



## REL Pacific Ask A REL Response

Early Warning Systems  
April 2019

### Question:

**What research is available on tools for evaluating school curricula programs with a focus on preventing violence and supporting survivors of sexual abuse?**

### Response:

Following an established REL Pacific research protocol, we conducted a web-based search for resources related to best practices in evaluating school curricula programs with a focus on preventing violence and supporting sexual abuse survivors, as well as resources on current school curricula addressing these issues. (see Methods section for search terms and resource selection criteria). We focused our search in particular on studies in the Pacific and other indigenous contexts for greater relevancy to the Pacific region, however we did include studies with more generalizable findings.

References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance. Descriptions of the resources are quoted directly from the publication abstracts. We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. We offer them only for your reference. Also, our search included the most commonly used research resources, but they are not comprehensive and other relevant references and resources may exist.

### Research References

De La Rue, L., Polanin, J., Espelage, D.L., & Pigott, T.D. (2017). A meta-analysis of school-based interventions aimed to prevent or reduce violence in teen dating relationships. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(1), 7-34. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1132720>.

*From the abstract:* “The incidence of violence in dating relationships has a significant impact on young people, including decreased mental and physical health. This review is the first to provide a quantitative synthesis of empirical evaluations of school-based programs implemented in middle and high schools that sought to prevent or reduce

incidents of dating violence. After a systematic search and screening procedure, a meta-analysis of 23 studies was used to examine the effects of school-based programs. Results indicated school-based programs influence dating violence knowledge ( $g\text{-bar} = 0.22$ , 95% confidence interval [0.05, 0.39]) and attitudes ( $g\text{-bar} = 0.14$ , 95% confidence interval [0.10, 0.19]); however, to date, the results for dating violence perpetration and victimization indicate programs are not affecting these behaviors to a significant extent. The results of this review are encouraging, but they also highlight the need for modifications to dating violence prevention programs including the incorporation of skill-building components and a need to address the role of bystanders.”

Guerrero, A., Goebert, D., Alicata, D., & Bell, C. (2009). Striving for a culturally responsive process in training health professionals on Asian American and Pacific Islander youth violence prevention. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 4*(6), 499-505. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1359178909000809>.

*From the abstract:* “The quality of youth violence prevention practice is dependent on the quality of education and training of professionals who will care for disadvantaged and/or underserved youth. The authors propose that culturally responsive youth violence prevention curricula, focused on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, should: 1) target institutions that train health professionals likely to serve Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; 2) promote the professional development of Asian American and Pacific Islander students and enhance all students' comfort in addressing behavioral, social, and cultural concerns; 3) cover specific issues relevant to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including the role of acculturative stress, socioeconomic hardship, and other risk factors that may account for mental health disparities; and 4) continuously engage researchers, educators, and community stakeholders in cooperatively and creatively applying new knowledge to clinical challenges. The authors summarize resources for youth violence prevention education that have been used for training healthcare professionals in a multicultural context.”

*Note: REL Pacific was unable to locate a free link to the full-text version of this resource. Although REL Pacific tries to provide publicly available resources whenever possible, this resource may be of sufficient interest to the reader to warrant finding it through university or public library systems.*

Kraizer, S., Fryer, G., & Witte, S. (1989). Child sexual abuse prevention programs: What makes them effective in protecting children? *Children Today, 18*(5), 23-27. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ399545>.

*From the abstract:* “Child sexual abuse prevention programs have proliferated over the past several years. Many of these program approaches, which include plays, games and videos, are visually appealing and highly entertaining, and parents and teachers have widely embraced them. However, despite the popularity of such programs, little effort has been made to evaluate their effectiveness in changing children's behavior. As a result of participation in a sexual abuse prevention program, has a child's vulnerability to abuse been reduced, for example, or has his or her sense of personal safety been enhanced?”

Early childhood educators, parents and others involved in selecting and conducting child sexual abuse prevention programs should also be concerned about such questions as: • Is there a measurable difference in the ability to demonstrate prevention skills between children who have been exposed to previous prevention efforts and those who have not? • Are communities, feeling confident that they have addressed the issue of child abuse, making any significant contribution to the personal safety of their children? • What elements of programming are responsible for producing the desired prevention skills? • Is it necessary to give children explicit information about child abuse in order to achieve the desired level of prevention? • Does the program have negative side effects--such as fear or anxiety--of which we remain unaware? • At what age do children learn prevention skills most effectively?"

*Note: REL Pacific was unable to locate a free link to the full-text version of this resource. Although REL Pacific tries to provide publicly available resources whenever possible, this resource may be of sufficient interest to the reader to warrant finding it through university or public library systems.*

Leff, S., Power, T., Manz, P., Costigan, T.E., & Nabors, L. (2001). School-based aggression prevention programs for young children: Current status and implications for violence prevention. *School Psychology Review*, 30(3), 344-362. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ667514>.

*From the abstract:* "There is a growing consensus that school psychologists, researchers, and policy makers need to work together to define policies and promote procedures for keeping schools safe for young children. This article advocates for the need design, evaluate, and implement school-based prevention programs that focus upon decreasing the daily aggression and victimization that occur in elementary school across the nation. Not only do these daily occurrences of aggression affect young children's school and social adjustment in elementary school, but they also have the potential to result in more serious outbreaks of school violence in the future. Five model programs are reviewed in an effort to define best practices in aggression prevention programming and to outline future directions for the field. The importance of defining school aggression broadly, designing comprehensive prevention and intervention services, utilizing culturally sensitive outcome measures across informants and important school contexts, and providing empirical support to document program efficacy are discussed in detail. In addition, policy implications and the key role that school psychologists play in the challenge to reduce aggression is highlighted."

*Note: REL Pacific was unable to locate a free link to the full-text version of this resource. Although REL Pacific tries to provide publicly available resources whenever possible, this resource may be of sufficient interest to the reader to warrant finding it through university or public library systems.*

Park-Higgerson, H.K., Perumean-Chaney, S., Bartolucci, A., Grimley, D., & Singh, K.P. (2008). The evaluation of school-based violence prevention programs: A meta-analysis. *Journal of School Health*, 78(9), 465-479. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ812035>.

*From the abstract:* “Youth violence and related aggressive behaviors have become serious public health issues with physical, economic, social, and psychological impacts and consequences. This study identified and evaluated the characteristics of successful school-based violence prevention programs. Twenty-six randomized controlled trial (RCT), school-based studies that were designed to reduce externalizing, aggressive, and violent behavior between the 1st and 11th grades were analyzed for assessing the effects of 5 program characteristics by comparing results of intervention groups to control groups (no intervention) after intervention using a meta-analysis. Electronic databases and bibliographies were systematically searched, and a standardized mean difference was used for analysis. There was no significant difference between interventions, although programs that used non-theory-based interventions, focused on at-risk and older children, and employed intervention specialists had slightly stronger effects in reducing aggression and violence. Interventions using a single approach had a mild positive effect on decreasing aggressive and violent behavior (effect size = -0.15, 95% CI = -0.29 to -0.02,  $p = .03$ ). Unlike previous individual study findings, this meta-analysis did not find any differential effects for 4 of the 5 program characteristics. In addition, the significant effect noted was contrary to expectation, exemplifying the complexity of identifying effective program strategies. This study adds to the current literature by assessing the program characteristics of RCT studies in an effort to determine what factors may affect school-based violence prevention program success.”

Peterson, R.L. & Skiba, R. (2000). Creating school climates that prevent school violence. *Social Studies*, 44(3), 122-129. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ649706>.

*From the abstract:* “Many programs whose purpose is to prevent violence or inappropriate behavior are also programs that might prevent disaffection, dropping out of school, drug and alcohol abuse, and poor academic performance. In other words, many prevention-oriented interventions are interventions that are not specific to violence or behavior and that address universals that affect a variety of possible negative outcomes related to schooling. In this article, we will identify and discuss some of the intervention options that are intended to prevent violence and inappropriate behavior in school by directly or indirectly affecting the social climate of the school.”

Scholes, L, Jones, C., Stieler-Hunt, C. Rolfe, B., & Pozzebon, K. (2012). The teachers’ role in child sexual abuse prevention programs: Implications for teacher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(11), 1-29. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ999393>.

*From the abstract:* “In response to the diverse number of child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention programs currently implemented in school contexts, this paper examines key considerations for selecting such initiatives and the multiplicity of understandings required to inform facilitation of contextually relevant prevention curriculum. First, the paper examines concerns about the lack of explicit professional development for educators concerning child protection, and the need to develop understandings about prevention program best practices within pre-service and in-service training. Second, drawing on a systematic review of literature, the paper identifies five key considerations

to inform teachers' selection and facilitation of CSA prevention curriculum in school contexts. Third, the paper advances calls by Wurtele (2009) and presents CSA prevention "best practices" overview and "model programs" list for professionals such as teachers. (Contains 1 table.)”

Topping, K. & Barron, I.G. (2009). School-based child sexual abuse prevention programs: A review of effectiveness. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 431-463. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ879157>.

*From the abstract:* “In this systematic and critical review of purely school-based child sexual abuse prevention program efficacy studies, 22 studies meeting the inclusion criteria differed by target population, program implementation, and evaluation methodology. Measured outcomes for children included knowledge, skills, emotion, risk perception, touch discrimination, reported response to actual threat or abuse, disclosure, maintenance of gains, and negative effects. Many studies had methodological limitations (e.g., sampling problems, lack of adequate control groups, lack of reliable and valid measures). However, most investigators claimed that their results showed significant impact in primary prevention (increasing all children’s knowledge or awareness and/or abuse prevention skills). There was little evidence of change in disclosure. There was limited follow-up evidence of actual use and effectiveness of prevention skills, and the evidence for maintenance of gains was mixed. Several programs reported some negative effects. Very few studies reported implementation fidelity data, and no study reported cost-effectiveness. Implications for future research, policy, and practice are outlined.”

Wilson, H.W. (2017). Development of sexual risk in minority youth: Risk and protective factors in early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 38(1), 5-11. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0272431617738365>.

*From the abstract:* “The current special issue highlights a number of culturally relevant variables that relate to sexual risk in early adolescents from minority race or ethnic backgrounds. Each of the four studies in this issue presents a unique perspective on factors that relate to increased risk or resilience in minority early adolescents. Therefore, findings reported in this special issue shed light on potential intervention strategies to deter the development of sexual risk in minority youth. The articles presented suggest a need for increased attention to early adolescence as a window of opportunity for preventing sexual risk in minority teens. Effective interventions during the transition from middle to high school, when dating and sexual interests emerge for most youth, have the potential to cultivate healthy relationships and prevent the development of health compromising sexual behaviors.”

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## **Additional Organizations to Consult**

National Exploration of Emotional/Behavioral Detection in School Screening (NEEDs2) - <https://needs2.education.uconn.edu/>

*From the website:* “The National Exploration of Emotional/Behavioral Detection in School Screening (NEEDs2) project aims to understand if and how social, emotional, and behavioral screeners are being used in schools, and what factors influence use. This project was funded by the National Center for Education Research, Institute of Education Sciences, within the social and behavioral context for academic learning portfolio (R305A140543).”

## **Methods**

### **Keywords and Search Strings**

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

“Curriculum” and “prevention” and “violence” not “dissertations & theses”

“Curriculum” and “prevention” and “violence” and “pacific” not “dissertations & theses”

“Evaluating” and “curriculum” and “sexual abuse” not “dissertations & theses”

“Pacific” and “preventing violence” not “dissertations & theses”

“Evaluating” and “curriculum” and “violence prevention” not “dissertations & theses”

“Pacific” and “curriculum” and “violence prevention” not “dissertations & theses”

“School curriculum evaluation for preventing violence” not “dissertations & theses”

### **Databases and Resources**

We searched ERIC, a free online library of over 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences, for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database Google Scholar, ProQuest and Google.

### **Reference Search and Selection Criteria**

REL Pacific searched ERIC and other academic journal databases for studies that were published in English-language peer-reviewed research journals within the last 30 years, given the longitudinal nature of research related to this topic. REL Pacific prioritized documents that are accessible online and publicly available, and prioritized references that provide practical information based on peer-reviewed research for this Ask A REL requestor. Methodological priorities and considerations were given to descriptive data analyses and literature reviews, with

special consideration given to a target population of native, Pacific, marginalized, and minority populations. Limitations to findings included a lack of region-specific resources, as REL Pacific first considers studies conducted in the Pacific region or similar contexts, but also includes research with generalizable findings.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educational stakeholders in the Pacific Region (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Pacific) at McREL International. This memorandum was prepared by REL Pacific under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-17-C-0010, administered by McREL International. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.