

## Boston vs. Bullies Evaluation – Executive Summary

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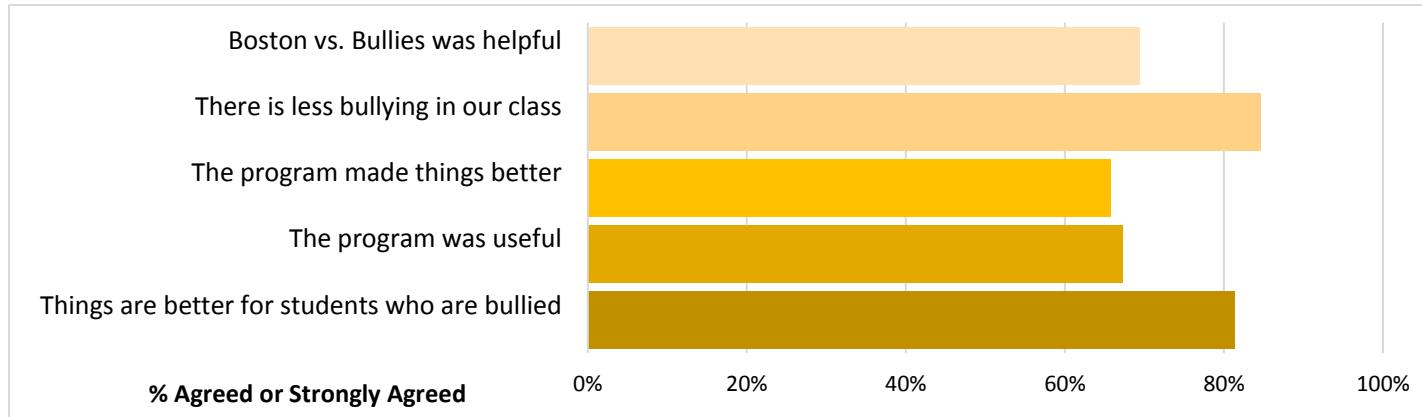
This report documents findings from an evaluation of the Boston vs. Bullies program. Drs. Jennifer Greif Green and Melissa Holt, from Boston University's Wheelock College of Education & Human Development, led evaluation efforts. Participants were 5<sup>th</sup> grade students and facilitators (teachers and counselors) at the following ten schools: the Ferryway School in Malden MA, the John F. Kennedy Elementary School in Boston MA, the George Keverian School in Everett MA, the Brophy Elementary School in Framingham MA, the William Monroe Trotter Innovation School in Dorchester MA, the South Memorial School in Peabody MA, the George School in Brockton MA, the Brookfield Elementary School in Brockton MA, the Gilmore Elementary School in Brockton MA, and the John F Kennedy Elementary School in Brockton MA. Schools were randomized to either implement Boston vs. Bullies during the 2017-18 school year (intervention schools) or to not implement the program (control schools). The goal of the evaluation was to determine: (1) how students who participated in Boston vs. Bullies perceived the program, and (2) whether there were significant differences in knowledge about bullying, attitudes, and responses toward bullying, perceptions of teachers' responses to bullying, bullying victimization and perpetration, and fighting between students in schools that participated in the Boston vs. Bullies program and students in schools that did not participate in the program.

**Evaluation methodology:** 5<sup>th</sup> grade students (useable data provided by 612; approximately 52% female & 42% White) completed a Scantron survey in fall 2017/winter 2018 (the ***pre-test survey***). Following the pre-test survey, students in six schools (19 classrooms) participated in the Boston vs. Bullies program for 40-60 minutes per week for approximately four weeks. Students from the other four schools (15 classrooms) comprised the control group, and did not participate in Boston vs. Bullies program during the evaluation period. Finally, 5<sup>th</sup> grade students completed a ***post-test survey*** in the winter/spring of 2018. In both the pre- and post-test surveys, students were asked questions about their experiences with bullying (as targets and perpetrators) and fighting at school, and with Internet harassment (as targets and perpetrators). In addition, students were asked a series of questions about their knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes related to bullying. For example, students were asked about their knowledge of the definition of bullying, perceived assertiveness in response to being bullied, tolerance for bullying behaviors, and adult responsiveness to bullying. In addition, students who participated in the Boston vs. Bullies program answered questions about whether they liked the program and the perceived impact of the program, such as its need and helpfulness for students.

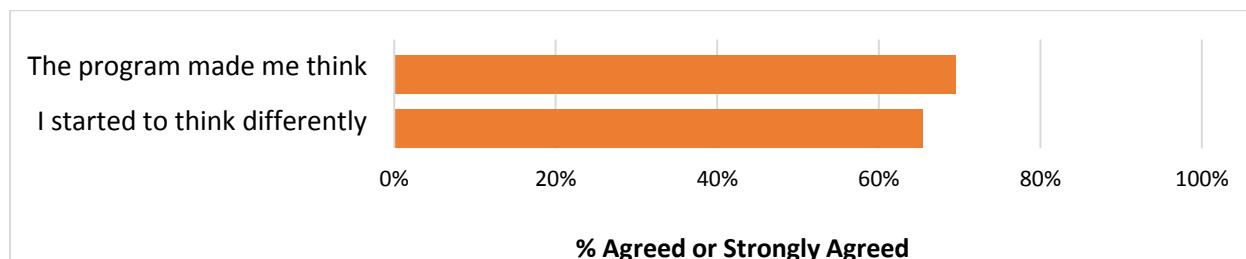
**Facilitators implemented Boston vs. Bullies with fidelity:** Facilitators were asked to complete brief surveys after the administration of each lesson. Surveys assessed facilitator perceptions of student engagement and the extent to which they implemented each component of the lesson they delivered (fidelity of implementation). Results of the evaluation indicated that facilitators perceived students to be engaged and that the majority of facilitators covered all of the potential lesson plan components, suggesting that the program was delivered as intended. As one facilitator noted: "The kids were very engaged and it was very easy to present. I really like the program."

## RESULTS

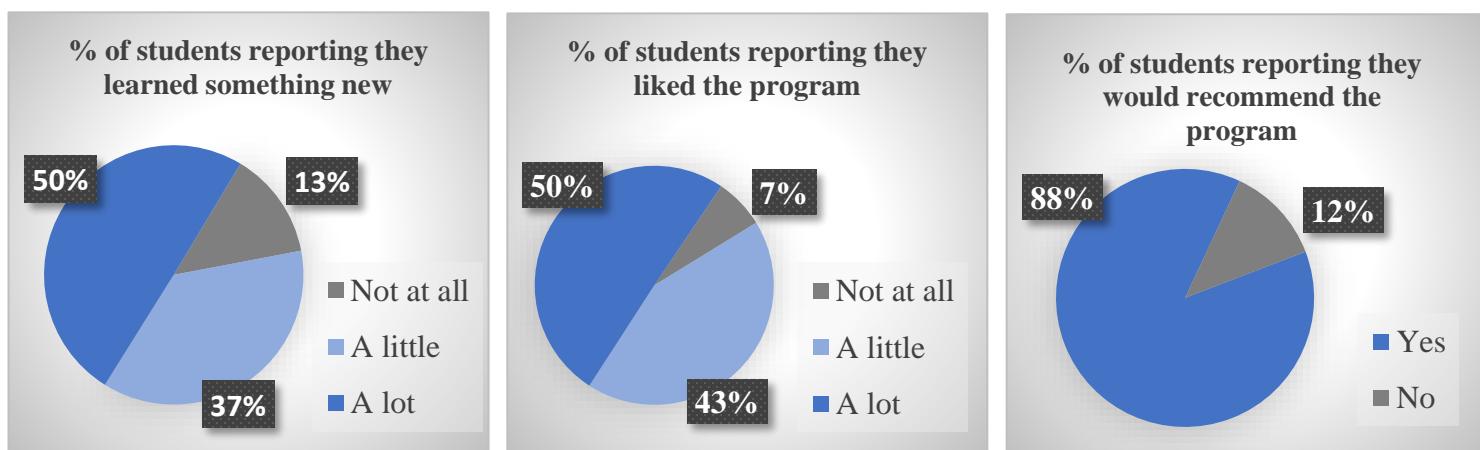
**Students found Boston vs. Bullies highly engaging:** Students had positive perceptions of Boston vs. Bullies. Students agreed that there was less bullying in their class after Boston vs. Bullies and that Boston vs. Bullies made things better for bullied kids. Students also generally agreed that the program was helpful, made things better, and was useful.



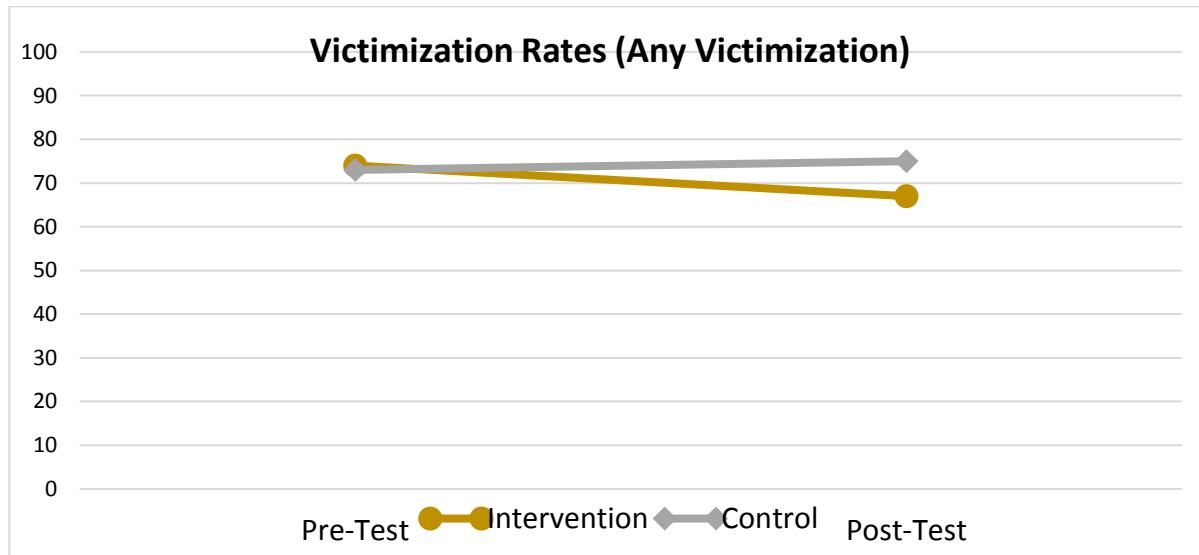
**Students reported that the program influenced their thinking:** Boston vs. Bullies generally made students think and encouraged students to think differently about bullying.



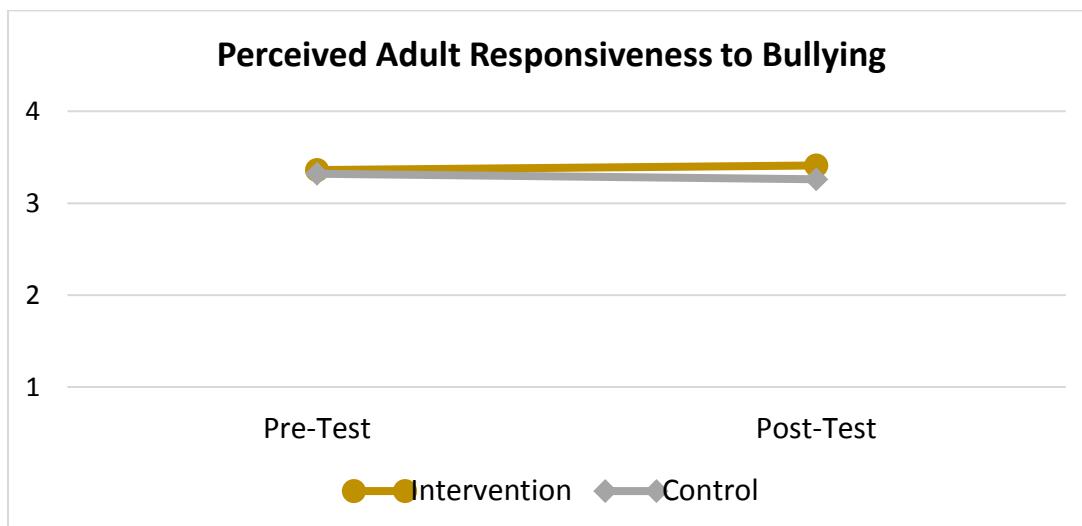
**Students liked and would recommend Boston vs. Bullies:** Students reported learning something new, that they liked the program, and that they would recommend Boston vs. Bullies to other kids.



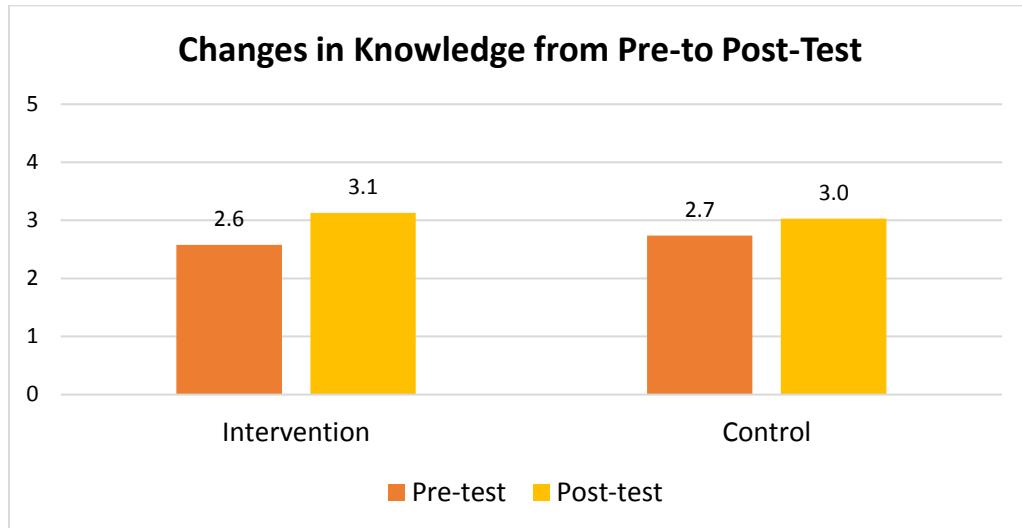
**Peer victimization decreased:** From pre-test to post-test, there was a statistically significant decrease in the percent of students who reported that they were targets of peer victimization in the intervention group (from 74% to 67%). In contrast, there was not a significant decrease for the control group (from 73% to 75%). Males and females in the intervention schools were equally likely to indicate reductions in bullying victimization.



**Adult responsiveness to bullying increased:** Students who participated in the Boston vs. Bullies program had a significantly greater increase in reports that adults were responsive to bullying than those who did not participate in the program. Males and females in the intervention schools were equally likely to indicate that adults were more responsive.



**Boston vs. Bullies improved knowledge about bullying:** Students who participated in the Boston vs. Bullies intervention demonstrated a significantly greater increase in their total knowledge of bullying from pre-test to post-test survey compared to those who did not participate in the program. Males and females in the intervention schools were equally likely to gain in their knowledge of bullying.



**Non-significant findings.** There were some outcomes with no significant differences between intervention and control schools, including attitudes toward bullying, school belonging, bullying perpetration, fighting, and mean levels of bullying victimization.

**Limitations and future directions.** There are several notable limitations to the current evaluation that should be acknowledged when reviewing results. First, pre- and post-test data were not collected at the same time for all schools, and the Boston vs. Bullies program was not implemented in all intervention schools at the same time. It is possible, but not likely, that timing differences could influence outcomes. Second, not all pre- and post-test surveys could not be matched. This is in part due to student absences, and also in part due to students responding incorrectly to matching items at one or both time point.

**Summary.** Overall, these results provide evidence that implementation of Boston vs. Bullies was associated with reductions in peer victimization, increases in knowledge about bullying, and improved student perceptions of adult responsiveness to bullying. In addition, students reported liking the program, suggesting that it is an appealing approach to bullying prevention among 5<sup>th</sup> grade students.

*"The students loved listening to the "Is it bullying?" scenarios and discussing why they chose their corner. The conversation was rich and thoughtful. Students were forced to justify their answers. The activity around using power for help or hurt was also something the students really enjoyed. This activity connected nicely to work around discrimination and identity which we have been doing in ELA and Social Studies."*

*"Overall -- great program. The athletes hook the students and the supporting activities and ease of the lesson plans was extremely helpful from my point of view as a facilitator."*

*~ 5<sup>th</sup> grade Boston vs. Bullies program facilitators*