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## The Beyond the Hurt Project

Dr. Wendy Hogg and the PEERS Lab Team

The PEERS Lab worked with the Canadian Red Cross, Western Division on a 2-year evaluation of the Beyond the Hurt (BTH) Bullying Prevention Program. BTH is a school-wide program that aims to reduce peer victimization and bullying, promote healthy relationships, and improve knowledge and awareness of bullying. The BTH Program trains groups of youth facilitators to educate younger youth about bullying and to help lead bullying prevention activities in their school. This program also offers training for school staff to help them learn about how to stop bullying in their school. BTH also encourages school-wide social action projects that aim to stop bullying, such as Bully Awareness Week or Pink Shirt Day activities.

The purpose of the BTH research project was to help the Canadian Red Cross learn more about how the BTH Program can help youth and schools stop bullying.



The BTH Project participants included 1766 youth in grades 7 to 10 and 300 teachers from 7 junior high schools and 3 high schools.

Youth were from ethnically diverse backgrounds; about 46% of youth identified as an ethnic minority. Additionally, 8% of youth identified as a sexual minority (e.g., bisexual).

This BTH Project collected data with youth 4 times over 2 school years:

### Project Year 1

- ◆ Fall 2014 (Wave 1)
- ◆ Spring 2015 (Wave 2)

### Project Year 2

- ◆ Fall 2015 (Wave 3)
- ◆ Spring 2016 (Wave 4)

## Beyond the Hurt Program Workshops

In the first year of the project, 3 junior high schools and 1 high school held the BTH Program workshops (BTH schools). In the second year of the project, 3 junior high schools and 2 high schools received the BTH workshops (waitlist schools). These are the two groups of schools that are compared in this newsletter.

At each participating school, Red Cross Prevention Educators led a 2-day youth facilitator workshop with youth facilitators and adult advisors and a 3-hour professional development workshop with school staff on bullying awareness and prevention. The youth facilitator workshops focused on issues related to bullying, strategies for responding to bullying, and ways to take action to help create healthy relationships and safe schools. The youth facilitators were trained on how to give presentations to younger youth about issues related to bullying and how to stand up against bullying. In collaboration with their adult advisors, youth developed and led 1-hour workshops with younger youth.

“Knowing that I could help to change someone’s school experience [from] being [a] negative one to a positive one.”

- Youth Facilitator on what the youth liked about the BTH Program

### Bullying-Related Behaviours

The following are some bullying-related behaviours that were examined in the BTH Project<sup>1</sup>:

- ◆ **Bullying** perpetration is when youth use aggression, power, and often humiliation that is directed at a peer.
- ◆ **Peer victimization** is when a youth is targeted by acts of bullying by their peers.
- ◆ **Relational** bullying or victimization involves behaviours that are intended to harm a youth’s social status or relationships, such as gossiping, rumor spreading, or social exclusion.
- ◆ **Physical** bullying or victimization involves overt behaviours that are intended to harm a youth, such as shoving, hitting, or spitting.
- ◆ **Cyber** bullying or victimization involves actions that are done electronically or online, such as on social media sites, that are intended to harm a youth’s social status or relationships. These actions can include posting images on social media or messages in chat rooms that are intended to be embarrassing or hurtful.
- ◆ **Bystanders** are youth and adults who witness peer bullying and victimization. Bystanders often stand by and do nothing to stop the bullying or victimization.

### Goals of the BTH Youth Training:

- ◆ To increase youth awareness and knowledge of bullying.
- ◆ To promote youth leadership, competence, and presentation skills.
- ◆ To help youth create and deliver workshops and social action projects that target the prevention of bullying in their school.



### What the Youth Facilitators Said:

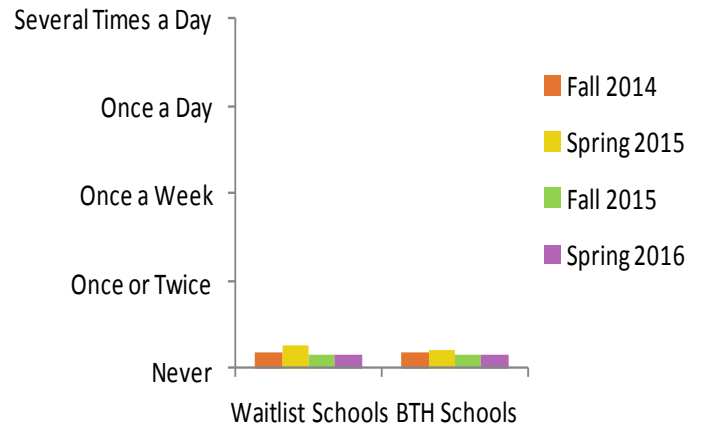
- ◆ About 87% of youth stated that the BTH youth facilitator training was a positive learning experience.
- ◆ About 94% of youth stated that the BTH training helped them learn about strategies to stop bullying in their school.

# Relational Bullying & Victimization

**Relational bullying** is when youth harm another youth by purposely threatening or damaging the youth's relationships or social status<sup>1</sup>. This could be when a youth spreads a rumor about another youth or purposely leaves the youth out of activities. Relational bullying can have negative effects on the school attitudes, emotional and behavioural problems, and peer relations of the youth who perpetrate the bullying<sup>2, 3, 4, 5</sup>.

In the BTH project, youth rated how often in the past month (never to several times a day) they had engaged in relational bullying toward other youth. Youth reported that they rarely used relational bullying. These rates were lower in Spring 2015 for youth in the BTH schools than youth in the waitlist schools (see Figure 1). Boys reported engaging in more relational bullying at each wave of data than girls<sup>6</sup>.

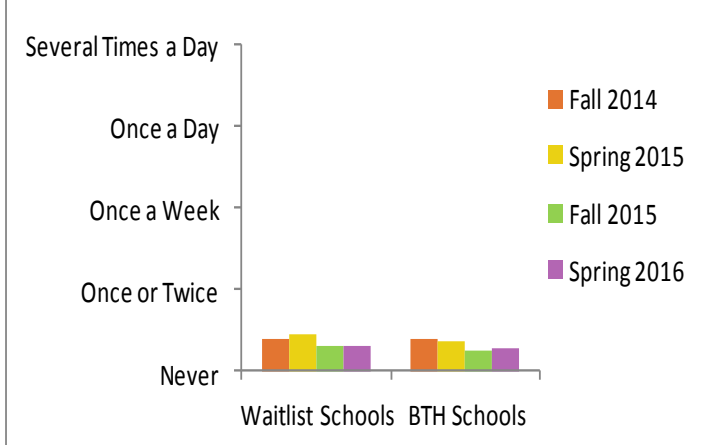
**Figure 1. Relational Bullying**



**Relational victimization** is when youth are targeted by acts that aim to threaten or damage their relationships or social status<sup>1</sup>. This could be when a youth is the subject of a rumor or is purposely left out of activities. Relational victimization has been associated with increased emotional, behavioural, social, and academic problems for youth who are the targets of this abuse<sup>4, 5, 7</sup>.

In the BTH project, youth rated how often in the past month (never to several times a day) they had been relationally victimized by another youth. Youth reported low levels of relational victimization. These rates were lower in Spring 2015 and Fall 2015 for youth in the BTH schools than youth in the waitlist schools (see Figure 2). Girls reported being the target of more relational victimization at each wave of data than boys<sup>6</sup>.

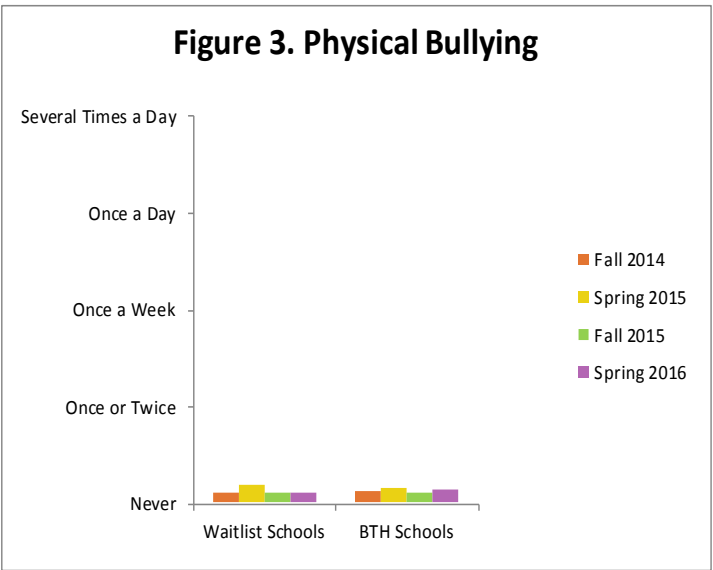
**Figure 2. Relational Victimization**



# Physical Bullying & Victimization

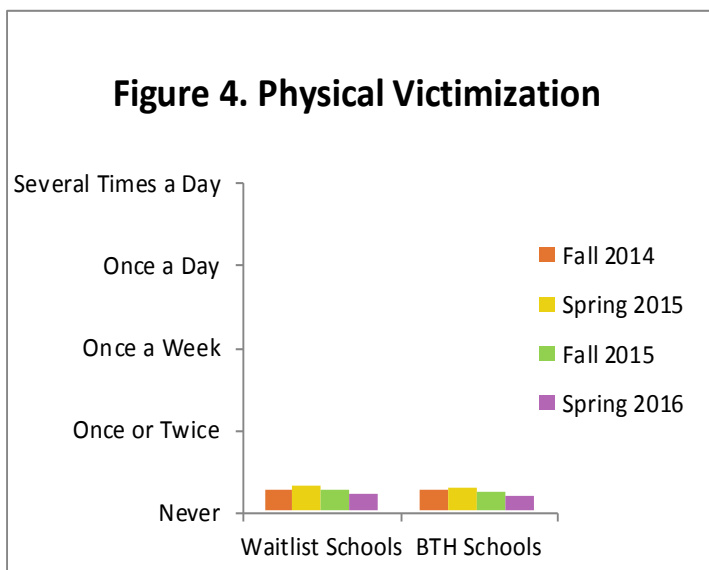
**Physical bullying** is when youth harm another youth by purposefully harming or threatening to harm a youth through physical actions<sup>1</sup>. Physical bullying can include pushing, hitting, or slapping. Peer physical bullying has been associated with emotional and behavioural problems for youth who perpetrate the bullying<sup>4, 5, 7, 8</sup>.

In the BTH project, youth rated how often in the previous month (never to several times a day) they engaged in physical bullying toward another youth. Youth reported rarely using physical bullying toward another youth. There were no differences in these rates between youth in the BTH schools and youth in the waitlist schools (see Figure 3). Boys reported engaging in more physical bullying at each wave of data than girls<sup>6</sup>.



**Physical victimization** is when youth are targeted by acts of physical bullying<sup>1</sup>. This physical harm could be when a youth is shoved, punched, or kicked. Physical victimization has been associated with low self-esteem, poor social competence, and emotional and behavioural problems in youth who are physically victimized<sup>4, 5, 7, 8, 9</sup>.

In the BTH project, youth rated how often in the previous month (never to several times a day) they experienced physical victimization. Youth reported low levels of physical victimization. There were no differences in these rates between youth in the BTH schools and youth in the waitlist schools (see Figure 4). Boys reported being the target of more physical victimization at each wave of data than girls<sup>6</sup>.



## Tips to Support Youth Who are Victimized by Peers

- ◆ **Communicate With Youth:** Start the conversation and let youth know you are there to listen and to talk. Be open with youth. Be there to listen and support but not to judge youth. Give advice and provide suggestions when youth ask for advice but listen first.
- ◆ **Encourage New Friendships:** Positive and supportive friendships can help to protect youth from being victimized. Promote new friendships by encouraging youth to participate in extracurricular activities or by helping youth plan activities with other youth. Promote positive friendships by reminding youth that a good friend would treat them with kindness and support.
- ◆ **Build Confidence:** Help build confidence in youth by encouraging them to do something they are talented at and are interested in. Help youth practice their social skills and ways to be assertive, such as through role plays. Teach youth to feel confident in their ideas and actions, address bullying when they see it happen, and how to stand up for themselves.
- ◆ **Stand Up For Youth:** Speak out when you see a youth being victimized. Be a role model for youth on how to be respectful to others. Talk with youth and important adults in their life to develop a clear plan to help stop the victimization.

## Tips to Help Youth Stop Bullying Peers

- ◆ **Establish and Enforce Consequences:** Youth who perpetrate bullying need help to understand the long-term effects that their words and actions can have on others. Use natural consequences that can help teach youth about the effects of their behaviors on others. For instance, writing an apology letter to the youth who was bullied can help youth to understand the implications of their behaviours.

### Examples of natural consequences that are teaching opportunities:

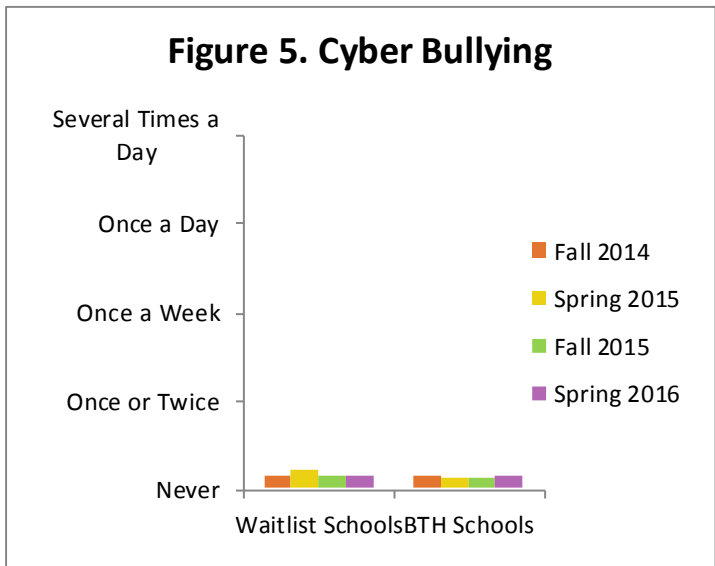
- ◆ Help youth label their feelings as well as the feelings of others. How do they feel when they bully another youth? How do they think the other youth feels?
- ◆ Encourage youth to make a genuine verbal apology to the youth they have bullied. Make sure this apology is given privately, such as through a letter. Public apologies may leave both youth feeling embarrassed or upset.
- ◆ Encourage youth to perform acts of kindness, such as giving compliments or helping other youth with their homework. Have youth describe how they feel after they perform these acts.
- ◆ **Examine Behaviours and Attitudes:** Think about how the youth's ability to handle anger and frustration and attitudes may support the use of aggression and peer bullying. Help the youth build positive and mature relationships with pro-social youth. These relationships can help the youth develop more pro-social attitudes and behaviours.
- ◆ **Positive Conflict Resolution:** Encourage youth to solve problems with other youth through positive verbal communication instead of harmful actions. Provide supportive opportunities for youth to problem solve through role play.



# Cyber Bullying & Victimization

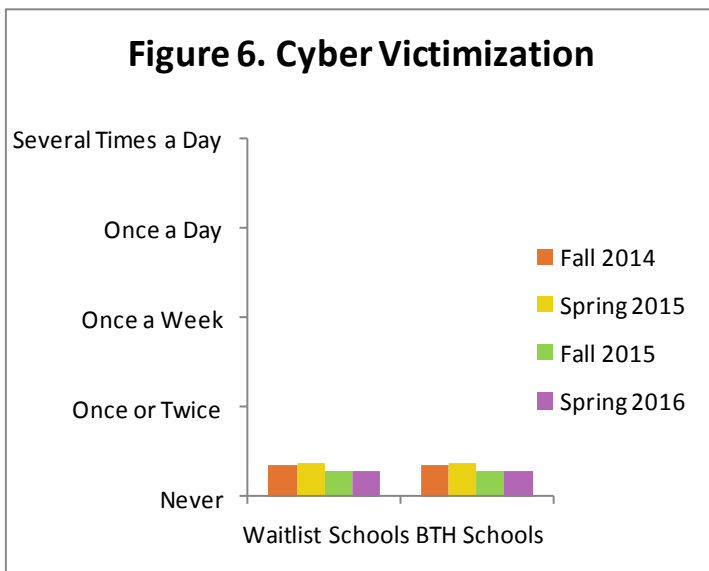
**Cyber bullying** is when youth use electronic or online forms of contact to intentionally harm another youth<sup>1</sup>. This could be sending a youth a text message or posting an embarrassing photo online to make the youth angry or to make fun of the youth. Youth involved in cyber bullying may be secretive about their online activities, and may spend long hours online. Cyber bullying has been associated with behavior problems and having few prosocial friends<sup>9, 10, 11</sup>.

In the BTH project, youth rated how often in the past month (never to several times a day) they had engaged in cyber bullying toward other youth. Youth reported rarely engaging in cyber bullying. These rates were lower in Spring 2015 for youth in the BTH schools than youth in the waitlist schools (see Figure 5). Boys reported engaging in more cyber bullying at each wave of data than girls<sup>6</sup>.



**Cyber victimization** is when youth are targeted through electronic or online forms of bullying<sup>1</sup>. This could be receiving an upsetting text message or having something embarrassing posted online. Youth who experience cyber victimization may appear unhappy, irritable, or distressed, particularly after using the computer or viewing their cell phone. Cyber victimization has been associated with more emotional problems<sup>9, 10, 11</sup>.

In the BTH project, youth rated how often in the past month (never to several times a day) they had experienced cyber victimization. Youth reported low levels of cyber victimization. There were no differences in these rates between youth in the BTH schools and youth in the waitlist schools (see Figure 6). Girls reported receiving more cyber victimization at each wave of data than boys<sup>6</sup>.



Rates of cyber bullying and victimization tend to peak during the middle school years<sup>6, 11</sup>. Unlike traditional, face-to-face forms of bullying, such as relational and physical bullying, cyber bullying can continue via text messages, email, and social media even when youth are not at school. Cyber bullying is not isolated within a given setting or community. It has a farther reach than more traditional, face-to-face forms of bullying. Youth who engage in cyber bullying behaviors also have the ability to remain anonymous and may never directly see the adverse effects of their behaviours. This makes it easier to continue these behaviours as well as to be more vicious in these behaviours.

## Tips to Help Stop Cyber Bullying

### For Youth Who Are Victimized:

- ◆ **Communicate:** Listen to the youth and let them know that you are there to listen and to help.
- ◆ **Support:** Reassure the youth you will not take away their phone or internet. Let youth know they can tell you if they encounter anything upsetting online.
- ◆ **Record** any emails, chat room history, web postings, or phone messages about cyber bullying. You can take those to your Internet Service provider or the police to report these events.
- ◆ **Report** incidents of cyber bullying to the school administration and to your Internet Service provider.

### For Youth Who Bully:

- ◆ **Educate** youth about acceptable online behavior. Set guidelines and rules for how to interact online.
- ◆ **Keep** computers in a common area, like the kitchen at home or computer lab at school. Monitor online activity and reactions to online communication.
- ◆ **Promote** empathy among youth. Talk with youth about how they would feel if they were the target of cyber bullying.
- ◆ **Emphasize** the natural consequences of bullying and the effect it can have on other youth. Possible consequences could include the loss of all cellphone and internet privileges, and possibly legal consequences.



Given the large reach of cyber bullying, strategies limited to one context, like at the home or school, will not be sufficient. We need all adults to stand up and speak out against bullying and to help youth do the same. We need to be advocates for youth who have been the target of bullying. We need to help youth understand how their intentional or unintentional behaviors can affect others, what is and is not acceptable, and the consequences, including legal consequences, of their offline and online behaviors<sup>6, 10, 11</sup>.

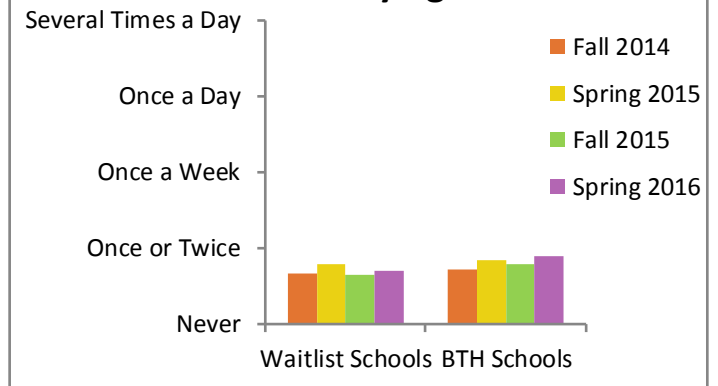
## Bystanders

**Bystanders** are present during most incidents of bullying. Research indicates that in about 85% of bullying incidents on school property, other youth stand by and watch the bullying<sup>14</sup>. With a captive audience, youth who are bullying receive the attention they want. Bystanders reinforce the bullying behaviours and make it more likely that these negative behaviours will be repeated. Most bystanders do not get involved<sup>12, 15</sup>. When youth have the confidence, courage and support to intervene, bullying can end<sup>12, 14, 15</sup>.

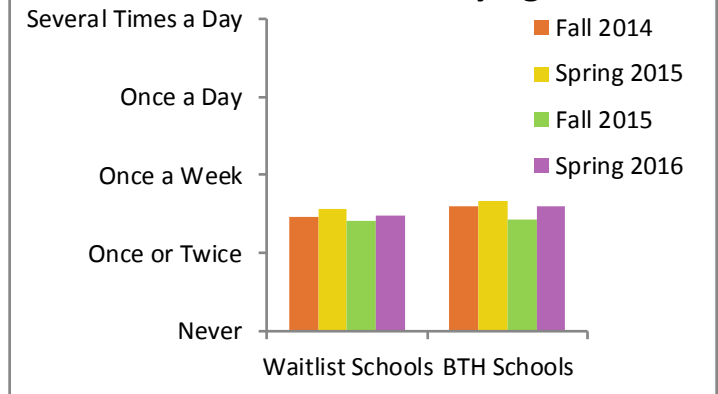
In the BTH project, youth rated how often in the past month (never to several times a day) they witnessed bullying in their school. Youth reported witnessing physical bullying almost once or twice and relational bullying more than once or twice in the past month. These rates did not differ for youth in the BTH and waitlist schools (see Figures 11 and 12). Boys reported witnessing more physical bullying. Girls reported witnessing more relational bullying at each wave of data<sup>6</sup>.

Youth need help to understand that it is their social responsibility to do something when they know someone is being bullied. Adults can coach youth to collectively take a stand and assertively step in to stop bullying. When youth do not feel safe or comfortable standing up to other youth who engage in bullying, youth should be encouraged to report the bullying to an adult<sup>12, 14</sup>.

**Figure 11. Bystander of Physical Bullying**



**Figure 12. Bystander of Relational Bullying**



### You Are a Bystander When You:

- ◆ **Create an audience** for the youth engaging in bullying behaviors.
- ◆ **Encourage** the youth engaging in the bullying to continue, such as by laughing or just watching.
- ◆ **Witness** a youth being bullied but do not take any action to stop it.

### Ways You Can Stand Up to Bullying:

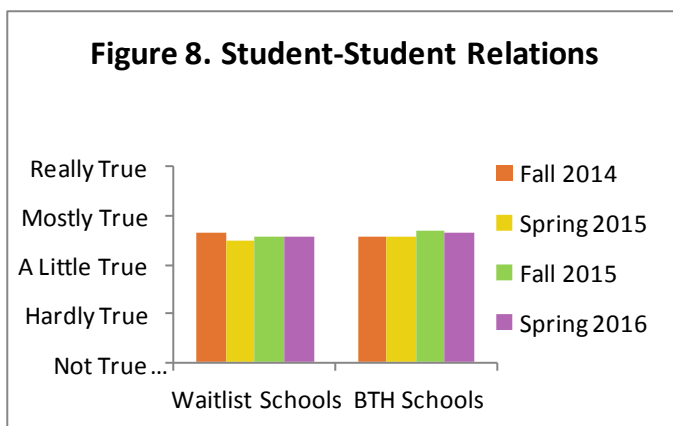
- ◆ **Report** bullying incidents to adults or appropriate authorities.
- ◆ **Do something to stop or distract** the youth doing the bullying, such as changing the focus to a different activity.
- ◆ **Do something to support** the youth being targeted, such as reporting the incident to an adult or standing up for the youth.

## School Climate

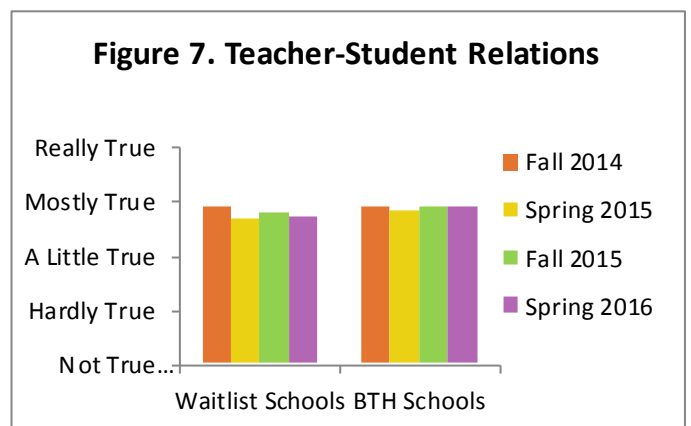
**School climate** is the quality and character of a school community and reflects how safe, included, and accepted youth and school staff feel at the school<sup>12</sup>. School climate includes youth perceptions of the quality of relations among students and teachers, amount of bullying, and how safe they feel at their school. Positive relations between students and teachers and feelings of school safety can help stop bullying<sup>12, 13</sup>.

In the BTH project, youth rated four aspects of their school climate. They reported that the relations among students and teachers in their school were mostly positive, with higher rates from Spring 2015 to Spring 2016 for youth in the BTH schools than youth in the waitlist schools (see Figures 7 and 8). Youth reported some bullying in their school (see Figure 9) but that their school was mostly safe (see Figure 10); these rates did not differ between youth in the BTH and waitlist schools or between girls and boys<sup>6</sup>.

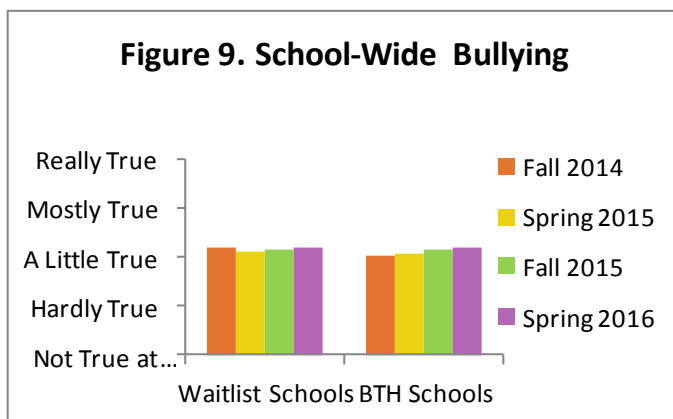
**Figure 8. Student-Student Relations**



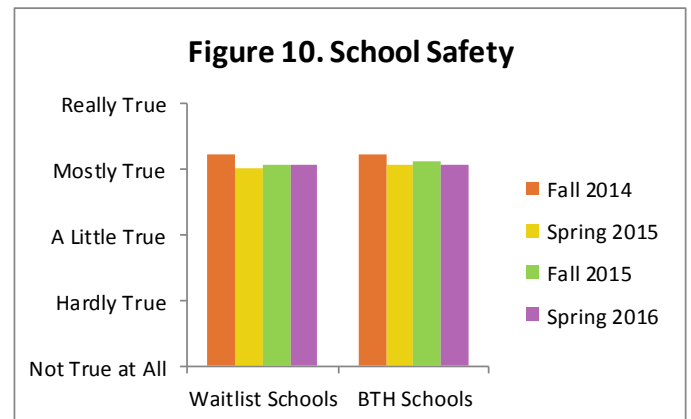
**Figure 7. Teacher-Student Relations**



**Figure 9. School-Wide Bullying**



**Figure 10. School Safety**



## Bullying Prevention Resources

**Kids Help Phone** is a free and anonymous counselling and information service available 24/7 for young people. Telephone: 1 800 668 6868

**Visit:** [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)

**Canadian Red Cross** has information about how to prevent bullying, violence, and abuse prevention. There is also information about the BTH Program.

**Visit:** [redcross.ca/respected](http://redcross.ca/respected)

**Alberta Education** has information about how to prevent bullying and support youth.

**Visit:** [www.education.alberta.ca](http://www.education.alberta.ca)

**PREVNet** is network of researchers and organizations working together to promote healthy relationships and stop bullying. There are several bullying prevention resources listed on their website.

**Visit:** [www.prevnet.ca](http://www.prevnet.ca)

## THANK YOU

Data from The Beyond the Hurt (BTH) research project will be used to help undergraduate and graduate students learn about peer relationships in adolescence and bullying prevention. This information will also be used to help schools learn more about bullying prevention and the Canadian Red Cross in their effort to improve the Beyond the Hurt Program. We are grateful to all the youth, parents, teachers, and school staff for their participation and commitment to this project. We also thank our numerous student volunteers who gave their time and energy to help with this project.

### PEERS Lab

Our research focuses on social and emotional development in childhood and adolescence. We are most interested in how relationships with peers, parents, and teachers contribute to resiliency among vulnerable children.

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