Literature Review to Support the Restorative Action Program Outcome Evaluation

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this review was to explore the literature to identify any meaningful research findings that can help inform and guide the outcome evaluation of the Restorative Action Program (RAP). Studies were drawn from several fields of research in order to identify literature relevant to programs such as RAP (i.e., addressing issues of conflict, violence, and bullying through a focus on youth development and positive school environment), particularly in terms of how such programs are designed and how they are evaluated. Findings were organized into five general sections, summarized below.

Terms and Concepts

- There was a substantial body of research available on school-based interventions that address conflict, violence, and bullying. However, relatively few studies addressed programs specific to high school settings and overall there was a lack of high-quality evaluation research.

- Current trends in the research support the development and use of programs that focus on improving overall school climate in addition to reducing negative behaviour (e.g., conflict, bullying and violence), and programs which address the whole school in comprehensive, multi-component approaches, as RAP does.

- In general, there was evidence to support the potential effectiveness of such programs, although more research is needed to establish which approaches are most effective and under what conditions.

Theoretical Frameworks

- Four major theoretical frameworks were identified that were relevant to RAP: *School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports* (SWPBIS), *Social and Emotional Learning* (SEL), *Positive Youth Development* (PYD), and *Restorative Practices* (RP).

- The SWPBIS and SEL models were highly structured and well-defined in their elements, and served as examples of how frameworks can be established and disseminated, particularly in their use of evidence-based practices and highly integrated program monitoring.

- The PYD and RP frameworks were the most similar to RAP and in combination best described RAP's own theoretical model. PYD is the framework from which the 40 Developmental Assets model has been derived. The RP framework describes the application of restorative justice principles in education settings rather than criminal justice and correctional settings. Both frameworks have received evaluation support for their effectiveness, although the RP framework is relatively new and under-researched.

Selected Programs

- Three programs were highlighted because they offered detailed overviews of their processes, successes, and challenges. The programs differed considerably from each and from RAP, but each fell under at least one of the frameworks identified above.

- Each program also represented a different approach to intervention structure: The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* incorporated a strong dissemination model that maximized program fidelity across many implementation sites. The *Making the Smart Choice* program used a detailed program manual to deliver consistent core content on social and emotional skills to participating youth. The *Student Support System* employed a structured but flexible intervention and tracking process to address bullying incidents consistently and effectively throughout the school.

- It is not necessary for RAP to imitate other programs, but it would be valuable for RAP and its processes to be defined and described with a similar level of clarity and detail. This would facilitate both strong and consistent implementation of the program which in turn increases the likelihood that the program will be effective.

Overarching Themes

- The most significant overarching theme throughout the literature was implementation, including its contribution to successful outcomes, barriers to strong implementation, and recommendations to improve implementation quality.

- Key recommendations for strong implementation were enhancing buy-in from all stakeholders, defining and communicating program components and goals clearly, and using data to plan and monitor implementation; of these, defining components and goals clearly is the area where RAP has the greatest room for improvement (see Camman & Wormith, 2014).

- Other overarching themes were sustainability and dissemination, though these received less attention in the literature and were closely linked with effective implementation.

Evaluation Considerations

- Evaluation study designs varied widely, depending on the nature of the program, the context in which it was implemented, the specific evaluation question, and the logistical constraints of the situation.

- Because each design and type of measure has limitations, complete and comprehensive evaluation requires using multiple method assessing different outcomes over several evaluation studies.

- Overall, based on the literature, RAP's present evaluation strategy and program direction are appropriate.

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1. Introduction and Overview

1.1 Project Rationale

The purpose of this review was to explore the literature to identify any meaningful research findings that can help inform and guide the outcome evaluation of the Restorative Action Program (RAP).

Several questions framed this review process:

1. What other programs exist that are comparable to RAP in their aims and approaches?
2. Have comparable programs achieved success in their goals?
3. What methods have these programs used to demonstrate their success?
4. What other lessons can be gathered from the literature that can inform RAP's development and evaluation?

Through the review process, a large number of articles and reports were identified which provided answers to each of these questions. While RAP is unique in the exact composition of its components and delivery method, it is far from alone in its efforts to improve schools and communities by improving youth.

The completion of this review fulfills one of the recommendations from the original evaluability assessment (Camman & Wormith, 2011), which was to situate RAP within a larger context of similar programming and initiatives. The intention of consolidating this knowledge in this report is to further facilitate connections between RAP and other practitioners, researchers, advocates and interested parties, both for RAP's benefit and for the benefit of the wider community.

1.2 Scope

RAP exists at the intersection of a number of well-developed and comprehensive fields of study, including violence prevention, conflict resolution, bullying prevention, youth development, each with its own history and growing body of research literature. To generate a review that would be timely and manageable in scale, it was necessary to impose limits on the scope of the review.

Specifically, articles were selected when they met the following criteria:

- Retrieved from an academic peer-reviewed source, or reputable government organization, NGO, or evaluation company

- Published within the last ten years (2004 and later, with exceptions for seminal reports of significant relevance and importance)
- Available online and in English
- Pertained to programs which are similar in design and operation to RAP, and therefore:
    - service adolescent youth (ages 12 to 18);
    - operate primarily in school settings (compared to programs delivered primarily in the community, home, justice system, or other setting);
    - target a range of conflict, bullying and/or violence prevention/reduction outcomes (compared to programs with an exclusive focus on one issue, such as dating violence or weapon-carrying);
    - adhere to positive, strengths-based practices (compared to punitive or deficit-focused practices);
    - employ comprehensive/whole-school/multi-component approaches (compared to single-component/single-intervention methods)
- Preference was also given to literature which pertained to Canada or the US, or, other countries of similar political, demographic, economic, and social profile (i.e., Australia, New Zealand, the UK, etc.).

The goal of the screening process was to identify and access high quality literature on programs which share a relatively similar programmatic and operational context with RAP[1] in order to facilitate meaningful comparisons and glean information directly applicable to RAP's needs.

Due to the changing social context of youth, it is important that even established programs and frameworks have been updated and kept current (Smith, 2011), hence the focus on more recent publications. Programs that have been implemented in markedly different cultural and social contexts, are geared toward a significantly different population (e.g., elementary school children), or are significantly different in their design (e.g., a single intervention workshop) are questionable in their generalizability to the RAP context. The factors and processes which impact these programs may not be the same as those which impact RAP, and therefore only programs which had some reasonable basis for comparison were included.

[1] For more information on RAP's organizational structure and context, please refer to previous evaluation reports (Camman & Wormith, 2011, 2013, 2014).

In addition to program-specific literature, articles were also retained when they discussed general issues of conflict, violence, bullying, and youth development within high schools, or methodological issues with regard to the evaluation and measurement of school-based programming.

1.3 Search Method

Articles were drawn from a wide range of sources, including scholarly databases, search engines, and government and organizational websites, using a systematic process. A detailed overview of the search process, including key words, is available in Appendix A. A total of 178 articles were identified and, of these, 86 were included in this literature review, based on the inclusion criteria indicated in the previous section.

1.4 Analysis and Findings

Each of the included articles was reviewed and analyzed for themes in relation to the research questions outlined above in a systematic and iterative process (Braun & Clark, 2006). These individual findings were synthesized into larger themes and organized for presentation in this report. The report itself is structured as follows:

1. **Terms and Concepts** – an introduction to the state of the research followed by an overview of the relevant terms and concepts and their supporting literature, including reference to the Canadian-specific context.
2. **Theoretical Frameworks** – overviews of the key frameworks, models, and theoretical perspectives relevant to RAP.
3. **Selected Programs** – in-depth summaries of specific interventions with similar approaches to RAP.
4. **Overarching Themes** – discussion of overarching themes not specific to a single framework or program, including issues of implementation, sustainability, and dissemination.
5. **Evaluation Considerations** – review of findings specific to program evaluation, particularly outcome evaluation, such as recommendations for study design, data collection, and future directions.

Each section contains specific comparisons to RAP and recommendations for consideration by the RAP Board of Directors.

2. Restorative Action Program Review

Prior to reviewing the literature, a brief review of RAP's structure and goals (for full program theory overview, see Appendix B; adapted from Camman & Wormith, 2011, 2013, 2014):

- RAP's service delivery model is known as 'Prevention-Intervention-Reconnection' or PIR, which reflects RAP's comprehensive and multi-component approach to addressing conflict in schools.
- RAP services are intended to prevent conflict from occurring or escalating, intervene when conflicts occur or escalate, and help students reconnect and address the aftermath of a conflict.
- RAP workers are trained staff who provide dedicated support to youth within selected schools (with one exception, each RAP worker services a single school).
- RAP workers collaborate with administrative, teaching, and other school staff as well as external partners in health, justice, and in the community generally to deliver programming to youth.
- Outside of the school, RAP workers are supported by an Executive Director and Board of Directors which includes representatives from the community, the school divisions, and funders.
- Students may be referred to RAP workers (or may refer themselves) for one-on-one support in dealing with issues related to conflict, including bullying and violence.
- RAP workers are also trained to provide conflict mediation services and can refer youth to other services as needed (e.g., mental health or addiction services).
- RAP workers also engage in an array of prevention-oriented activities, including presentations and workshops, group programming, and events aimed at increasing knowledge and skills related to conflict and healthy relationships, providing leaderships and personal development opportunities, and promoting a positive school environment (see Figure 2.1 for RAP's program logic model).
- The primary goals of RAP are to help students address and prevent conflict more constructively, develop assets in the form of skills and leadership traits, receive leadership opportunities, develop healthier relationships, and stay in school.
- The ultimate goals of RAP are for the school environment to be safer and more positive overall and for students to become good citizens.

- The specific skill sets and leadership traits targeted by RAP are (see Appendix C for definitions):

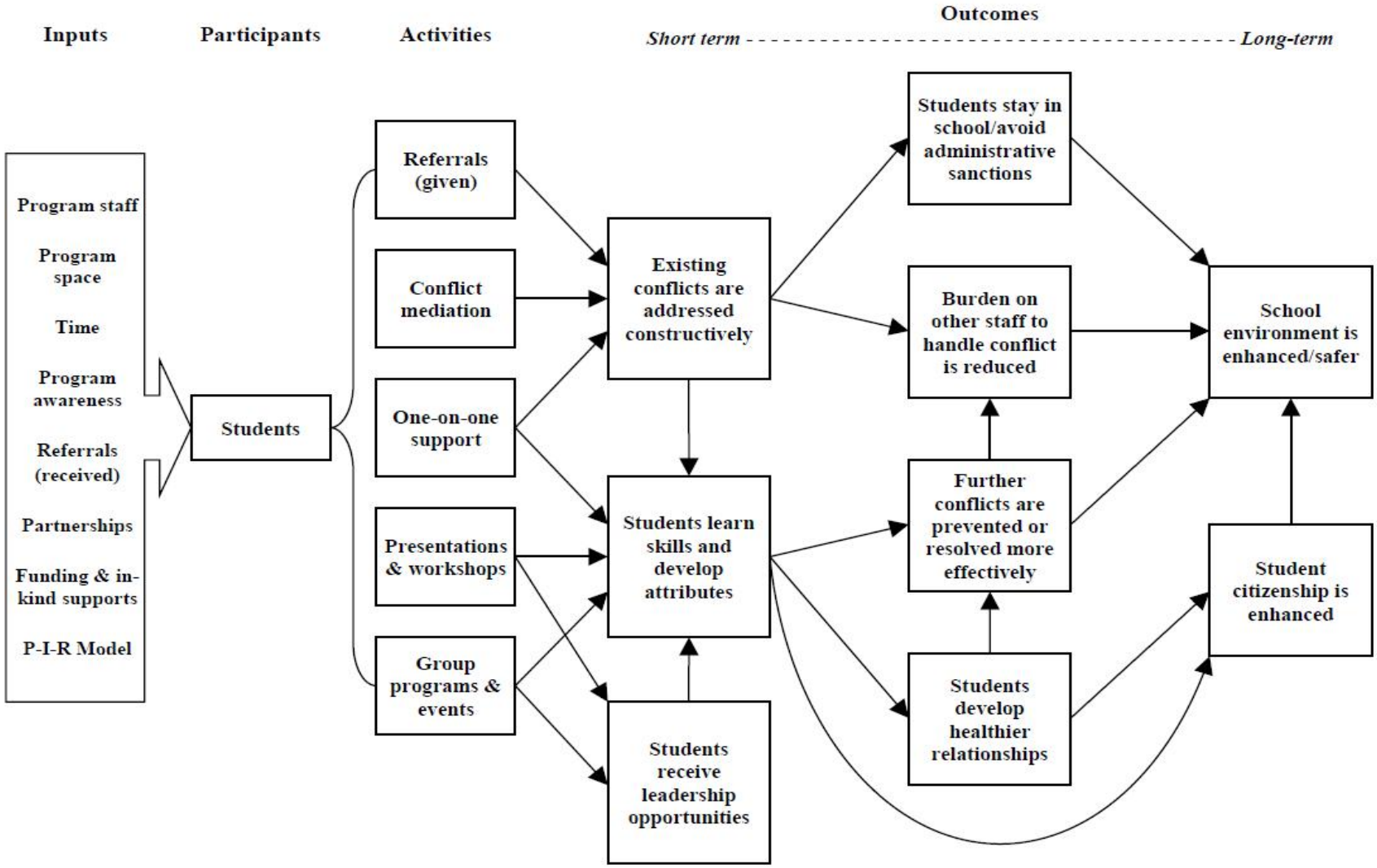
Skills	**Leadership Traits**	
• Communication	• Belonging	• Responsibility
• Handling conflict	• Empathy	• Self-awareness
• Healthy personal choices	• Empowerment	• Self-esteem
• Healthy relationships	• Engagement	• Sense of safety
• Positive school environment	• Respect for others	• Trust

- RAP is presently being prepared for outcome evaluation as part of a long-term evaluation strategy. Past phases of this strategy have included evaluability assessment (Camman & Wormith, 2011), the development of a program performance monitoring system (Camman & Wormith, 2013), and preliminary implementation assessment of the performance monitoring system and the program itself, as well as outcome evaluation planning (Camman & Wormith, 2014).

- RAP was established in 2003 and, as of the publication of this report, operates in 9 secondary schools in Saskatoon, SK.

- RAP is supported by a school-community partnership between the Rotary Clubs of Saskatoon, the Greater Saskatoon Public School Division, and the Saskatoon Public School Division.

Figure 2.1. RAP program logic model.



(Camman & Wormith, 2013)

3. Terms and Concepts

3.1 State of the Research

As stated in the introduction, there is a great deal of literature available in each of the distinct areas of research covered by this review (i.e., bullying prevention, school violence prevention, conflict resolution, and promotion of youth well-being). However, there are also many limitations to the existing research, particularly as it applies to the needs of this review.

In general, there has lately been an increasing focus on research-supported interventions and the use of systematic data collection to evaluation programs, both in the US and in Canada (Greenberg et al., 2003; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014). However, there are also many challenges to conducting high quality research in this area and maintaining currency in the literature. Programs must continue to adapt to changing circumstances, and therefore require continuous re-evaluation (Smith, 2011). School-based programs are also developed and implemented in unique environments, and the heterogeneity across school settings complicates the generalizing of findings across sites (Kutcher & Wei, 2012). Thus even with a large pool of available literature, there is an on-going need for more and better research.

Several specific concerns about the state of school-based intervention research were raised in the literature and should contextualize interpretations of this report and its findings:

- **Lack of high quality outcome research:** Many authors, particularly those conducting systematic reviews or meta-analyses, highlighted the fact that there is an insufficient number of appropriately-designed and well-conducted evaluation research (Benne & Garrard, 2003; Durlak et al., 2007; Garrard & Lipsey, 2007; Massey, Armstrong, Boroughs, Henson & McCash, 2005; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008; Mytton, DiGuiseppi, Gough, Taylor & Logan, 2006; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). 'High quality' research refers to studies which use strong evaluation designs, valid and appropriate data collection techniques, and which report their findings in sufficient detail to be useful and informative. This is particularly significant for meta-analytic studies which require large numbers of well-conducted studies in order to statistically compare effect sizes to determine whether a program's effects are likely to be genuine and replicable and to more accurately assess the likely magnitude of the program's impact across different implementations.

- **Lack of 'real world' research.** Frequently the outcome studies that are reported in the literature represent high-quality implementations done as demonstration projects (Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). While these evaluations are useful for showing what a program is capable of under ideal circumstances, often with significant support from the researcher or intervention designer, they do not necessarily accurately capture how the program will perform under normal circumstances or over the long-term and therefore may be misleading.

  It can also often be the case that well-reported interventions are more likely to be 'top-down' initiatives, where the program has been commissioned and designed by politicians and academics with the intention of widespread dissemination, compared to 'bottom-up' interventions developed by communities in response to their own local needs (Astor, Meyer, Benbenishty, Marachi & Rosemond, 2005; Smith, 2011). Community-driven grassroots initiatives may have less capacity for or interest in pursuing widespread dissemination or may not be in a position to conduct rigorous outcome evaluation (Massey, Boroughs & Armstrong, 2007), but these types of programs also have important insights to contribute, especially given their under-representation in the literature.

- **Lack of high school-specific research.** Of particular concern to this review is the relative lack of published research on interventions designed to be implemented at the high school or secondary school level. Several published meta-analyses identified few high school-based programs to include, often less than 10% or as few as 2 or 3 programs total, particularly where focusing on more recent program developments (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011, Hahn et al., 2007; Limbos et al., 2008; Merrell et al., 2008), and the current review process itself returned relatively fewer high school-based programs compared to other school settings. This is a noted challenge in the area, and is particularly problematic because programs such as these are developmentally-sensitive and interventions which have been supported for use with younger children may be inappropriate for use with older adolescents (Farrell, Meyer, Kung & Sullivan, 2001; National Crime Prevention Centre, 2011).

- **Lack of follow-up research.** A more minor issue, but it was noted by some researchers that there most published outcome evaluations do not include follow-up data (Durlak et al., 2007, 2011; Mytton et al., 2006). This reflects the above comment on the overall lack of high quality evaluations, as including follow-up measures is a standard of good study design to ensure program effects are persistent over time and to better understand long-term impacts of the intervention on students.

- **Lack of comparative evaluation of program components.** Also related to lack of high quality study designs, relatively few multi-component interventions have been evaluated in sufficient detail to report program effects relative to specific components of the program (James et al., 2006). This is important for determining which specific elements of the program are contributing to the program success (and which may need to be removed or adapted) as well the extent to which contextual non-programmatic features may also contribute (e.g., the presence of a particular teacher, the influence of existing school policies or social norms among the students), although in practice such complex and specific evaluations can be difficult to undertake.
- **Lack of standardized terminology and fragmented research efforts.** A final difficulty, especially with regard to literature reviews, is the lack of a common language or accepted terminology and definitions for key concepts across (or sometimes within) different research areas (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). This lack of common and well-established terms can lead to the fragmentation of the research base, where researchers may be studying and reporting on similar programs but are unaware of the relevant work being conducted elsewhere due to the different terminology being used. While an effort was made in this review to search based on a wide range of keywords, it is possible that some relevant articles were not retrieved due to this. In other cases, the same terminology may be used to describe different things, such as different definitions of 'bullying' (Swearer, Espelege, Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2010) or 'thriving' (Benson & Scales, 2010), which can lead to confusion and inappropriate comparisons.

While it is important to be mindful of these challenges in the state of the literature, they also present several positive opportunities. The evaluation of RAP as a community-designed and community-driven program for high school-aged youth will clearly be an asset to the existing research. This literature review has also identified much relevant terminology within the literature with which to describe RAP in order to facilitate further research connections. Finally, where evidence for program impact appears to be lacking, this is likely due more to the lack of research available rather than the innate intractability of the issues being targeted.

The remainder of this section will review the literature around general concepts relevant to RAP. Specifically, the constructs of conflict, school violence, bullying, school climate, and whole-school/multi-component approaches will be summarized along with relevant empirical findings.[2]

[2] Another key concept related to RAP is 'developmental assets', but this concept will discussed in relation to the specific 'Positive Youth Development' framework included in the next section.

3.2 Conflict

Within the literature, "conflict" is a broad term, as aptly demonstrated during the development of the RAP program monitoring system, which at one point yielded such subcategories for the general category of "Interpersonal Conflict" as "arguing/drama/not getting along", "break-ups", "poor communication", "teasing/rumours/gossip" in addition to the standard categories for "harassment", "intimidation", "discrimination", "bullying", "physical violence", and so forth (Camman & Wormith, 2014). Qualitative research conducted with high school youth found that the differences between different types of conflict can be as subtle as the term is broad. For example, conflicts among friends were defined as 'fights', and include disagreements, misunderstandings, and miscommunications resulting in hurt and angry feelings. These were seen as rarely leading to physical violence, but could involve indirect verbal and social aggression (e.g., talking behind each other's back; Allen, 2015). Moreover, the concept of 'interpersonal drama' emerged as its own unique phenomenon, overlapping with but distinct from conflict, bullying, and aggression.

Empirical support for conflict reduction/prevention programs

Due to the broadness of the term and its overlap with more specific categories of interest, such as "bullying" or "violence", it was challenging to identify and compare different conflict-oriented programs and interventions, as few were specifically defined that way. However, there is a body of literature around conflict resolution education (CRE) programs. These are interventions such as skills instruction, peer mediation, and embedded curriculum components (where skills, strategies, and concepts are incorporated directly into classroom instruction) where the primary goal is to teach students to manage and reduce their levels of conflict more effectively through communication, problem-solving, perspective-taking, and respect (Garrard & Lipsey, 2007). These are all concepts that are comparable to RAP's approach to conflict reduction, although RAP's approach is more comprehensive than pure conflict resolution education, including an emphasis on general youth development.

A meta-analysis of CRE programs has been conducted, which included 11 interventions directed specifically toward youth ages 14 to 17 (Garrard & Lipsey, 2007). This study found substantial positive effects of CRE interventions on reducing problem behaviour and fighting for this age group (combined effect size of .40 when controlling for methodological confounds). One interesting finding was that the specific format of the programming (e.g., peer mediation vs. skills instruction) did not moderate these effects, but implementation quality did. In other words, good program delivery mattered more than how the program itself was constructed. The program effects were also largest for the older

youths than the younger students, indicating that high school may be an ideal site for such interventions.

3.3 Violence

Research on school violence has proliferated rapidly in the last three decades (Furlong, Morrison, Cornell & Skiba, 2004). Preventing youth violence is seen as important not only to benefit and protect youth, but also to reduce violence in society as a whole and the likelihood of adult violence (Hahn et al., 2007).

School violence is the result of a complex and dynamic set of factors (Farmer, Farmer, Estell & Hutchins, 2007) and it can be difficult to predict what kinds of violent behaviours youth will engage in and which they will not (Sullivan, Childs & O'Connell, 2010). While fatal incidents of violence in school are rare, non-fatal forms of violence, including physical fights, weapon carrying, threats, and injury, are still of concern, especially given their impact not only on the youth directly involved, but the entire school climate (Hahn et al., 2007). However, it should also be noted that levels of school violence appear to be decreasing in both Canada and the US, including as it pertains to weapon carrying, physical fights, and gang activity (Astor et al., 2005; Freeman et al., 2011). Nevertheless, violence at any frequency remains a significant concern for many.

Empirical support for violence reduction/ prevention programs

Four recent comprehensive studies were identified that provided empirical support for programs targeting school violence, including one systematic review (exhaustive summary of available research), two meta-analyses, and one Cochrane review (systematic review and meta-analysis of especially high methodological rigour).

- In their systematic review, Limbos and colleagues (2008) looked at 41 studies of interventions to prevent youth violence. However, only two interventions pertained to high school youth and neither was found to be effective.
- In contrast, Hahn and colleagues (2007) included four high school programs in their meta-analysis of universal school-based violence prevention programs (including those focused on general violence, dating violence, and bullying), and found program effects to be promising (29% reduction in violence behaviour for high school students, compared to 18.8% for elementary students and 7.3% for middle-school children). The small sample of high school studies included in this analysis may mean this finding is unreliable, however.
- Indeed, Wilson & Lipsey (2007), in an especially large meta-analysis of 249 universal school-based psychosocial programs for reducing aggression and

disruptive behaviour (50 of which were in high schools) over the last sixty years, reported that while overall all programs were effective, high school programs were less effective than those for younger students, contrasting the findings above.

- Finally, the Cochrane review, which included only high quality randomized control trial studies (including twelve for youth ages 12 and up) of non-universal/targeted interventions focused on reducing aggression, violence, bullying, conflict, anger, or behaviours associated with aggressive behavioural disorders (Mytton et al., 2006), found a moderately beneficial impact of intervention programs overall for all age groups from primary to secondary school and a slight advantage for programs focused on relationship and social skills over programs focused on self-control and conflict management.

In general, there is reasonable evidence to suggest that some interventions are capable of producing reductions in violent behaviours in school, though it appears that findings are highly variable and it is unclear as to what specific factors make these programs successful.

3.4 Bullying

Relative to the previous two concepts, bullying has received a much more detailed and extensive treatment in the literature, possibly because it represents a more specific phenomenon. There was strong concurrence around the fundamental definition of bullying as referring to acts of repeated aggression occurring within a context of power imbalance where the bully has greater social power than their victim (e.g., Allen, 2009; Freeman et al., 2011; Public Safety Canada, 2008; Olweus & Limber, 2010; Rigby, 2004; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). This behaviour was generally assumed to occur exclusively between peers, rather than between students and adults, where it might instead be characterized simply as abuse. Indeed, one report offered the term "peer abuse" as an alternative term (Olweus & Limber, 2010). It was also recognized that bullying can take a wide array of forms, including physical, verbal, relational, direct, and indirect; can occur on a continuum of severity; and bullies can act alone or as part of a group of students (Freeman et al., 2011; Nitza, 2009; Rigby, 2004).

It is worth noting that students themselves may have somewhat different definitions of bullying than researchers or other adults do. Allen (2009) conducted a qualitative study with students in one high school and found that they tended to prioritize severity of harm when defining bullying rather than characteristic features of bullying. Students also tended to assume bullying required overt physical aggression (e.g., stereotypical representations of a kid getting beaten up for their lunch money), though on reflection they accepted that

emotional forms of bullying could also occur. While bullying is relatively well-defined in the literature, it is less so in its common usage. It should not be assumed that everyone who has contact with a program such as RAP is operating with the same definition and efforts should be made to clarify terminology when necessary.

Bullying prevalence

Studies of bullying prevalence suggest that a relatively small proportion of students either engage in or experience bullying on a regular basis. The most recent Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children report, published by the Public Health Agency of Canada, reports findings from their 2010 data collection cycle, including on the prevalence of and consequences of bullying on Canadian youth aged 11 to 15 (Freeman et al., 2011). (Information on older youth was not available.)

Significant findings from this report included:

- The proportion of students reporting being bullied slightly increased between 2002 and 2010 (20% to 22%), and the proportion of students reporting being a bully decreased (15% to 12%) over the same time period
- A larger proportion of students than either of these groups (~40%) reported both engaging in bullying and being bullied and this proportion has remained stable
- A relatively small percentage of students (8% or less, depending on grade) reported being bullied once a week or more; an even smaller proportion (4% or less) reported engaging in bullying with that frequency
- Rates of reported victimization decreased from Grade 6 to Grade 10 while rates of reported bullying increase over the same time period
- Teasing and social exclusion were the most common forms of bullying; for girls, this type of bullying increased with age while for boys it decreased
- Rates of electronically-mediated bullying (i.e., "cyberbullying") were relatively low (less than 20%) and did not change across grade level
- Bullying victimization is associated with greater emotional problems
- Being a bully is associated with greater behavioural problems

Overall these findings suggest that bullying is a persistent issue within Canadian schools for a substantial minority of students, at least for younger students, though the decreases over grade level in most reported bullying experiences is positive. A longitudinal study of bullying prevalence in Australia came to similar conclusions, but also found that

bullying tended to spike during the transition from primary to secondary school (Lester, Cross, Dooley & Shaw, 2013), as this represented a time of social upheaval and vulnerability for many students. This transitional spike has also been referenced elsewhere (Rigby, 2004), but was not evident in the Canadian research, though it does resonate with the findings from the RAP program monitoring that Grade 9 and 10 students tend to be especially in need of services and that their program involvement typically declines over grade levels (Camman & Wormith, 2013, 2014). Other research has also concurred with the potentially long-term detrimental impacts of bullying on youth (e.g., Lester et al., 2011; Nitza, 2009; Smith, 2011).

Causes of bullying

Bullying has been attributed to a wide range of causes, including individual differences, such as youths' propensities toward seeking and misusing social power over others (Rigby, 2004) as well as features that make some youth more desirable 'targets' (e.g., stigmatized physical characteristics, including disabilities; marginalized race, religion or sexual orientation; lack of social competence; deLara, 2008; Olweus & Limber, 2010; Rigby, 2004). Bullying has also been characterized as resulting from peer dynamics and group processes that support abusive social norms, such as when a group of friends decide to pick on a vulnerable student (Nitza, 2009; Rigby, 2004). Community/environmental dynamics, which includes school connectedness and school climate, and even larger sociocultural factors, such as widespread inequality between social groups, have also been implicated as contributing to patterns of bullying (Rigby, 2004). Some of these causes may also have reciprocal reinforcing relationships with bullying. In one longitudinal study, students who were more isolated early on were more likely to be bullied and as a consequence became more isolated and more vulnerable to bullying (Lester et al., 2013).

Each of these supposed causes of bullying has some supporting evidence from the literature but none entirely explains all of the available data, suggesting that bullying has many concurrent causes and that intervention strategies should strive to be as comprehensive as possible (Rigby, 2004). Fortunately, it has also been found that some of these causes are interrelated, such as the role of improving peer dynamics in improving overall school community dynamics and vice versa (Nitza, 2009). Therefore, even bullying interventions which only address one cause directly may still have wider benefits indirectly.

Empirical support for bullying reduction/prevention programs

Bully prevention programs have been a rapidly growing research area since the 1980s, with global recognition of and attention to the issues it presents. Despite this, many of the meta-analyses that have been conducted provide varying results, and there is a lack

of conclusive knowledge about what specific factors make some programs more effective than others (Smith, 2011).

Four recent meta-analyses were included in this review.

- Ferguson, Miguel, Kilburn, and Sanchez (2007) looked at 45 recent school-based bullying interventions, of which five took place in high schools. The effect size for the high school programs was significant but small (*r*=01.13) and comparable to the overall effect for all schools (r=0.12), indicating a small positive benefit for students. This study also reported that programs were more beneficial for students identified as being at high risk for bullying or otherwise aggressive behaviour.
- Merrell and colleagues (2008) included 16 studies of K-12 anti-bullying initiatives, only two of which provided a breakdown by grade, and found that most programs had negligible effects and a small number had negative effects (possibly an ironic effect of increased reporting following awareness-raising interventions). Where positive effects were found, they appeared to be related to students' knowledge, attitudes, skills and self-esteem, but less so to their actual behaviour.
- More recently and optimistically, Ttofi and Farrington (2011), in reviewing 44 studies of varying evaluation designs for K-12 anti-bullying programs, found that there was an overall reduction in bullying of 20-23% and in victimization of 17-20% following intervention. While it was not reported how many high school students specifically were included in these results, overall stronger effect sizes were associated with programs for older youth (11 and up).
- Finally, a final meta-analysis specifically examined the impact of programming on bystander intervention by peers in bullying situations (Polanin, Espelege & Pigott, 2012). While only 11 eligible studies were identified, four of which referred to high school-based programs, there was a moderate positive effect detected overall in intervention behaviours.

In general, there is some modest evidence from the meta-analytic research for the potential impact of bullying intervention programs at the high school level, but less is known about what specific factors enhance effectiveness and how, if possible, these effects can be improved.

3.5 School Climate

Another key concept with respect to RAP is the notion of 'school climate'. In addition to reducing negative factors in the school community (e.g., conflict, bullying, and violence),

RAP seeks to promote a positive and supportive school environment in its place. This is a recognized construct within the research literature which has been the subject of considerable study and publication, which will be reviewed briefly here.

According to the research, school climate refers to "the shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between students, teachers, and administrators and set the parameters of acceptable behavior and norms for the school" (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam & Johnson, 2014, p. 594). There is no universally accepted set of domains which define school climate, though typically there is an emphasis on safety (physical and emotional, real and perceived), relationships (e.g., students with each other, with teachers and other staff, and with the school generally), and the school's structure, its level of responsiveness to student's needs and presence of clear and fair expectations of behaviour (Bear, Pell & Gaskins, 2014; Bradshaw et al., 2014). Other suggested factors include having good communication, being committed to the success of all students, and being open to parental and community involvement (Zins et al., 2007).

Addressing and improving school climate is a common theme in bullying and violence prevention programming (e.g., Astor et al., 2005; Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Bryant-Edwards & Hetherington, 2002; Nitza, 2009; Zins & Elias, 2007; Zins et al., 2007). Perceptions of the supportiveness of the school environment have been found to predict high school students' willingness to seek help for bullying (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory & Fan, 2010). Students themselves have identified aspects of school climate as playing a significant role in both the occurrence and severity of school violence (Johnson, Burke & Gielen, 2011). Programs which offer alternatives to suspension with the goal of keeping students in school, as RAP does, can be enhanced by also ensuring that the school environment is welcoming and supportive (Drewery, 2014). The Ontario Ministry of Education requires all school boards to conduct school climate surveys using a standardized tool available on their website (Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d.). It has also published a set of guidelines for how to improve school climate, although no evaluation data have been included to support the efficacy of these specific techniques.

Importantly, school climate has also been implicated in reciprocal relationships with other important outcomes. For example, the presence of positive and supportive peer relationships is believed to be both a cause and consequence of positive school climate (Nitza, 2009). Similarly, enhancing students' connectedness with a supportive school environment is another means of reducing their vulnerability to bullying victimization, and reduced victimization can increase their ability to connect (Lester et al., 2013). Training in social and emotional skills has been argued to be facilitated by a positive climate, and students who possess these skills are more likely to contribute to a safe and welcoming environment (Zins et al., 2007). Thus positive school climate, once established, is an

outcome with the potential of contributing to its own sustainability, assuming other factors do not negatively impact it.

One additional consideration relevant to RAP is the additional challenge of addressing school climate in high schools. Larger populations of students and more fragmented experience of having multiple classes with different teachers and combinations of peers can complicate the process of achieving and maintaining a positive school environment (Nitza, 2009).

Empirical support for school climate programming

Durlak and colleagues (2007) conducted a meta-analysis on the success of programs designed to produce systemic organizational changes, including within schools. Of the interventions included, 22 specifically assessed changes in school environments, focusing either on the psychosocial environment of schools or classrooms or on changes in policies and procedures within the classroom. While the sample size was small, the overall impact was significant, showing a moderate positive effect across all types of programs. Thus there is evidence that programs which target outcomes such as school climate can be successful, although due to the complexity of these types of interventions, more research is needed (Durlak et al., 2007).

3.6 Whole-School and Multi-Component Approaches

In addition to its outcomes, RAP can also be classified with respect to its structure. RAP's identified service delivery model is known as 'Prevention-Intervention-Reconnection' or PIR, as discussed in the original evaluability assessment (Camman & Wormith, 2011). This model represents RAP's commitment to providing comprehensive conflict management services, both in the sense of services which are accessible to all youth in the school as well as services which are continuous to students as they deal with challenges. In other words, RAP's design is intended to support students before their challenges become severe (prevention), help them cope with challenges as they occur (intervention), and deal with the aftermath and consequences (reconnection).

This type of approach is consistent with what is described in the literature as whole school or multi-component approach. Traditionally, interventions have been classified along a continuum of what level of service they provide and to whom they provide it, differentiating between 'universal' or primary prevention programs for all youth, 'selective' or secondary prevention programs for at-risk youth, and 'indicated' or tertiary prevention programs for youth who are already persistently engaged in problem behaviours or situations (Farrell et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2014; Swearer et al., 2010; Wilson & Lipsey,

2007). Programs can also be classified by the site of intervention (e.g., family, school, community; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007).

However, increasing in popularity are comprehensive programs, which address more than one level or site of intervention at a time (Greenberg et al., 2003; Farrell et al., 2001). These programs can be known variously as 'multi-component', 'school-wide', or 'whole-school' approaches, though the overlap in these definitions is not exact. For example, a multi-component program might refer to a program which focuses on at-risk youth in school as well as at home (i.e., two components, but one level of intervention). A school-wide intervention may be single-component if it only targets one aspect of the school for change by a single means (e.g., a new discipline policy). However, there is a trend toward programs like RAP, which offer multiple levels of support and intervention throughout the school environment and are integrated with other services, both within and outside the school, including the community (Greenberg et al., 2003).

These types of programs are considered ideal for addressing equally complex issues such as school violence and bullying (Astor et al., 2005; Farmer et al., 2007). Using a whole-school approach in anti-bullying strategies has been specifically advocated by the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) in Canada as a means of addressing environmental and social factors as well as targeted interventions for individuals (NCPC, 2011). Whole-school approaches are also strongly implicated in efforts to improve school climate.

Empirical support for whole school or multi-component approaches

There is minimal evidence to specifically support the efficacy of programs such as these, likely due to the difficulties of evaluating comprehensive and complex interventions of this nature (NCPC, 2011). Some meta-analyses of universal-level programming (i.e., primary prevention for all youth) have identified the potential utility of interventions at this high level (Hahn et al., 2007; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007), although even in this case, one found that at-risk youth still stood to benefit more than low-risk youth (Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). Another meta-analysis indicated that universal programs were less effective for assisting youth in addressing mental illness, attributing this to a lack of direct intervention support (Kutcher & Wei, 2012). Because multi-component programs are by design more complex than single-component approaches, it is possible that weak findings are related more to implementation challenges than potential efficacy (Durlak et al., 2011).

3.7 Canadian Context

For this review, a particular effort was made to assess the state of relevant programming in Canada specifically. Few of the published evaluations identified were conducted in Canadian settings, though these have been noted where they occur. Public

Safety Canada (PSC), the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC), and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) all provided some resources on the state of issues such as bullying and violence among Canadian youth and recommended practices and programs. However, it should be noted that many of the recommended programs and practices, particularly those for bullying, were not designed for high school-aged students. This again reflects the limitations of the available literature.

Provincial and territorial Ministry of Education websites were also reviewed. With the last ten years, the majority of ministries have published a document referencing the importance of and suggested strategies for managing issues such as violence and bullying within schools. For example, recently the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education published their *Saskatchewan Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying* (2013). Their website also references the *Caring & Respectful Schools* conceptual framework, a broad strategy for promoting safe and caring learning environments in Saskatchewan schools (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, n.d.). Similar frameworks are described in Alberta, BC, and Ontario, all emphasizing the need for safe, caring, respectful and supportive school environments (e.g., Alberta Ministry of Education, n.d.; British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d.; Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d.). These frameworks were also accompanied by a number of tools, guides, and other resources geared toward students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members.

The Ontario website is the most comprehensive, going so far as to make available their aggregate suspension and expulsion data from 2003 to 2013 as well as two sets of brief summaries of promising practices and programs to support student success in use throughout the province (present status of these programs is unknown; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, 2012). No well-designed evaluation studies on the impact of these frameworks or specific practices were retrieved from provincial websites, nor were any of the practices identified exactly comparable to RAP's approach of involving a dedicated RAP worker in each school to provide conflict-specific support.

Of all the programming literature reviewed, only one recent paper pertained to the evaluation of a Canadian program. The Secondary Schools Demonstration Project (Wright, John, Livingstone, Shepherd & Duku, 2007) was a set of interventions implemented at two schools in Ontario, with the goal of reducing antisocial behaviour. The interventions were based on social development theory and used a universal prevention approach, making the programming available to all ninth graders. Specific interventions include teaching cooperative learning skills, training teachers in classroom management, and arranging peer tutoring, mentoring, and mediation. Two comparison schools were also included in the evaluation, but overall the majority of findings were small, statistically insignificant, and in some cases showed negative trends (Wright et al., 2007). The poor outcomes were

attributed to the short-term implementation (3 months); poor implementation, particularly with regard to inappropriate referrals; and lack of programmatic capacity to address issues such as negative peer influence.

There is presently no clearly-established gold standard method for managing conflict, violence, and bullying within high schools in Canada. Consistent with the literature reviewed above, there was a strong emphasis on comprehensive whole-school approaches, particularly those which included an emphasis on improving school climate. However, there is a need for greater dissemination of appropriately-designed and well-conducted evaluations on the effectiveness of these methods.

Key Lessons from Terms and Concepts

- RAP's approach as a multi-component, whole-school program targeting reductions in conflict, violence and bullying as well as improvements in school climate is consistent with trends in the overall literature as well as within the Canadian context, both in terms of recognizing the importance of these issues and in the methods used to address them
- There is some evidence that programs which target these outcomes can be successful, though the support is mixed and the specific factors which relate to success as yet unknown, largely due to the lack of high-quality evaluation research available
- There is considerable need for further evaluation of all programs, but especially programs such as RAP, a community-developed initiative focusing on high school students in Canada

4. Theoretical Frameworks

The distinction between frameworks and programs is that frameworks relate to broad conceptual models which may be implemented through a range of different specific programs and interventions. Programs refer to defined systems of intervention with a specific implementation model. Programs may fall under multiple frameworks.

The frameworks reviewed here were all selected based on their strong representation in the literature and their relevance to and compatibility with RAP. Four frameworks were identified:

- (School-Wide) Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS/PBIS)
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Positive Youth Development (PYD)
- Restorative Practices (RP)

Each framework is described in relation to its definition and history, key characteristics, outcome targets, the supporting research behind it, and its comparability to RAP. The frameworks are presented in order of their similarity to the RAP model, from least to most similar. All of the frameworks described here are typically implemented as primary prevention/universal approaches or multi-component approaches with both primary and secondary intervention components (i.e., universal programming for all students with some targeted interventions for students identified as at-risk or needing additional support).

4.1 (School-Wide) Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

This evidence-based framework has been in operation for over twenty years in various formats in schools across the US, where it is widely considered an effective means of improving both student behaviour and school climate (Dunlap, Kincaid, Horner, Knoster & Bradshaw, 2013; Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Horner et al., 2014). Support for the framework has come from US federal funding and policy, and PBIS programming (not necessarily school-wide) has been implemented in over 10,000 schools in the US, primarily elementary and middle schools (Dunlap et al., 2013; Horner et al., 2014).

There are a variety of terminological variations in the name of this framework (e.g., positive behaviour support, positive behavioural supports and interventions, school-wide positive behaviour support), reflecting historical changes in policy and focus and language

preferences (e.g., moving from focusing on a subset of students with severe behavioural issue to a broader whole-school focus; Dunlap et al., 2013). The reference to a 'positive' framework can be interpreted to mean both programming which is geared toward encouraging positive behaviour, as well as programming which takes a positive and supportive approach, as opposed to a punitive, aversive approach, to behaviour change (Dunlap et al., 2013). The 'school-wide' component of SWPBIS reflects the move toward more universal/primary prevention-oriented programming and the broadening of this framework into a set of intervention practices and systems intended to foster a positive social culture as well supporting positive behaviour on an individual level (Dunlap et al., 2013; Horner et al., 2014). It stems from the community health prevention research as well as behavioural psychology approaches, and has more recently been influenced by the literature on effective program implementation (Horner et al., 2014).

Framework characteristics

SWPBIS programming can be implemented at all school levels, from K to 12 (Dunlap et al., 2013). In the implementation guide published by Flannery and Sugai (2009), it was described as:

> *[A] multi-tiered systems approach for building social culture and intensive individual behaviour supports needed for all students to be socially and academically successful. The basic logic of SWPBS is that establishing a positive social culture throughout the school will result in (a) students expecting appropriate behaviour from each other, (b) a social context that encourages academic success, and (c) the social supports that make individualized intensive behavioural interventions more effective and more durable.* (p. 84)

The core elements of PBIS programming are the setting of clear expectations of appropriate behaviours, providing instructions on how to meet those expectations, and reinforcing these behaviours when they occur (Sugai & Flannery, 2009). The 'school wide' component supports the behavioural components by ensuring that the atmosphere of the school is conducive to these somewhat more traditional behavioural interventions. It is therefore a whole-school and multi-component approach. SWPBIS also incorporates a model for schools on how to adopt the relevant PBIS programming and practices, the specific selection of which can be tailored to the school's own needs (Horner et al., 2014).

Regarding implementation of a PBIS framework, it was noted in the literature that this can be a lengthy and involved process (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Horner et al., 2014). Full implementation tends to take approximately three years, and requires substantial administrative and political support as well as significant resources to train staff (Horner et al., 2014). The length of each stage of implementation can be highly variable across sites

and progress through the stages tends to be iterative and cyclical rather than strictly linear. However, once the framework has become established, with the development of local capacity to run both the programming and evaluation, costs tend to decrease (Horner et al., 2014).

Outcome targets

The original goal of the framework was the management of disruptive behaviour, typically tracked through the level of discipline referrals. Presently, however, the framework targets a wide range of outcomes, from academic performance to reduction of bullying to improved social and emotional competence of students (Horner et al., 2014).

Supporting research

Data-based decision-making is also a key component of SWPBIS (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Horner et al., 2014). The implementation of SWPBIS includes the implementation of corresponding data collection systems which are used to monitor the program and its effects and provide information to decision-makers and other stakeholders to guide the development of programming effectively. The accumulation of research and a range of implementation experiences to draw upon also permitted the creation of detailed implementation guidelines and recommendations for SWPBIS programming (see Flannery & Sugai, 2009).

While the framework has a long history and is generally regarded as an effective approach (Dunlap et al., 2013), few rigorous evaluations specific to its implementation in high schools have been released (Lane, Webhy, Robertson & Rogers, 2007). One recent meta-analysis reported moderate positive effects of SWPBIS systems on reducing problem behaviour, though only two of the studies included referenced high school-based programs (Solomon, Klein, Hintze, Cressey & Peller, 2012). Another study found that a PBIS system in a high school increased attendance and reduced discipline referrals, though it did not impact academic performance (Miles, 2003). Lane and colleagues (2007) reported that high school students with different presentation characteristics (e.g., those experiencing more emotional concerns versus those experiencing more conduct problems) responded to the programming in different ways, though all students had some positive benefits.

There was one Canadian implementation of the framework in the literature, though it took place in several middle and elementary schools and not high schools, in British Columbia and Alberta (Greflund, McIntosh, Mercer & May, 2014). Pre-post data were not reported regarding the overall changes in discipline referral levels nor were comparison groups included, but it was noted that the implementation of the PBIS framework did not result in the over-representation of Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal students in either the

frequency or severity of discipline referrals. It was unclear if this was the result of the interventions themselves or the standardization of the discipline referral system which is also part of the PBIS model. It was also found that the program was amenable to culturally-appropriate modifications.

Lessons for RAP

The SWPBIS framework is similar to RAP in its overall design as a multi-component and whole-school approach as well as its focus on supporting youth to be successful. Its individual-level intervention strategies can be quite different, however, such as the use of token economies (e.g., rewarding students with tokens for good behaviour which can be exchanged for prizes; Miles, 2013) and other reinforcement strategies in keeping with the behaviouralist origins of the model.

This framework is significant, however, in the manner with which it has become embedded not only in schools but within educational policy and federal legislation in the US, which has provided the infrastructure needed to support and disseminate the program on such a wide scale (Dunlap et al., 2013; Flannery & Sugai, 2009). RAP has forged and is continuing to build relationships at the municipal and provincial level, but has not yet achieved this degree of support.

The extensive use of program performance monitoring and data-driven decision-making practices has also been a positive factor in the expansion and sustainability of the PBIS approach (Flannery & Sugai, 2009). Specialized data systems have been developed for the model, designed to facilitate both data collection and dissemination. This includes data dashboards through which aggregate statistics can be accessed and visualized on demand. By implementing a program performance monitoring system in 2012 (Camman & Wormith, 2013), RAP has taken steps toward the same end, although not yet to the same extent or technological sophistication.

Further reading

Flannery, K. B., & Sugai, G. (2009). *School-wide PBIS implementation in high schools: Current practice and future directions*. Eugene, OR: Center on PBIS.

4.2 Social and Emotional Learning

The social and emotional learning (SEL) framework arose primarily from the prevention and resilience literature (Zins & Elias, 2007). The framework is a response to the identified need within schools to provide youth with social and emotional coping skills,

in addition to academic skills, and the noted lack of resources available with which to do so (Durlak et al., 2011).

While many programs to support student social development exist, the SEL model has identified a specific set of core competencies which have been found to be critical to social and emotional learning (Payton et al., 2000). The SEL framework also provides a means of providing this instruction in an integrated and coordinated manner, avoiding the issue of multiple uncoordinated interventions targeting individual competencies while competing for resources within the school (Payton et al., 2000).

The Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is an international organization that was founded in 1994 (Payton et al., 2000). This organization is dedicated to supporting and disseminating research on the science of SEL practices through knowledge transfer, training, and collaboration with researchers, teachers, policymakers, and community stakeholders.

Framework characteristics

Social and emotional learning entails the fostering of specific competencies in order to support youth development and reduce the risk of negative outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011).

There are five defined SEL competency areas (Zins & Elias, 2007, p. 3):

- **Self-awareness:** identification and recognition of one's own emotions, recognition of strengths in self and others, sense of self-efficacy, and self-confidence
- **Social awareness:** empathy, respect for others, and perspective taking
- **Responsible decision-making:** evaluation and reflection, and personal and ethical responsibility
- **Self-management:** impulse control, stress management, persistence, goal setting, and motivation
- **Relationship skills:** cooperation, help seeking and providing, and communication

The competencies are taught to youth through the implementation of specific evidence-based classroom practices (Payton et al., 2000). The skills are also taught to students in an interactive manner intended to encourage them to generalize these skills to all aspects of their lives (Payton et al., 2000; Zins et al., 2007).

It is assumed that youth will be exposed to the competencies in supportive, safe environments which will allow them to learn while also providing opportunities to practice and strengthen their skills (Durlak et al., 2011; Zins et al., 2007). Thus, as with SWPBIS, another critical component of the model is the establishment and enhancement of a positive school climate in order to facilitate skill development (Durlak et al., 2011). As noted earlier in this review, it has also been suggested that there is a reciprocal relationship between school climate and social and emotional skill development, with each outcome further supporting the other (Zins & Elias, 2007).

Typically SEL programming is universal in nature, meaning primary prevention programming which is intended for all youth (it has been noted though that a subset of students will always require more targeted support and intervention; Zins & Elias, 2007). SEL programming can take a number of forms, including separate SEL curriculum, SEL components incorporated within the existing curriculum and within extracurricular activities, and as a structural feature impacting teaching practices and school policies (Zins & Elias, 2007). Ultimately, the goal of implementing SEL within a school environment is for the programming to be integrated into every aspect of the school routine in order to provide comprehensive and coordinated support (Zins et al., 2007). It has also been found that the most effective and sustainable SEL practices are those which are structured as collaborative efforts, involving students, parents, school staff and community members (Zins & Elias, 2007).

Outcome targets

As indicated by the name of the program, one of the major intended outcomes of the framework is the development of core SEL competencies. Beyond this, however, the development of these skills is expected to lead to a range of improved prosocial and reduced antisocial outcomes (Payton et al., 2000). According to researchers, SEL approaches "aim to foster the development of students who are knowledgeable, responsible, and caring, thereby contributing to their academic success, healthy growth and development, ability to maintain positive relationships, and motivation to contribute to their communities" (Payton et al., 2000, p. 179).

Other areas of impact include increased school attachment and engagement, more positive assets (including improved attitudes toward self and others, better self-esteem, more prosocial beliefs), less risky and antisocial behaviours (including bullying and poor conduct), improved academic performance, and improved relationships with school, family, and community (Durlak et al., 2011; Zins et al., 2007).

Supporting research

SEL programming is intended to be theoretically-driven and empirically-validated (Zins et al., 2007). Curriculum components should be structured and sequenced with well-designed lesson plans to ensure consistent delivery across sites and adequate exposure of key material to students (Payton et al., 2000). Evaluation and performance monitoring are also explicitly incorporated within the framework (Zins et al., 2007). As with the SWBPIS model, data collection and dissemination is intended to support the continuous improvement of the program and track progress toward goals. The accumulation of SEL research and established interventions has also allowed for the development of specific SEL implementation guidelines (Zins & Elias, 2007) and the identification of key features of quality SEL programming (Payton et al., 2000).

Several studies and meta-analyses have supported SEL's effectiveness at improving student outcomes, in terms of their development of SEL competencies (Zins & Elias, 2007), their academic performance (Zins et al., 2007), and other outcomes such as mental health, substance abuse, and antisocial behaviour (Greenberg et al., 2003). Many SEL programs have been identified as model or exemplary programs by various organizations (Zins & Elias, 2007).

One recent meta-analysis of 213 SEL interventions (13% of which were delivered in high schools) found significant positive effects across studies (Durlak et al., 2011). The largest effects were for SEL skills (g=0.57, which is a moderately large effect size), but effects were also moderately large for other outcomes, including attitudes, behaviour, emotional distress, and academic performance. Programs were especially effective when they followed best practices for skill training, were explicit about the skills being targeted, and had high implementation quality.

Lessons for RAP

RAP is most comparable to SEL in terms of a mutual focus on social and personal skills and assets, a positive school environment, and youth development. There are some subtle differences in their respective approaches to skill building; RAP has a somewhat broader emphasis on taking positive action within the school and community and conflict-specific skills, whereas the SEL framework concentrates on fundamental social and emotional skills. The SEL competencies have also been explicitly and specifically defined and supported with empirical study. While the RAP assets have been influenced by research, they have not yet been validated within the specific program environment.

The SEL model is primarily universal and preventative in nature, focusing on maximum integration into the classroom and school-wide environment (Zins & Elias,

2007). RAP includes strong intervention components, such as one-on-one support and conflict mediation, in addition to preventative aspects, and is not as deeply integrated as to be equivalent to academic learning processes, one of the SEL goals (Zins et al., 2007). RAP also does not emphasize academic outcomes as strongly as SEL does—while RAP aims to reduce time spent out of class or school due to conflict, it does not claim to have a direct impact on grades.

As with the SWPBIS comparison, RAP does not presently have the same research and evaluation infrastructure as SEL, such as having a committed research collaborative to support its activities, as in the CASEL (Payton et al., 2000). The relationship of RAP with the University of Saskatchewan's Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies is a step in this direction, however.

Further reading

Payton, J. W., Wardlaw, D. M., Graczyk, P. A., Bloodworth, M. R., Tompsett, C. J., & Weissberg, R. P. (2000). Social and emotional learning: A framework for promoting mental health and reducing risk behavior in children and youth. *Journal of School Health, 70*(5), 179-185.

Zins, J. E., & Elias, M. J. (2007). Social and emotional learning: Promoting the development of all students. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 17*(2-3), 233-255.

Zins, J. E., Bloodworth, M. R., Weissberg, R. P., & Walberg, H. J. (2007). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 17*(2-3), 191-210.

4.3 Positive Youth Development

The positive youth development (PYD) framework has evolved over several decades, and arose from many sources, including the field of positive psychology, experiences of youth workers, and developmental systems theory (Benson & Scales, 2009; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2005). It was developed in response to frameworks that focused primarily on negative and deficit-oriented aspects of youth behaviour (Bowers et al., 2010; Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2002). It is a broad area, primarily interested in supporting behaviour change through emphasizing young people's strengths and potential and increasing their developmental assets (Durlak et al., 2007). The PYD model is complementary with the SEL framework as the SEL competencies are consistent with PYD assets (Greenberg et al., 2003), although PYD approaches can address more assets than those identified within the specific SEL model.

Framework characteristics

Positive youth development is characterized as a holistic strengths-based approach that seeks to help youth not only function but thrive (Lerner et al., 2005). As with the previous two frameworks, this can be accomplished by supporting students in their individual development as well as through the promotion of supportive environments which allow them to learn and apply their assets (Durlak et al., 2007).

The five 'C's of PYD are (as adapted from Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721):

- **Competence:** Positive view of one's actions in domain-specific areas, including the social (e.g., conflict resolution), academic (e.g., grades), cognitive (e.g., decision-making), and vocational (e.g., work habits).
- **Confidence:** Internal sense of positive self-worth and self-efficacy (global as opposed to domain-specific).
- **Connection:** Positive mutually-contributing bonds with people and institutions, including peers, family, school and community.
- **Character:** Respect for social and cultural rules, sense of right and wrong, integrity.
- **Caring:** Sense of sympathy and empathy for others.

As with SEL, the PYD framework can be implemented through many different programs, providing these programs are consistent with the PYD philosophy. Catalano and colleagues (2002) reported that PYD programs are those which promote bonding and healthy relationships; promote social, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and moral competence; foster resilience, self-determination, spirituality, self-efficacy, positive identity, hope, and prosocial norms; and provide recognition of and opportunities for prosocial behaviour. Programs do not necessarily have to address all of these assets, but more comprehensive programs are associated with greater success (Catalano et al., 2002). PYD approaches are also developmental, emphasizing the potential for growth and change (Lerner et al., 2005). Finally, PYD programs can address youth development across multiple domains, including family, school, and community, and are not intended to be limited to a single domain (Catalano et al., 2002).

These parameters are obviously quite broad, though there is also an assumption that PYD approaches will be supported by research. SEL programming would be considered to fall under the umbrella of PYD, as does conflict resolution education programming (Garrard & Lipsey, 2007).

Outcome targets

PYD programs strongly emphasize the need to both reduce problem behaviour and increase positive behaviour; programs which focus on negative behaviours alone are not in keeping with the strengths-based focus of PYD (Catalano et al., 2002). Positive behaviours can include prosocial behaviour, positive relationships with adults and peers, and school performance, while negative outcomes can include issues such as aggression and antisocial conduct, drug use, or peer rejection (Durlak et al., 2007). In addition to supporting students directly, some PYD programs also promote systems-level change, seeking improvement in the overall psychosocial environment of the school, community, or family (Durlak et al., 2007).

While asset development may be seen as a beneficial outcome of PYD interventions, researchers caution that within the developmental framework, assets should be considered 'building blocks' to success, and not signs of success themselves, as the number of assets a youth has increases the likelihood but does not guarantee their ability to thrive and succeed, which is the ultimate goal of PYD programming (Benson & Scales, 2009).

Supporting research

A relatively recent summary of PYD evaluation outcomes found that many of the included evaluations demonstrated positive impacts on youth (Catalano et al., 2002). Programs were most likely to be successful when they had a structured curriculum, were delivered over 9 months or longer, and had high implementation fidelity. There is also considerable research in the literature suggesting that possessing developmental assets is associated with increased positive outcomes and reduced negative outcomes for youth (e.g., Aspy et al., 2004; Benson & Scales, 2009). However, there is little concordance on which specific assets are most critical to thriving among youth and an extremely broad array of potential aspects which have been studied and examined (Benson & Scales, 2009). While the research is positive, it is also vague in terms of providing direction to programs on where best to focus efforts and limited resources.

Lessons for RAP

The PYD framework is very closely associated with RAP. The 40 Developmental Assets model, which outlines forty general assets that are protective factors for youth, is also a derivative of the PYD framework (Benson & Scales, 2009), and has been specifically attributed as an influence on RAP's design (Camman & Wormith, 2011). Given its focus on promoting positive youth development and global change within school communities, RAP also constitutes a PYD program. However, as noted in the original evaluability assessment (Camman & Wormith, 2011), while these frameworks and models provide direction to RAP

in terms of supporting a strengths-based, asset-enhancement approach, there is very little additional research which provides specific guidance on how best to do so.

Further reading

Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2002). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *Prevention & Treatment, 5*(1), 15a.

Lerner, R. M., Almerigi, J. B., Theokas, C., & Lerner, J. V. (2005). Positive youth development. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 25*(1), 10-16.

4.4 Restorative Practices

The final framework to be discussed is also the most recent. While restorative justice practices have a relatively long history within criminal justice, only recently have the same principles been applied in school environments (McCluskey et al., 2008; Smith, 2011). In the criminal justice system, restorative approaches with youth typically refer to the work of specialized professionals working with young offenders or youth in conflict with the law (i.e. tertiary prevention). In contrast, restorative practices as implemented in schools typically provide support to a broader range of youth at an earlier stage of intervention and prevention, including universal programming intended for all youth. Restorative practices can also involve the entire school community as well as parents and other community members in the restorative process (McCluskey et al., 2008). The common factor is the emphasis on the importance of building, maintaining, and repairing relationships on an individual and community level.

Restorative practices are increasingly being implemented in schools. In 2004, a selection of primary and secondary schools in Scotland began participating in a long-term pilot of restorative practice programs in an effort to address high rates of expulsions and suspensions (McCluskey et al., 2008; Kane et al., 2009). Restorative practices are also popular in New Zealand, initially introduced as a means of reducing drop-out and associated youth crime rates (Drewery, 2014). This approach was subsequently found to have a transformative potential for the entire school.

Framework characteristics

Restorative practices are those which focus on repairing harm to victims and communities, using a structured approach to healing and repairing (McCluskey et al., 2008). Any approach which promotes conflict resolution and the building of relationships, including between students and each other, students and adults (e.g., teachers, parents), and students and their school community as well as the broader community, is consistent

with restorative practices (Standing, Fearon & Dee, 2012). As with all of the other frameworks, school climate is an essential component of RP. As one researcher noted, it was initially assumed that simply keeping youth in school would be enough (Drewery, 2014). However, it was found that students' experiences within their schools and the need for school connectedness beyond physical presence were also essential to success.

Restorative practices assume that conflict can be resolved through conversation and communication (Standing et al., 2012). Common types of RP interventions, which can range from formal and structured to more informal and ad hoc, include 'restorative conferencing', mediations, informal circle discussions, corridor chats, family conferencing, skill development program, positive role modelling, and curriculum enhancement (Drewery, 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008; Standing et al., 2012). Regardless of the specific intervention type, the emphasis is on the equal relationship between those involved and the inclusivity of the process (Drewery, 2014). Unlike traditional approaches which can be either authoritarian or overly paternalistic with regard to youth, restorative practices assume that all participants in the conversation are equal and the goal is to seek mutual understanding in order to support change (Drewery, 2014).

In the multi-school pilot implementation in the UK, it was found that the RP framework did not always require the creation of new interventions (McCluskey et al., 2008). In some cases, there were existing practices already in operation within the schools, such as mediation. However, the RP paradigm was a means of integrated these separate initiatives into a single cohesive and coordinated framework. In New Zealand, restorative practices have also been found to have a particular cultural relevance to Maori students, which was fitting given that these youth were also disproportionately negatively impacted by the previous punitive strategies (Drewery, 2014).

One of the implementation challenges encountered with respect to restorative practices is difficulties on the part of staff in how to reconcile the RP values of mutual respect, shared understanding, and non-punitive responses to conduct violations with existing punitive discipline policies (McCluskey et al., 2008; Kane et al., 2009). Some staff rejected the RP ethos entirely, while others felt that while RP was valuable in some circumstances there was still a need for punishment in more severe situations. Implementing RP in a school environment can require a shift in values sets for staff and administration away from more punitive orientations, which can be challenging without strong administrative support and guidance (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Outcome targets

The original rationale for introducing restorative practices into schools was to increase student retention and reduce expulsions and suspensions (Drewery, 204;

McCluskey et al., 2008). However, students are also expected to learn skills in communications, social relations, and conflict management through this process (Standing et al., 2012). Beyond that, while often individual student change is the focus of such programs, RP proponents also encourage schools to consider the need for broader structural changes and to create more positive environments and a stronger community in response to conflicts that arise (Drewery, 2014; Standing et al., 2012).

Supporting research

Due to the relative infancy of this model, it has been under-represented in the education research literature. The lack of high-quality evaluative research in this area results in such programs not being included in meta-analyses (Smith, 2011), and even individual studies of program success are limited. One early report on the UK implementation of the model was described as finding the programs to have had little detectable effect thus far, with the exception of one whole-school approach, though this report is no longer available online (Bitel, 2005, as cited by McCluskey et al., 2008). Later research on this pilot confirmed that many of the included sites had experienced significant implementation challenges and had not yet reached a point of implementation where definitive evaluation could take place (McCluskey et al., 2008). More recent reports on this pilot were unavailable for this review.

The preliminary reports on the UK implementation found that while some schools struggled with implementation, others showed evidence of an increase in the use of RP-specific language by stuffs and staff, improvements in the school climate, skill development, and some reductions in discipline referral levels, although the latter could not be attributed to the RP implementation alone (McCluskey et al., 2008). The secondary schools experienced more implementation difficulties than did the primary schools included in the pilot, which was attributed to the greater resistance to the program among secondary school staff and the challenge of the more complex structure of these schools (i.e., larger population, students distributed across more classrooms; McCluskey et al., 2008).

Lessons for RAP

The restorative practices framework has much in common with RAP. RAP was also originally created out of a need for a less punitive approach to handling conflict and student misbehaviour while also supporting youth through positive change, and the RAP program developers specifically looked to restorative justice principles for inspiration (Camman & Wormith, 2011; RAP, 2013). While the traditional restorative justice models implemented in criminal justice contexts are more similar in philosophy than in actual practice to RAP, the restorative practices framework represents how these same values are implemented in educational and community contexts.

While all of the frameworks discussed thus far have emphasized the development of assets, of which relationships are one, RAP and the RP framework both place a particularly strong emphasis on the importance of relationships and on connecting and re-connecting youth with their schools. Many of the specific RP interventions described (such as mediations, conflict counselling, circle discussions, and corridor chats) echo RAP's intervention strategies. Restorative practices, especially when they include an emphasis on asset development and positive student growth, are consistent with the broader PYD framework as well, and RAP might be said to be a hybrid RP-PYD type program.

Further reading

Drewery, W. (2014). Restorative Practice in New Zealand Schools: Social development through relational justice. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1-13.

McCluskey, G., Lloyd, G., Kane, J., Riddell, S., Stead, J., & Weedon, E. (2008). Can restorative practices in schools make a difference?. *Educational Review, 60*(4), 405-417.

Key Lessons from Theoretical Frameworks

- There are many common denominators among the identified frameworks, including the emphasis on both skill and relationship-development, strengths-based approaches, and the importance of school climate not only as an outcome itself but as a means of achieving and sustaining the other outcomes
- There are also subtle differences in emphasis, in terms of the specific types of interventions involved (e.g., behavioural management versus restorative conferencing) and what selection of skills and assets are prioritized
- RAP has the least in common with the SWPBIS and SEL approaches because of the particular focus of those frameworks on classroom-based and teacher-delivered interventions as well as the greater focus on behavioural methods (SWPBIS) or a specific set of fundamental competences (SEL); these frameworks also focus highly on academic outcomes, which RAP does not emphasize as strongly
- RAP is most closely related to the PYD and RP approaches, taking both a general and broad approach to youth asset development as well as especially emphasizing the significance of relationships and the need to restore and reconnect relationships following conflict
- While there is research to support both the PYD and RP frameworks, more specific research is needed on what particular components or interventions related to these models are effective and under what circumstances
- The SWPBIS and SEL frameworks are both accompanied by a significant degree of detailed and specific documentation on what factors and features support effective programming and implementation of their respective models; both models also explicitly incorporate continuous data collection and evaluation
- The SWPBIS and SEL models serve as an example of the level of model and program specificity that is desirable to ensure implementation fidelity and program effectiveness over time
- The degree of supportive infrastructure present for the SEL and SWPBIS frameworks, in terms of policy, funding, and research, underscores the importance of the relationships that RAP has forged with its school, government, community, and university partners

5. Selected Programs

While no programs in the literature shared all of RAP's exact features, several were identified which bore similarities to RAP in terms of structure, goals, and organizational context, and were presented with enough detail to offer insights into the kinds of successes and challenges that may also be relevant to RAP in the future.

Three programs in particular will be discussed in detail:

- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OPBB)
- Making the Smart Choice (MTSC)
- Student Support System (SSS)

Three other programs on which less information was available will be discussed briefly, all of which were part of the larger Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) project, an initiative funded by the US Department of Education:

- Tyrone SS/HS Initiative
- Think First
- On-Campus Intervention Program (OCIP)

Programs will be described in terms of their history, design and theoretical basis, evaluation findings, and relevance to RAP.

5.1 Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) is one of the most well-known and highly-regarded anti-bullying initiatives described in the literature. It was developed over 30 years ago in Norway in response to the highly publicized suicide of three teenage boys who had been victimized by bullying (Limber, 2011; Olweus & Limber, 2010). It was initially assessed through a longitudinal study of a large cohort of children over three years, and it was determined that the program was effective in reducing bullying behaviours (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

The program has since been implemented throughout Norway, and has also been successfully disseminated on an international scale, including throughout the US, with minor adaptations (Limber, 2011; Olweus & Limber, 2010). Many other bullying prevention programs have also been inspired by OBPP, though they have not been faithful replications and results for these derivative programs has been mixed (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Program design

The OPBB is a whole-school multi-component program. Its key principles are that adults, both at home and in school, must be warm and positive toward youth, set and communicate limits on inappropriate behaviour, use consistent but not hostile consequences for inappropriate behaviour, and be positive role models (Olweus & Limber, 2010). These principles have been translated into specific intervention practices that are implemented at multiple levels, including such components as:

- **Individual level:** supervise students interactions, intervene when bullying occurs, and meet with students to develop intervention plans as needed
- **Classroom level:** enforce anti-bullying rules, have regular classroom discussions about bullying and related topics
- **School level:** institute a bullying prevention committee, train staff in bullying prevention, introduce school-wide anti-bullying rules
- **Community level:** involve community members in the program and support the program through school-community partnerships (Limber, 2011; Olweus & Limber, 2010)

The community-level component was not as pronounced in the original Norwegian implementation but was found to be an important factor in dissemination of the program through the US (Limber, 2011). The program includes both prevention and intervention components, though the primary aim is prevention through the restructuring of the school environment and its social norms to work against bullying behaviour (Limber, 2011; Olweus & Limber, 2010). OBPP has been designated an SEL-type program by some (Zins & Elias, 2007), although it was not initially designed specifically under that framework. It also shares characteristics with SWPBIS programming in terms of managing behaviours through establishing and reinforcing clear behaviour norms.

The program is implemented by first establishing a committee composed of administrators, teachers, other school staff, mental health professionals, parents, members of the community, and students where possible (Limber, 2011). This committee is responsible for ensuring the fidelity of the implementation process, and receive a structured 2-day training course to this effect in order to be certified. Teachers and other school staff who will be responsible for helping to implement the program in the school also receive training and certification. Refresher and supplemental training options are also available. This process ensures a high level of program integrity across the many widely dispersed sites. A train-the-trainer model was employed whereby those who become certified as trainers can provide additional training to those in their region (Olweus & Limber, 2010), which also contributes to the sustainability of the program.

In addition to the program itself, program developers also created the *Olweus Bullying Questionnaire*, which is a measure of bullying prevalence in the school environment, and which is frequently used to inform program implementation and evaluation (Olweus & Limber, 2010). The questionnaire will be discussed in greater depth later in this report.

Evaluation support

The OBPP has been found across several evaluations to be successful in reducing the prevalence of bullying and other antisocial behaviours as well as improving school climate (see Olweus & Limber, 2010, for a summary of evaluation studies). Some of the implementations have been at a very large scale, from grades 3 to 12, and have been evaluated over periods as long as five years at least, demonstrating the program's capacity for sustainable change (Olweus & Limber, 2010). The majority of evaluations (and implementations) have occurred in elementary and middle-school settings, and while results for some high school implementations have been positive, overall the effects tend to be weaker in this setting (Limber, 2011; Olweus & Limber, 2010).

One specific evaluation of OBPP in a quasi-experimental, pre-post comparison study of two high schools found that the program resulted in no statistically significant reductions in bullying either within or between the experimental and control schools (Losey, 2009). This was attributed to the poor implementation, as there was significant staff resistance and a lack of administrative support at the intervention school. Implementation quality has been strongly linked to program outcomes for OBPP (Olweus & Limber, 2010). Common implementation challenges are lack of readiness to accept the program, inadequate administrative support and leadership, perceived cost and time-intensiveness of some of the components (e.g., weekly classroom discussions on bullying and related topics). The relatively complex organization of classes in high school compared to younger grade levels can further complicate this issue (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Lessons for RAP

The OBPP was included in this review because it represents one of the most well established and reputable anti-bullying programs available. However, it is also quite different from RAP in terms of its specific design. Both programs are multi-component and multi-level, and both recognize the importance of school-community partnerships and the participation of the community in the program. However, OBPP is highly structured and delivered through existing staff, particularly teaching staff. It is also primarily focused on bullying. In contrast, RAP relies on the support of teachers, but is delivered via the RAP worker and deals with all forms of conflict first and foremost, with bullying as a subset. OBPP has a defined strategy for changing the social norms of a school as a primarily

preventative method, while RAP focuses on supporting youth development through intervention and one-on-one supports supplemented by class- and school-wide activities.

The primary lesson for RAP from the OBPP example is its creation of a dissemination-ready program model which emphasized several measures for ensuring program fidelity. This included the use of oversight committees, the creation of standardized training in the key program concepts and approaches, and the use of a train-the-trainer model. RAP is already in operation across multiple sites, with the intention of further dissemination both in Saskatoon and beyond. OBPP is a strong example of how the dissemination process can be successfully managed through clear program components and implementation procedures.

Further reading

Olweus, D. & Limber, S. P. (2010). Bullying in school: Evaluation and dissemination of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 80*(1), 124-134.

Limber, S. P. (2011). Development, evaluation, and future directions of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. *Journal of School Violence, 10*(1), 71-87.

5.2 Making the Smart Choice

In 1997, Lyons Township High School, a large urban high school in Chicago, undertook the development of a multi-component school-wide program (Breunlin et al., 2005). The initiative was the result of collaboration between the school community and an outside consultant from a local university who developed the program jointly to meet an identified need and to fill a gap in the programming literature for high school-specific interventions (Breunlin et al., 2005; Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Hetherington & Kinsman, 2006). Parents were concerned that the school was over-using out-of-school suspensions as a disciplinary practice, and in particular that Black and Hispanic youth were over-represented among the suspended students (Breunlin et al., 2006). This concern was later validated through examination of the discipline data, as well as the conducting of a school climate survey which confirmed that there was an overall negative climate and poor relationships among the students, teachers, and community (Breunlin et al., 2002).

To address this issue, a steering committee comprising representatives of all stakeholder groups was formed and worked together for four years to develop a strategy to improve the school environment and strengthen relationships within it (Breunlin et al., 2005, 2006). One of the specific interventions designed for this initiative was *Making the Smart Choice* (MTSC), an individual-level intervention program designed to create an

alternative to suspensions by keeping youth in school and teaching them conflict management skills instead (Breunlin et al., 2002, 2006).

The program was informed by a number of different theoretical orientations, including systems theory, social learning theory, emotional intelligence theory, and conflict mediation theory (Breunlin et al., 2006). The resulting program took into account the complex network of factors influencing youth behaviour and school environment, as well as the importance of training youth to think about and approach conflict differently. The MTSC intervention was also influenced by practical factors, such as the political context and viability of the program in terms of community acceptance (Breunlin et al., 2006). The core content of the program was based on the high school violence prevention literature (Breunlin et al., 2006).

Program design

The overall initiative began with the formation of the steering committee that guided the program development process. Through a process of self-study, six intervention areas were identified and addressed in the following manner (Breunlin et al., 2002):

- **Teacher-student relationships:** Teachers were trained in constructive conflict management skills and how to promote positive relationships and a welcoming, safe space in their classrooms (e.g., student-centered learning approaches, establishing listening and cooperation norms, modelling life skills).
- **Student-student relationships:** School-wide norms were cultivated to promote positive interactions within the school. One strategy for this was running a summer leadership training program, known as the *Peaceable Schools Initiative*, which resulted in a team of students not already in recognized leadership roles planning and executing events for other students throughout the year to promote respect and responsibility.
- **School discipline:** To deal with the issue of heavy reliance on suspensions to deal with physical and verbal altercations in the school, the *Making the Smart Choice* program was developed, discussed in more detail below.
- **School-community relationships:** Community members were included in a citizen's advisory council, comprising representatives of all stakeholder groups, which discussed and provided input on school issues.
- **Student attachment to school:** While not implemented during the evaluation period, an advisory program was planned to connect students to adult advisors.
- **Administration-teacher relationships:** Monthly meetings were held between a group of staff and administrators to identify and discuss issues and look for

means of fostering a more cooperative environment. Ultimately no specific intervention was required.

As indicated, one of the main outputs of this process was the creation of the MTSC intervention program. This psychoeducational program was delivered in a one-on-one format to any youth facing suspension due to inappropriate conduct (Breunlin et al., 2002, 2006). It was also noted that the program could be delivered in a group format if necessary and that its content was appropriate to any student who could benefit from training in communication, anger management, and conflict resolution (Breunlin et al., 2002). The program operated in the following manner (Breunlin et al., 2006):

- **Referral system:** Administrators met with youth who were facing suspension due to violent behaviour at school. Youth were given the option of participating in the alternative program with the length of their suspension halved or not participating in the program and receiving the regular full suspension. The administrators and a school-based coordinator were responsible for referring the student to the MTSC program, which was located at a nearby agency. The agency also had a program coordinator responsible for receiving referrals, liaising with the school, communicating with families, assigning cases to trainers, and supporting the trainers.
- **Program format:** Each youth was assigned to a trainer (graduate students from a university family therapy program). The trainer guided the student (and their family members, if present) through a series of four 2-hour sessions designed to help them understand and change their emotions, beliefs, and behaviours with respect to conflict management. Trainers were instructed to be empathetic but to challenge problematic expectations around the acceptability of violence.
- **Program content:** The training was delivered based on a 36-page manual developed for the program. It covered three core content areas—anger management, communication, and conflict resolution—and each section included teaching tools (e.g., schematic drawings) for explaining the concepts and relevant theories, structured interactive exercises (e.g., role plays), and homework assignments to facilitate development of skills in each area. One example of a highly successful teaching tool was a schematic of 'Anger Mountain', which explained the neurophysiological experience of anger in a manner accessible to youth.
- **Program process**: Each of the four sessions focused on a different content area, with the first session as an introduction to the program. Youth were encouraged to share their own experiences and reflect on these in the context of the program content. If family members participated, they were also encouraged to discuss

and reflect on the program content. The fourth session concluded with the student writing and signing a letter describing what they learned in the program, which was submitted to a school administrator as proof of completion. A booster session where the trainer visited the student in school occurred six weeks after program completion to confirm the student's progress in behaviour change.

The assumption behind involving the family in the intervention was that students would not be able to maintain changes in their conflict-related thoughts, behaviours, and emotions at school if they were not supported in doing so at home (Breunlin et al., 2006). Family participation in the program was optional, and typically included parents but siblings also participated in some cases.

There was a perception that, in addition to the program content, the intensive one-on-one attention that students received was important to helping these students reconnect with their surroundings rather than further alienating them through punitive measures (Breunlin et al., 2002). However, while the program was universally available to any student in need of it, it was also voluntary, and students who refused to participate were at greater risk for poor outcomes than those who did participate (Breunlin et al., 2002). Therefore improving the overall school climate was also considered important to ensure program benefits were felt more widely than only among students participating in the intervention program.

Program sustainability was achieved through a number of means, including initial funding grants and contributions by the school; the commitment of a large number of volunteers, including school staff, parents, community members, and student leaders; partnerships with the university and the local agency with trained staff who helped provide the intervention program; and the use of a train-the-trainer model that allowed school staff to take over aspects of the initiative (i.e., the summer program and on-going staff development) from the outside consultant (Breunlin et al., 2005). Strong collaboration was particularly important for delivery of the MTSC program, as it required the school and the outside agencies to establish clear roles and coordinate their respective activities.

Evaluation support

In terms of the overall initiative, the school climate assessment that was administered at the outset was re-administered twice more at 2-year intervals to a randomly selected sample of 300 students as well as all teaching staff (Breunlin et al., 2005). Over the 4-year period, there were small but statistically significant increases in students' perceptions of student-student relationships, student-teacher relationships, and the overall school climate. Teachers' impressions did not significantly increase, but their perceptions were already higher than the students' at the outset. These findings were

modest, but did indicate some change in the school environment during the measurement period.

For the MTSC program specifically, it was expected that the program would reduce re-suspensions and other disciplinary actions (e.g., detention, in-school suspensions), particularly those related to violence (Breunlin et al., 2002). While there was a trend for students who completed the program to experience fewer disciplinary acts over the 4-year period than students who chose not to participate, this difference was not statistically significant, possibly due to the small sample sizes of the groups (Breunlin et al., 2002). Moreover, the groups were self-selecting and program effects may have been confounded with motivation to change (i.e., students who agreed to the program may have already been less inclined to repeat negative behaviour).

There was a significant downward trend in school suspension levels overall at the school in the years prior to and following the program implementation, though the decrease had already begun prior to the creation of the program (Breunlin et al., 2006). Without more comparison data, it is difficult to state conclusively the degree to which the program itself contributed to reduced suspension rates. No subsequent information been reported on the program.

Lessons for RAP

The MTSC intervention shares considerable similarities with RAP, in its structure and intent as well as in its developmental trajectory as a program. Both RAP and MTSC were created in response to an identified community need, with the goal of keeping students in school and fostering a more positive school environment, and evolved into complex multi-component systems. Both programs rely substantially on collaboration with a number of community partners, and like RAP the MTSC intervention is delivered through external partners rather than directly through teachers, as many similar programs are. The MTSC program was also complemented by parallel efforts to improve the school environment and foster leadership skills and assets in youth. Both RAP and MTSC recognize the significance of the family role and incorporate family participation where possible and needed.

The programs also differ in some significant ways due to different organizational constraints. For example, it would be difficult to implement RAP by sending students out of school to a nearby agency as RAP operates across multiple sites distributed throughout the city. While the MTSC program likely benefits from having the infrastructure of an existing agency with dedicated administrative support, there are also advantages to the RAP workers being located within the schools and in close regular contact with youth as well as embedded within the school environment. It was noted with regard to the MTSC program

that it is useful for the program to be delivered by non-school personnel because this increased the youths' trust in their trainers and allowed them to be more open (Breunlin et al., 2006). A similar benefit has been noted for RAP workers to be within the school but not perceived by students as being part of the disciplinary hierarchy (Camman & Wormith, 2011, 2013).

The most significant difference between the two approaches is the use of a manualized intervention approach in the MTSC program. The advantage of a manualized approach, particularly for a psychoeducational program geared toward skill teaching, is that it ensures youth are all exposed to the same core content and the effectiveness of this content can be verified. It can also facilitate dissemination of the program while increasing the likelihood of implementation fidelity (Breunlin et al., 2006). While RAP workers receive training in specific conflict mediation processes, there is otherwise no standardized program curriculum, including for classroom presentations and workshops aimed at asset-building (Camman & Wormith, 2013). While RAP's approach may not lend itself to the same manualized approach as MTSC, this program serves as one example of how structured program content can facilitate service delivery.

Finally, while the MTSC program appeared promising, the evaluation results and lack of further documentation in the literature were disappointing. The structure of the program, particularly the presence of a detailed program manual with concrete lessons and exercises, may have facilitated dissemination, but it is unknown if the program has been implemented at any other sites. More comprehensive evaluation of the program, such as the use of better comparison designs (difficult given the limited implementation of the program), assessment of students' asset achievement in addition to negative behaviours, or presenting student perspectives on their own experiences with the program, might have been more instructive. RAP will likely face similar challenges in its evaluation process. The MTSC example specifically demonstrates the disadvantages of not including comparison groups in evaluation designs.

Further reading

Breunlin, D. C., Cimmarusti, R. A., Bryant-Edwards, T. L. & Hetherington, J. S. (2002). Conflict resolution training as an alternative to suspension for violent behavior. *The Journal of Educational Research, 95*(6), 349-357.

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Breunlin, D. C., Mann, B. J., Kelly, D., Cimmarusti, R. A., Dunne, L. & Lieber, C. M. (2005). Personalizing a large comprehensive high school. *NASSP Bulletin, 89*(645), 24-42.

5.3 Student Support System

The Student Support System (SSS) is an intervention process designed to systematize, support, coordinate and track responses to bullying within a school (Allen, 2009, 2010). The system was the result of discussions among a group of concerned educators at a mid-sized, relatively economically-privileged suburban US high school (Allen, 2009, 2010).

The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (Olweus & Limber, 2010) was administered at the school and it was determined that bullying was indeed prevalent (Allen, 2009). A committee was formed to address the issues, with three goals: 1) improve school climate, 2) improve social interactions among students, and 3) reduce bullying. To this end, they designed a reporting and intervention system to facilitate better and more effective adult intervention in bullying situations and other negative social interactions among youth.

The system was based on the SEL framework, focusing on the promotion of social-emotional skill development and conceptualizing bullying as an opportunity for positive change, both at the individual level and in terms of impacting the larger social context which facilitates bullying (Allen, 2009). Punitive approaches to bullying were considered more likely to reduce reporting overall and encourage more covert forms of antisocial behaviours (Allen, 2009).

The rationale for designing the intervention system was to give teachers and other school staff concrete steps to follow and responses to undertake when they identified bullying situations (Allen, 2010). The model is collaborative in that it involves students, parents, school administrators, mental health professionals, teachers, and a wide range of other school staff (Allen, 2009). Adult involvement can range from as little as submitting a report of a bullying incident to actually providing the interventions themselves.

Program design

The SSS is a multi-component process including a spectrum of responses, interventions, and follow-up, managed by an intervention team (Allen, 2009). A reporting and documentation system tracks incidents, responses, and outcomes and helps with managing the process and ensuring cases are not overlooked or forgotten.

***Roles*.** The system incorporates five distinct roles (Allen, 2009):

- **Reporter:** The individual who reports the incident. This may be a student, staff, or parent, although the majority have been from staff.

- **Receiver:** The person who receives the initial report and decides whether to respond to it themselves or ask for support from the intervention team. Regardless, this person is responsible for completing all documentation related to the process and submitting them to the intervention team. Receivers can be teachers or other school staff.
- **Responder:** The person who takes responsibility for assessing the situation, choosing the next step, and moving forward with the response. May or may not be the same as the receiver or reporter. More than one person may be a responder for a given incident (co-responders).
- **Liaison:** If the reporter wishes to remain anonymous, a liaison acts as a reporter on their behalf, protects their identity (which cannot be disclosed without permission), and may also act as a responder.
- **Coach:** A member of the intervention team with specific training in how to implement the continuum of SSS responses who can help support other staff through the process. A coach may also be a responder or a co-responder with another staff person. Coaches assist with follow-up and keep the intervention team informed.

The intervention team, specifically known as the social-emotional learning intervention team (SELIT), is a small group of staff who are responsible for overseeing the support system (Allen 2009). At the implementation school, this team had several staff volunteers, including an assistant principal, a school guidance counsellor, a school psychologist, an unspecified paraprofessional, and a number of teachers. The SELIT manages the documentation generated by each incident, reviewing each case as it occurs as a group, providing information and insights into what has occurred, and, if necessary, making suggestions for how to address it. The mental health professionals on the team were considered an especial asset when it came to generating appropriate interventions to specific situations (Allen, 2009).

***Reporting*.** A significant component of the SSS was the documentation flow (Allen, 2009). Each incident generated a set of reports, including the initial report to alert that an incident had occurred and several follow-up reports to track progress on how the issue was investigated, addressed, and resolved. The purpose of the documentation was to ensure that no cases were mislaid or unresolved, to identify related cases and allow for collaboration, and to generate historical data to monitor and assess the efficacy of the system as well as the state of bullying within the school as a whole.

When reporting an incident, reports were accepted in several formats, including written, verbal, or electronic (available online), and reports were allowed to be anonymous

(Allen, 2009). Reporters were asked to indicate the severity of the incident, how they became aware of it, what happened, between whom, and where. Follow-up reports were generated at significant points in the process (e.g., acknowledging that the situation had been reported, information gathering efforts, interventions attempted, resolution and checking-back after the resolution).

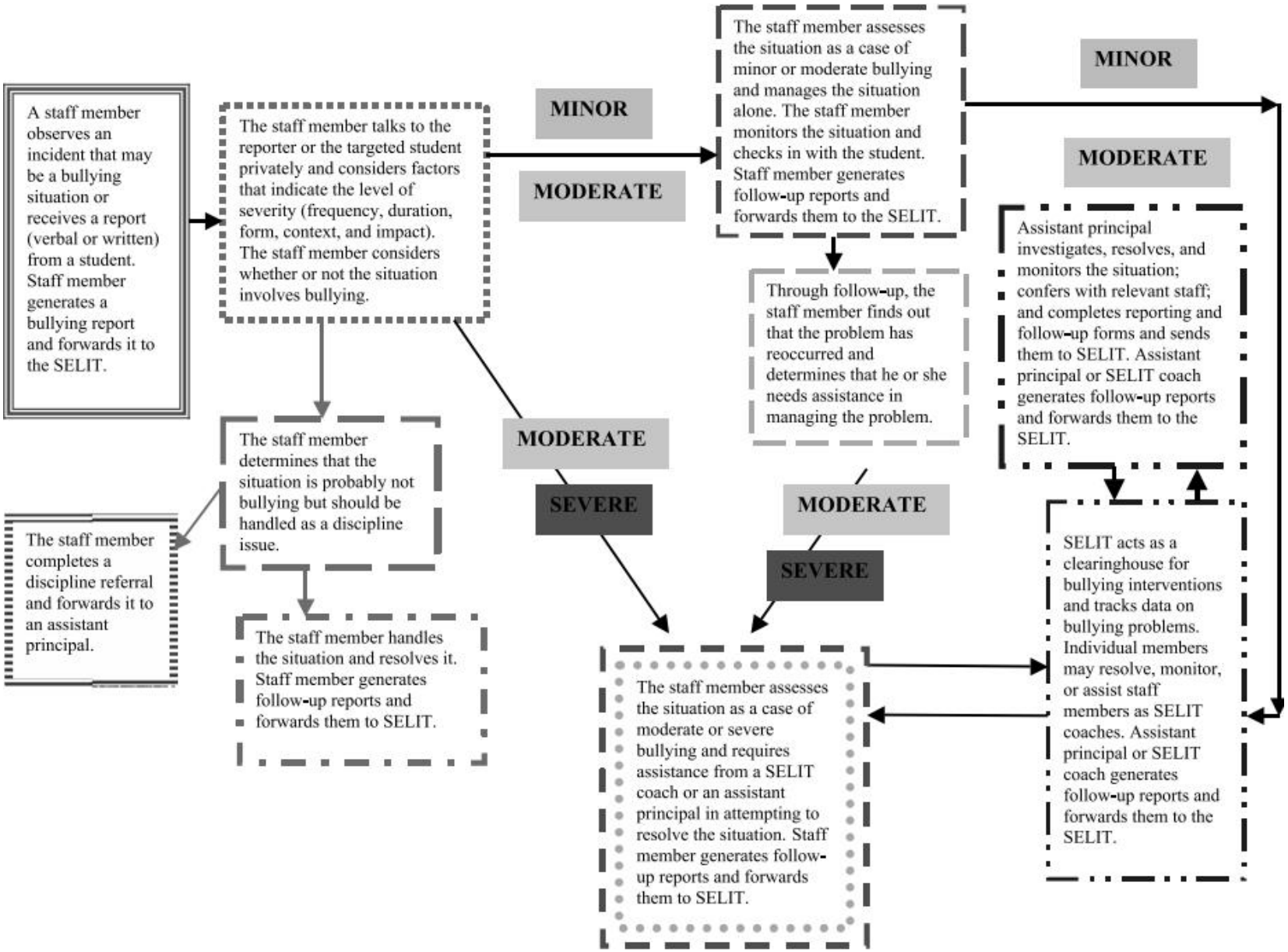
Information sharing was sometimes an important component of the program, balanced with the importance of maintaining student privacy (Allen, 2009). One means of maintaining stakeholder investment in the program was reporting back to the original incident reporters what the general outcome of the situation was (i.e., that it had been addressed and resolved). The goal of this was to build investment in the process so that reporters did not feel that their involvement had no impact. Information sharing was also used to make staff aware of particular patterns, such as a bullying-prone area in the school, so that they could intervene more effectively.

***Process*.** The system itself has been defined in a series of flowcharts which illustrate the continuum of responses possible, depending on the characteristics of the incident (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2 for an overview of the system and the documentation process specifically; taken from Allen, 2009, pp. 73-74).

In general, the process began with the reporting of an incident. Once the report was received and an appropriate responder was identified, information about the incident was gathered and an assessment made on how to respond to the incident based on its severity and other characteristics. The intervention was made and followed-up on until staff were satisfied the issue was resolved. The process was documented throughout and reports were sent to the intervention team to be reviewed. It is a comprehensive and detailed system, but it is also flexible to the different needs of each situation and there was no strict timeline on reporting (Allen, 2009).

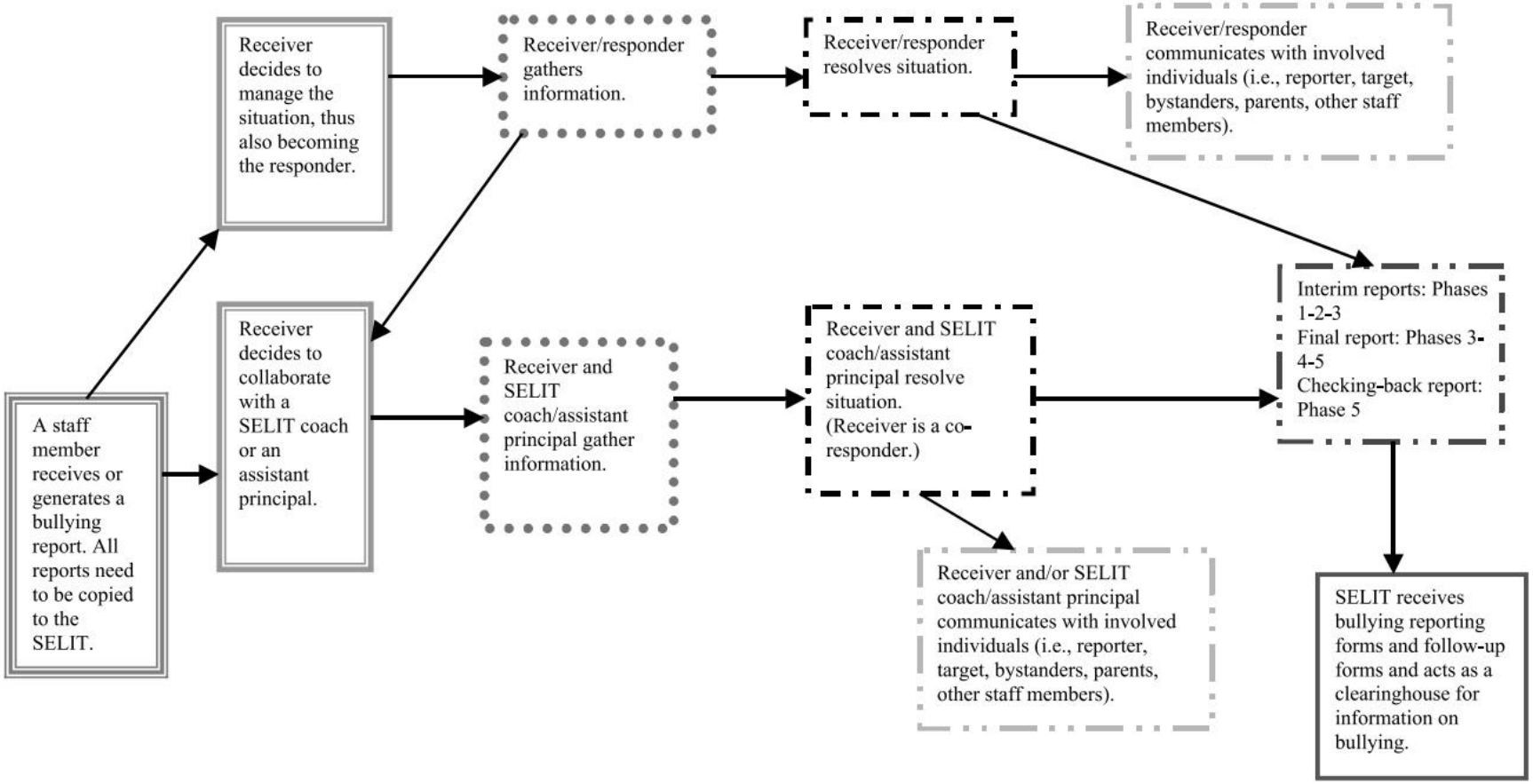
***Intervention*.** The interventions themselves were characterized as non-punitive and student-centered (Allen, 2009). The focus was not on responding to the specific bullying behaviours themselves, but rather to understand the dynamics of the situation and intervene at the peer group level. Intervening adults met with the youth involved, including the target, bully (or bullies), and bystanders in separate individual meetings. First the target was interviewed to discern what their feelings about the situation were. Then there was an attempt made to elicit empathy and support for the target from the other involved students, including the bully themselves, in order to change the social dynamic of the group and disrupt the power imbalance that led to the bullying. Students were encouraged to focus on problem-solving and taking responsibility for each other's well-being.

Figure 5.1. Process flow of the Student Support System.



From Allen, 2009, p. 73

Figure 5.2. Documentation and response flow of the Student Support System.



From Allen, 2009, p. 74

Although not explicitly identified as such, this approach is consistent with the restorative practices model and its focus on restoring relationships over allocating blame (e.g., Drewery, 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008). However, in contrast to intervention styles such as mediations or circle conferencing, there was a deliberate decision made to meet with the students involved separately rather than in a group to disrupt the bully's ability to exert social influence in a group setting (Allen, 2009).

Other intervention approaches included the use of non-disciplinary family or student meetings where the behaviour was moderate or mild in nature, with the focus on generating solutions and changing behaviour (Allen, 2009). Meetings such as these were facilitated by one or two staff, typically including a coach from the intervention team and a mental health professional, with check-ins and follow-up contact as needed. These meetings were non-punitive and were not entered into the student's discipline record.

While this approach was non-punitive overall, there was still an option for students to be diverted with a discipline referral if the severity of the situation warranted it (Allen, 2009). The SSS and the school's discipline process were complementary and could operate at the same time.

***Implementation*.** The program was piloted for a year and then announced to the school the following year (Allen, 2009). Its implementation was supplemented with a student-made video to introduce the topic of bullying, school-wide assemblies to explain the new system, classroom presentations by teachers, and separate presentations to parents (Allen, 2010). Many facets of the program were already in place informally before the program was officially implemented (Allen, 2009).

Evaluation support

The program was evaluated using a pre-post comparison over two years, assessing self-reported perceptions of bullying and victimization by the students and staff (Allen, 2010). All of the reported outcomes were significant and generally positive, though most were small. Students reported decreased bullying, increased victimization (attributed to improved reporting, not actual increases in victimization), increased perceptions of both teacher and student interventions, as well as less fear of bullying and more empathy for victims of bullying. Staff also reported seeing less aggression, increased knowledge and beliefs about bullying, increased confidence in being able to cope with bullying, and stronger perceptions of the adequacy of the school's response to bullying problems (Allen, 2010). Overall the findings were promising over a fairly short intervention and measurement period. Unfortunately, there was minimal documentation available on the intervention at this point in time and no evidence that the program has been replicated at any other sites yet.

Lessons for RAP

While the Student Support System represents a different approach to the issue of bullying and conflict in schools, there are some notable similarities between the two programs. Both approaches are oriented toward responding to students in a non-punitive fashion to foster change and both aim to address the school climate as a whole in addition to individual behaviours. Both programs include aspects of including other adults in the school through referrals and collaboration in delivering interventions. A major point of difference is that the SSS is managed by an in-school team of school personnel in contrast to a single RAP worker, although RAP workers often collaborate and work with other school staff.

The critical feature of the SSS is the degree to which it has been defined as a process, outlining concrete steps to be taken in addressing bullying incidents with a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities involved. This enhances the likelihood that the steps will be followed consistently despite the complexity of the situations, while also allowing for flexibility in response to the needs of each situation. The integrated reporting process generates useful data to support the interventions themselves as well as overall program integrity. While RAP's processes would be different due to operational differences between the two programs, this serves as a useful reference point as to what kind of program documentation could support RAP in pursuing implementation fidelity and dissemination in the future.

Further reading

Allen, K. P. (2009). Dealing with Bullying and Conflict through a Collaborative Intervention Process: The Social and Emotional Learning Intervention Team. *School Social Work Journal, 33*(2), 70-85.

Allen, K. P. (2010). A bullying intervention system in high school: A two-year school-wide follow-up. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 36*(3), 83-92.

5.4 Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiatives

Three other programs identified in the literature bear some discussion. Each were programs implemented as part of the federally-funded Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) project in the US, which was undertaken with the goal to reduce youth violence through school-community partnerships (Massey et al., 2007; Telleen, Kim & Pesce, 2009). Because there is a recognized dearth of strong evaluative research in this area, the SS/HS grants were also intended partly to remedy this, providing funds to evaluate as well as implement program using evaluative best practices (Massey et al., 2005; Telleen et al., 2009). A similar funding initiative was conducted by the National Crime Prevention Centre

between 1998 and 2003 (the Community Mobilization Program), but did not include the same emphasis on evaluation (NCPC, 2011). Each program represents a different approach to addressing school violence in high school settings.

Tyrone SS/HS Initiative

This school-wide, K-12 program was implemented in the Tyrone Area School District, a rural community in the US experiencing high levels of poverty (Welsh, Domitrovich, Bierman & Lang, 2003). Faculty at a local university helped develop the programming, including a range of components targeting different grade levels with age-appropriate methods. Secondary school-specific components included after-school academic support, transitional support for students entering high school, health education curriculum, and a 'motivational resource room'. Other major components of the program were the addition of school-based mental health providers and an in-school suspension program. The suspension program integrated the services of counsellors, teachers, and school resource officers, who helped the students meet their needs with regard to mental health, legal, and academic issues respectively while on suspension.

Evaluation support. Evaluation of the program was found to be challenging due to the complexity of its design, particularly where the program was open to all students and therefore comparison groups were lacking (Welsh et al., 2003). A multi-method approach was used to compensate for this, assigning patterns of program use, quality of delivery, staff perceptions of safety (using qualitative methods), and one randomized control trial to test a specific program component. The results of the randomized control trial were not available for this review, but overall it was reported that perceptions of the program were positive (Welsh et al., 2003). The program was seen as centralizing resources within the school which increased their accessibility, and overall the process built upon and increased collaboration and communication among stakeholders, including improved integration of education and law enforcement services.

It was noted that this program has struggled with sustainability due to lack of available funding following the end of the SS/HS grant period and that there were few models of dissemination available to support the program being implemented elsewhere (Welsh et al., 2003).

Lessons for RAP. This program is one of the few to have a similar delivery format as RAP in terms of introducing new personnel to the school; in this case mental health providers complemented the existing school psychology staff. This was seen as a positive feature because the school staff had more expertise in the educational system context, while the external providers had stronger case management backgrounds and other useful

skill sets in terms of crisis management (Welsh et al., 2003). A parallel might be drawn between this and the contribution that RAP workers make in the school environment.

Another similar challenge experienced by this program was the difficulty of evaluating such a complex program delivered with multiple individual components and at many different levels (Welsh et al., 2003). The strategy used here is the same being taken by RAP, which is to use multiple evaluation methods, in this case ranging from qualitative assessments to randomized control trials, to approach the evaluation from multiple angles as resources allowed.

Think First

This anger management and conflict resolution training program was designed to build social and emotional competencies in students in order to reduce problem behaviours (Massey et al., 2007). It was a structured 10-week program implemented in two formats. A pull-out format was used for students with discipline issues who were referred to an outside program led by a trained facilitator. There was also an in-class format where a teacher delivered the program as part of an existing and optional peer mediation class. The program itself had already been established in the literature as a successful intervention in previous implementations.

***Evaluation support*.** Because the focus of the program is skill-building, it was decided that assessment at the student level was most appropriate, in terms of whether youth were exhibiting changes in their attitudes and classroom behaviour (Massey et al., 2007). The fact that two program delivery formats were used presented an interesting opportunity for comparison, although the groups were not equivalent or randomly assigned. Interestingly, while both groups showed significant improvements in most of the desired domains, for the in-class group the effects were large while for the pull-out group they were only moderate. This despite the fact that the pull-out group initially had lower scores in these domains and therefore more room for improvement (Massey et al., 2007). The researchers attributed the relative success of this format to the fact that it was less disruptive than removing students from class, partly based on the higher satisfaction reported among teachers and parents for this format.

***Lessons for RAP*.** The Think First program provides an example of the utility of using comparisons groups in evaluation, as this may reveal surprising but important information about how program effectiveness can vary across different contexts. It also highlights how experimental findings alone can be difficult to interpret without additional contextual information, particularly when results are unexpected.

On-Campus Intervention Program

OCIP was designed as a suspension-alternative program with the goal of retaining students in school and providing them with support and counselling rather than further disrupting their academics and excluding them from the school environment (Massey et al., 2007). Students at risk for suspension were instead sent to a separate room in the school where they were supervised by a teacher and given support by a counsellor, either individually or in a group setting, to address any emotional or behavioural difficulties the student was experiencing. The program was implemented over two semesters with over 100 youth being diverted through the process.

Evaluation support. Because the program implementation period was relatively short, it was not expected that students would exhibit individual-level changes large enough to be measured so instead the evaluation focused on school-level indicators (i.e., discipline referrals, for violence in particular, and drop-out rate; Massey et al., 2007). Because random assignment to the intervention was not possible, matched comparison groups in a quasi-experimental design were used instead. For each semester's cohort of OCIP-involved students, another sample of students from the school was randomly selected whose composition matched the intervention group in terms of frequency and severity of discipline referrals, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. Data were compared retrospectively at four time-points (immediately before and after the intervention semester and for two semesters afterward as follow-up).

It was found that for students who participated in OCIP, there was an initial increase in the number of discipline referrals, followed by a levelling off during the next two semesters, while the non-intervention comparison group exhibited a steady decline in discipline referrals throughout (Massey et al. 2007). The trends were the same for both cohorts of students and for both general and violence-related discipline referrals, and ultimately there was no advantage in discipline referrals for students who had been diverted. However, it was found that students who participated in OCIP were significantly less likely than the matched sample to drop out of school within that semester.

Lessons for RAP. OCIP is similar to RAP in terms of providing alternatives to suspensions which keep youth in school and connect them with resources rather than excluding them and disrupting their academics further. Where RAP differs is in its strengths-based approach which seeks to actively improve students by building on their existing positive assets in addition to addressing their difficulties and challenges. RAP's approach is also more comprehensive and multi-faceted in terms of providing conflict mediation as well as prevention activities.

While support for the program was mixed, the study design itself provides useful suggestions on how to approach similar evaluations, such as the use of matched comparison groups to improve the validity of the comparison in the absence of random assignment. However, the researchers were unable to account for the initial spike in referrals which occurred for both intervention groups, signalling that further investigation was warranted into how the program was operating, which may have shed light on the reason for the disappointing results with respect to discipline referrals.

Further reading

Massey, O. T., Boroughs, M. & Armstrong, K. H. (2007). School violence interventions in the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative: Evaluation of two early intervention programs. *Journal of School Violence, 6*(2), 57-74.

Telleen, S., Kim, Y. O. & Pesce, R. (2009). An ecological developmental community initiative to reduce youth violence: Safe schools/healthy students. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 37*(4), 326-338.

Welsh, J., Domitrovich, C. E., Bierman, K. & Lang, J. (2003). Promoting safe schools and healthy students in rural Pennsylvania. *Psychology in the Schools, 40*(5), 457-472.

Key Lessons from Selected Programs

- While RAP shares features with many other programs, the specific configuration of RAP's elements is unique in the literature, as are many other programs developed to suit specific contexts
- Each of the identified programs provides a different example of how to incorporate structure into program design:
    - The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* has a highly structured dissemination plan and overall framework, supported by features such as program-specific training and use of an implementation committee
    - The *Making the Smart Choice* program uses a structured intervention approach with an established curriculum delivered consistently with the use of specially trained staff and a detailed program manual
    - The *Student Support System* has a step-by-step intervention and incident-tracking model with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and specific actions to take
- While RAP is not interchangeable with any of the programs described here, RAP would benefit from being described in terms of its goals and processes with the same level of detail and clarity as these other programs have been described
- The OBPP is the only program of those identified to have been successfully disseminated, in part due to its adaptability as well as its effective dissemination planning, and it serves as an example of how to effectively approach large-scale dissemination
- Evaluation of such complex programs can be challenging and multiple studies using different approaches is ideal to provide converging evidence of success and to fully understand the nature of the program's effects, if any

6. Overarching Themes

The themes and findings discussed in this section were not specific to any one term, framework, or program. Rather these themes were universally present in the literature, including issues of implementation, sustainability, and dissemination/replication. Of these, implementation was the most heavily discussed and significant concept.

6.1 Implementation

'Implementation' refers to the carrying out of the operational components of the program design (i.e., delivering the intended program activities in their intended manner to the intended program recipients using the intended staff and resources; Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, 2004). This does not include achieving the desired outcomes which are the goals of the program activities, but correct implementation is required before intended outcomes can be realized (though even a well-implemented program may not realize its goals if the theory and assumption behind the program are inaccurate).

Importance of implementation

The most common and resounding theme in this literature review was the importance of proper program implementation in achieving desired program effects. Nearly every meta-analysis included in this review which assessed implementation as a moderating factor found that implementation quality was a significant and often one of the most important factors in whether and to what extent a program achieved its goals (e.g., Catalano et al., 2002; Durlak et al., 2011; Garrard & Lipsey, 2007; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). Implementation challenges were also frequently implicated in evaluations which found weak or non-existent program effects (e.g., Lane et al., 2007; Losey, 2009; McCluskey et al., 2008; Olweus & Limber, 2010; Wright et al., 2007). Overall there is reasonable evidence in the literature that implementation integrity significantly impacts program success; though, as with other aspects of the literature, there is a need for more consistent reporting on implementation quality in research and evaluation publications (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

Implementation itself can be a lengthy and involved process, depending on the complexity of the program in question. The SWPBIS framework has been found to take approximately three years to fully implement within a new school (Sugai & Flannery, 2009). There are also multiple aspects to implementation and program fidelity (Savignac & Dunbar, 2014):

- **Adherence:** Delivery of the program as designed, in terms of its components, methods, materials, processes, setting, etc.

- **Exposure:** Appropriate dosage, in terms of the number, frequency, and length of exposure to program components
- **Quality:** Use of high-quality methods by appropriately trained and qualified staff who are confident and practiced in their skills
- **Participant responsiveness:** Participants are engaged, motivated, and involved in the program experience
- **Program differentiation:** Unique characteristics of the program that distinguish it from other interventions

Fortunately, it has also been noted that 100% implementation fidelity is an unrealistic and unnecessary goal (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). It is unrealistic because every site will have unique contextual features or resource constraints which may require adaptations to the program or limit certain aspects of implementation, and there is inevitable variation in how a program operates across sites. It is unnecessary because while implementation fidelity does affect program outcomes, many programs are still successful with partial but relatively high levels of implementation (60% is common and 80% is good; Durlak & DuPre, 2008). In order to determine the overall level of implementation, however, it is first necessary to clearly define what the implementation requirements of a particular program are.

While RAP has already been implemented at several schools, the factors and strategies discussed below may pertain to future implementations of the program, particularly if the program is intended to be disseminated beyond the direct oversight of the program designers. These factors are also important to consider when determining the quality of implementation achieved so far.

Factors affecting implementation

There are many factors which can impact program implementation. Key factors reported in the literature included buy-in and uptake, organizational capacity and access to resources, adequate and effective training and program materials, program fit, and others. These factors are summarized here:

***Buy-in and uptake*.** This refers to the degree to which stakeholders perceive the program as important, useful, and feasible (buy-in) as well as their actual participation in the program, either as deliverers, supporters, or recipients (uptake). Effective program implementation requires a supportive facilitating context (Savignac & Dunbar, 2014). Important stakeholders in school-based programs include school staff, program staff, administrators, students, community members, and funders, as well as anyone else whose opinion of the program may be influential to its viability.

- **Staff:** Staff buy-in was the most frequently noted area of implementation challenge, particularly for programs meant to be delivered by staff (Kenney & McNamara, 2003; Limber, 2011; Mathews, McIntosh, Frank & May, 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008; Standing et al., 2012; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014). Staff may be actively resistant to new programming, or they may be simply inadequately prepared and unable to participate in it effectively despite a desire to do so. Sources of staff resistance can include values which are contrary to the values of the programming (McCluskey et al., 2008), a perception that the demands of the program are too high relative to the time available and other competing priorities, such as educating students (Olweus & Limber, 2010), confusion about what the purpose of the programming is, and simply feeling a lack of ownership of and investment in the program (Standing et al., 2012).
- **Administrators:** Administrator buy-in and support was the second most commented-on aspect of this implementation barrier. Although not often responsible for delivering programs, administrators have a special role to play in program implementation. They must act as leaders and advocates for the program within their schools in order to support the buy-in from their staff and students (Durlak & Dupre, 2008; Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Kenney & McNamara, 2003; Massey et al., 2005; Standing et al., 2012). Effective administrative leadership also means ensuring that the necessary infrastructure, communication systems, and resources are available to support the program, and assisting program implementers in navigating the school bureaucracy (Flannery & Sugai, 2009).
- **Students:** Student buy-in is sometimes overlooked as an implementation factor. However, as the majority of programs are voluntary in nature, initiatives which do not inspire the participation of youth to engage fully with the intervention are unlikely to succeed (Benne & Garrard, 2003).
- **Community members:** The impact of community member engagement and support on implementation depends on how much involvement the community is intended to have in the program. However, community resistance to a program, particularly when parents are involved, can present a substantial impediment (Breunlin et al., 2006; Olweus & Limber, 2010). Programs which are intended to have a substantial family or community engagement component absolutely require high buy-in from these stakeholder groups.
- **Political and social climate:** Although not a stakeholder group specifically, the overall political and social climate and general receptivity to the program or such programming in general on a regional or national level can have a substantial impact on implementation, particularly in terms of the presence (or

absence) of supportive legislation, policies, and appropriate sources of funding (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014; Welsh et al., 2003).

***Organizational capacity and access to resources*.** Another major factor influencing program implementation identified in the literature was organizational capacity and ability to access sufficient resources to carry out the program. Organizational capacity refers to the organization's existing infrastructure, policies, and resources (including staffing, space, time, and funding; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Savignac & Dunbar). Resources which are not already part of the organization, such as program materials, specific training, evaluation and monitoring capacity, must also be readily accessible, both in terms of availability and cost. Typical costs associated with program implementation include purchase of program materials, time and cost associated with training staff, acquisition of new staff or consultants, and measurement instruments. Even relatively inexpensive programs which are intended to have minimal on-going financial considerations may still require an initial investment of funding (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

***Adequate and effective training and program materials*.** In addition to having access to resources, the resources themselves must be appropriate and useful. Inappropriate or inadequate training can lead to staff who are incapable of or unwilling to properly implement the program (Kenney & McNamara, 2003). Training and technical assistance should also be on-going to ensure the sustainable implementation of the program (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Program materials which do not motivate or engage youth, such as materials that are out-of-date or culturally irrelevant, are also unlikely to support good program implementation (Benne & Garrard, 2003).

***Program fit*.** Also related to buy-in and the appropriateness of program materials is the idea of 'program fit', or the match between the program design and the implementation site. If the needs the program is intended to address are not the priority needs at the site, then this may hinder implementation as the program may not be seen as relevant (Benne & Garrard, 2003; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Kenney & McNamara, 2003). In some cases, stakeholders may need to be convinced that a need exists if it is an issue of perception (Breulin et al., 2006). However, program implementation should not be pursued without first confirming that a need is present.

Moreover, sometimes while a need may be present and recognized by all involved, the program approach itself may not fit well with the intended site and its organizational norms and protocols (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). If there is a fundamental difference in philosophies about how to approach the issue or operational constraints that cannot be overcome, then another program may be more suitable.

***Other*.** A number of other factors were referenced throughout the evaluation research literature, including:

- **Setting complexity:** It was noted several times that high school settings can be more challenging than elementary and middle school settings because there are more students, larger class sizes, and students move between multiple different classes each day (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Limber, 2011; McCluskey et al., 2008; Nitza, 2009; Olweus & Limber, 2010).
- **Supporting research and evidence:** Programs that had more research support and evidence of program effectiveness were easier to implement, likely because it was easier to justify them and solicit support for their implementation in addition to such programs being more well-established and effectively designed (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Horner et al., 2014; Massey et al., 2005
- **Competing approaches or multiple uncoordinated interventions:** Failing to coordinate different approaches under a unifying strategy or attempting to implement ideologically incompatible approaches (e.g., restorative practices with zero tolerance approaches) can lead to fragmentation of efforts and competition for limited resources (Olweus & Limber, 2011; Zins et al., 2007).

Recommendations to improve implementation

While many potential pitfalls to implementation were identified in the literature, several solutions and strategies for success were also highlighted. Key recommendations included:

***Promote buy-in and program ownership from all stakeholders*.** This is a general recommendation due to the significance of this factor as an implementation barrier discussed above. However, it can be accomplished in many different ways. Involving stakeholders directly in the planning and implementation process is one method (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Massey et al., 2005). Providing evidence that the program is relevant and needed is another (e.g., results of school surveys or discipline data; Breulin et al., 2006; Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Kenney & McNamara, 2003). The other recommendations outlined below can also promote buy-in.

***Seek out champions and supportive policies/structures*.** Several studies mentioned the importance of actively seeking out not only stakeholder engagement, but high-level support from administrators, policymakers, and influential members of the school and wider community (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Horner et al., 2014; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014; Standing et al., 2012; Zins & Elias, 2007). This type of leadership and

support can be instrumental in establishing a program and reducing barriers such as access to resources and funding.

***Define program framework/components/goals clearly*.** Programs which are not well-defined are necessarily more difficult to implement, or even to assess in whether they have been implemented at all (Garrard & Lipsey, 2007; Hussey & Flannery, 2007). All aspects of a program should be defined and explained in documentation that is accessible to anyone who is implementing the program. This includes what the program should look like in operation, what its underlying rationale and assumptions are, and what its goals are. This is especially important where programs are complex and multi-component (Standing et al., 2012). Having well-articulated program goals and components can also increase stakeholder support because it reduces confusion, promotes buy-in to the program theory, and supports effective program delivery (McCluskey et al., 2008; Standing et al., 2012).

***Allow for controlled adaptation*.** While fidelity is important, so is flexibility. Part of the process of specifying program components is the identification of which components are essential to the program integrity and which can be modified to better suit each individual school (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Allowing aspects of the program to be tailored can increase stakeholder engagement and investment in the program by increasing their sense of ownership (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Smith, 2011). School-based programs are often subject to adaptation, usually in response to logistical challenges or lack of resources, and often these adaptations negatively impact program success (Savignac & Dunbar, 2014). However, planned and controlled adaptations made proactively to address concerns in advance rather than reactively as problems arise can be more successful (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014).

***Use data to plan and monitor implementation*.** The use of data to support implementation was heavily emphasized in the research. It has already been noted that data-driven decision-making is a key feature of both the SWPBIS (Flannery & Sugai, 2009) and SEL frameworks (Zins et al., 2007). Using data to help plan programs means assessing the extent and nature of the need for the program (e.g., school climate surveys) as well as the existing resources available (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Zins & Elias, 2007). This can help ensure program fit as well as enhance buy-in by providing concrete evidence of the need for programming to stakeholders (Breunlin et al., 2006).

On-going program monitoring, such as the type of monitoring recently established for RAP (Camman & Wormith, 2013), is also critical for effective implementation (Garrard & Lipsey. 2007; Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014; Wright et al., 2007). Meaningful program data helps track implementation fidelity by showing which aspects of the program are being implemented and which are not, assuming the program has been well-defined. It can also act as an important feedback mechanism for those delivering or

participating in the program. (Teaching staff at one school reported that receiving regular data reports showing their progress were validating and a means of recognizing their hard work; Flannery & Sugai, 2009). Engaging staff directly in data collection and assessment can also increase sense of ownership of the program and buy-in (Mathews et al., 2014), although if the requirements are onerous it may be perceived as a burden and become an implementation barrier instead (Benne & Garrard, 2003). In general, program monitoring should be conducted in a consistent and planned manner with attention to the quality and accuracy of the data collected (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Wright et al., 2007).

***Other recommendations*.** Other implementation-related recommendations arising from the literature included using coordinated and integrated approaches to multiple activities addressing similar outcomes in order to reduce duplication of efforts (Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2000; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014); creating implementation teams or committees to oversee and manage the implementation process at each site (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Limber, 2011); and providing on-going training and support for those delivering the program (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Garrard & Lipsey, 2007; Kenney & McNamara, 2003; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014; Zins & Elias, 2007).

Lessons for RAP

Presently RAP has embraced some of the above recommendations more than others. RAP has strong buy-in from many stakeholders, including a number of champions within the schools as well as the wider community. Relationships with school, community and government partners have helped support the program and ensure access to sufficient funding for continued operation and growth. RAP's recently implemented program performance monitoring system (Camman & Wormith, 2013, 2014) has improved the program's capacity for using data to monitor its implementation. Though, as noted in a previous report (Camman & Wormith, 2014), there is still room for improvement in terms of the clarity of all of the program's components and clear standards for what constitutes high quality implementation of the program, as well as which elements of the program are necessary for program integrity and which can be adapted to suit particular contexts and needs.

Further reading

Durlak, J. A. & DuPre, E. P. (2008). Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41*(3-4), 327-350.

Savignac, J. & Dunbar, L. (2014). *Guide on the implementation of evidence-based programs*. Ottawa: Public Safety Canada.

6.2 Sustainability

Sustainability is a noted challenge for many programs, particularly with regard to funding (Massey et al., 2005; Welsh et al., 2003). Presently RAP is working toward its own sustainable funding model. Some of the sustainability practices identified in the evaluation literature were not appropriate for RAP (e.g., charging students a nominal fee to participate; Breunlin et al., 2005). One relevant approach is the use of evaluation data aid with grant writing and lobbying for external support (Welsh et al., 2003), which RAP is pursuing. Other sustainability strategies largely focused on increasing capacity within schools to take over from external staff and paid consultants, such as using train-the-trainer models (Breunlin et al., 2005; Olweus & Limber, 2010). However, in RAP, the RAP workers themselves represent the 'increased internal capacity' of the school for managing conflict, and therefore this strategy is not relevant.

For well-established and long-standing frameworks and programs such as PBIS, SEL, and OBPP, sustainability also appeared to be associated with developing a significant infrastructure around the program itself, with external oversight bodies to maintain quality standards; promote, conduct, and disseminate research; pursue partnerships; and lobby for supportive policies (e.g., the Olweus Group, the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning; Olweus & Limber, 2010; Payton et al., 2000). These approaches are also sustained by extensive networks of partnerships with school, community, and government stakeholders. As discussed previously, while RAP does not have the same level of infrastructure, institutionalized support, and supporting body of evaluative evidence yet, progress toward these goals is being made.

Unfortunately, although sustainability is a critical issue, it was largely overlooked with regard to school-based intervention programming of this nature due to limited long-term follow-up in the available evaluation research. Nonetheless, the ultimate goal of most intervention planning is to create a sustainable program (Savignac & Dunbar, 2014; Smith, 2011). Many of the factors which affect implementation also affect sustainability, such as stakeholder support, organizational capacity, and on-going access to sufficient resources, and therefore the recommendations outlined above apply to sustainability as much as to implementation. While it is not a guarantee, well-implemented programs are more likely to garner the necessary support to continue than poorly implemented and poorly performing programs.

6.3 Dissemination/Replication

Finally, a third general theme from the evaluation literature was the dissemination and replication of programming. Dissemination is closely linked with implementation as

programs which are implemented well are also more likely to be replicable (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014). Dissemination of a program can be difficult and resource-intensive, however, and may require a considerable investment of time and effort (Horner et al. 2004). While the necessary level of program and dissemination infrastructure may be beyond RAP's present needs or capacity, it may still be of relevance to RAP in the future, should the program prove to be successful.

Only one of the highlighted high-school based programs in this review has been successfully replicated on a wide scale (OBPP; Olweus & Limber, 2010). The SWPBIS framework has also been implemented widely (Flannery & Sugai, 2009), although as a framework rather than a specific program, the various implementations cannot necessarily be described as exact replications. Similarly, the SEL framework is widely used and referenced (Zins & Elias, 2007; Zins et al., 2007), but the specific programming used at each site varies greatly and again does not necessarily constitute replication.

Nonetheless, each of these approaches share common features which facilitated their dissemination: 1) their components were clearly defined and well-articulated, 2) a body of supporting evidence had been accumulated, and 3) specific measures to promote dissemination were included in the program/model designs themselves. For example, the developers of the OPBB created a training model to support dissemination as well as complementary instruments to assess levels of bullying (Olweus & Limber, 2010). For both the SWPBIS and SEL frameworks, specific implementation guidelines have been identified and shared (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Payton et al., 2000). The SWPBIS model has also been complemented with the creation of standardized school assessment measures available freely online to those interested in implementing the framework (Flannery & Sugai, 2009). Once again, the presence of an organized oversight group assisted with the development and distribution of these tools and guidelines (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Olweus & Limber, 2010; Payton et al., 2000).

Key Lessons from Overarching Themes

- The three critical overarching themes which emerged from the literature were the inter-related issues of implementation, sustainability, and dissemination
- Implementation received the most focus. There was strong consensus among researchers and program developers that programs must be effectively implemented before they can be meaningfully evaluated for outcomes and strong implementation predicts larger program effects
- Many factors impact implementation, among them buy-in and uptake (especially from staff and administrators), organizational capacity and access to resources, adequate and effective training and program materials, and program fit
- Recommendations to support strong implementation included enhancing buy-in from all stakeholders (including seeking out champions), defining and communicating program components and goals clearly, allowing for controlled adaptation, and using data to plan and monitor implementation
- RAP has a great deal of stakeholder support and has begun using data to support implementation, but can continue to work on developing clear and well-defined standards for what constitutes appropriate implementation of the program and what aspects of the program can be adapted
- Sustainability was identified as an important theme but with minimal discussion of specific guidelines for achieving sustainability. RAP's commitment to evaluation and partnerships with other organizations are comparable to sustainability strategies used by other well-established programs and frameworks, however
- Dissemination was also an identified theme, though again relatively few concrete recommendations for supporting dissemination were available in the literature. Widely-disseminated programs and frameworks tended to have well-defined components, a large body of supporting evidence, and specific guidelines for how to implement the program effectively in new sites

7. Evaluation Considerations

This section will discuss themes identified in the evaluation literature specific to program evaluation. Identified themes included:

- The general **role of evaluation** in intervention programming, including contributions and standards
- The selection of appropriate **evaluation study designs**, including discussion of quantitative and qualitative approaches
- Two important aspects of **data collection**, including the selection of meaningful indicators and appropriate measures, as well as examples of several types of relevant measures for future evaluation studies of RAP
- The complementary role of **program monitoring** with regard to outcome evaluation

7.1 Role of Evaluation

Unsurprisingly, the practice of evaluation was strongly supported. There were a number of positive benefits attributed to program evaluation, including using evaluation results to help identify problems and challenges in the program and generate solutions (Benne & Garrard, 2003). Evaluation can help identify both the intended and unintended outcomes of a program (Massey et al., 2007), as well as determine which aspects of a program are having which effects, if any (Breunlin et al., 2002). Evaluation data, if generated thoughtfully, can support program decision-making (Flannery & Sugai, 2009), and is an advantage when seeking funding support (Massey et al., 2005).

Researchers have cautioned that failing to evaluate programs can lead to a false sense of security that meaningful action has been taken to address serious social problems, when in fact the actions are not having the intended effect at all (Farrell et al., 2001). When programs do not work as expected, while evaluation results may be disappointing, they may also have significant benefits for cost-savings. In one large-scale, 10-year implementation of a comprehensive and longitudinal K-12 SEL intervention program, it was found that ultimately the program as designed had only minimal impact on the youth involved and that the cost of implementing the program far outweighed any realized savings in reduced future mental healthcare referrals (Foster, 2010).

While not the desired outcome, the use of evaluation in this instance prevented further costly investment in a model that was not satisfactory but whose scale alone might have given the impression of guaranteed success. In less extreme examples, evaluation can

be used to guide the program development process, track progress toward goals, identify problems as they arise, and suggest solutions to keep the program on target (Benne & Garrard, 2003).

Ideally, evaluation is built into the program development and implementation process from the outset (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Horner et al., 2014; Zins et al., 2007) and indeed this is a recommended implementation practice by the National Crime Prevention Centre of Canada (NCPC, 2011). In practice, this rarely occurs, though advantages of doing so are to improve the overall rigour of the evaluation, enhance stakeholder participation, detect and respond to potential areas of difficulty earlier, and manage resources efficiently (Benne & Garrard, 2003). Regardless, evaluation should assess both program process and outcomes, should be guided by valid theoretical models relevant to the program being evaluated, should be sensitive to the capacity of the program and supporting organizations, and should support continuous improvement with results shared with all stakeholders (Farrell et al., 2001; Horner et al., 2014; Welsh et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2007).

7.2 Evaluation Study Design

Evaluation design refers to the combination of elements of the evaluation study and its methodology (e.g., if it is qualitative or not; if quantitative, whether it is experimental, quasi-experimental, or non-experimental; whether it is longitudinal or cross-sectional; what type of data are collected; what the unit of analysis is; etc.). There is a wide range of evaluation designs which can be employed, and each design has its own benefits and disadvantages (Farrell et al., 2001). Often in evaluation research, there are many logistical constraints on the types of evaluation designs that can be used (Massey et al., 2007). For example, randomized control trials with the random assignment of participants to intervention and control groups are often not practical or ethical to employ in situations where all students are intended to have access to the program immediately.

Most researchers emphasize the importance of using an array of methodological approaches, as no single design is ideal or appropriate to answer all evaluation questions (Benne & Garrard, 2003; Massey et al., 2007; Swearer et al., 2010). This is particularly true for complex, multi-component programs (NCPC, 2011; Welsh et al., 2003). This finding is consistent with the recommendation of a previous report on the use of a multi-method evaluation approach, specifically the combining of qualitative and quantitative methods (Camman & Wormith, 2014). Moreover, well-established programs and frameworks tend to have been evaluated multiple times in many locations using many different types of evaluation designs (e.g., Olweus & Limber, 2010; Zins et al., 2007). This suggests that RAP's current approach to evaluation is consistent with the standard in the evaluation literature.

Quantitative designs

Quantitative designs were quite common in the program evaluation literature. Such designs include randomized control trials, or 'true' experimental designs, as well quasi-experimental designs that lack randomized assignment but include elements such as pre-post comparisons and non-equivalent group comparisons (e.g., intervention group compared with waiting list group), longitudinal and cohort studies, and combinations thereof (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). There was no single 'gold standard' evaluation design—rather, appropriate evaluations designs were those could be carried out with available resources and provide meaningful and timely information to decision-makers.

Simple pre-post comparisons, where data from an individual time-point before the intervention are compared with data from a single time-point after the intervention are the most common (Ting, 2009), but this design is relatively weak as it is does not control for potential complicating factors, such as natural changes over time. Stronger evaluation designs include multiple points of comparison both before and after an intervention as well as comparison groups to rule out other competing factors (Farrell et al., 2001; James et al., 2006). Evaluations which use stronger designs have been linked with larger program effects overall (Garrard & Lipsey, 2007). As discussed, it can be difficult to include sophisticated design controls in every study, but at minimum it is important to include comparison groups where feasible (Farrell et al., 2001).

Follow-up data to check if program effects are stable or persistent over time is also very important and often not included in evaluation designs, despite the unique insights longitudinal data can provide (Farrel et al., 2001; Lester et al., 2013). This is especially true where the use of comparison groups is limited for practical reasons (Olweus & Limber, 2010). In some cases, lack of detected program effects may be more attributable to an insufficient period of follow-up to allow changes to become large enough to be measureable than actual program failure (Losey, 2009).

Quantitative data can be collected and compared at the individual student level or the aggregate school level, depending on what is being measured (Farrell et al., 2001). For example, if the outcome of interest is changes in the school environment, a school-level comparison would be best, whereas if the goal is changes in individual student behaviour, student-level data would be more appropriate. Different evaluation questions necessitate different evaluation approaches, and multiple approaches can be complementary with each other. Common sources of quantitative data include archival school data, behavioural checklists, and surveys, but specific measures and data collection techniques will be discussed further below.

Qualitative designs

Qualitative studies are those which produce rich textual data rather than numeric and statistical data. Common types of qualitative study designs include the use of interviews, focus groups, field observation, and can range from hundreds of interviews with individual subjects (e.g., deLara, 2008) to a single case study of an individual school or student (e.g., Standing et al., 2012). It is not uncommon for quantitative and qualitative data collection to be blended, such as the use of surveys combined with follow-up interviews and focus groups (Benne & Garrard, 2003). Quantitative and qualitative methods can complement each other well. For example, in one study, discussions in focus groups on the nature of bullying were used to create hypothetical bullying scenarios to be rated using a quantitative measure (Allen, 2009). Qualitative data can also be used to help explain quantitative results, such as following up on survey responses with interviews to gain more insight into what students meant by their answers (Little, 2008).

Qualitative studies do not necessarily provide evidence of a program's general effectiveness because quantitative methods are better suited to assessing representative samples of students. However, qualitative evaluation designs can provide deeper insights into the reasons why programs succeed or fail. For example, Standing and colleagues (2012) conducted a single case study of one student involved in a restorative practices intervention. Ultimately, the student made progress but was not a 'success' in the sense of staying out of trouble in school as he was suspended by the end of the school year for a major incident. However, in documenting this student's experiences in detail, it was evident that the student was motivated to change, engaged with the intervention efforts, and showed in concrete ways that he was capable of learning and applying new skills and behaviours. However, support for this student's efforts varied by classroom—some teachers were very supportive and participated in the intervention with him, others nominally participated but did not adhere to the program values (e.g., took a disciplinary rather than restorative approach), and others rejected the process entirely. The student therefore made short-term gains, but was unable to maintain them throughout the school environment. This points to a significant barrier to program implementation and the need for widespread support and new competencies among teaching staff for such an intervention to be successful. The researchers also recommended that this case study approach be repeated with a small group of students to generate additional insights (Standing et al., 2012), an approach strongly reminiscent of the success case method recommended in a previous RAP report (Camman & Wormith, 2014).

A similar example of the value of a single case study came from Kenney and McNamara (2003), who reported on the attempt to establish school-wide student problem-solving intervention at several high schools. While the initiative was beset by

implementation challenges and overall was not successful, one classroom in which a history teacher was especially successful at integrating the program content into his curriculum served as a demonstration of what the program might be able to accomplish when implemented well. Students in this class demonstrated increased problem-solving skills and specifically reported that the program was helpful to them. At another school, an administrator who was particularly effective in supporting the program served as an example of appropriate implementation techniques compared to other sites where administrators struggled to support the program (Kenney & McNamara, 2003).

Case study approaches may therefore be especially useful for programs where level and quality of implementation is either poor, or, as in the case of RAP, largely unknown. While efforts are underway to define and standardize RAP's core components, the program is still very much in development. The preliminary implementation assessment reported last year, based on the first two years of program monitoring data, found that some aspects of RAP operated fairly similarly across sites, while others varied. For instance, all RAP workers reported working on students' assets, but there was no consistency in reporting of which assets under which circumstances (Camman & Wormith, 2014). Similarly, all RAP workers delivered the same core services of one-on-one support, conflict mediation, and activities such as classroom presentations, workshops, group programming, and events, but the number and nature of these services, especially for the activities, varied widely. It is as yet unknown to what extent variations in RAP across schools is due to differences in the schools themselves, differences in how RAP workers deliver their services, and differences in how RAP workers conceptualize and report their activities. In the meantime, case study approaches may be especially instructive in learning more about the program, how it operates, and what factors affect it.

7.3 Data Collection

As with evaluation designs, there are many different ways to generate evaluative data for analysis, and no single ideal way. Appropriate data collection methods depend on what is feasible and useful for a given situation. There was considerable discussion in the literature around various aspects of data collection, including how to choose meaningful indicators, how to select appropriate measures, and the different types of measures available.

Choosing meaningful indicators

'Indicators' are operational definitions of outcomes, or the specific and concrete ways that outcomes are represented for assessment purposes. For example, if the outcome is reduced fighting and violence in schools, then an appropriate indicator might be the number of discipline referrals for violent incidents (Morrison, Peterson, O'Farrell, &

Redding, 2004). For an outcome like students' level of social adjustment, this may be represented by such indicators as their level of social skills, the number of friends they have, and if they are rated as being well-liked (Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). For complex outcomes, combining multiple indicators can help capture disparate facets. All outcomes can be operationalized in multiple ways depending on one's research goals, and every indicator has advantages and drawbacks (Farrell et al., 2001).

It is unwise to hinge an evaluation on a single indicator. By looking at multiple related outcomes, a fuller view of program effect can be achieved, especially if not all findings are positive (Farrell et al., 2001; Hussey & Flannery, 2007; Lane et al., 2007). For example, if an evaluation finds that a conflict resolution education intervention increased students' conflict resolution skills but did not decrease fighting, this challenges the program's assumption that learning skills will lead to reduced conflict; if, on the other hand, it is found that skills also did not increase after the intervention, then this may mean that the program's theory is sound, but its execution is flawed (Farrell et al., 2001).

Choosing appropriate indicators relies on having a clear understanding of what is intended to be measured. For instance, in the SS/HS programs discussed in a previous section, the respective evaluations of the On-Campus Intervention Program and the Think First anger management program relied on different indicators because of differences in the programs' designs (Massey et al., 2007). Think First targeted student-level changes primarily, so student-level data in the form of attitudes and classroom behaviours were assessed. With OCIP, it was recognized that the student-level changes may not be immediately apparent within the timeframe of the intervention, and that school-level changes in discipline referrals would be a more appropriate indicator of program success. RAP, as a complex and multi-faceted program with many desired outcomes, is amenable to many different evaluation designs using many different types of indicators, the exact selection of which will depend on evaluation priorities and logistical constraints.

School (archival) data. One particular set of indicators frequently represented in the evaluation research was the use of school-level or archival data. This includes discipline records, suspensions, expulsions, on-campus incidents, drop-out and retention levels, grades and academic performance indicators, and graduation rates (Breunlin et al., 2002; Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Lane et al., 2007; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). These data are often used because they tend to be relevant and persuasive and represent important outcomes in the school in addition to being perceived as relatively objective (Farrell et al., 2001; Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Furlong et al., 2004; Morrison et al., 2004). Due to RAP's desired impact on reducing suspensions as well as conflict generally, the use of school data to assess this outcome has been recommended multiple times (Camman & Wormith, 2011, 2014).

While important and useful, school-level data are not without limitation. Such data must be handled with care and transparency and be assessed for their reliability and validity (Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Furlong et al., 2004). Discipline-related data, especially for less serious incidents, may be subject to bias and under-reporting and may not be sensitive to less dramatic but genuine changes in student behaviour (Farrell et al., 2001; Lane et al., 2007; Morrison et al., 2004). Definitions and collection procedures may change over time, which affects the comparability of data at different time points (Lane et al., 2007). This does not negate the potential utility of school records as a data source, but these data should also be complemented by other types of indicators, such as self-report, behavioural ratings, and direct observation, and conclusions should be drawn with careful regard to the limitations of the data (Lane et al., 2007; Morrison et al., 2004).

Selecting appropriate measures

One of the advantages of archival data such as school records is that the data already exist and must only be extracted and prepared for analysis. However, the majority of the time data for the desired indicator do not yet exist and must be generated. In qualitative studies, data are typically generated through qualitative techniques such as interviews and focus groups, with the specifics of each depending on the research question. For quantitative studies, surveys and questionnaires are among the most common data collection instruments, whether using self-report ratings by students or ratings by teachers and parents (Durlak et al., 2007; Garrard & Lipsey, 2007).

As with other evaluation design decisions, the selection of an appropriate measure depends on what is being measured and for what purpose; many instruments exist for a variety of contexts, theoretical models, and outcomes, and the measure should be selected based on its fit with the intervention, the theory of change, target population, and overall evaluation design (Farrell et al., 2001). Despite the abundance of available measures, most have been designed for a specific purpose and validated for a specific population; if a new measure must be created for a particular study, it should be pilot tested and data on its reliability and validity included in the evaluation report (Farrell et al., 2001). One large meta-analysis found that for the evaluation studies included, 74% used assessment instruments which demonstrated appropriate reliability, while 48% were reported as having some kind of measurement validity (Durlak et al., 2007).

Although it is not possible to recommend a specific measure in the absence of a committed evaluation design, there were three categories of survey instruments which may be relevant to future evaluation studies of RAP, depending on what type of evaluation is pursued, including bullying prevalence surveys, youth asset surveys, and school climate surveys:

- ***Bullying prevalence surveys*.** Bullying prevalence surveys are instruments used to assess the perceived and actual rates of bullying and victimization within the student population. For example, the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children report (Freeman et al., 2011) discussed in the Bullying section at the beginning of this review has as part of its survey several questions on the nature and frequency with which Canadian children report engaging in or experiencing bullying behaviours. Many such instruments exist, though one that is particularly well-known is the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (Olweus & Limber, 2010). This measure, as discussed elsewhere in this report, was developed to complement the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program by providing the means for establishing a baseline of bullying prevalence that could be re-assessed following implementation of the program. This measure has also been used in studies in a general manner, independent of the OBPP program specifically (e.g., Allen, 2010). All such measures should be used while taking into account the impact of faulty recall and reporting biases as well as differences of interpretation of what constitutes 'bullying' among bullies, victims, and teachers (Furlong et al., 2004).
- ***Youth asset surveys*.** As the positive youth development field of research has gained prominence, so has the need to establish specific measures of the outcomes and characteristics related to it (Bowers et al., 2010). To that end, many measures of youth assets or other indicators of thriving are being developed (e.g., Benson & Scales, 2009; Bowers et al., 2010; Feinberg, Ridenour * Greenberg, 2007). These tools can be large and cumbersome as they must include measures of many different domains of assets and positive characteristics; one scale initially included 31 factors with 4 to 6 items per subscale, though it was subsequently refined to eight factors through additional testing (Feinberg et al., 2007). The challenge among these measures is the highly disparate definitions of what constitutes 'thriving' or positive development among youth, and whether assets themselves are indicators of thriving or are a preliminary step which make thriving more likely (Benson & Scales, 2009). Whatever measure is selected would need to be consistent with the definitions used by RAP's specific program model.
- ***School climate assessments*.** While bullying prevalence surveys are specific to that type of behaviour, school climate assessments take into consideration a wider range of domains. Depending on the specific measure used, these can include factors such as school attachment, sense of belonging, sense of safety, perceptions of teacher and classroom interactions, incidence of behavioural problems, teacher-student relationships, student-student relationships, clarity and fairness of rules, respect for diversity, teacher-home communication, etc. (Bear et al., 2014; Wright et al., 2007). It is essential for a measure of something

as complex and multifaceted as school climate to be measured across multiple domains (Bradshaw et al., 2014), which makes them an effective complement to the use of school record data, which typically reflects a narrower set of outcomes (Morrison et al., 2004). School climate assessments can be used to first establish a baseline prior to implementation, and then repeated at later intervals to assess change over time (Breunlin et al., 2005). There are many school climate surveys available, although as with youth asset surveys, it is important that the measure selected is consistent with the theory of the program being assessed (Bradshaw et al., 2014). A particular note of interest is that the Ontario Ministry of Education requires all schools to conduct regular school climate assessments as part of their Safe and Accepting Schools strategy (Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d.). Sample surveys for young children, teens, staff, and parents are available online at the Ministry website.

Given the concerns noted above with exclusively using archival school data such as discipline referrals and suspension rates to assess school-level program outcomes, school climate surveys, which also incorporate more positive and strengths-focused domains (e.g., relationship quality, sense of belonging), may be an appropriate complement for monitoring school-level outcomes.

7.4 Program Monitoring

Program monitoring has already been addressed at length in previous RAP reports (Camman & Wormith, 2013, 2014) as part of the development of RAP's own performance monitoring system. However, the extent to which program monitoring was emphasized in the literature as a critical practice suggests it bears further discussion. Many reports on best practices in program implementation and evaluation cited the need for on-going performance measurement (e.g., Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Horner et al., 2014; NCPC, 2011; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014; Telleen, 2009; Zins et al., 2007).

Although performance data typically focus on program implementation more than outcomes (e.g., tracking whether the program components are being delivered as intended), as established previously in this report, strong implementation is the foundation of successful program outcomes. On-going assessment of implementation and program fidelity can identify facilitators and challenges to the program's operation, provide insights into its effectiveness, guard against drift from the program delivery model, and signal when operational changes are needed to address new situations (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Flannery & Sugai, 2009; Savignac & Dunbar, 2014).

Flannery and Sugai (2009) identified several standards for effective program monitoring systems based on feedback from schools implementing the SWPBIS model:

- The data collection process was to be driven by specific meaningful questions (e.g., is the program needed? Is it being implemented effectively and with adequate resources?).
- Monitoring was to be conducted in a consistent and planned manner with attention to the quality of data being generated.
- To reduce the effect of human error on data quality, standardized definitions were created and established through staff training on how to complete reporting forms.
- Also for data quality, schools typically required at least one staff person dedicated to entering and managing the data to ensure consistency and quality in the data and provide timely reports.
- Data were shared and reviewed by designated teams or at staff meetings on a regular (usually monthly) basis to support decision-making.
- Data reports were written to be easily interpretable with graphical representations of key findings and comparisons over time.
- Results were also broadly disseminated to all staff to demonstrate the impact of the new programming, show progress, and validate their efforts.
- Specialized data visualization systems (i.e., data dashboards) were designed to facilitate both data collection and dissemination, through which aggregate statistics could be quickly accessed and visualized.
- Data analysis techniques were initially rudimentary (e.g., trends and correlations), but became more sophisticated with experience.

Some common challenges with program monitoring systems were also noted in this report. Many existing data systems are expensive, resource-intensive, poorly-integrated, and overly technical to use, and more streamlined and efficient systems are needed (Flannery & Sugai, 2009). Common problems in the design of program monitoring approaches were 1) collecting too much data in a manner that was overwhelming and difficult to interpret; 2) reporting findings in formats that were inaccessible and did not facilitate decision-making; and 3) reporting findings only to high-level decision-makers rather than a wider range of stakeholders with a vested interest in the program.

RAP's current performance monitoring system meets some of the above standards, although not all of them. There have been recent efforts to streamline and simplify the RAP system to collect only the most meaningful and actionable of indicators (Camman & Wormith, 2014). Standardized definitions of key program concepts have been created and shared with staff through training as well as on-going technical support from the database

designer and consultant (Camman & Wormith, 2013, 2014). Sophisticated data-sharing techniques have not been implemented and presently up-to-date program data is not available on a monthly or on-demand basis. Strides toward integrating data-based decision-making in RAP have been made, however, with room for further integration in the future as resources permit.

Key Lessons from Evaluation Considerations

- Evaluation was widely supported as an effective means for not only measuring program outcomes, but facilitating the development of the program, identifying its critical features, improving implementation, and building stakeholder support
- Evaluation study designs varied widely in the research, from experimental to non-experimental, qualitative to quantitative; the appropriateness of a given evaluation design depended on the specific evaluation question being investigated and the logistical constraints of the situation
- For quantitative evaluations, stronger designs included comparison groups, multiple time-points of observation, and post-intervention follow-up
- There were several examples of qualitative studies which made use of a case study approach to illuminate key factors influencing the success and failure of different program components; these were particularly helpful where the implementation of a program was weak or of unknown quality
- For data collection, choosing meaningful indicators and selecting appropriate data sources and measure depended on having a clear understanding of the outcome in question
- School-level data (e.g., suspensions, discipline referrals) are commonly used and highly relevant, but are not without limitation and should be used in conjunction with other outcome measures
- All measures and data sources should be assessed for validity and reliability, but otherwise selection depends on appropriateness for a given research question and evaluation design
- Three types of measures of particular relevance to RAP are bullying prevalence surveys, youth asset surveys, and school climate assessments
- Overall, the preference was for multi-method evaluations assessing several outcomes from different perspectives over more than one study, and for outcome evaluation to be complemented with on-going program monitoring

8. Summary and Conclusions

In the introduction, four questions were identified as having guided this review of school-based intervention and prevention programs for conflict, bullying, and violence:

1. **What other programs exist that are comparable to RAP in their aims and approaches?**

   Several programs and overarching frameworks were identified for interventions that aim to reduce conflict, bullying, and violence in schools while supporting the positive growth of youth and the improvement of the school environment generally, including:

   Programs:

   - Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)
   - Making the Smart Choice (MTSC)
   - Student Support System (SSS)

   Frameworks:

   - School-wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS)
   - Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
   - Positive Youth Development (PYD)
   - Restorative Practices (RP)

2. **Have comparable programs achieved success in their goals?**

   Each of the identified programs and frameworks demonstrated some degree of success in achieving their desired outcomes. Particularly well-evaluated were the SWPBIS, SEL, and OBPP approaches. As well, there was evidence from a number of meta-analytic studies and systematic reviews to suggest that interventions in general can be effective at reducing conflict, violence, and bullying and improving school climate and developmental assets, particularly when using whole-school and multi-component programming such as RAP.

3. **What methods have these programs used to demonstrate their success?**

   A wide range of evaluation techniques have been employed to investigate and demonstrate program effectiveness. No single evaluation approach is superior and the most well-established and reputable approaches have been evaluated many times, in many ways, under many different conditions. In general, the advice of the literature was to use multiple methods, multiple indicators, and look at multiple outcomes in order to generate a comprehensive view of a program's overall impact, and to use the strongest designs possible within reason to the available resources.

4. **What other lessons can be gathered from the literature that can inform RAP's development and evaluation?**

   This review explored an array of literature across several fields of study in order to identify research relevant to RAP's particular context and needs. While many different findings have been included in this review, three core lessons emerged:

   - **RAP is not alone, but has a unique contribution to make:** No other program identified in this review shared RAP's unique configuration of components, but many programs share RAP's overall vision and priorities, including addressing conflict with strengths-based and comprehensive whole-school approaches. While some programs and models have emerged as relatively reliable and effective approaches across a variety of settings (e.g., OBPP, SEL, SWPBIS), there is a lack of high-quality outcome research for high-school based programming in this area. The evaluation of RAP, therefore, is an opportunity to make a substantial and important contribution to the evaluation literature.
   - **Implementation should continue to be a priority:** The importance of implementation was raised independently by many researchers across different areas of the literature. Specific recommendations for promoting effective implementation were identified and summarized, some of which RAP has already made significant progress on (such as building stakeholder support and tracking program data). The recommendation made in previous RAP reports (Camman & Wormith, 2011, 2014) to continue to refine and clearly articulate in detail RAP's essential processes and goals are reiterated here, as this will be essential to effectively implementing, sustaining, and disseminating RAP. The programs and frameworks discussed in this review provide a number of examples of well-articulated interventions.
   - **Evaluation will be an on-going and vital process:** The findings of this review supported recommendations from previous RAP reports (Camman & Wormith, 2011, 2014) to take a broad, long-term and multi-faceted approach to evaluating RAP, including both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The use of case studies was strongly supported, while the use of school record data was also supported but with cautions to not overestimate the reliability and objectivity of such indicators and to include additional measures where possible. One likely complement to archival school data would be the use of school climate measures to assess other aspects of school-level change. The value of program monitoring as part of this long-term evaluation approach was also highlighted.

In sum, the literature review confirmed that RAP's program direction and current evaluation strategy are consistent with the practices identified in and supported by the

available research, while also indicating future directions with respect to continued multi-faceted evaluation with a strong focus on strengthening implementation.

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Appendix A: Search Method Overview

1. Sources

Academic databases:

- PsycInfo
- PubMed
- MedLine with Full Text
- CINAHL Plus with Full Text
- Sociological Abstracts
- SOCIndex
- ProQuest Education Journals
- CBCA Education
- Academic Search Complete

Organizational websites:

- Public Safety Canada/National Centre for Crime Prevention
- Health Canada
- Canadian Best Practice Portal (CBPP)
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Programs Guide (US)
- Canadian provincial/territorial Ministry of Education websites

Search engines:

- Google Scholar
- Google

2. Search Keywords

The following keywords were used in combination to generate relevant search returns:

- Conflict/violence/bullying
- Prevention/resolution/reduction
- High school/secondary school
- Adolescen(t/ce)/teen(ager)/young adult/youth
- Program/strategy/intervention/evaluation

Where necessary, the following refining terms were used to narrow results:

- Leadership/asset/skill
- Enhancement/learning/development

- Positive/strengths
- Meta-analysis/review

3. Selection criteria

- Retrieved from an academic peer-reviewed source, or reputable government organization, NGO, or evaluation company
- Published within the last ten years (2004 and later, with exceptions for seminal reports of significant relevance and importance)
- Available online and in English
- Pertained to programs which:
    - Serviced adolescent youth (ages 12 to 18)
    - Operated primarily in school settings (compared to programs delivered primarily in the community, home, justice system, or other setting)
    - Targeted a range of conflict, bullying and/or violence prevention/reduction outcomes (compared to programs with an exclusive focus on one issue, such as dating violence or weapon-carrying)
    - Adhered to positive, strengths-based practices (compared to punitive or deficit-focused practices)
    - Employed comprehensive/whole-school/multi-component approaches (compared to single-component/single-intervention methods)
- Preference was also given to literature which pertained to Canada or the US, or, other countries of similar political, demographic, economic, and social profile (i.e., Australia, New Zealand, the UK, etc.).

4. Process

- Academic databases were searched first using combination of the keywords to generate search returns of a manageable size (no more than 200 results)
    - Results were scanned to identify potentially relevant articles which were then reviewed in detail
    - Relevant articles were retrieved (those which could not be retrieved were marked as "missing"; articles which had already been retrieved were marked as "redundant")
- For the organizational websites, each site was searched exhaustively for all relevant webpages using site-specific Google search queries with the keywords

- Finally, general Google Scholar and Google searches were conducted on combinations of the keywords, reviewing only the first 20 pages of search returns
- This process resulted in the identification and retrieval of 139 unique relevant articles
- An additional 39 articles were identified through a 'treeing' process (i.e., searching the references and citations of key articles)
- Of these 178 articles, 86 were ultimately included in the review, in addition to a small number of articles not identified through the review process (e.g., past RAP reports)

Appendix B: RAP Program Theory

➢ RAP operates within the school environment to help students cope effectively and appropriately with conflict through a range of one-on-one, small group, and large group activities.

➢ RAP enhances the school environment by supporting students, addressing their conflict situations, and building their personal assets related to conflict management while allowing administrative, teaching, and other support staff to focus on academic areas.

➢ RAP provides alternative means to administrative or criminal justice sanctions for serious conflicts and encourages students to remain engaged in the school environment while managing their conflicts.

➢ RAP's goals and activities are guided by three core principles: Prevention, Intervention, and Reconnection:

I) Prevention: Helping students cope with conflict situations before they occur or escalate and develop and maintain healthy relationships by:

- helping students develop positive personal attributes
- teaching students skills and knowledge in conflict resolution and healthy behaviour
- giving students opportunities to practice these skills
- promoting a positive school environment

II) Intervention: Helping students work through existing conflict situations in constructive ways and providing an alternative to administrative suspension or criminal justice involvement by:

- supporting students individually as they cope with conflicts
- facilitating mediations between conflicting parties
- providing students with referrals to additional sources of support

III) Reconnection: Helping students heal, repair harm, and rebuild and restore relationships following a conflict as well as promoting positive engagement between students, the school, and the broader community by:

- supporting new and returning students as they integrate into the school environment
- focusing on repairing relationships through better conflict management
- providing students with opportunities to engage with their school and the community

(Camman & Wormith, 2013)

Appendix C: RAP Asset Target Definitions

Skills Sets	
Communication	Communicating effectively with others (e.g., listening, paraphrasing, expressing self clearly)
Handling Conflict	Managing or resolving conflicts (e.g., using a win-win approach, negotiating, developing effective strategies for individual conflicts)
Healthy Personal Choices	Positive decisions about health/wellbeing, (e.g., personal hygiene, self-care, resilience to peer pressure)
Healthy Relationships	Developing/maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships (e.g., boundaries, recognizing abusive behaviour)
Positive School Environment	Promoting more positive and supportive school environment for other students (e.g., cultural competence, anti-bullying skills)

Leadership Traits	
Belonging	Feeling welcomed and valued within their environments
Empathy	Able to recognize other people's needs and imagine different experiences from their own
Empowerment	Feeling capable, able to use their skills, and make decisions for themselves
Engagement	Being actively and enthusiastically involved in their environments
Respect for Others	Actively acknowledging the different needs of others and not behaving in ways that violate these needs
Responsibility	Willing to take action on behalf of themselves and others and to be accountable for the consequences of these actions
Self-Awareness	Having insight into their emotions and experiences and recognizing how these impact their behavior
Self-Esteem	Feeling generally good about themselves and having a positive self-concept
Sense of Safety	Feeling physically, emotionally, or in any other way safe in their environments
Trust	Able to express confidence in or rely on other people

(Camman & Wormith, 2014)