KiVa

A whole-school anti-bullying program, developed at the University of Turku, now implemented in 31 countries and 2,500 schools

Aims and Objectives

KiVa is an evidence-based antibullying program, aimed at preventing bullying and tackling the cases of bullying effectively. It works by changing group social norms and building the capacity of all children to behave constructively — taking responsibility for not encouraging bullying and actively supporting victimised peers.

Implementation highlights

KiVa addresses all forms of bullying, including physical, verbal, sexual, racist, and cyberbullying. It is based on three linked elements:

1. Prevention (Universal) - actions directed at all students, including lessons, videos, posters, materials for staff meetings, parents' evenings, and a family guide.

2. Intervention (Indicated actions) - targeted response when acute bullying cases come to staff attention. The school's KiVa team leads individual discussions with those involved, using either a 'confronting' or 'non-confronting' (empathy-raising) approach.

3. Monitoring: annual online surveys for students and staff, providing school-level data on students' overall wellbeing, and bullying and victimisation rates to guide improvement.

At a glance

Univ. Prevention

Target audience
- Teachers, principals, school staff
- Students (6-16 years)
- Parents / caregivers

Delivery settings
School

Objectives
- Prevent bullying and cyberbullying
- Intervene in case of bullying
- Minimize the negative consequences of bullying

Costs
Indicative cost: from €0 (when covered by ministry/government partnerships) up to a negotiated per-school fee, depending on scope and country. Exact pricing available on request.

Professionals involved:
- Teachers and school staff

Leading organization:
- University of Turku (Finland)

Countries
31 countries worldwide
(12 in Europe)

How can this practice be implemented?

- National partner organisations coordinate rollout, train and support schools. Teachers are trained by certified KiVa trainers working under the licensed partner.
- KiVa provides ready-to-use and versatile materials, age adapted (6-9, 10-12, 13-16)
- Annual online monitoring surveys for students and staff guide implementation

Get started

- Visit the KiVa website
- Find a KiVa partner
- Become a partner
- Read the family guide

Key takeaways

- 98% of bullied students felt that KiVa team's interventions were helpful
- Implementation support is available

Supporting policies

- Finland's **Basic Education Act** (628/1998): Guarantees every student the right to a safe learning environment, free from bullying, harassment, and violence. Schools have a proactive legal obligation to prevent — not only respond to — such incidents. A **2003 amendment** requires all schools to have a formal anti-bullying plan covering prevention, incident response, pupil support, and monitoring.
- Finland's **Non-Discrimination Act** (1325/2014): Promotes equality and and enhance the protection to those who have been discriminated against, reinforcing the inclusive school environment that KiVa aims to foster

What makes this a good practice?

key features

- Reduction in bullying (multiple RCTs)
- ROI €4.04–€6.72 per euro (NL)
- 31 countries · 2,500+ schools

Impact: does it work?

Effectiveness

KiVa reduces both self- and peer-reported bullying and victimisation, across verbal, relational, physical, and cyber forms (1). It also improves school liking, academic motivation and achievement (2), and reduces anxiety and depression (3). 98% of victims involved in KiVa-team discussions report their situation improved (4).

Efficiency

Cost-effectiveness analysis shows benefits outweigh costs (5). A Netherlands analysis found a good return on investment of €4.04–€6.72 per euro invested (6). A new study showing long term results in higher education attainment, employment and income is underway (14).

Evidence base

15+ empirical publications, including a large RCT in Finland (6) (117 intervention schools, 117 controls) and RCTs in the Netherlands (7), Italy (8), and the UK (9). Program development was preceded by 10+ years of bullying research at the University of Turku (15).

Reach: who can benefit?

Equity and access

Universal, whole-school delivery means all students benefit regardless of background. The program explicitly aims to build inclusive, equitable and safe school environments.

Transferability and scalability

Delivered in 2,500+ schools across 31 countries. Implemented nationwide in Finland; international RCTs (Netherlands, Estonia, Italy, Wales) confirm effectiveness outside Finland. Additionally, the KiVa international community shares best practices among partners and trainers, facilitating transfer.

Integration: keeping it going and working across sectors

Sustainability	Designed as a permanent part of school culture rather than a time-limited project. The INVEST research centre at the University of Turku supports partners and trains KiVa trainers long-term. Both short- and long-term sustainability of implementation has been investigated in empirical studies (11-13).
Intersectorality	Varies by country. In Finland, school psychologists (health and social-care sector) collaborate with schools and sit on KiVa teams — an example of cross-sector linkage that can be replicated elsewhere.

Engagement and innovation: listening to young people and adapting over time

Youth participation	Students are active contributors to KiVa's improvement cycle through an annual anonymous survey collecting data on bullying prevalence, loneliness, sexual harassment, school atmosphere, and general wellbeing. Each school receives an annual report with results broken down by grade level, including trends over time and benchmarking against other KiVa schools in the region. This feedback loop ensures that student experiences directly inform school-level action and monitoring.
Intergenerational / life-course approach	Age-adapted materials across three units (6–9, 10–12, 13–16); parents are involved throughout the child's progression and they are informed on bullying and the program through parents' evening, a family guide and information leaflets
Research priorities and innovation	Task-shifting through non-specialist school staff — empowers staff and builds sustainable mental-health capacity inside existing school systems.

References and additional tools to favour translation

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