

# Building a Foundation Against Violence: Impact of a School-Based Prevention Program on Elementary Students

Bruce W. Hall  
Tina P. Bacon

**ABSTRACT.** This study examined the effectiveness of the Too Good for Violence Prevention Program (TGFV), a multifaceted interactive intervention. Grounded in Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the TGFV curricula focus on developing personal and interpersonal skills to solve conflict non-violently and resist social influences that lead to violence. Participants were 999 third grade students and 46 teachers in ten elementary schools. The schools were matched on student characteristics and academic performance and assigned to treatment or control conditions. Teachers and students completed checklists assessing students' behaviors prior to, following, and 20 weeks after program delivery. Results show that treatment students, as compared to control students, were perceived by teachers as evidencing more frequent use of personal and social skills and of prosocial behaviors after program delivery. Student survey data show that treatment students, as compared to control students, evidenced more positive scores in the areas of emotional competency skills, social and resistance skills, and communication skills after

---

Bruce W. Hall is Professor Emeritus, College of Education, University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Avenue, EDU 357, Tampa, FL 33620 (E-mail: bwhall@tampabay.rr.com).

Tina P. Bacon is a Research and Evaluation Consultant, 5973 Leeland Street South, St. Petersburg, FL 33715 (E-mail: tbacon@tampabay.rr.com).

This research was supported by the C. E. Mendez Foundation, Inc., with the collaboration of professionals from one of the State of Florida's largest school districts. The authors express their appreciation to the teachers, site administrators, and district administrators whose cooperation made this study possible.

Journal of School Violence, Vol. 4(4) 2005  
Available online at <http://www.haworthpress.com/web/JSV>  
© 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.  
doi:10.1300/J202v04n04\_05

program delivery. The benefits of the TGFV program continued to be observed at the 20-week follow-up. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

**KEYWORDS.** Violence prevention, risk and protective factors, prosocial behavior, elementary

## INTRODUCTION

### *Need for Early Intervention*

Preadolescence is a time when children begin to occasionally engage in high-risk behavior (Stipek et al., 1999). According to Van Acker and Talbott (1999), children entering elementary school are confronted with myriad social demands for which they may not be prepared. In their efforts to solve these social problems, some children will begin to display aggressive behavior. For this reason, entrance into school has been associated with increased risk for the display of aggressive behavior (Van Acker & Talbott, 1999). As noted by Baker (1998, pp. 31-32):

By the time children get to the primary grades we assume they have acquired a key set of social competencies that foster adaptation to schooling. These include valuing social exchange, trusting the intent of adults, the ability to “read” complex patterns of social behavior, a willingness to take positive risks, age-appropriate self-regulatory skills, and a developing sense of worth, self-acceptance, and personal agency. These capacities are nurtured within children’s social relationships. However, children with tendencies toward violence have different developmental trajectories. They arrive at the schoolhouse door ill equipped to negotiate the complexities of school life and to engage in a meaningful way with the community of the school.

Childhood aggression has been found to be highly indicative of later antisocial behavior (Smith & Furlong, 1998). Violence is a learned behavior. Patterns of violence appear to develop at an early age (Kelam et al., 1994) and the values, attitudes and interpersonal skills acquired early in life play a key role in the development of violent behavior