

# Effective Violence Prevention

What we know about  
what works – and  
what doesn't work - in  
violence prevention.

Teresa Wroe, Prevention Coordinator  
Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault

# Best Practices in Prevention

- Teaching and practicing proactive communication skills.
- Building victim empathy.
- Practicing bystander intervention.
- Increasing positive behaviors rather than focusing on the negative behaviors.

# Most Effective Approaches

- Culturally specific and sensitive to diversity.
- Multiple presentations over time.
- Single gender audiences.
- Practicing communication skills.
- Building skills and practicing bystander intervention.
- Utilizing peer educators.

## Best Used With Caution

- Risk reduction related to gender violence done in mixed gender audiences.
- Using figures and stats that are not localized.

# Possibly Counterproductive

- Primarily awareness or knowledge based education.
- Confrontational style.
- Debating myths about violence with students.
- Approaches that inadvertently blame victims.

# Who We Teach

- Teach different topics for various age groups:
  - Elementary: bullying, abuse and sexual abuse
  - Middle School: bullying, sexual harassment and relationship abuse
  - High School: sexual harassment, sexual assault and dating abuse
- Programs must reach teachers, administrators, parents and youth leaders in the community.

## *HOW We Teach*

- Discussion-based information, delivered in an interactive style.
- Active participation from students (e.g., role plays, question and answer).
- Outcome based assessment of behavior or attitude change.

(continued)

## *HOW We Teach*

- Avoidance of “scare tactics” and traumatizing information.
- Use of theatre/performance and art projects.
- Exploration of integrating violence prevention education into existing mainstream curricula in disciplines like history, literature, health sciences and social studies.



## *WHAT* We Teach

- Gender socialization as a contributing factor.
- That most violence is perpetrated by acquaintances.
- Bystander intervention as a means of prevention.
- Social skills can be an underlying foundation for prevention education.

# The Foundations of Violence Prevention

- Social skills as a foundation.
- Underlying issues of violence.
- Distinctions related to sexual violence.
- Reaching all constituents.

# Constructs Targeted in Violence Prevention Programs

- Myths about violence.
- Recognizing emotions and victim empathy.
- Negative consequences for perpetrators and healthy relationships.
- Risk reduction, communication and assertiveness.

# Myths About Violence

- Most frequently addressed construct.
- Avoid the unintended message that ‘you’re stupid for believing these myths.
- Explore *why* we believe these myths vs. debating myths with students.
- Challenge teens to rebel against traditional gender roles, sexist media messages and myths about social norms.

# Victim Empathy

- Cognitive-emotional recognition of the trauma experienced by victims.
- Identify one's own feelings.
- Recognize and identify signs of emotion in another person.

# Negative Consequences for Perpetrators

- Emphasize the negative consequences of violence and the positive consequences of developing healthy relationships.
- Educators should focus on expectations in relationships.
- Use bystander approach for influencing students perceptions of increasing the likelihood of negative social consequence.

# Risk Reduction

- These programs emphasize setting boundaries.
- Build communication and assertiveness skills.
- Avoidance of high risk situations should be used with caution.
- Avoid giving the subtle or unintended message that the victim is to blame.

# Integrating the Curricula

- Social skills can be the foundation.
- Align overall curricula with academic standards.
- Identify models to use in integration.
- Identify disciplines to target violence prevention.



# Identifying Disciplines

- Health
- Civics
- History
- Reading and Writing
- Arts and theatre
- Math

# Nested

- Nest multiple ideas into a single lesson.
- Within a subject area teacher targets multiple skills (i.e. social, thinking and content-specific)
- Doesn't require planning with another teacher.
- Example: violence, personification, conflict.

# Webbed

- Take one theme and web it throughout disciplines.
- Generic themes provide rich possibilities for various disciplines.
- Requires a cross-departmental team.
- Example: change.

# Threaded

- Thread one skill throughout various disciplines.
- Determine set of skills and infuse them into existing content priorities.
- All teachers need understanding of skills.
- Example: conflict, change, oppression, etc.

# Integrated

- Teachers look for similar patterns and approach content through these patterns.
- Blends major disciplines by finding overlapping skills, concepts and attitudes.
- Requires cross-disciplinary approach.
- Example: research, analysis, cause and effect and change.