Integrated Approaches to Preventing Antisocial Behavior Patterns Among School-Age Children and Youth

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LEVELS OF BOTH LETHAL AND NON-lethal forms of youth violence continue to accelerate in our society despite recent declines in other forms of criminal behavior (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1996). Four years ago, the former surgeon general, C. Everett Koop, and his associates in the medical field declared interpersonal violence to be the Number 1 public health problem in this country (Koop & Lundberg, 1992). Gunshot wounds have now replaced automobile accidents as the leading cause of paralysis among young people (Centers for Disease Control, 1994). Evidence suggests that the United States has evolved into the most violent developed country in the world (Council on Crime in America, 1996; Zimring & Hawkins, 1995). Our society seems to be caught up in an epidemic of violence—a majority of which is accounted for by youth under the age of 19 who use handguns and other weapons to settle disputes (Fagan, 1996). Most of these individuals are young men, although young women seem to be narrowing the gender gap in the areas of juvenile crime and gang activity (Hawkins, 1996). Recent demographic projections are far from encouraging. For example, it is expected that the number of juveniles in our society will double by the year 2010 and that the number of juvenile arrests will double in the next decade (June 13, 1996, CNN).

In its seminal 1993 report on youth violence, the American Psychological Association (1993) identified four factors that act as accelerators for violence and criminal behavior among youth:

1. Early involvement with drugs and alcohol;
2. Easy access to weapons, particularly handguns;
3. Association with antisocial groups; and
4. Pervasive exposure to violent acts in the media.

Exposure to these risk factors seems to be increasing for large sectors of at-risk children and youth and their peers who are not at risk, and the effects are further exacerbated by various forms of abuse and neglect that produce young people who are highly agitated and/or in states of rage.

Although our society is engaged in what can be called an “incarceration frenzy,” national experts in public health, gangs, delinquency, and youth violence who are attempting to control this escalating phenomenon consistently...
argue that we cannot stem the tide of youth violence through incarceration applied after the fact (Fagan, 1996; Stamper, 1996). Stamper noted that the country’s unprecedented rate of building prisons and treating youth as adult offenders provide grim testimony to our society’s failure to cope with the massive problems that are now consuming our children and youth.

To be effective in this domain, our society must also address the front end of this massive social problem. It is essential that we engage in a national dialog that recognizes and eschews violence in all its forms, as well as the attitudes and more subtle, related forms of behavior that can lead to it (e.g., aggression; mean-spirited teasing and bullying; sexual harassment; endorsement of antisocial beliefs such as “fight back, ask questions later”). We must (a) change the norms and expectations around aggressive attitudes and behavior and how we relate to each other interpersonally, and (b) directly address the risk factors and precursors associated with future violent and delinquent behavior by targeting and intervening with at-risk children and youth early in their lives—well before they become invested in these unfortunate acts and behavior patterns.

Schools often reflect societal trends, and we now see the spillover of interpersonal violence and conflict into the daily lives of students and staff in school settings that were once relatively safe. The following statistics and observations document how school safety and the quality of life in school settings have declined precipitously in the recent past. For example:

- More than 6,000 teachers are threatened annually, and well over 200 are physically injured by students on school grounds.
- Increasingly, students are intimidated and threatened by mean-spirited teasing, bullying, and sexual harassment occurring at school.
- Finally, schools are major sites for recruitment and related activities by organized gangs (Committee for Children, 1996; National School Safety Center, 1996; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).

Violence and antisocial, destructive forms of behavior increasingly characterize students who populate our public school systems. Well-developed antisocial behavior patterns and high levels of aggression evidenced early in a child’s life are among the best predictors of delinquent and violent behavior years later (Fagan, 1996; Hawkins & Catalano, 1992; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992). These behavior patterns become elaborated and more destructive over time; they poison the school environment and lower the quality of life for students and staff alike. The National School Safety Center reported that school safety has emerged as an issue of great national concern, and neither students nor staff feel completely safe in our school settings (Stephens, 1995). National organizations representing the interests of schools (e.g., National Association of State Boards of Education, Association of Chief State School Officers, National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers) have adopted school safety and violence-free schools as major features of their advocacy efforts at federal and state levels. The 26th annual Phi Delta Kappan Gallup poll of the public’s attitudes toward the public schools mirrors educators’ concerns about the safety of schools and the rates of student violence, aggression, and conflict occurring therein (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1994).

By their very nature, schools are reactive organizations because of their structure and the myriad and often conflicting pressures to which they must respond. To date, they have been relatively detached players in developing proactive responses to the fundamental social changes that have occurred in our society and that are increasingly reflected in students’ school behavior (Kulongoski, 1996). Yet, our schools have a powerful and very crucial role to play in: (a) targeting at-risk children and youth early in their academic careers, and (b) intervening comprehensively with such students and key social agents (i.e., parents, teachers, and peers) in order to divert them from a path that frequently leads to school failure and dropout; rejection by teachers, peers, and, ultimately, caregivers; investment in delinquency and violent behavior; gang membership; and prison (Patterson et al., 1992; Reid, 1993; Walker & Bullis, 1991, 1996; Walker & Sylwester, 1991).

In this article we make the case that schools have a key role to play in addressing the rising tide of at-risk students who bring antisocial, aggressive behavior patterns with them to the schooling experience due to the multiple, nonschool risk factors to which they have been exposed early in their lives (i.e., poverty, abuse and neglect, family conflict, weak or incompetent parenting, drug and alcohol involvement of primary caregivers, dysfunctional family situations that are chaotic and highly unpredictable; see APA, 1993; Nelson, Rutherford, & Wolford, 1996; Patterson et al., 1992; Teens & Violence, 1996; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).

We further argue that schools have the relatively unique ability to access the vast majority of at-risk children early in their school careers and also to marshal the resources and expertise necessary to address their problems in a coordinated fashion. In so doing, they can help reduce, eliminate, and/or buffer many of the risk factors that, if left unattended, propel young people along a path leading to a host of unfortunate outcomes, including violence and criminal behavior. Schools, however, can only play this role effectively if they are supported in doing so by our society and are partners with families and com-
community agencies in consortia that implement community-wide initiatives to address this problem.

Schools can appropriately serve as a lead agency within an interagency approach to addressing the problems of such children and youth—and, in many cases, their families (Dryfoos, 1990). Realizing such a different mission will require dramatic changes in the ways that school personnel have characteristically dealt with this student population, their attitudes toward them, and the necessary identification and reallocation of resources. For example, we recommend the following changes and practices in this regard:

1. All students should be screened proactively at the point of school entry to identify those who show the early signs of antisocial, aggressive behavior patterns that put them at risk;
2. Coordinated primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention efforts are mounted as appropriate to divert as many children as possible from this path and to keep them out of the juvenile justice system;
3. The practice of relying upon exclusion, suspension, and expulsion as a primary means of coping with this problem should be discontinued; and
4. School systems should develop and, in many cases, reestablish a continuum of alternative school placements for this population, many of which have been eliminated in the wake of school reform and full inclusion (MacMillan, Gresham, & Forness, 1996).

Keeping these students engaged with schooling for as long as possible is one of the best things we can do for them. By so doing we can further develop their skills, influence them in positive directions, and prevent their becoming involved with disruptive peer groups during school hours.

To date, the effective role of schools in developing solutions to the problems of antisocial behavior, interpersonal conflict, and violence has been largely unrealized. Like the larger society, educators have tended to respond to these problems reactively and after the fact with punishing alternatives. The increasing rates of school suspensions and expulsions have the dual effect of making schools relatively safer, and society unsafar, as these suspended/excluded youth are turned loose on communities where their investment in offending behavior accelerates markedly (Bostic, 1994). As a social policy, this practice is akin to the displacement of water in its ultimate effects.

The solutions that have been developed by and offered to schools in this area are often incomplete and not sufficiently comprehensive to adequately address the problem. School responses, much like the marketing strategies of the Silicon Valley as detailed by Geoffrey Moore (1995) in his recent book, Inside the Tornado, are not complete and do not provide full solutions that actually have a chance to work. The investments made are often minimal and well below the threshold necessary to achieve critical effects. In a recent review of the epidemiology of violence, Gladwell (1996) referred to the "tipping point" in epidemics, wherein the epidemic reaches a critical point beyond which it escalates out of control. There are also tipping points in the investments required to have an impact on problems such as violence, school dropout, or bullying. However, because schools are often forced to operate off a reactive and minimalist response posture to emerging problems, the investments they make fall short and are frequently inadequate to have a substantive impact or solve the problem.

The purpose of this article is to describe a conceptualization of fully integrated, comprehensive approaches to preventing antisocial behavior in the context of schooling. These are approaches that provide full or complete solutions that may have a better chance of working than traditional approaches. In this article, a school-based approach to the prevention of antisocial, aggressive behavior patterns is described that: (a) targets the entire school site as well as individual students for assessment and intervention, (b) matches the intensity and nature of interventions with the severity and intractability of students' adjustment problems, and (c) emphasizes the fostering of prosocial and safe learning environments for all students.

The remainder of this article is divided into four sections. The first section describes the characteristic responses of school systems to these problems and illustrates how many educational practices used with this student population are insufficient and poorly matched to the problems they are designed to redress. Section 2 describes the multiple risk factors, across different contexts, that are producing unprecedented numbers of children and youth who are likely to become school failures and adolescent offenders. This section makes the case for school investment in a risk/protective factors approach that the juvenile corrections field and the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention have recommended. Section 3 presents a conceptual model that integrates different primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention approaches for (a) preventing violence, (b) making schools safe, and (c) teaching students social competence and effective forms of coping behavior. Section 4 briefly reviews some model intervention approaches and procedures that are appropriate for each of these prevention levels. The article concludes with a discussion of future directions and the need for societal reinvestment and support of schools in their attempts to address a problem that increasingly poses risks for our society and way of life.

**Traditional School Approaches**

Students who enter the schoolhouse door frequently bring life-course-persistent patterns of antisocial behavior with them (Moffitt, 1994); that is, they are socialized to a particular behavior pattern by family and home conditions that establish it as a permanent, enduring feature of their lifestyle. Many of these destructive behavior patterns are taught to students inadvertently by caregivers within the context of highly
stressed home conditions (e.g., poverty, divorce, abuse, neglect, unemployment, and substance abuse). Unfortunately, children who behave in this fashion alienate their peers, teachers, and, ultimately, their primary caregivers. More important, these students have not had opportunities to learn appropriate ways of behaving with peers and adults, nor have they been encouraged to substitute adaptive responses for maladaptive ones. Such students need to be directly taught an adaptive, positive pattern of behavior for home, school, and other settings, be given opportunities to display what they have learned, and receive feedback regarding the effectiveness of their efforts. In addition, these students need to be taught how to correctly discriminate the forms of behavior to use and not use in a variety of social and educational contexts. In many situations, the problem is not "knowing how to do it," but "doing it when it is required." Often incentives are needed to motivate antisocial students to change their long-established behavior patterns.

Simple and General Solutions

School personnel have a long history of applying simple and general solutions to complex student behavior problems and of expressing understandable disappointment when these attempts do not work as expected. Usually the approach used, or other factors (e.g., the child's home life, poor motivation for change, lack of parent support), are blamed for unsatisfactory outcomes. In most cases, the failure to achieve meaningful outcomes is due to a poor match between presenting problems and the selected interventions, a less than adequate implementation of the interventions, lack of the necessary resources, or a failure to treat the problem(s) comprehensively throughout the implementation process. Rarely do school personnel invest the resources, time, and expertise necessary to effectively solve such problems. Frequently these intervention practices are sustained by unrealistic expectations about what is actually required to produce enduring changes in student behavior or by a natural tendency to quickly eliminate the immediate presenting problem rather than focus on the source.

In other cases, indirect intervention approaches (e.g., counseling, insight-based therapies, social skills training, improving self-esteem) are used to solve intractable student behavior problems that require more powerful, direct forms of intervention (Eysenck, 1994; Mayer, 1995; Shamise, 1981). Referral of the problem student for counseling consistently ranks as the most popular intervention option among teachers primarily because responsibility for change is placed upon the student and a solution to the problem is pursued in a context external to the classroom. Such indirect approaches are rarely adequate or sufficient because the student tends to be unmotivated to engage in these therapies and because "ownership" of the problem is often shared by the student and other social agents (e.g., peers, adults; see Dryfoos, 1990).

Unfortunately, when such indirect intervention approaches fail, punishments and exclusion from the school setting often become the interventions of choice to eliminate the problem. Exclusion, suspension, expulsion, verbal reprimands, and detention are common reactive responses. Although punishment consequences provide an immediate, short-term reprieve from the problem, positive long-term change in behavior is not achieved. In fact, researchers have shown that punishment-based interventions for students with serious antisocial and violent behavior usually result in an increase in the problem behavior (Mayer & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1990).

In order to produce consistent, socially acceptable behavior changes, we must intervene directly and comprehensively within and across all school settings in which problem behaviors are observed. Such an approach must be fully integrated and must incorporate primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention goals and correlated interventions. This approach also is based upon the following assumptions and observations about school interventions:

1. Students who are at risk for developing antisocial patterns of behavior and their correlated negative outcomes, particularly minority students, are more likely to be punished, excluded, and controlled than to have their problems addressed in a therapeutic manner.

2. Schools typically have maintained a reactive, punishment-oriented posture in relation to at-risk students that fails to recognize the need to: (a) identify students early on who show the signs of these problems, and (b) mount comprehensive, sustained interventions that can divert children from this path early in their school careers.

3. The intractability and severity of student adjustment problems are rarely appropriately matched to available interventions that can remediate or ameliorate them. Too often, simple interventions are applied in this regard in an attempt to solve complex student problems and vice versa.

4. School interventions for at-risk minority students are rarely contextualized in relation to the nuances of their cultural backgrounds; in addition, teacher interactions with minority at-risk students tend to be based upon low-performance expectations, critical rather than constructive, short in duration, and punishment oriented.

5. To achieve maximum efficacy, school interventions need to incorporate universal, schoolwide features that address the needs of all students as well as specific features that address the individual needs of those students who do not respond to the universal, schoolwide intervention.

6. Intervention responses to students with severe problem behaviors tend to be developed and implemented by individual teachers rather than by a team of committed staff members.

7. Efforts to improve interventions for students with severe problem behaviors must be organized into a comprehensive and strategic building- or district-level plan that ranks as one of the top three school-improvement goals for at least 2 years.

Prevention strategies and interventions appropriate for students who are at risk of academic and social failure
should address and systematically take into account these findings and observations. In addition, these strategies must be comprehensive and proactive in nature and implemented as early as possible in these students' school careers—preferably at the beginning of the schooling experience.

What Is the Answer?

There are no simple or easy solutions to eliminating and reducing antisocial behavior problems among children and youth. Schools can take actions that will merely address the problem or they can invest in strategies that actually have a chance of ameliorating it in an acceptable and meaningful fashion. Preferred and promising practices exist; however, they are implemented infrequently in school settings primarily because they are often considered too intrusive and/or labor intensive and because the time and effort involved in their implementation is perceived as too costly (Witt & Marsten, 1983; Witt & Robbins, 1985). Thus, schools are increasingly unable to accommodate effectively those at-risk students who bring challenging attitudes and behavioral characteristics to the process of schooling.

In many cases, the choice boils down to intervention effectiveness versus teacher acceptance of approaches that provide effective solutions. In other words, approaches that are proven and effective are often not acceptable to many teachers and vice versa. As the pressures these students produce continue to escalate in their intensity and the pain levels increase for staff and students alike, teachers and other school personnel may tend to become more pragmatic in this regard. Schools must learn to judge the effectiveness and acceptance of available interventions within the context of the meaning of immediate and long-term behavior change, reasonable criteria for judging change, a systematic and objective analysis of the costs and benefits of their efforts, and the chronicity and resistance to change of severe problem behavior among antisocial children.

Solutions must start with a comprehensive look at the contexts in which violence and antisocial behavior occur (Biglan, 1995). The school, for example, represents a complex organization of people, environments, policies, routines, and procedures that should function as a coordinated whole. A school can be viewed as a network of four interactive systems that collectively enable students to learn and teachers to teach (Sugai & Horner, 1994). The schoolwide system is designed to accommodate the vast majority of students by setting rules and expectations, teaching desired academic and social behaviors, and organizing and standardizing the activities of all building staff members. This dimension of schooling is geared toward accommodation of all students and establishes the culture or ecology of a school building.

In contrast, the specific setting system of a school building provides policies and procedures for the common areas of a school—cafeteria, hallways, bus area, bathrooms, playgrounds, and so forth. These areas are unique in that all students, regardless of their homeroom or grade level, must pass through them daily. Although generally there are rules, behavioral expectations, and explicit codes of conduct for these areas, they tend to be less structured than classroom settings and occasion frequent peer-to-peer and student-to-adult interactions.

Classroom systems are developed by teachers to support the larger schoolwide policies and procedures and to manage the academic performance and social behavior of students within instructional environments and arrangements. General schoolwide rules (e.g., be respectful) are adapted to the requirements of individual teachers (e.g., wait your turn when another person is talking).

Finally, the individual student system provides established policies and procedures for responding to students who present the most severe forms of problem behavior. Collectively, these four systems provide a comprehensive matrix in which behavioral supports, services, and interventions can be established that accommodate the behavioral challenges and needs of students who display the most antisocial and destructive forms of behavior. In order to accomplish this goal, however, it is essential to have strong administrative support and leadership; staff investment in the approach and willingness to implement it with integrity; and the necessary resources, including time commitments, behavioral expertise, and team-based working structures.

Risk and Protective Factors in Antisocial Behavior Patterns

In its public information campaigns regarding such problems as coronary heart disease, the U.S. Public Health Service has been highly successful in advocating and demonstrating an approach to risk and protective factors. This approach emphasizes the identification and reduction of known risk factors (e.g., smoking, obesity) as well as the development of protective factors, such as exercise and stress management regimens, that operate to buffer and offset the effects of the risk factors. For maximum impact, it is necessary to reduce and eliminate known risk factors and to simultaneously develop protective factors that can contribute to resiliency and plasticity (i.e., adaptability).

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has adopted this model as a recommended approach for addressing the problems of youth offenders (see OJJDP, 1995). A list of risk and correlated protective factors across the domains of community, family, school, and individual/peer group is given in Figure 1. The literature in juvenile corrections suggests that the more risk factors an individual is exposed to over time, the greater the likelihood that negative outcomes such as school failure and delinquency will occur. In the context of interventions, addressing risk and protective factors simultaneously will produce better positive outcomes than addressing either one alone (Hawkins, 1996; Hawkins & Catalano, 1992; OJJDP, 1995). The effectiveness of the recommendations in the first section of this article regard-
ing school interventions is predicated on the assumption that: (a) they are applied to risk and protective factors that have an impact, either directly or indirectly, on the individual's adjustment and performance, and (b) they are also applied within the context of reducing and/or eliminating risk factors and also developing and/or enhancing protective factors.

In our view, this approach is most likely to be successful in developing resilience among antisocial children and youth who increasingly bring severe risk profiles with them to the schooling process (Garmezy, 1991, 1993; Luthar, 1991; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Rutter, 1990). Resilience literally refers to the ability to recover and "to spring back" (Garmezy, 1991); with the great majority of antisocial children and youth, the primary task of school personnel and other adults is to assist them in achieving this outcome because they will already have been exposed to multiple risk factors before entering school.

A number of the risk and protective factors listed in Figure 1 are within the ability of educators to address effectively. Dropping out or being excluded from schooling puts a youth's life at serious risk for a host of crime-related outcomes. For example, 90% of daytime burglaries in Los Angeles County are committed by truant, suspended, and excluded youth (Bostic, 1994); this figure averages 80% nationally (Crowe, 1995). Rejection by teachers and peers has been identified by Patterson and his associates (Patterson et al., 1992; Reid, 1993) as one of the key stages that at-risk, antisocial students follow on their path to school failure and delinquency. These students are usually rejected because of the extremely aversive nature of their behavioral characteristics, of which the most dominant are coercion, aggression, and the humiliation of others.

The adaptive and maladaptive behavioral competencies associated with the two primary social-behavioral adjustments that all students must negotiate in the school setting (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995) are given in Figure 2. Failure to satisfactorily negotiate these critically important adjustments puts the student's school success at considerable risk. The adaptive competencies listed in Figure 2 under teacher and peer-related adjustment can be considered protective factors that offset effects of the listed maladaptive behaviors, which function as risk factors.

Nearly all students who display at-risk and antisocial forms of behavior are deficient in many of the critically important behavioral competencies associated with schooling. Students who do not display these competencies at acceptable levels are ultimately rejected by teachers and peers. Further, they often band together and form deviant and/or disruptive peer groups that wreak havoc and often get involved with the law (Patterson et al., 1992; Reid, 1993). The work of Dodge and his colleagues has provided important insights into the developmental trajectories and peer-relations problems of antisocial children and youth (Dodge, 1985; Dodge, Coie, & Brakke, 1982).

Unfortunately, antisocial students are often above the minimally acceptable limits of their teachers in terms of these maladaptive forms of behavior and well below the teachers' expectations in relation to the adaptive competencies. Thus, in this context an approach in-
volving risk and protective factors would reduce or eliminate the student's likelihood of engaging in the unacceptable maladaptive behaviors (risk factors) and develop/increase the student's frequency of displaying the adaptive competencies (protective factors). Implementing this approach would vastly improve the academic chances and school adjustment of many—perhaps most—antisocial students. It should be noted that some school systems are responding proactively to these student-generated pressures by creating learning and opportunity centers, establishing schools within a school, and investing in programs designed to keep at-risk students in school. In our view, these practices need to become the norm within school systems.

Unfortunately, most school approaches for coping with such students focus on punishment, exclusion, containment, and rejection. As noted earlier, by pushing these students out of the school system and thereby disengaging them from schooling, we are merely turning them loose on communities and displacing the problem to another sector of our society. In our view, effective alternative programs and options need to be developed for this student population that: (a) keep them engaged with the process of schooling for as long as possible; (b) directly teach coping strategies and develop functional skills in social, academic, and behavioral domains; and (c) provide a respite for both the at-risk student and the regular school placement setting (Garrison, 1996; MacMillan et al., 1996; OJJDP, 1995).

**A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION**

In any school, one can identify three types of students: (a) typical students not at risk for problems, (b) students with an elevated risk status for developing antisocial behavior problems, and (c) students who show signs of life-course–persistent antisocial behavior patterns and involvement in delinquent acts (Larson, 1994; Moffitt, 1994; Walker, 1994). Life-course–persistent antisocial behavior refers to at-risk students who are socialized to antisocial behavior and delinquency within the family context by exposure to such risk factors.
Primary Prevention Strategies

Primary prevention strategies focus upon enhancing protective factors on a schoolwide basis so that students do not become at-risk. Interventions used to achieve primary prevention goals are universal—all students are exposed in the same way at the same level. An example of this kind of strategy is teaching conflict resolution, emotional literacy, and anger-management procedures on a schoolwide (i.e., universal) basis.

Primary prevention is much like putting fluoride in a community's water supply in order to prevent dental cavities. In addition, primary prevention strategies focus on teaching all students and staff the rules and expectations and other disciplinary policies and procedures that are designed to enhance the smooth operation of a school environment. Teaching skills for school success (e.g., being prepared, getting to class on time, asking for help, completing and turning in homework), designing and presenting an effective and interesting academic curriculum, and maximizing opportunities for student academic and social success also represent important primary prevention approaches. These universal intervention approaches have perhaps the greatest potential for use by schools in establishing a positive school climate and effective school procedures that divert mildly at-risk students from a path leading to negative developmental outcomes. In our view, these approaches are greatly underutilized in the majority of today's schools, where their impact could be maximized.

Secondary Prevention Strategies

Secondary prevention involves interventions that provide behavioral or academic support, mentoring, skill development, and assistance to more severely at-risk students. Students who do not respond to universal interventions become candidates for intensive, individually tailored interventions that are more expensive. Interventions for achieving secondary prevention goals are often referred to as "selected." In

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**Target Student Type**

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<tr>
<th>Intervention Approach</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Prevention (Universal Interventions):</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- School wide discipline plans</td>
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| - Instruction in conflict resolution/
  anger management strategies |
| - Effective teaching and schooling procedures |
| **Secondary Prevention (Individualized, 1-1 Interventions):** |
| - Identification of at-risk clusters of children, youth and families; |
| - Direct instruction in moral reasoning; |
| - Anger-management and self-control; |
| - Family support and parent management training; |
| - Consultant based 1 to 1 interventions |
| **Tertiary Prevention (Wraparound, Comprehensive Interventions):** |
| - Connection of children, youth and caregivers to community-based social service agencies; |
| - Development of individually-tailored, wraparound interventions; |
| - Significant family involvement in planning and treatment activities; |
| - Coordination with social service agencies, law enforcement, courts, and corrections; |
| - Drug-alcohol counseling; |
| - Alternative placements such as day-treatment centers, specialized schools, residential environments; |

**FIGURE 3.** Correspondence between target student type and universal-selected intervention approaches.
other words, such students select themselves out for more intensive interventions by demonstrating their nonresponsiveness to the universal or schoolwide interventions and their corresponding need for more powerful, individualized intervention supports and services.

Secondary prevention is much like increasing one’s scheduled visits to the dentist because of an increased susceptibility (e.g., soft or thin enamel) for dental cavities or initiating an orthodontic intervention because of teeth crowding. Examples of such strategies might include small-group social skills lessons; behavioral contracting; specialized tutoring; and the provision of such services as remedial reading programs, at-risk counseling, and Big Brother/Sister.

Tertiary Prevention Strategies

Tertiary prevention is appropriate for severely involved, intractable students who display a life-course–persistent pattern of antisocial behavior that usually involves delinquent activities and sometimes violence and social destructiveness (Moffitt, 1994). In our dental analogy, individuals at this level would be candidates for significant cavity repairs, root canals, bridges, and other expensive forms of dental care. Successful intervention for this student population must be (a) comprehensive, (b) initiated early, and (c) in evidence over the long term, and must involve parents, teachers, and peers. As a rule, wraparound, interagency approaches to intervention that are collaborative in nature are required to help students who fit this profile (Kukic, 1995).

Interventions are comprehensive in that a team of individuals is involved, including parents, community agency personnel (e.g., juvenile corrections, mental health, child and family welfare services), educators (general and special), administrators, and support staff (e.g., school psychologists, counselors). More specifically, interventions are based on comprehensive assessments of the problem and the organization of strategies that incorporate information obtained from these assessments. The result is a specially designed, highly individualized, comprehensive intervention that directly involves a cadre of concerned individuals who are committed to a long-term system of care (Cumblad, Epstein, Keeney, Marty, & Soderlund, 1996; Epstein et al., 1993; VanDerBerg & Grealish, 1996). Interventions at this level must involve, at a minimum, the three social agents who have the greatest impact on the lives of children and youth (i.e., parents, teachers, and peers).

Fully Integrated Approaches

School-site intervention approaches that encompass all three of these prevention levels or types are needed (Dryfoos, 1990; Knitzer, Steinberg, & Fleisch, 1990). Unfortunately, few schools implement all forms of prevention in their buildings, and, if they do, their efforts are rarely coordinated or interfaced with others involved in a student’s schooling. To be maximally effective, prevention approaches and the interventions comprising them must be directly linked to and coordinated with each other within the context of a school site and its four systems of behavior support (i.e., schoolwide, specific setting, classroom, and individual student). Failure at one level of prevention provides an implicit assessment that the student requires exposure to more powerful, intensive interventions at the next level of prevention (i.e., those students who do not respond to the primary-level intervention components are then referred to the more intensive one-to-one strategies contained in the secondary prevention level). Similarly, those students who do not respond at this level would move to the third level and be exposed, along with their families, teachers, and peers, to a comprehensive, collaborative, and intensive wraparound intervention.

As a result, the failure of an at-risk student to respond to a well-designed, well-implemented intervention at any of these three levels offers an assessment indicating that more powerful, intensive, and/or comprehensive approaches are needed. For example, failure at the secondary prevention level would probably indicate the need for an alternative structured classroom or community-based program, or some other more intensive intervention. However, it should be noted that the failure of a student, or a group of students, to respond to a poorly implemented intervention provides little assessment information regarding the need for additional/alternative placements or interventions.

In a fully integrated approach of this type, it is expected that the adjustment problems of approximately 75% to 85% of a school’s students can be solved with well-implemented, primary prevention strategies of a universal nature (Reid, 1993). A majority of the remaining students should respond to individually administered secondary prevention interventions of a more intensive nature. The very small number of remaining students who do not respond to this next level of intervention (secondary prevention) would be candidates for a tertiary prevention strategy.

The implementation costs associated with these three levels increase as one moves along the continuum. Many universal interventions can be implemented on a schoolwide basis for relatively small investments (e.g., $10 to $15 per student annually), whereas tertiary interventions often cost $25,000 or more per application. The ultimate goal of this overall approach is to retain as many students as possible at the primary and secondary prevention levels and to reduce the number who require tertiary interventions. The economic and social implications of this outcome are of critical importance to the health and viability of schools. Unless schools invest more aggressively in early intervention approaches at the point of school entry and beyond, it is unlikely that the above goal will be accomplished. In the next section, the key features of interventions appropriate for these prevention approaches are illustrated and selected examples given (Zigler, Taussig, & Black, 1992).

Model Interventions

Descriptions of interventions appropriate for each of the three levels of prevention are provided in this section.
These interventions represent preferred practices and have demonstrated efficacy when implemented with acceptable levels of treatment integrity.

**Universal Interventions for Primary Prevention Applications**

As noted above, universal, schoolwide interventions are used at the primary prevention level. Examples of these kinds of interventions are (a) development of a schoolwide discipline program, (b) presentation of a schoolwide social skills training program, or (c) the schoolwide teaching of anger management and conflict-resolution strategies.

Universal interventions can be divided into two types: (a) mandatory or required, and (b) optional or based upon need. With regard to required or mandatory interventions, every elementary school should consider having two components in place at all times: (a) a well-thought-out and carefully implemented schoolwide discipline plan, and (b) systematic application of what has been learned over the past two decades about effective schooling and teaching. If implemented with treatment integrity, these two interventions would likely make significant contributions in establishing an effective, high-performance school that produces desired outcomes for a majority of students. We consider them to be a mandatory part of any school-based, primary prevention strategy designed to address antisocial behavior patterns among at-risk students.

Both of these universal interventions are ideally suited for consideration, design, and implementation by school site councils and schoolwide assistance teams, with the participation of entire school staffs. The knowledge bases for effective teaching and schooling as well as for the establishment of schoolwide discipline systems are well developed. There are many reference sources and materials representing preferred practices that can be implemented effectively. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), for example, has developed a superb staff inservice program for implementing the knowledge base on effective schooling and teaching at a local school-building level. The ASCD package contains implementation and training manuals as well as videotapes that demonstrate effective schooling/teaching practices in operation. This staff development package is derived from solid research and builds an implementation process for applying this knowledge in a practical, feasible manner at the building and classroom levels (see Note 1).

Similarly, Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey (1995) provided detailed guidelines and examples that show how to set up and monitor effective schoolwide discipline programs. Sprick, Sprick, and Garrison (1992) also presented extensive information and guidelines on how to set up policies governing schoolwide discipline procedures. Colvin, Kameenui, and Sugai (1993) and Colvin, Sugai, and Kameenui (1994) offered a reconceptualized curriculum for developing, implementing, and sustaining schoolwide discipline systems that are comprehensive, proactive, and instructional. In this curriculum, structures and procedures for facilitating staff development, team-based decision making, and sustained effort are emphasized.

At the optional level, additional universal interventions can be considered, depending upon a school's self-assessment of need. These interventions address violence prevention and bullying/mean-spirited teasing. Violence prevention and school safety are emerging as major themes of concern in U.S. school systems. Mean-spirited teasing and bullying is an escalating problem that many schools are experiencing. Traditionally, schools have not done well in controlling this obnoxious, and potentially damaging, form of behavior. More ominously, it often transforms into sexual harassment in the upper elementary and middle school grades as students mature. Parents of school-age girls are becoming increasingly concerned about this phenomenon (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 1994).

The OJJDP’s (1995) Guide for Implementing a Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders provides an excellent review of curricular intervention programs for preventing violence, enhancing school safety, and developing a positive school climate. Two exemplary curricular programs of this type are briefly described next.

Among the most widely accepted curricular programs recently available for violence prevention in schools is the Second Step program as developed and published by the Committee for Children, a nonprofit agency based in Seattle. Second Step is a kindergarten through Grade 8 violence prevention curriculum that teaches four essential skills to all students: empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management/conflict resolution. The Second Step curriculum is designed to be taught at each grade level and is sequenced to take into account the developing maturity and cognitive ability of students in the K-8 grade range. This program contains both school and parent involvement components and is being widely adopted by school districts nationally even though it is relatively new. Because the program requires training, it contains curricular materials and parent handbooks for each developmental level. The curriculum's content is taught by classroom teachers using the same instructional procedures as for teaching academic content. Second Step contains 30 skills that are taught for approximately 30 minutes daily over an extended implementation period (i.e., 3 to 6 months). Symbolic modeling, problem solving, role plays, discussion, question and answer, and responding to carefully structured and visually presented scenarios are used to teach content.

Evaluation studies reported by the Committee for Children of the Second Step curricular program (Committee for Children, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992) indicate that: (a) perspective taking and social problem-solving skills improved significantly following participation in the program, and (b) Second Step students showed superior skill levels over matched control students in their responses to hypothetical social-conflict situations. A 3-year longitudinal study is currently underway to assess the
program’s long-term impact on student attitudes and behavior. It is important to note that this program and those like it have not been shown, as yet, to actually prevent violence, even though they address directly some of the precursors of violent behavior (see Note 2).

The Heartsprings Institute in Tucson, Arizona, has recently developed a program called PeaceBuilders that is designed to create a culture or ecology of peace in a school. Peace as a concept is systematically taught and is presented as something that people have to work at continuously for its development and maintenance. PeaceBuilders is designed for use with students and schools in the kindergarten through Grade 5 range; it is a brilliantly conceptualized universal intervention that is based on a strong research foundation, and it is user friendly.

The impact of the program has been rigorously evaluated using indicators that reflect actual student behavior (e.g., visits to the school nurse’s office for injuries associated with fighting; Embry, 1996; Embry & Flannery, 1996; Embry, Flannery, Vazsonyi, Powell, & Atta, 1996). The PeaceBuilders program contains a number of attractive games and activities for use in building an atmosphere of peace, and students, school staff, and parents within the intervention are involved in a coordinated, interactive fashion. PeaceBuilders is a highly recommended preferred practice in teaching prosocial forms of behavior that reduce and prevent conflict (see Note 3).

Selected Interventions for Secondary and Tertiary Prevention

As noted, those students who fail to respond to universal interventions will require exposure to secondary and/or tertiary prevention approaches in order to adequately address their problems. At-risk students showing life-course–persistent antisocial behavior patterns very likely will not respond sufficiently to universal interventions. Brief descriptions of three empirically based interventions for antisocial children and youth that address secondary and tertiary prevention goals are described next.

Fast Track is a comprehensive, long-term study of a child–family–school intervention for diverting young children from a path leading to antisocial behavior patterns (Coie, 1994). A multisite study, it involves a broad array of investigators who implement identical intervention and evaluation procedures that address children at risk for developing antisocial behavior patterns. Fast Track is designed to forge home and school partnerships to address the needs and problems of at-risk students and their families prior to escalation into crisis situations. This intervention is one of the most comprehensive ever developed for mounting effective prevention strategies of a secondary nature.

Dishion and his colleagues (Dishion & Andrews, 1995; Dishion, Patterson, & Grisler, 1994; Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, & Skinner, 1991) have developed the Adolescent Transitions Program for intervention with adolescents and their families having elevated risk status for drug/alcohol involvement and antisocial behavior patterns. This intervention program contains separate curricular and behavioral intervention procedures targeted for parents and adolescents, respectively. Both program components involve handbooks, group and individual sessions, video scenarios that teach problem-solving skills, and social contingencies designed to support integration of the newly taught skills into each person’s behavioral repertoire. Systematic evaluations of the Adolescent Transitions Program indicated that it produces a range of positive outcomes in comparison to control, noninvolved antisocial students (see Note 4).

Finally, the First Steps early intervention program for antisocial kindergartners is appropriate for use primarily in secondary prevention approaches. First Steps is a preferred practices intervention program designed to divert at-risk kindergartners from a path leading to costly antisocial behavior patterns. It consists of three modules designed to be used in concert with each other: (a) a universal, schoolwide screening procedure to detect at-risk students; (b) a school intervention involving the target student, peers, and teachers that teaches an adaptive, prosocial pattern of school behavior; and (c) a home intervention component that provides parent training in skills to help the child succeed in school (i.e., cooperation, listening, accepting limits, communication, sharing, problem solving, making friends, and developing confidence and self-esteem).

First Steps is a preferred intervention for use with students who show the early signs of antisocial behavior at the point of school entry. This program has been rigorously evaluated using adult ratings of student behavior and direct behavioral observations of target students in classroom and playground settings (Walker, Kavanagh, et al., 1995; see Note 5).

The Effective Behavioral Support Program

The Effective Behavioral Support Program (EBS) has been researched extensively by Sugai and Horner (1994) and is a whole-school approach to addressing the problems posed by antisocial students and to coping with challenging forms of student behavior. EBS is a model comprehensive, school-based intervention and has the following key features, as elaborated in Sugai and Horner (1994):

1. Problem behaviors are defined clearly for students and staff members;
2. The factors that trigger and maintain these problem behaviors are identified;
3. Development of the intervention is based on information about what triggers and maintains problem behaviors;
4. More appropriate, alternative behaviors are defined for students and staff;
5. Students are taught these alternative behaviors directly and given assistance to acquire the necessary skills to enable the desired behavior change;
6. Effective incentives and motivational systems are developed and imple-
mented to encourage students to behave differently;
7. Staff are committed to staying with the intervention over the long term and to monitoring, supporting, coaching, debriefing, and providing "booster shots" as necessary to maintain the achieved gains;
8. Staff receive training and regular feedback about effective implementation of the interventions; and,
9. Systems for measuring and monitoring the intervention's effectiveness are established and implemented.

These intervention features and characteristics are an essential part of the EBS intervention approach, which is based upon lines of empirical inquiry that have led to the development of preferred practices. These practices are predictive of demonstrated efficacy in enhancing schooling and socialization outcomes for at-risk antisocial students, as reviewed by Mayer (1995). The EBS approach addresses all three types of prevention in a coordinated fashion and provides appropriate intervention procedures for applications at schoolwide, specific setting, classroom, and individual student levels.

Schools, social service agencies, and mental health clinics are seeing increasing numbers of at-risk children and youth and their families who are in desperate need of selected interventions that address secondary and tertiary prevention goals. Effective collaborations among professionals within these agencies and systems will be required to address the complex needs and the presenting challenges of this student population. The just cited examples of interventions for at-risk antisocial students are indicative of the escalating costs and comprehensiveness of approaches that are required to cope with continuing increases in the scope and magnitude of this problem.

CONCLUSION
The increasing incidence and prevalence of antisocial behavior patterns among youth in our schools and communities are undeniable trends of the past decade. Research indicates that multiple family, school, and community factors are involved as causal agents in these trends (Hawkins, 1996; Hawkins & Catalano, 1992; Patterson et al., 1992). For example, the presence of antisocial behavior is more likely when children and youth experience the following risk factors: (a) family management strategies that are punitive, inconsistent, and lacking in careful monitoring and supervision of children's activities, whereabouts, and affiliations; (b) neighborhoods and communities that provide antisocial networks, endorse antisocial attitudes and behavior, and lack prosocial activity alternatives for young people; and (c) school environments that have punitive disciplinary approaches, unclear rules and expectations, high rates of academic failure, and poor accommodation of individual differences. Life-course—persistent patterns of antisocial behavior are likely to be in evidence if proactive, early prevention strategies and comprehensive, risk-reduction/protective-factor—enhancement intervention approaches are not implemented to address these conditions.

On a larger level, a body of research and policy in the field of sociology provides persuasive evidence that lack of social support—as opposed to simple, long-term exposure to the above risk factors as well as to criminal behavior, activities, and cultures—plays a key role in crime (Cullen, 1984; Sykes & Cullen, 1992). Social support refers to providing psychological or emotional nurturance and/or material goods and assistance through relationships, support networks, and institutions (House, 1981; Vaux, 1988). Cullen (1994) argued that the United States has higher rates of serious crime than other industrialized nations because it is a less supportive society and that our investment in social support strategies at institutional, community, family, and peer/individual levels would be an effective buffer in the current struggles with youth crime and violence.

The observations of Stamper (1996) regarding the escalation in building prisons and a continued reliance upon punishment-based coping strategies as clear indicators of U.S. society's failure to proactively address crime-related risk factors have the ring of truth and fit well into this social support paradigm. As a society, we need to arrive at a consensus that violence in all forms as well as its attitudinal and behavioral precursors are unacceptable. At the same time, however, we need to develop a more empathic and socially supportive posture toward those at-risk children and youth who, through no fault of their own, are victimized by long-term exposure to crime-related risk factors they cannot control.

Our society in general and our schools in particular need to alter their normative expectations and beliefs toward implementing more positive, socially supportive strategies for the broad range of at-risk children and youth. Changes in such norms will occur only in conjunction with broad recognition of the value and cost benefits of prevention initiatives. The OJJDP (1995) has been a particularly effective force in this regard within the field of juvenile corrections. A coalition of organizations representing educators at all levels needs to take the lead in forging a national debate about the role of schools and schooling in diverting at-risk children from a path leading to a host of negative developmental outcomes that often include delinquency, violence, and incarceration.

Fortunately, we have preferred and promising prevention practices at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels that enable us to target at-risk children and youth very early in their school careers and to intervene comprehensively with such students and the key social agents in their lives (i.e., families, teachers, and peers). These practices have the potential to reduce and/or eliminate risk factors and to develop and enhance protective factors that can redirect children and youth away from damaging antisocial lifestyles and outcomes. Unfortunately, efforts to adopt, implement, and sustain these programs have been disjointed, reactive, and often unsystematic. Adoption of practices with questionable effectiveness and cost effi-
ciency is also a not infrequent occurrence among many school districts. Clearly, we need to establish policies, standards, and processes that enable practitioners to make informed decisions about the adoption of practices that are trustworthy, accessible, and usable. Equally important, we need to implement behavioral support systems that are proactive, instructional, sustained, and comprehensive.

As noted earlier, fully integrated approaches are required that are sufficiently comprehensive and powerful to provide full and complete solutions to the problems that antisocial children and youth are presenting to schools and educators. Typically, we have underestimated or refused to accept the investments required to help these students. To date, we have not come close to reaching the necessary threshold, or “tipping point,” for successfully realizing or even approximating this goal. Until society is willing to adequately support schools in this effort, educators will continue to be challenged by barriers that make a successful outcome less likely. However, in the absence of this development, schools can still do a great deal to adopt and promote preferred practices that detect at-risk children early and put them in contact with essential and effective program services.

The data presented in Figure 4 provide a graphic example of how schools do not generally respond proactively to the early social-behavioral adjustment problems of at-risk students. Figure 4 contains a record of the number of public school students identified and served as severely emotionally disturbed, by age level, for the eight western states composing Region 6 of the Office of Special Education Programs’ service system. These statistics were derived from child count data contained in the Office’s annual report to the U.S. Congress, and they represent the 1990–1991 school year. Unlike referrals for academic performance and learning problems, which peak between Grades 2 and 3 (Lloyd, Kauffman, Landrum, & Roe, 1991), these data indicate that school accommodation of students having serious behavioral adjustment problems follows a very different pattern.

The results suggest that many, perhaps most, behaviorally at-risk students are referred to and access services well after the point when their problems can be successfully remediated (Kazdin, 1987). Ideally, this figure should show a mirror image reversal, with the vast majority of at-risk students identified as early as possible in their school careers. There are enormous political, bureaucratic, philosophical, and fiscal barriers among school systems to adopting a policy that would make this outcome a reality. However, until schools change their posture in this regard, effective accommodation of the growing at-risk student population will continue to be problematic—and very expensive.

The prevention approaches highlighted in this article are ideally suited for adoption and use by school sites, particularly at the elementary level, where their impact is likely to be greatest. However, these approaches are not likely to produce acceptable benefits and outcomes at any developmental level if they are not implemented with acceptable levels of treatment integrity or implementation fidelity. In particular, schools and school systems must make the following commitments:

1. Address the problem and develop solutions to antisocial violent behavior from a schoolwide perspective;
2. Respond in a way that considers the multiple systems that interact in a schoolwide organization;
3. Establish a long-term plan that places the school’s sustained commitment to developing solutions as one of the top three school improvement goals for the building;
4. Obtain a commitment from all staff members to work toward a comprehensive and proactive solution to the problem of antisocial and violent behavior;
5. Emphasize a proactive and instruction-based approach across the three levels of prevention (primary, secondary, and tertiary);
6. Establish an active role for administrator participation and involvement in
the design, implementation, and supervision/monitoring of a comprehensive plan to address antisocial behavior in the context of schooling;

7. Strive toward continually increasing the behavioral capacity and resources of the building;

8. Establish a team-based approach for the development, implementation, management, and evaluation of a schoolwide response to enhancing the school climate and to decreasing the amount and effects of antisocial and violent behavior.

School systems and school building sites are ideally positioned to take a lead role in the prevention and remediation of destructive and potentially violent behavior patterns that usually lead to a host of negative developmental outcomes over the long term. They can screen and identify at-risk students early in their school careers and expose them to the comprehensive interventions that will make a difference in their school careers and lives. In addition, schools represent an important contributor in wraparound efforts, which attempt to integrate all the services needed to meet the pervasive needs of children and youth with antisocial and violent behavior. For many such children and youth and their families, schools represent the most predictable, consistent, normalized, and prosocial environment available on a daily basis. We must take advantage of the opportunities made available by the schooling process.

The evidence regarding long-term outcomes associated with such early intervention indicates that it prevents delinquency years later, reduces teen pregnancy rates, contributes to school success, and teaches students about the relationship between choice and consequences (Behrman, 1995; Zigler et al., 1992). In order to successfully address the rising tide of violence and destructive behavior that is consuming our schools, communities, and families, such approaches must be carefully considered, planned, and supported via the necessary community investments. Further, these investments must be early, proactive, comprehensive, and sustained over the long term. Early intervention can be a highly cost-effective strategy in reducing violent crime (Greenwood, 1995).

We have excellent examples of promising and preferred practices, and we can make accurate statements about effective approaches and practices that are likely to have a significant effect and produce desirable outcomes. However, policies, structures, opportunities, and contingencies must be in place that ensure (a) a goodness-of-fit between these preferred practices and the problem contexts that define the lives of children and youth with antisocial behavior and their families, and (b) a sustained commitment toward implementation and evaluation over the long term. Finally, we need to work toward directing and redirecting our attention in making prevention a high priority for sustained funding, policy, and service delivery. Prevention works, and it is well worth the investment.

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Notes

1. The package is available by writing or calling the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314; 703/549-9110.

2. Information about the Second Step program can be obtained by writing to the
References


