

Module 6. The KiVa Method in Bullying Prevention

This module introduces teachers to the KiVa Method, an evidence-based anti-bullying program developed at the University of Turku in Finland. The program takes a school-wide approach to prevent and tackle bullying by involving the entire school community, including teachers, students, and parents.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

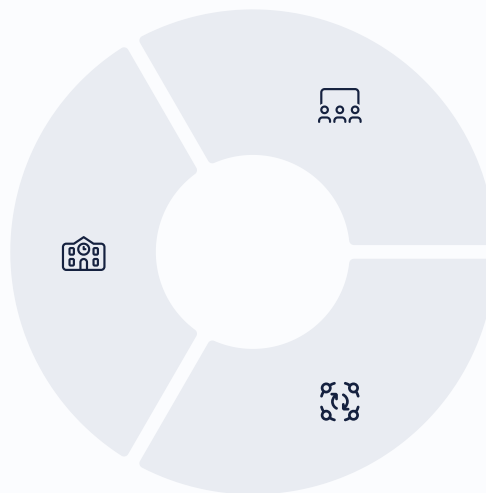
Overview of the KiVa Method

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 behaviors. Research shows that KiVa is highly effective in reducing bullying and victimization rates, with schools reporting significant decreases in bullying incidents following its implementation (Kärnä et al., 2011).

The program's emphasis is on addressing the group dynamics that enable bullying, shifting the focus from solely punishing perpetrators to empowering bystanders to act as defenders of victims (Garandeau et al., 2014). This shift aims to foster an environment where bullying is socially unacceptable, reducing the likelihood of incidents occurring in the first place.

Teacher Training

Equips educators with skills to identify various forms of bullying, understand the dynamics that sustain it, and intervene effectively. Teachers learn to recognize both overt forms like physical aggression and covert forms like social exclusion or cyberbullying (Salmivalli, 2010).



Student Engagement

Involves structured lessons designed to promote empathy, cooperation, and inclusivity among peers. These interactive lessons incorporate discussions, role-playing exercises, and group activities that encourage students to think critically about their actions and impact on others (Salmivalli et al., 2011).

School-Wide Approach

Creates a shared understanding that bullying is unacceptable and that everyone has a role in preventing it. The program emphasizes teamwork and peer support, teaching students how to act as defenders and allies to those who may be vulnerable.

When bystanders feel empowered and know how to intervene safely, bullying incidents decrease significantly (Garandeau et al., 2014). This reinforces the idea that bullying prevention is a collective effort and not solely the responsibility of teachers or school administrators.

Practical Applications of the KiVa Method

Schools implementing the KiVa program report successful use of peer support groups and interactive discussions to reinforce the program's principles. Peer support groups provide additional help to students who have experienced bullying or are at risk, allowing them to discuss 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 program. 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 understand different perspectives, build empathy, and develop problem-solving skills.

For example, a teacher might lead a discussion where students identify behaviors 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 program 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 program 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. The combination of in-person activities and digital resources provides multiple touchpoints for reinforcing anti-bullying messages and skills.

Structured Lessons in the KiVa Program

Delivering classroom lessons as part of the KiVa program involves a methodical approach designed to engage students and cultivate anti-bullying attitudes. Effective implementation follows a clear structure that maximizes student engagement and learning outcomes.

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).

Structured Activities and Exercises

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). Keep these activities structured and guided to ensure they remain constructive.

Role-playing is particularly effective for promoting empathy and active bystander behavior. When implementing role-playing exercises, teachers should create clear scenarios that mimic realistic bullying situations relevant to the students' age group. Roles should rotate among students to give them a broader understanding of different perspectives, while being mindful of students who may have experienced bullying and might be sensitive to certain roles.

After each exercise, holding a debriefing session where students can express their feelings and observations is crucial for reinforcing the emotional and social skills needed to counteract bullying. Connecting lessons to real-life application by discussing how students can apply what they learned in their interactions at school emphasizes the importance of standing up for peers and seeking help from teachers or trusted adults.

Interactive Teaching Techniques

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. Integrate videos and visual presentations that demonstrate positive peer interactions and highlight the importance of standing against bullying (Williford et al., 2013).

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).

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.

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

Monitoring the effectiveness of peer mediation and overall anti-bullying efforts is essential for maintaining the KiVa program's success. Teachers should conduct regular, unobtrusive observations during unstructured times like recess and lunch to 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).

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 gauge student perception and the sense of safety in the school environment. Teachers should schedule periodic meetings with peer mediators to discuss their experiences and share challenges, promoting continuous learning and refinement of mediation practices.

Case Studies: KiVa Method in Action

Case Study 1: Implementing Peer Mediation in an Urban Middle School

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

Implementation

- Teachers selected 10 students from grades 6–8 who demonstrated leadership qualities and empathy
- Students participated in a two-week workshop learning conflict resolution, active listening, and confidentiality practices
- During a lunchtime conflict where one student, Alex, was repeatedly teased by peers, two trained mediators stepped in under teacher observation
- Mediators facilitated a discussion where all students involved shared their perspectives and reached mutual understanding

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

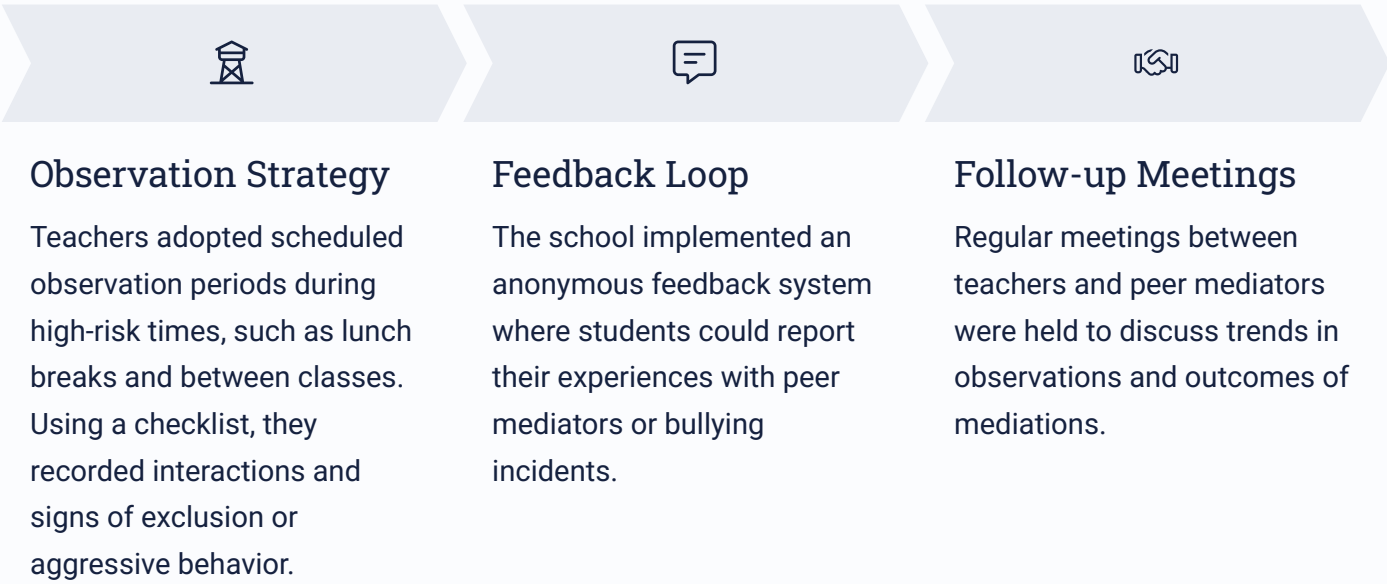
Pine Valley Elementary, a small school in a rural community, noticed subtle bullying behaviors, such as exclusion and rumor-spreading, among fifth-grade students. The school decided to integrate KiVa structured lessons into its weekly schedule.

The homeroom teacher introduced weekly lessons focused on empathy and the consequences of bullying. These included storytelling sessions where students shared personal experiences of feeling excluded and discussed how they felt and what they could do differently. Role-playing exercises were created where students acted as victims being excluded from games, while others acted as bystanders and upstanders.

During post-exercise discussions, 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

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.



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?

These case studies demonstrate the versatility of the KiVa Method across different school environments and age groups. The success factors include consistent implementation, adaptation to specific school contexts, and continuous monitoring and adjustment of strategies based on feedback and observed outcomes.

Restorative Justice in the KiVa Method

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, encouraging 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. Two primary methods of implementing restorative justice in the KiVa framework are restorative circles and conferences.

Restorative Circles

Restorative circles can be proactive or reactive and 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 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

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 (including ground rules)
- 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

Both approaches emphasize healing relationships rather than punishment, creating opportunities for genuine understanding and behavioral change. By focusing on the harm caused rather than rule-breaking, restorative justice helps students develop empathy and take responsibility for their actions in a supportive environment.

Case Study: Implementing Restorative Justice After a Bullying Incident

This case study examines how a school effectively used restorative justice principles to address a bullying situation involving two students, Jordan and Alex.



This case demonstrates several key principles of restorative justice in the KiVa framework:

- Voluntary participation from all parties
- Focus on understanding harm rather than assigning blame
- Creating space for authentic emotional expression

Implementing the KiVa Method: Key Takeaways



School-Wide Approach

The KiVa Method is most effective when implemented as a comprehensive school-wide program involving teachers, students, and parents. This creates a consistent message that bullying is unacceptable and that everyone has a role in prevention (Salmivalli et al., 2011).



Teacher Training

Proper training equips educators with the skills to identify various forms of bullying and intervene effectively. Understanding both overt and covert forms of bullying is essential for comprehensive prevention (Salmivalli, 2010).



Empathy Development

Structured lessons and activities that promote empathy, cooperation, and inclusivity are central to changing peer dynamics that enable bullying. Role-playing exercises help students understand different perspectives (Williford et al., 2013).



Peer Mediation

Training students as peer mediators empowers them to actively participate in conflict resolution and creates additional support systems within the school community (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012).



Restorative Practices

Restorative justice approaches shift focus from punishment to accountability and understanding, helping students learn from mistakes while repairing harm to relationships (Cornell et al., 2015).



Continuous Monitoring

Regular observation, feedback collection, and data analysis are essential for assessing program effectiveness and making necessary adjustments to maintain positive outcomes (Kärnä et al., 2011).

The KiVa Method represents a significant advancement in bullying prevention by addressing the social dynamics that enable bullying rather than focusing solely on individual perpetrators and victims. By empowering bystanders, developing empathy, and creating accountability through restorative practices, schools can create environments where bullying becomes socially unacceptable.

Research consistently demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach, with schools reporting significant decreases in bullying incidents following implementation. The case studies presented in this document illustrate how the KiVa Method can be adapted to different school contexts while maintaining its core principles.