Youth violence

Today’s violence - complex and pervasive
With the recent spate of school based shootings, there is renewed interest in violence prevention, especially as it pertains to adolescents. But the violence that affects today’s students is both more complex and more pervasive than the headline grabbing - but statistically rare - multiple shootings on school playgrounds. Bullying, fighting, and relationship violence are all forms of physical violence that many of today’s students are forced to deal with on a daily basis. Fewer students are faced with gang violence, but it accounts for a large proportion of violence in poor, urban neighborhoods.

Needs are diverse
Since not all schools or classes experience the same forms of violence, they are not all helped by the same violence prevention program. In addition, not all teaching conditions are the same. Some schools have shorter class periods, some longer ones. Some districts mandate violence prevention and/or allow a significant number of classroom hours for it. Many don’t.

Individual student needs differ as well. Some are more at risk to be perpetrators of violence, others to be victims, and many have a “dual status”, where they are victims in one situation (often at home), and then become perpetrators in another situation. Many adolescent boys clearly need training in empathy. Many adolescent girls are made more vulnerable by their exaggerated sense of empathy at the expense of a solid sense of self. These girls - and many boys - need training in setting limits, firming up their sense of self, and developing overall assertiveness.

Peers are most often the targets of adolescent violence, but increasingly teachers are targets as well. Classroom teachers are routinely subjected to disruptive, antisocial behavior which forces attention away from teaching and the needs of other students. Beyond that “routine” aggression, 200,000 overt acts of aggression are committed against teachers each year.

In addition to the programming for students described here, Ripple Effects offers parallel training for teachers to reduce their chances of being targets, inadvertent precipitators, or escalators of violence.
Goals of intervention

Students will:

- Master skills of assertiveness, decision making, problem solving and conflict resolution
- Develop the core abilities of empathy, impulse control and anger/fear management
- Know basic strategies for making friends and asking for help
- Understand the criteria for deciding whether to break a confidence and turn someone in

A suggested scope and sequence

SKILL TRAINING TOPICS

**Perpetrator perspective**
- **Empathy**
  - Identify feelings
  - Predict feelings
  - Take perspective
  - Stereotypes

**Impulse control**
- Stop reactions
- Predict consequences

**Managing feelings**
- Body sensing
- Self talk
- Letting go
- Anger
- Fear
- Sadness

**Resolving conflict**

**Potential victim perspective**
- **Self awareness**
  - Mindfulness

**Assertiveness**
- Getting respect
- Resisting pressure

**Decision making**
- Brainstorming
- Trying solutions

**Bystander perspective**
- Bystander
- Solidarity
- Confronting behavior

**For all**
- **Connecting to community**
  - Courtesy
  - Respect
  - Making friends
  - Resolving conflict
  - Telling
  - Getting help
  - Responsibility
  - Restorative justice

CHALLENGE TOPICS

**Violence**
- Aggression
- Beat up – victim
- Beatings (child abuse)
- Bully – offender, victim
- Discipline
- Family violence
- Fighting
- Gangs
- Guns (weapons, shooting)
- Hitting
- Hurting animals
- Loner
- Police
- Rape – offender, victim
- Revenge
- Selling drugs
- Sexual harassment
- Stalking – offender, victim
- Snitch
- Threats