Children’s rights and safe learning environment

KiVa – A national anti-bullying program for Finnish schools

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Pupil welfare
The Basic Education Act and education policy

Education shall be provided and organized according to the pupils’ age and capabilities, and so as to promote pupils’ healthy growth and development.

A pupil has the right to get instruction and guidance counselling in accordance with the curriculum and sufficient support in learning and school going, as soon as the need arises.
Pupil welfare
The Basic Education Act and education policy

A pupil is entitled to free pupil welfare which is necessary for participation in education.

Pupil welfare means action promoting and maintaining good learning, good mental and physical health and social well-being, and conditions conducive to these.

Pupil welfare encompasses
• pupil welfare as determined in the curriculum adopted by the education provider and
• pupil welfare services comprising school health care referred to in the Public Health Act (66/1972) and support to schoolgoing referred to in the Child Welfare Act 417/2007).
Pupil welfare
The Basic Education Act and education policy

Welfare consists of every day care and safe school environment, social and psychological support, health and dental care, school meals and school transport.

Holistic approach to well-being
• child’s well-being as a prerequisite for learning
• healthy growth and development
• prevention and early intervention
• subjective right to pupil welfare

Safety
• safe and healthy learning environment
• plan for safeguarding pupils/students against violence, bullying and harassment

Cooperation
• home-school cooperation
• cross-sectoral cooperation
Before KiVa

Finnish school system is effective but it is not without problems

- Finnish pupils report low ”school liking”
  (WHO’s HBSC-reports)

Since the beginning of the 1990’s

- A lot of public attention has been allocated to bully-victim problems on Finland
  ”Self-invented programs” encouraged by legislation

- Every school has to have a strategy or action plan against bullying
- No evidence-based bullying prevention programs available on the market

Despite the actions taken, no changes in the prevalence of pupils bullying others / being bullied by others during (1998 – 2007, School Health Promotion Study).
Frequency of bullying

Frequency in Finnish comprehensive schools 5 – 10 %
• The percentage varies from study to study
• The percentage is higher in grades 1 to 6

In Scandinavian comparison Finland and Denmark do worst; Sweden has least bullying in schools

In even wider perspective, Finland’s bullying percentage is "average"
Evidence-based bullying prevention programs are needed

• Each school develops their own policy???
  • self-invented program self-invented program self-invented program
    self-invented program self-invented program self-invented program self-invented program
    self-invented program self-invented program self-invented program ....

• Improving the school climate
  • No evidence of mere ’positive climate’ or ’good atmosphere’ leading to reductions in bullying
  • BUT there is evidence of the contrary effect
    (e.g. Salmivalli, Grandeau & Veenstra 2012)

• Latest meta-analyses by Ttofi & Farrington
  • 44 different studies
  • Conclusion: Antibullying programs can – and they often do - work
KiVa antibullying program
Taking action at the national level

Kiva = ’nice, good, friendly’,…
KiVa = ’Kiusaamista Vastaan’, Against Bullying

Developed in the University of Turku in a development & research team
• Professors Christina Salmivalli and Elisa Poskiparta
• Ten PhD students
• Teacher trainers

Funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture
• Development of the KiVa program and initial evaluation of the effectiveness 2006 – 2009
• Beginning the broad implementation across Finnish comprehensive schools 2009 – 2010
• Supporting high-quality implementation and sustainability across the country 2010 - 2011

Research funding from the Academy of Finland
The social architecture of bullying

Bullying can be a strategy to gain status and power in the peer group - this strategy is often successful

• Bullies are perceived as popular (Caravita, DiBlasio & Salmivalli, 2008)
• Bullying helps to maintain status (Juvonen & Calvan, 2008)
• Bullying helps to increase status over time (Cillessen & Borch, 2004)

In order to demonstrate their power and renew their high status position, bullies need to choose

• Targets who are submissive, insecure of themselves, physically weak and in low-power, rejected position in the group …

The power demonstrations need witnesses

• Choosing optimal time and place for attacks
• In most bullying incidents, a group of peers is present
The social architecture of bullying

Participant roles in bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996)
The behavior of onlookers/bystanders does matter

Individual level

- Short term: The defended victims are better adjusted than the undefended ones
  (Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing & Salmivalli, 2011).

- Long term: The most negative memory related to bullying is often that 'no one cared'
  (Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2000)
The behavior of onlookers/bystanders does matter

Classroom level

- In classrooms where reinforcing the bully is occurring at high levels and defending is rare
  - Bullying is more frequent (Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011)
  - Individual-level risk factors are more likely to lead to victimization (Kärnä, Voeten, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2010)
In order to reduce bullying

We do not necessarily need to change the victims, making them "less vulnerable".

Influencing the behavior of classmates can reduce the rewards gained by the bullies and consequently, their motivation to bully in the first place.

→ UNIVERSAL ACTIONS

However, the victims need to feel that they are heard and helped by the adults at school.
The bullies need to be confronted for their unacceptable behavior.
In order to reduce bullying

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→ INDICATED ACTIONS
What should an antibullying program include?

Something for all students
→ Universal interventions

Something for bullies and victims in particular
→ Indicated interventions
Special characteristics of KiVa

Special characteristics

• Both universal and indicated actions
• An exceptionally large amount of materials & concrete tools (not merely a "philosophy")
• Utilizing ICT: virtual learning environments

KiVa is more systematic and structured than most existing anti-bullying programs

• What to do, when to do it, how to do it …
Universal actions

- Awareness of the role bystanders play in the bullying process
- Safe strategies to support and defend the victimized peers → self-efficacy for defending
  - based on common decisions in the group
  - not necessarily heroic acts of confronting the bullies
Universal actions

- Commitment & coordination at the school level
- Signaling that ‘we are KiVa school’
  - Visible vests for teachers supervising recess time
  - Posters
- Annual student online survey
- Three developmentally appropriate versions for pupil lessons (grade levels 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9)
  - in primary school, 10 double lessons during the school year
  - in secondary schools, four ’themes’
- An anti-bullying computer game / virtual learning environment
- A parents’ guide
- Virtual ”mailbox”
The themes of the KiVa lessons (Grades 4 – 6)

1. Respect is for everybody
2. In a group
3. Recognize bullying
4. Hidden forms of bullying
5. Consequences of bullying
6. Group involvement in bullying
7. Countering bullying as a group
8. What to do if I get bullied?
9. KiVa Koulu – let’s do it together
10. How are we doing?
Universal actions

Student lessons
KiVa computer game: Characters from the virtual school (Grades 4-6)
Computer games and virtual learning environments

KiVa Game

KiVa Street
KiVa games and KiVa Street are closely connected to student lessons
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Enhancing awareness of the role bystanders play in the bullying process, as well as empathy for victims. Providing self-efficacy and safe strategies to support and defend the victimized peers.
KiVa games and KiVa Street are closely connected to student lessons

- Repeating & testing of what has been learnt →”I KNOW”
- Learning to take action →”I CAN”
- Motivation →”I DO”
Parents’ guide and website
Virtual "mailbox"

However: only a minority of cases came to attention and were directed to school teams.

New feature in KiVa computer game

- Virtual "mailbox"
  - Possibility to send a message to own school’s KiVa team
I don't want to come to school anymore. Other kids are not playing with me anymore...
Indicated actions – tackling the cases of bullying coming to attention

Individual discussions with the victim and with the bullying children
→ KIVA TEAM
• Two different approaches were tested

Utilizing prosocial, high-status peers
• "Your help is needed"
→ CLASSROOM TEACHER
• setting standards for others
• making the victim feel better
• protecting the victimized child from further attacks
Evaluation of Kiva

KiVa was put in an extremely rigorous test

Randomized controlled triad (RTC)
• 2007-2008
• 2008-2009
• Was possible in the beginning, not anymore

Evaluation during broad rollout; age cohort design
• Since 2009
Randomized controlled triad (RTC)

Biggest randomized control trial ever

- 234 schools (117 intervention, 117 control) representing all provinces in the mainland Finland and both Finnish- and Swedish-speaking schools
- Over 30 000 students
- Exceptionally wide age range
  - grades 1-9
  - pupils with 7-15 years of age
- Numerous outcome variables
Randomized controlled triad
Success of the indicated actions

The proportion of cases handled by the school team in which bullying

1. Stopped completely 79.4%
2. Decreased 18.5%
3. Remained the same 1.9%
4. Increased 0.3%

(Garandeau et al., Tackling acute cases of bullying: Comparison of two methods in the context of the KiVa antibullying program).
First phase of evaluation (2007–2008)  
Randomized controlled triad  

Results  

After controlling for other predictor variables in the model(s), the risk for bullying others and for being victimized by others was halved after one school year of implementation of KiVa program. 

Other positive results (significant)  
- School liking increased (all pupils)  
- Learning motivation increased (all pupils)  
- Depression and anxiety decreased  
- Head masters’ specific support to KiVa important
First phase of evaluation (2007–2008)
Randomized controlled triad
Main conclusions

- KiVa was effective in reducing (self- and peer-reported) bullying and victimization, already during the first nine months of implementation.
- The effects generalize to multiple forms of victimization.
- Numerous positive effects on other outcomes (emotional, cognitive, as well as behavioral).
- Effects varied across grade levels, being strongest in grade 4 and weakest in secondary school (grades 7-9).
- Indicated actions were often effective, but taken in a minority of bullying cases.
Evaluation under broad rollout (2009 - )

Results

The percentage of bullying decreased by approximately

- 15 % in all grade levels
- 20 % in primary school (grades 1-6)

Notice:
The KiVa School of the Year 2011

- Polvijärvi Secondary School:
  - The percentage of children being victimized by others decreased by 56 %
  - The percentage of children bullying others decreased by 90 %!

- Karamzin Primary school:
  The percentage of children being victimized by others decreased by 67 %
Evaluation under broad rollout
Main conclusions

- Effects seem to be weaker than in RTC, but still significant with much variation across grade levels.
- Again, strongest effects in grade 4 and weakest in grades 7 – 9 (secondary school).
- Generalized to Finnish population of 500 000 students, the effects of this size would mean a reduction of 12 000 victims and 8 000 bullies after nine months of implementation of KiVa.

More data comes in every year
- About bullying, victimization, implementation fidelity…
Primary schools

![Graph showing the comparison of victimization and bullying across years 2009, 2010, and 2011.](chart)

- **Victimization**
  - 2009: [Value]
  - 2010: [Value]
  - 2011: [Value]

- **Bullying**
  - 2009: [Value]
  - 2010: [Value]
  - 2011: [Value]
Scaling up Diffusion

2009: 1450 schools
2010: + 810 schools
2011: + 200 schools + Åland Island

90% of comprehensive schools in the country have adopted KIVa.

About 7500-8000 teachers and other school personnel have been trained face-to-face.
The future of KiVa: Maintaining high-quality implementation in Finland

• On-line training for school personnel (10 hours)
  • Lectures
  • Interviews (head masters, teachers, KiVa teams…)
  • Films of lessons at classrooms
  • Simulations of discussions with the victim and the bullies
• Discussion forum for school personnel
• Newsletters (4 / school year)
• Biannual KiVa Days (since 2010)
• Quality recommendations
• Annual The KiVa School of the Year award
The future of KiVa: Maintaining high-quality implementation in Finland

- Yearly on-line surveys (Students / Staff)
  → Automatic and individual feedback to schools
- KiVa resource schools
  - Piloting begins in 2012
- New products to complement existing KiVa materials
The future of KiVa: Research challenges

- Mediators and moderators of effects
- Implementation & sustainability issues
- New projects
  - follow-up of one whole cohort of children
  - KiVa-twins
  - ECRP project on bullying and victimization networks
The future of KiVa: International evaluations underway

- Sweden (Lerum)
- Netherlands (multi-site study)
- USA (Kansas)
- Puerto Rico
- Wales …

In addition to Finnish and Swedish, the material is being translated into English, Spanish, Flamish (Dutch), Japanese, …
KiVa is exceptional in many ways

KiVa can be seen as an example of how commitment from part of politicians, researchers, and educators can make a difference in the lives of numerous children and youth.

- The effectiveness of the program is outstanding
- The Ministry of Education and Culture has funded the development of the program
  - Over 30 000 children took part
- The Ministry of Education and Culture has provided the funding of the national diffusion of the program
  - Using Kiva is free of costs to schools

- European Crime Prevention Award (2009)
- Social Policy Award for the Best Article, Society for research on Adolescence (2012)
Some references


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KiVa Koulussa ei kiusata
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www.kivakoulu.fi