

## **Module 6: The KiVa Method in bullying prevention**

### **Objective:**

To familiarize teachers with the KiVa Method for effective bullying prevention and intervention.

### **Summary of content:**

- Overview of the KiVa Method, focusing on training teachers and engaging students in positive peer interactions.
- Practical steps for teachers using the KiVa approach: structured lessons, peer mediation, and monitoring.
- Role of peer mediators and restorative justice in promoting behavioral change and accountability.

### **Lesson 1: Overview of the KiVa Method**

The KiVa Method is an evidence-based, comprehensive anti-bullying programme developed at the University of Turku in Finland. The programme's name, "KiVa," stands for "*Kiusaamista Vastaan*," which translates to "against bullying." It was designed as a school-wide approach to prevent and tackle bullying by involving the entire school community, including teachers, students, and parents (Salmivalli et al., 2011). The KiVa Method distinguishes itself from traditional anti-bullying measures by focusing not only on direct intervention but also on preventative education aimed at changing the social norms that support bullying behaviours.

Research shows that KiVa is highly effective in reducing bullying and victimisation rates, with schools reporting significant decreases in bullying incidents following its implementation (Kärnä et al., 2011). The programme's emphasis is on addressing the group dynamics that enable bullying, shifting the focus from solely punishing the perpetrators to empowering bystanders to act as defenders of victims (Garandeau et al., 2014). This shift in focus aims to foster an environment where bullying is socially unacceptable, reducing the likelihood of incidents occurring in the first place.

### **Core elements of the KiVa Method**

1. **Teacher training to recognise and intervene in bullying situations:** One of the essential elements of the KiVa Method is the training provided to teachers and school staff. This training equips educators with the skills to identify various forms of bullying, understand the dynamics that sustain it, and intervene effectively. Teachers are taught to recognise both overt forms of bullying, such as physical aggression, and covert forms, such as social exclusion or cyberbullying (Salmivalli, 2010). By understanding these nuances, teachers can respond promptly and appropriately, which is crucial for preventing the escalation of bullying situations (Williford et al., 2013). The training sessions often include practical

tools, simulation exercises, and detailed guides on how to mediate conflicts and facilitate productive discussions within the classroom.

- 2. Student engagement in structured lessons and activities promoting empathy and teamwork:** The student component of the KiVa Method involves a series of structured lessons designed to promote empathy, cooperation, and a culture of inclusivity among peers. These lessons are interactive, incorporating discussions, role-playing exercises, and group activities that encourage students to think critically about their actions and the impact on others (Salmivalli et al., 2011). For example, a lesson might involve students working in small groups to discuss scenarios where they witnessed bullying and brainstorming effective ways to support the victim. The goal of these activities is to create a shared understanding that bullying is unacceptable and that everyone has a role in preventing it (Kärnä et al., 2011).

These lessons also emphasise the importance of teamwork and peer support, teaching students how to act as defenders and allies to those who may be vulnerable. Research has shown that when bystanders feel empowered and know how to intervene safely, bullying incidents decrease significantly (Garandeau et al., 2014). This component of the KiVa Method reinforces the idea that bullying prevention is a collective effort and not solely the responsibility of teachers or school administrators.

### **Practical examples of the KiVa Method**

**Real-life applications of peer support groups and interactive class discussions:** Schools that have implemented the KiVa programme report the successful use of peer support groups and interactive discussions to reinforce the programme's principles. Peer support groups are organised to provide additional help to students who have experienced bullying or are at risk. These groups allow students to discuss their experiences in a safe environment and develop strategies to handle future incidents, supported by trained facilitators (Salmivalli et al., 2011).

Interactive class discussions are another effective strategy employed in the KiVa programme. During these discussions, teachers present hypothetical situations or real-life case studies to prompt dialogue and encourage students to share their thoughts and responses. This method helps students to understand different perspectives, build empathy, and develop problem-solving skills. For example, a teacher might lead a discussion where students identify behaviours that constitute bullying and brainstorm how bystanders could intervene constructively (Williford et al., 2013). These exercises promote a proactive approach to dealing with bullying and create a sense of shared responsibility among students.

Furthermore, the KiVa programme incorporates online resources and virtual tools to engage students beyond traditional lessons. These tools include educational games and interactive activities that reinforce the key messages of the programme and allow students to practice responses in simulated bullying scenarios (Kärnä et al., 2011). This multi-faceted approach ensures that students not only learn about the importance of empathy and support in theory but also apply these concepts in practice, contributing to a safer and more inclusive school environment.

## **Lesson 2: Practical steps for teachers using the KiVa Method**

### **Structured lessons**

Delivering classroom lessons as part of the KiVa program involves a methodical approach designed to engage students and cultivate anti-bullying attitudes. Below is an outline of how teachers can effectively deliver these lessons:

#### **1. Introduction and setting the stage:**

- Begin each lesson with an overview of the topic, clearly explaining the goals of the session. Ensure that students understand the significance of the lesson and its connection to their everyday school life.
- Establish a safe space by setting clear ground rules that encourage respect and participation (Kärnä et al., 2011).

#### **2. Interactive teaching techniques:**

- **Discussion and storytelling:** Use relatable stories and real-life scenarios to prompt discussion among students. This helps students connect with the material on an emotional level, making the learning experience more impactful.
- **Multimedia resources:** Integrate videos and visual presentations that demonstrate positive peer interactions and highlight the importance of standing against bullying (Williford et al., 2013).

#### **3. Structured activities and exercises:**

- **Role-playing:** Implement role-playing exercises where students take on different roles in a bullying scenario—such as the bully, the victim, and bystanders. This practice helps students empathize with various perspectives and understand the impact of their actions (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012).
  - **Execution tip:** Keep these activities structured and guided to ensure they remain constructive. Debrief after each role-playing session to discuss what students learned and how they felt in each role.

#### **4. Guided reflection:**

- Encourage students to reflect on what they learned and write down or share how they would apply the lessons to real-life situations. This reinforces their understanding and helps them internalize anti-bullying strategies (Salmivalli, 2018).

### **Tips on integrating role-playing exercises for students**

Role-playing is an effective tool in the KiVa program for promoting empathy and active bystander behavior. Here are some tips for integrating role-playing exercises:

#### **1. Create clear scenarios:**

- Develop well-defined scenarios that mimic realistic bullying situations. Ensure that the context is relevant to the students' age group and school environment (Williford et al., 2013).

#### **2. Assign roles thoughtfully:**

- Assign roles that rotate among students to give them a broader understanding of different perspectives. Be mindful of students who may have experienced bullying and might be sensitive to certain roles.
- 3. Facilitate active participation:**
  - Prompt students to engage in role-playing by asking guiding questions and encouraging them to think creatively about how they would react. For example, “What could you say to support a peer being bullied?”
- 4. Debrief and discuss:**
  - After each exercise, hold a debriefing session where students can express their feelings and observations. This part of the lesson is crucial for reinforcing the emotional and social skills needed to counteract bullying (Kärnä et al., 2011).
- 5. Connect lessons to real-life application:**
  - End the role-playing session by discussing how students can apply what they learned in their interactions at school. Emphasize the importance of standing up for peers and seeking help from teachers or trusted adults (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012).

## **Peer mediation and monitoring**

**Peer mediation** is an integral part of the KiVa Method, empowering students to actively participate in conflict resolution and bullying prevention. Training teachers on how to effectively implement and supervise peer mediation can significantly enhance its impact. Here’s how teachers can be trained:

- 1. Understanding the role of peer mediators:**
  - Peer mediators are students trained to assist in resolving minor conflicts and support victims of bullying. Teachers should first be equipped with the knowledge to select and train these mediators. Selection criteria include traits like empathy, good communication skills, and the ability to remain neutral (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012).
- 2. Training peer mediators:**
  - Teachers should conduct workshops or training sessions focusing on active listening, conflict resolution skills, and confidentiality.
  - Role-playing exercises are valuable tools for training mediators to practice handling different types of conflict situations. Teachers should model these exercises before guiding students through them (Williford et al., 2013).
- 3. Guidelines for teachers during mediation:**
  - Teachers should serve as facilitators and support systems, stepping in only when necessary to ensure the process remains constructive.
  - A debrief with peer mediators after sessions helps reflect on their experience, identify strengths, and pinpoint areas for improvement (Kärnä et al., 2011).

## **Continuous observation strategies and follow-up measures to assess the impact**

Monitoring the effectiveness of peer mediation and overall anti-bullying efforts is essential for maintaining the KiVa program's success. Here are some strategies:

**1. Scheduled observations:**

- Teachers should conduct regular, unobtrusive observations during unstructured times like recess and lunch. This helps identify potential conflicts and assess the presence of positive peer interactions.
- Checklists and observation logs can be useful tools for tracking behaviors, noting both incidents of bullying and instances where peer mediators successfully intervened (Salmivalli, 2018).

**2. Feedback collection:**

- Regular feedback from students, including those who have been supported by peer mediators, can provide valuable insights into the program's impact. Surveys or informal conversations can be used to gauge student perception and the sense of safety in the school environment (Kärnä et al., 2011).

**3. Follow-up meetings:**

- Teachers should schedule periodic meetings with peer mediators to discuss their experiences and share challenges. This promotes continuous learning and refinement of mediation practices.
- Post-mediation follow-ups with both the victim and the perpetrator are essential to ensure that conflicts have been resolved effectively and that there is no recurrence of bullying behavior (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012).

**4. Data-driven analysis:**

- Collect and analyze data on bullying incidents before and after the implementation of peer mediation. This can include tracking the number of reported cases and qualitative data from teacher observations.
- Use this analysis to adjust training and mediation processes as needed, ensuring that the school's approach remains effective and responsive to emerging challenges (Williford et al., 2013).

## **Case example: scenario-based examples illustrating the application of KiVa Method steps**

### **Case Study 1: Implementing peer mediation in an urban middle school**

*Background:* Hillcrest Middle School, located in a busy urban area, has been facing an increase in verbal bullying incidents during recess. The school decided to implement the KiVa program with an emphasis on peer mediation.

*Application:*

- **Training peer mediators:** Teachers selected 10 students from grades 6–8 who demonstrated leadership qualities and empathy. These students participated in a two-week workshop where they learned conflict resolution, active listening, and confidentiality practices.

- **First peer mediation session:** During a lunchtime conflict where one student, Alex, was repeatedly teased by peers, two trained mediators, under the teacher's observation, stepped in. They facilitated a discussion where the students involved shared their perspectives and reached a mutual understanding. The mediators maintained neutrality, guided the conversation constructively, and ensured Alex felt supported.

*Outcome:*

- The session concluded with the aggressors acknowledging their behavior's impact, and they agreed to change their actions. Alex reported feeling more secure and supported, while the mediators gained confidence in their role. Teachers noted fewer incidents involving the same group over the next month.

### **Case Study 2: structured lessons in a rural elementary school**

*Background:* Pine Valley Elementary, a small school in a rural community, noticed subtle bullying behaviors, such as exclusion and rumor-spreading, among fifth-grade students. The school decided to integrate KiVa structured lessons into its weekly schedule.

*Application:*

- **Lesson structure:** The homeroom teacher introduced weekly lessons focused on empathy and the consequences of bullying. These lessons included storytelling sessions where students shared personal experiences (real or hypothetical) of feeling excluded and discussed how they felt and what they could do differently.
- **Role-playing exercise:** A role-playing scenario was created where one student acted as a victim being excluded from a game, while others acted as bystanders and upstanders. The exercise aimed to show the difference between passive observation and active intervention.

*Outcome:*

- During discussions post-exercise, students expressed a newfound understanding of the power they had as bystanders to prevent bullying. Follow-up observations showed that students who participated in the role-playing were more willing to include others in their activities, and teachers reported fewer instances of exclusion.

### **Case Study 3: Continuous monitoring in a suburban high school**

*Background:* Greenfield High School, situated in a suburban area, experienced sporadic cyberbullying incidents reported by students. Teachers decided to adopt continuous observation and follow-up measures to monitor the effectiveness of KiVa practices.

*Application:*

- **Observation strategy:** Teachers adopted scheduled observation periods during high-risk times, such as lunch breaks and between classes. Using a checklist, they recorded interactions and signs of exclusion or aggressive behavior.
- **Feedback loop:** The school implemented an anonymous feedback system where students could report their experiences with peer mediators or bullying incidents.
- **Follow-up meetings:** Regular meetings between teachers and peer mediators were held to discuss trends in observations and outcomes of mediations.

*Outcome:*

- Over a semester, the data collected from observations and feedback showed a 30% reduction in reported cyberbullying cases. Students expressed feeling safer, and teachers noted an improvement in peer relationships.

**Case study discussion questions:**

1. What aspects of peer mediation were most effective in Case Study 1, and why?
2. How did the structured lessons in Case Study 2 help change students' perceptions of their roles in preventing bullying?
3. What additional monitoring measures could Greenfield High School consider to enhance the efficacy of their KiVa program?

**Lesson 3: The role of restorative justice and peer mediators in behavioral change and accountability**

Restorative justice in schools aims to repair harm and rebuild trust within the school community. It shifts the focus from punishment to accountability and understanding. . It encourages students to learn from their mistakes and understand their role in maintaining a positive community (Cornell et al., 2015). Morrison (2013) highlights the effectiveness of restorative practices in reducing bullying and fostering inclusive school climates. In restorative justice practices, offenders are encouraged to take full responsibility for their actions, understand the harm caused, and actively work to repair it.

We will present two ways of implementing restorative justice: restorative circles and conferences.

**Restorative circles** can be proactive or reactive and they aim to build relationships and address conflicts. From a reactive perspective, they bring together the victim, the perpetrator, and any affected parties to openly discuss the incident, its impact, and possible solutions. The circle is facilitated by a trained teacher or peer mediator and everybody sits in a circle to symbolize equity and shared responsibility:

- Start with an opening statement that sets a respectful and non-judgmental tone.
- Each participant shares their feelings and perspective. The mediator or facilitator ensures all voices are heard and that the conversation remains constructive (Bradshaw et al., 2014).
- Close the session with an agreed-upon plan for resolving the conflict and preventing future incidents.

**Restorative conferences** are more formal reactive meetings involving the bully, victim, teachers, and parents. Conferences aim to address severe or repeated bullying incidents.

- Prepare all participants by discussing the conference's purpose and process beforehand (the ground rules of the conference; for example, everybody waits their turn to speak, when the facilitator gives permission).
- Each participant shares their perspective, focusing on the impact of the harm.
- Participants discuss the emotional, social, and practical effects of the incident.
- The group collaboratively develops a plan for repairing harm and preventing future issues.

### **Case study: Implementing restorative justice after a bullying incident**

A student, Jordan, was involved in repeatedly mocking another student, Alex, which led to Alex avoiding certain classes. The school arranged a restorative justice circle involving both students, their parents, and a facilitator. Teachers and Alex's parents became concerned about his emotional well-being and academic performance. After the school investigated the situation, they opted for a restorative justice approach to address the conflict. The school counselor (the facilitator) invited Alex (the victim) and his parents, Jordan (the perpetrator) and his parents, and a teacher familiar with both students, for a restorative justice circle intervention.

#### *Intervention:*

- The facilitator met with each participant beforehand to explain the process, address concerns, and ensure they felt safe and supported.
- Both students agreed voluntarily to participate, understanding that the goal was to repair harm and prevent future incidents.
- Ground rules were established: respect, active listening, and confidentiality. The facilitator opened the circle by acknowledging the incident and its impact on Alex.
- Jordan was asked to explain his actions and how he thought they affected Alex. Initially defensive, Jordan admitted to feeling pressure from his friends to act “tough.” The facilitator asked questions that enhanced Jordan’s empathy for Alex.
- Alex shared how the mocking made him feel isolated and anxious. The facilitator emphasized that most people in such a situation would feel similar emotions.
- Parents and teachers contributed with their perspective. The facilitator oriented the discussions towards finding common-ground and solutions.
- The group discussed solutions and agreed on regular check-ins



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