

## Research Summary

### **Effects of the *Too Good for Violence* Prevention Program**

This study examined the effectiveness of the *Too Good for Violence* (TGFV) Prevention Program in impacting children's behaviors and skill development in protective factors associated with resistance to violence. The study examined the following questions. First, do students participating in the *TGFV* prevention program in comparison to students in the control group indicate: 1) higher levels of emotional competency skills, 2) higher levels of social and conflict resolution skills, 3) higher levels of communication skills, and 4) more positive perceptions of interactions with other students? Second, do teachers' observations of students participating in the *TGFV* prevention program in comparison to observations of students in the control group indicate: 1) higher levels of social skills, 2) higher rates of prosocial behaviors, and 3) lower rates of inappropriate social behaviors? Third, are *TGFV* program effects similar for students across gender, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status?

### **Method**

Ten elementary schools from a large Florida school district were randomly selected and recruited for participation in this study. Nine hundred and ninety-nine (999) third grade students and 46 teachers participated in the study. The student sample was 48% female, approximately 44% White, 12.5% African American, 36% Hispanic, 5% Multiracial, 2% Asian, and 0.5% American Indian. Fifty-four percent of the students were categorized as economically challenged by receipt of reduced or free lunch services, 20% received exceptional education services, and 17% received limited English proficiency services.

Students in five of the elementary schools participated in the prevention program during the first quarter of the school year, and students in the other five schools served as the control sample for the study. Students in the treatment and control sample were administered a pretest survey questionnaire at the beginning of the year prior to delivery of the *TGFV* prevention program. A posttest student questionnaire was administered following the delivery of the prevention curriculum and again 20-weeks after the treatment delivery. Concurrently, classroom teachers completed student observation questionnaires before program delivery, following program delivery, and 20-weeks after program delivery. Trained *TGFV* instructors delivered the prevention program to students in the treatment schools in 40-50 minute lessons once a week over a seven-week period.

### **Results**

Prevention research has identified certain risk factors that increase the likelihood of children and youth engaging in aggressive behaviors and certain protective factors that decrease the impact of risk factors. The *TGFV* program incorporates curricula and instructional activities aimed at reducing risk factors and building protective factors. The following risk and protective factors were examined in the study: Emotional Competency Skills; Social and Conflict Resistance Skills; Communication Skills; and Social Interactions with Others.

1. Students in the treatment and the control group responded to a survey questionnaire before, immediately following and 20-weeks after program delivery.

**Student responses to protective survey items at the end of program and again at the 20-week follow-up suggest the following:**

- (a) Students participating in the *TGFV* program had statistically significant higher scores or higher levels of **emotional competency skills** in comparison to students in the control group. A sample of item content that represents skills in this category includes: 1) I know many different words to describe what I feel inside, 2) It is easy for me to talk about my feelings, 3) I can calm myself down when I am upset, and 4) I stop and think before I act when I am mad or upset.
  - (b) Students participating in the *TGFV* program had statistically significant higher scores or higher levels of **social and conflict resolution skills** in comparison to students in the control group. A sample of item content that represents skills in this category includes: 1) If a student was bothering me, I would walk away, 2) If a student teased me, I might make a joke out of it, 3) If I have a conflict, I ask to hear the other student's side of the story, and 4) I use peaceful ways to work out conflicts with other students.
  - (c) Students participating in the *TGFV* program had statistically significant higher scores or higher levels of **communication skills** in comparison to students in the control group. A sample of item content that represents skills in this category includes: 1) I can tell how students feel by listening to their tone of voice, 2) I listen to other students even when I disagree, 3) I use "I feel messages" to share my feelings with other students, and 4) I tell other students how I feel when they do something I like.
  - (d) Students in both the treatment and the control group had very positive perceptions of their **interactions with other students** (pretest, 9-week, and 20-week testing). The average scores across groups ranged from 4.17 to 4.29 on a 5.00-point scale, suggesting a ceiling on the potential effects of program treatment. Considering the students in this sample were served in general education settings, the vast majority of third graders were not likely to be engaging in socially inappropriate behaviors such as name calling, yelling, and pushing other students.
2. In an effort to triangulate data, teacher judgment concerning student behavior was also examined. Classroom teachers were asked to rate each student's behavior related to social skills, prosocial interactions, and antisocial interactions across the three testing periods. If teacher responses are consistent with student responses, the study's findings could be interpreted with greater confidence.

**Teachers' observations of students at the end of program and again at the 20-week follow-up suggest the following:**

- (a) Based on teachers' judgments, students participating in the *TGFV* program had statistically significant higher scores or higher levels of **social skills** in comparison to students in the control group. A sample of item content that represents skills in this category includes: 1) treats other students with respect, 2) uses a variety of verbal labels for emotions, 3) stops and thinks before acting, and 4) uses or suggests more than one way to solve a social problem.
  - (b) Based on teachers' judgments, students participating in the *TGFV* program had statistically significant higher scores or higher levels of **prosocial behaviors** in comparison to students in the control group. A sample of item content that represents skills in this category includes: 1) helps other students, 2) asks other students to play if they don't have someone to play with, 3) takes turns, plays fair, and follows rules of the game, and 4) resolves problems with other students on his or her own.
  - (c) Teachers rated students in both the treatment and the control group as engaging in very few **socially inappropriate behaviors** (pretest, 9-week, and 20-week testing). The average scores across groups ranged from 4.35 to 4.44 on a 5.00-point scale (scores coded in reverse). This finding supports students' perceptions of limited antisocial behaviors in the school setting as indicated above (2.d).
3. Treatment effects were examined for students participating in the *TGFV* program across gender, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status (free/reduced lunch). These results offer evidence of the *TGFV* program's utility in serving and meeting the needs of diverse student populations.

**Treatment student responses to protective survey items at the end of program and again at the 20-week follow-up suggest the following:**

- (a) The *TGFV* program was equally effective for participating students **regardless of ethnic background**. In other words, White, African American, and Hispanic students experienced similar increases in Emotional Competency Skills, Social and Conflict Resolution Skills, and Communication Skills. Students maintained similarly positive perceptions of interactions with other students.
- (b) The *TGFV* program was equally effective for participating students **regardless of gender**.
- (c) The *TGFV* program was equally effective for participating students **regardless of socioeconomic status**.