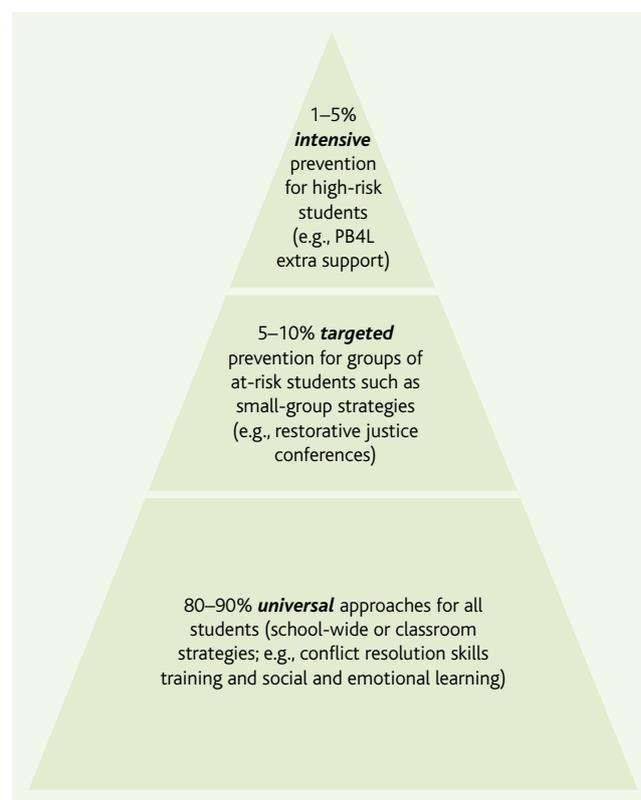
6.4 Working with students

Whole-school approaches include a range of different ways of working with students. At a simple level these can be divided into:

- *targeted* interventions—working directly with particular students or groups of students to address bullying
- *universal* approaches—which involve developing the skills and competencies of all students in the school or at a particular year level.

Most whole-school approaches contain a mix of universal and targeted programmes. Writers suggest that most effort should be placed on universal approaches as shown in the "intervention triangle" below.

The intervention triangle

Both targeted and universal strategies for working with students are discussed in more detail in Section 7.

1–5% *intensive* prevention for high-risk students (e.g., PB4L extra support)

5–10% *targeted* prevention for groups of at-risk students such as small-group strategies (e.g., restorative justice conferences)

80–90% *universal* approaches for all students (school-wide or classroom strategies; e.g., conflict resolution skills training and social and emotional learning)

6.5 Gathering and analysing data

Most whole-school approaches designed to reduce bullying and create a safer school climate collect some form of data to show whether activities have been effective. As well as being useful in measuring progress over time the process of collecting data can itself raise awareness about bullying behaviours and may reveal the different perceptions of students and teachers about what is going on in the school.

Some common forms of data collection include:

- anonymous student surveys to measure the nature and extent of bullying behaviours
- anonymous teacher surveys to measure and raise awareness of bullying as well as to identify areas of good practice and areas needing attention
- student discussion groups to collect ideas about how to address bullying and promote a safe school climate
- teacher discussion groups and professional learning sessions to raise awareness and to review, develop and trial approaches to addressing bullying and fostering a safe school climate

- a parent and whānau survey or consultation to raise awareness, involve parents and whānau and collect community ideas about ways to build a safer school community
- incident reporting and behaviour monitoring data which can be used as a baseline against which to measure the impact of initiatives
- analysis of attendance data, stand-down figures, suspension and exclusion data can be used to monitor changes in student outcomes over time
- student engagement data which can be used as an indicator of a safe and caring climate.

Measuring change in school practices and student behaviours over time can be challenging and research suggests that schools need to gather and analyse more than one type of data if they are to get a picture of effectiveness.[37]

It takes time to make changes in schools and a continual focus is needed for two years or more, with some researchers suggesting that at least three to five years are necessary to embed changes in schools.[39]

A necessary component in addressing bullying and fostering a safe school climate is awareness raising. Giving the message that the school has a focus on reducing bullying may lead to an increase in the amount of bullying activity reported. In the short term this could give the impression that bullying is increasing rather than decreasing and is another reason why longer term data collection and a focus on a range of aspects of school life are important.

7 Working with students

Whatever approach to creating a safe and caring school climate a school decides to adopt, working with students will be part of it. Outlined here are traditional and more recent approaches to working with students.

7.1 Traditional approaches to behaviour management

The traditional approach to student behaviour management is based on behavioural theory—that people will change their behaviour based on sanctions and rewards. International studies suggest that this still tends to be the most common approach in schools. The traditional approach involves these elements:

- development of school policies about bullying
- provision of information to students and the school community about what is and is not acceptable
- development of school rules or guidelines about bullying
- investigation of incidents of bullying
- the application of sanctions, penalties or punishments.[39]

The traditional approach has a focus on students reporting to adults and adults taking action. The traditional approach does not offer a solution to the findings from studies which show that many bullying incidents are not reported, that

students perceive schools are not addressing their concerns or that reporting bullying to teachers can make the bullying worse.[40]

There is general agreement in the literature that "zero tolerance" *attitudes* to bullying can be valuable in establishing a safe and caring school climate, but that punitive or "zero tolerance" *behaviour management approaches,* such as expulsion from school, do not appear to have a strong evidence base.[41]

7.2 Youth development—an alternative approach

Alternatives to traditional behaviour management approaches seek students' involvement in developing solutions to bullying behaviour.

Youth development approaches emerged from research which showed that the same risk and protective factors impacted on a range of student outcomes. This led practitioners to call for approaches that moved beyond a single focus (such as bullying) towards approaches that help prevent a broad range of youth problems by decreasing risk and increasing protective factors.

Positive youth development can be an all-encompassing term but a review of literature on positive youth development indicates that these approaches include those which:

- promote bonding, social, emotional, cognitive, behaviour or moral competence
- foster resilience, self-determination, spirituality, self-efficacy, clear and positive identity, belief in the future and prosocial norms
- provide opportunities for prosocial involvement or recognition for positive behaviour.[42]

A recent analysis that explored the outcomes of programmes that met these criteria found that 19 of 25 programmes showed positive changes in youth behaviour and 24 of 25 showed significant improvements in problem behaviours (bullying was included as one of these behaviours).[43]

Problem solving and conflict resolution

Problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies aim to increase prosocial behaviours, co-operation, empathy and respect for difference while decreasing antisocial behaviours such as aggression, bullying and violence. These approaches can be proactive or preventative in that they support students to develop social and conflict resolution skills, or they can be reactive in that they support students to address particular incidents.

Problem-solving approaches can be adult-led or student-led.

Adult-led restorative justice approaches

In New Zealand, one common adult-led problem-solving approach that has been used to address incidents of bullying behaviour is restorative justice. This stems from the successful use of the family group conference model within the youth justice system, which in turn stems from Māori cultural practices.

The underpinning philosophy of restorative processes is that wrongdoing is perceived as damage done to a relationship and can best be repaired by those most directly involved. This is in contrast to the traditional approach which sees wrongdoing as being about rule breaking which needs to be punished.

In schools, restorative family conferences typically take the form of a teacher or community support person facilitating a discussion that allows each party (the victim and their family, the perpetrator and their family, teachers and other school staff, and community support people) to describe what happened, what led to the behaviour, what hurt has been done and what needs to be done to put it right. There is an expectation that perpetrators will take responsibility

for their actions, and that group members are working towards forgiveness.

The use of restorative justice approaches is growing in New Zealand schools. In a 2009 survey, half of a sample of primary principals and almost two-thirds of the secondary sample reported that their schools were using some form of restorative process.[44] Under the umbrella of restorative justice, schools are using a wide variety of processes including restorative classroom management, informal restorative talks and miniconferences as well as restorative family conferences to address more serious incidents.[45]

There is some evidence for the effectiveness of restorative justice processes in schools. This is mostly descriptive and in the form of case studies.[46]

The use of restorative processes offers schools a way of rethinking school practices with a shift towards prioritising respectful relationships and dialogue. There is some evidence that, to be effective, restorative processes need to be embedded within school practice rather than delegated to a small number of teachers trained in the approach.

Other adult-led problem-solving approaches

There are two other well-known adult-led approaches that are used to address incidents of bullying. Both have some evidence of success. One is the Pikas Method of Shared Concern.[74] The aim of this method is to restore wellbeing of all involved in bullying incidents by changing group dynamics through a problem-solving process which involves the group of perpetrators and bystanders. A series of individual and group meetings with perpetrators is facilitated.

The other is the Support Group (or No Blame) Method which is designed to increase students' empathy. A facilitator meets with the student who was bullied and separately holds a conference with a support group of peers, perpetrators and bystanders. This group is encouraged to take responsibility for the problem and to suggest solutions and actions they might take.

Student-led social problem-solving approaches

The most common student-led problem-solving approach in New Zealand and internationally is peer mediation. This popular approach grew from studies which showed that bystanders are often involved in bullying behaviour, and that when peers intervene, bullying stops faster.[48]

Peer mediation training focuses on developing students' understanding about behaviours that are not acceptable and offers students training in reasoning, social skills and conflict resolution. Student leaders can be selected for this training or all students can be trained in conflict resolution and bystander intervention techniques.

As with many approaches, the success of peer mediation seems to rest on how well initiatives are implemented and supported. In New Zealand, an evaluation of Cool Schools Peer Mediators found schools positive about the impact of the programme especially in teaching students conflict resolution skills and processes. Factors that contributed to the success of these programmes included training, whole-school involvement, commitment of staff and students, the role of the co-ordinator and where the programme sat within the school's behaviour management system.[49]

Peer mentor and buddy approaches that are commonly used in schools are also examples of student-led approaches. These can be used to create a caring environment in which senior students model effective ways of developing relationship and social problem-solving skills to younger students.

Comparing approaches

While there are debates about the relative merits of youth development approaches (such as peer mediators) and traditional approaches to behaviour management, the focus of youth development approaches on developing students' skills and strategies aligns with the focus of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, *Ka Hikitia* and current good practice in education.

Social and emotional learning

Researchers are increasingly suggesting that approaches to addressing bullying behaviours, rather than standing alone, are best located within a wider framework for developing students' social and emotional skills.[50]

Although many social problem-solving and conflict resolution initiatives also support students to learn skills, many are essentially designed as interventions to address behaviours such as bullying.

However, another group of youth development approaches is proactive and preventative, promoting social and emotional learning and the development of prosocial skills.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as:

> *...the process through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to:*
> * *recognize and manage their emotions*
> * *set and achieve positive goals*
> * *demonstrate caring and concern for others*
> * *establish and maintain positive relationships*
> * *make responsible decisions*
> * *handle interpersonal situations effectively. (Payton et al., 2008, pp. 5–6)*

Internationally, there are a number of SEL programmes that show evidence of effectiveness. Two particular strategies are often noted as having an impact—the use of student role plays and viewing DVDs about relationship or bullying situations. Both are used to encourage students to discuss issues, develop and actively practise problem-solving strategies.

New Zealand schools have a number of curricular, co-curricular and school-wide approaches that are designed to foster students' social and emotional skills and competencies. These include approaches to developing the key competencies, values, character, leadership and civic responsibility. There are also a number of programmes that aim to support students to develop these skills and competencies. Some examples are Kiwi Can, Life Education, Lions Quest, and Roots of Empathy. Many of these programmes have evidence of their general effectiveness but this might not include a close exploration of their impact on bullying behaviours.

Internationally, there is some evidence that a focus on developing students' social and emotional skills and competencies is likely to reduce bullying behaviours.[51] For this reason, a focus on social and emotional learning can be an important component of a whole-school approach or can be used as the overall framework for this approach.

8 A summary—managing change

Bullying behaviours are complex and effective responses to them are not simple. The "interventionist" approaches in which adults intervene to remedy problem student behaviour are starting to be overshadowed in more recent literature by discussion of the value of youth development approaches. These approaches involve students in the creation of solutions, have a wider view on the broad range of risk and protective factors that influence bullying and other potentially harmful behaviours, and take a more inclusive and longer term view of the processes needed to make changes to school cultures.

New Zealand, Australia and the UK tend to favour youth development approaches that prioritise students engaging in social problem solving. Examples include peer mediation and restorative justice processes.

Although there are some differences between the UK and Australasian, and the USA and European, approaches to anti-bullying, most of the literature suggests that addressing bullying and creating a safe and caring school climate requires a sustained whole-school approach that involves the whole school community—students, teachers, parents, whānau and other education, health and community professionals from outside the school.

Research suggests that there is no blueprint for addressing bullying and therefore schools need to design an approach that works for them. One important point that has emerged from the literature is that commitment from all stakeholders to thoroughly implementing anti-bullying activities may be just as important as the sorts of components that are selected to fit within a whole-school approach. Other lessons and principles that have emerged from this literature overview are the need to:

- avoid labelling students as "bullies" and "victims" and instead consider explanations for bullying behaviours that look beyond the individual to explore the contribution of individuals, peers, teachers, families, school, community and the wider environment
- use a whole-school approach, involving all stakeholders in the change process and include a range of activities designed to address different aspects of school practice, to develop anti-bullying activities and create a safer and caring school climate
- focus on creating a caring and respectful school climate and enhancing positive outcomes rather than having a sole focus on anti-bullying
- promote social and emotional learning and develop students' social problem-solving skills and competencies
- plan a change process that involves and gets commitment from the whole community
- include multiple components within the whole-school approach that align with the school vision and existing practices
- have a long-term focus and specific plans for at least three to five years
- monitor change over time and use an iterative design process that can be adapted and improved.

9 Further reading

9.1 New Zealand material

Overviews of effective practices in New Zealand schools

Buckley, S., & Maxwell, G. (2007). *Respectful schools: Restorative practices in education: A summary report*. Wellington: Office of the Children's Commissioner and The Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University. At: http://ips.ac.nz/events/downloads/Respectful%20 schools.pdf

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Articles

Berryman, M., & Bateman, S. (2008). Effective bicultural leadership: A way to restore harmony at school and avoid suspension. *set: Research Information for Teachers*, *1*, 25–29.

Boyd, S. (2008). Supporting the development of a positive school culture. *set: Research Information for Teachers*, *3*, 4–8.

Cavanagh, T. (2007). Focusing on relationships creates safety in schools. *set: Research Information for Teachers*, *1*, 31–35.

Websites

NZ Police. For the *No Bully* site and information about *Kia Kaha*, see http://www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/nobully/ NetSafe for New Zealand-based information about cyber bullying, see http://www.cyberbullying.org.nz/teachers. This site includes two online DVDs for classroom discussion: "At a Distance—standing up to cyber bullying" (NZ-developed primary-age) and "Let's fight it together" (UK-developed secondary-age).

Books

Macfarlane, A. (2007). *Discipline, democracy, and diversity*. Wellington: NZCER Press.

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9.2 Australian material

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Rigby, K. (2010). *Bullying interventions in school: Six basic approaches*. Camberwell, VIC: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Rigby, K., & Thomas, E. (2010). *How schools counter bullying: Policies and procedures in selected Australian schools* (Revised edition). Camberwell, VIC: Australian Council for Educational Research.

9.3 USA material

Jimerson, S., Swearer, S., & Espelage, D. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of bullying in schools: An international perspective*. New York: Routledge.

Orpinas, P., & Horne, A. (2006). *Bullying prevention: Creating a positive school climate and developing social competence*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Swearer, S., Espelage, D., & Napolitano, S. (2009). *Bullying prevention and intervention: Realistic strategies for schools*. New York: The Guilford Press.

9.4 Topics of interest to schools

Planning a whole-school approach

Sullivan, K., Cleary, M., & Sullivan, G. (2004). *Bullying in secondary schools: What it looks like and how to deal with it*. London: Paul Chapman.

Approaches for addressing moderate cases of bullying behaviour

Restorative justice

Berryman, M., & Bateman, S. (2008). Effective bicultural leadership: A way to restore harmony at school and avoid suspension. *set: Research Information for Teachers, 1,* 25-29.

Buckley, S., & Maxwell, G. (2007). *Respectful schools: Restorative practices in education: A summary report*. Wellington: Office of the Children's Commissioner and The Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University.

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Method of shared concern

Rigby, K. (2010). *Bullying interventions in school: Six basic approaches*. Camberwell, VIC: Australian Council for Educational Research.

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Peer mentoring/mediation

Sullivan, K., Cleary, M., & Sullivan, G. (2004). *Bullying in secondary schools: What it looks like and how to deal with it*. London: Paul Chapman.

One New Zealand example is Cool Schools Peer Mediators. At: http://www.peace.net.nz/index.php?pageID=24)

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Notes

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