Up4Diversity

Empowering Young People and
Youth Workers to Become
Active Upstanders in the
Prevention of Violence Towards
LGBTIQ+ People in the
Digital Era

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Module 3.
Introduction: Bystander & Upstander Interventions

> "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (Olweus, 1995)
>
> "Bullying is aggressive goal-directed behavior that harms another individual within the context of a power imbalance" (Volk, Dane & Marini, 2014)

Bullying is not a recent phenomenon: whether it is bullying at school, the classroom, or the playground, bullying has been a persistent social problem with various and long-term consequences[1]. Social science research on bullying became more targeted in the 1990s and focused on the prevalence of bullying in educational contexts, the negative consequences for victims of bullying as well as the role of the school in addressing this problem[2]. This research has revealed that bullying is not inevitable and recognizes the role of institutions and institutional culture in preventing and combating the victimization of students. Furthermore, there is increasing recognition that homophobic bullying and harassment of LGBTIQ+ individuals are a sizeable part of this phenomenon[3].

At the EU level, there has also been comparative research that mapped the prevalence of bullying. The 2020 FRA (Fundamental Rights Agency) report states explicitly that comparison between the survey results of 2012 and 2019 shows that LGBTIQ+ individuals continue to experience constant and everyday violations of their human rights[4]. The report also notes that there were not enough indications that sufficient progress was achieved in the protection of the LGBTIQ+ community although the report cautions that the EU average does not reflect important differences between member states.

One positive indication of the literature is that educational communities (teachers, educators, staff, youth, families, etc.) **can be trained to become allies of the LGBTIQ+ community and intervene in situations of harassment and violence[5].** Training everyone in the community, starting with professionals and youth, to become "upstanders" against LGBTIQ+ violence is an important step in reducing the phenomenon of bulling. This is a new terminology which aims to bypass the confusion between "bystander" and "active bystander" given that active bystanders may contribute to the continuation of the bullying behaviour. The term "upstander" indicates individuals who intervene in order to interrupt the aggressive acts or to support the victim. Existing literature shows that there are different ways one can be an upstander based on their motivation, level of moral reasoning and perception of self-efficacy[6].

This module focuses on the different types of upstander interventions to prevent or interrupt violent acts against LGBTQI+ youth. The main pillars of the module are: 1) Roles in a violent situation: bystanders and upstanders, barriers to intervene; 2) ways to transform and encourage bystanders to become upstanders; and 3) specific successful actions and strategies to be an upstander a discussion on the important elements in promoting upstander behavior.

The learning goals are:

1. To understand the need of everyone's upstander actions

2. To get to know specific strategies to stand up to violence at an individual, group and institutional level

Roles in a violent situation: bystanders and upstanders, barriers to intervene

Understanding the group dynamics of how bullying works is the first step in overcoming it. One important dimension of bullying is the fact that it takes place in public. Unlike other acts of social transgression (stealing, property damage etc.) bullying works because of the presence of wit-

nesses. Research has shown that bullies are deliberate in their choice of setting to maximize the number of people observing their acts. The mere presence of bystanders emboldens them to be more aggressive in order to gain admiration and approval even with intimidation[7]. These rewards for the bully can be amplified by the behavior of the bystanders but they could also be offset by their interventions.

This 2-minute video from the Glee TV show can help see different roles in a situation of violence against LGBTI+ youth, apart from the fact that violence can take many forms: https://www.youtube.com/watch?-v=6QvG4qnW5g0&t=1s

Bystander intervention, the intervention of those who become upstanders, is a successful action that happens daily when someone has had an accident or is having a medical condition: someone calls an ambulance while others take care of the victim, and some others get more help from bystanders in the street who may be able to help in any way. This usually happens and many people do not hesitate to do something in such situations. Sadly, when it comes to standing up to violence, especially violence against LGBTI+ youth in educational settings, youth, educators and the community sometimes hesitate on whether to intervene and how to do it.

Recent studies have begun to pay more attention to the different roles taken up by bystanders of bullying beha-

viors and to examine how training can encourage bystanders to **become upstanders and play a positive role in ending bullying and violent behaviors[8].** Some reasons why bystanders do not intervene include:

- The bystander effect ("Someone else will intervene...")

- Trivializing and normalizing violence, which we do not see as a real problem: "It's not a big deal"

- Wrong conceptions of friendship: some people think "If the victim is my friend I will intervene, but if I don't know them, not so much..."; or "if the perpetrator is a friend, I will not intervene...")

- Shyness, fear of embarrassment or "making a scene"

- Unwillingness to upset peers and especially bullies with social support, in fear of reprimands: these reprimands are what we will explain as Isolating Gender Violence (IGV) or second order violence in module 4. This is one of the main reasons why people do not intervene, because they do not want to be victimized.

- Lack of training and dialogues on what violence is on the consequences of standing by and importance of standing up.

- Lack of clear and successful tools and strategies[9].

Bystanders can encourage the bully by simply remaining passive witnesses to the harassment and providing an audience to the event. But they can also actively encourage the bully through their own reactions: laughing, taunting or even deciding to participate in the abuse by copying the bully's behavior. The presence of bystanders who reinforce the bully has been associated with an increased frequency of bullying in schools . Overall, the research literature has identified the following **types of bystanders:**

1. **Assistants** are bystanders who directly assist the bullies.

2. **Reinforcers** are those who laugh and encourage the bullies.

3. **Outsiders or Passive bystanders** are those who witness or become aware of the incident but walk away.

4. **Upstanders or Defenders** are witnesses or become who become aware of an incident who stand up and intervene to support the victim of bullying.

Recognizing the dynamics of these different roles in a bullying incident is important for anyone who wishes to encourage the "upstander" behavior or understand how the other types of bystanders can be trained to become upstanders. Therefore, **educators need to guide in identifying these roles and in finding ways to promote positive interventions.** Activity 1 is designed to achieve this goal.

Nonetheless, it is important to understand that, in the end, there are only two roles when we see or are aware of a situation of violence: we are either part of the problem (aggressors, assistants, reinforcers but also passive bystanders who look away) or part of the solution (upstanders, defenders). We are not saying bullies and bystanders are equal, but that doing nothing solves nothing and rather perpetuates violence.

ACTIVITY 1 – Beyond the bully role
Instructions

1. Explain and discuss the different roles in a bullying incident: bully, recipient of bullying, assistant, reinforcer, outsider and upstander. Professionals participating can provide examples from previous incidents of the types of behaviours exhibited in these roles.

2. Prepare label cards and ask 6 volunteers to take up these roles.

3. Pick a scenario (see below) and ask volunteers to act out their role. Encourage volunteers to be "creative" but also make sure that none of them is too uncomfortable in their role. A safer alternative may be asking people to narrate what they would do in their role, rather than acting it out.

4. At the end of the play thank the participants and congratulate them for being brave. Do a quick de-rolling by asking the participants to "dust off" and "shake off" the role they have just played.

5. Proceed to discuss together the different roles: how they acted, how they reacted and how they played off of each other, especially in relation to the bully role. Volunteers can explain how they felt playing their role and the rest of the group can react on how they dynamics evolved.

6. Close the discussion with the following points: first, it may be difficult to know how to react to a bullying incidence because the bystander roles are not always clear. Second, acknowledge the fluidity of the bystander roles and encourage the participants to think of small steps in turning a reinforcer or passive bystander into an upstander.

Scenario 1

The protagonists are sitting in a cafeteria. The bully notes a pride flag pin button on the backpack of the recipient of bullying. He asks him if he is gay and proceeds to harass him. There can be a variation in the scenario: the recipient of bullying may reply positively, may replay negatively or not reply at all. They bully will continue with the same behaviour but the bystanders may vary their reactions accordingly. The discussion can focus on whether the response by the recipient of bullying should make a difference.

Scenario 2

Students are waiting to be picked up by their parents after school. The bully asks the recipient of bullying why is it that he is picked up by two different women on different days. The recipient of bullying says that he has two mothers. The bully starts harassing him.

From Bystander to Upstander—Community responsibility

As said before, violence frequently takes place in public settings, both online or in-person; moreover, many times we are not live witnesses to a violent situation, but we become aware become someone tells us or we see it later on digital contexts. It is in that moment when we become bystanders who have two choices: we can remain passive, or we can stand up. This applies not only to educators, but also to youth and the whole educational community.

Part of understanding the urgency of practicing and adopting an upstander position in situations of LGBTI+phobic

bullying and violence is the knowledge of how harmful it is for the individuals who are targeted. Research has shown that sexual minority youth report high rates of harassment and victimization through threats and injuries, sometimes with the use of a weapon. This has led to higher drop-out rates for LGBTIQ+ minority students as well as an increase in suicidal ideation[11]. Overall, these phenomena have direct and long-term effects on their health and well-being[12]. Most concerning is the fact that schools and educational spaces are often breeding grounds for the type of bullying and sexual harassment that LGBT+ individuals experience[13]. The current scientific evidence suggests that a school climate that is non-acceptant, the lack of a supportive social network as well as the absence of LGBT+ movements in the community are related to higher rates of suicidality in LGBT+ youth[14].

What usually hurts LGBTIQ+ minority individuals is not only the bullying but the lack of reaction or support by the bystanders or the witnesses of bullying. Research shows that the problem of homophobic bullying and cyberbullying in educational spaces and youth organizations needs to be addressed early on to prevent the spread of marginalization[15]. If bystanders remain passive, the popularity of the aggressor increases; they give the victim the false perception that everyone else approves these behaviours. Besides, when bystanders do not intervene, the victim suffers both for the initial violent situation and for not being supported, having the worst consequences: they feel alone after the episode, they feel like no one cares; they feel that bystanders are more on the side of the aggressor than on their side; they internalize LGBTI+phobia; and impunity encourages aggressors to repeat their actions against them.

On the other hand, there are many things we can do as upstanders, and we do not have to be heroes or to do everything. Being aware of the positive consequences of standing up can encourage bystanders to become upstanders: they break the silence and send the message that violence is not okay, that they will intervene and that impunity is over; moreover, victims are not alone.

Thus, **the success of interventions to overcome bullying depends on the promotion of a sense of community and peaceful coexistence as this is evident in teamwork,** the signing of agreements and references by students to concepts such as equality and solidarity[16]. Another common approach for these interventions is to foster students' self-esteem and empathy. Empathy training has direct applications for the reduction of bullying and for the promotion of upstanding behaviour[17]. High levels of empathy were also found to be associated with more defending behaviours[18].

Overall, existing research shows that **bullying incidents can be reduced with the creation of a safe climate where recipients of bullying feel that there is a community response to abuse and harassment.** This can be achieved by training "upstanders" through empathy training and tools that minimize the harmful effects of bullying. Indeed, there is clear evidence from research that defended victims are less frequently victimized and have higher self-esteem and higher status compared to undefended victims[19].

The goal of Activity 2 is to cultivate an understanding of how bullying works (what hurts, what heals) and to develop strategies for community responses against bullying. The overall purpose is to help participants understand that their response matters and that there is responsibility on the part of the whole community to act in order to protect, defend and support recipients of bullying.

ACTIVITY 2 – What hurts, what heals
Instructions

1. Divide participants into two groups.

2. Ask Group 1 to identify "What Hurts" in a bullying situation. Advise them to make notes on cards so that each participant has 1-2 cards. Encourage them to identify non-verbal, verbal and even violent acts that they can do in a pretend mode. This last category can include pretending to spit someone, shove, push or hit.

3. Ask Group 2 to identify "What Heals" in a bullying situation. They have to guess what the other group has written down and find ways to respond. These upstander reactions can be directed to the bully or to the recipient of bullying. The group can consider both individual and group responses.

4. Following group work of about 15 minutes, the two groups stand facing each other and the facilitator stands between the two groups. A participant from Group 1 starts by initiating a bullying incident directed at the facilitator. The first choice can be a "mild" one with the possibility of escalation. A participant in Group 2 needs to respond to this with one of the responses written on the cards. The recipient of bullying remains passive.

5. Another participant from Group 1 continues/escalates the harassment. Group 2 considers their response. The exercise continues with the use of a few more cards.

Discussion:

1. What seemed to be the most hurtful type of bullying? Each participant, including the facilitator, can express their feelings from their own perspective in this role playing. Also, Group 1 can discuss their process: how difficult was it to find hurtful acts? What was the easiest category to make up between non-verbal, verbal, and violent acts?

2. How appropriate was the response of Group 2? What other responses needed to be in place so that they provided healing to the hurtful insults/acts? Group 2 can also discuss the process of thinking about these upstander responses, both in individual and group format.

Videos for further discussion:
Don't stand for homophobic bullying
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrJxqvalFxM
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qmA-rp1FV0

How to be an upstander

There is already evidence that upstander interventions with teenagers and university students are effective tools in promoting upstander behaviour. Research shows **that creating a safer climate but also training upstanders on specific action protocols makes it easier for young people to respond as bystanders[20].** Most of these training interventions are preventive and encourage young people to plan their own future intervention method[21]. The opportunity to consider one's reaction to witnessing bullying and to devise a plan of action is seen as key for young people's ability to carry out this intervention once it becomes necessary. Furthermore, other researchers have shown that

approaches to defending the victim is an important factor and it must be included in the training[22]. Finally, there are also indications that upstander training should include information and support in case they experience Second Order violence[23]: this takes place when the upstander or the person trying to support the victim is targeted by the bully. Upstander training needs to account for this possibility and prepare young people accordingly. More details about that will be developed in the module 4.

Therefore, there are two ways to design upstander interventions: those that support the recipient of bullying and those directed to responding to the bully. Both are important and can take place concurrently. Intervening and responding to the bully, however, is often seen as more difficult by participants. Existing interventions so far have focused on the enhancement of a variety of skills or qualities. Some interventions focused on the defender's self-efficacy[24], others focused on the enhancement of empathy and anti-bullying attitudes of the bystander[25] while others focused merely on promoting awareness of upstander approach[26]. **The success of upstander interventions is generally registered in the promotion of a sense of community and peaceful coexistence.**

What is of utmost importance, is to prepare both the educators and the students to feel confident to stand up in bullying incidents. Hypothetical scenarios and discussions around them have been proven to be an effective way to increase knowledge, confidence as well as empathy around such

issues. The purpose of Activity 3 is to explore scenarios of acting as an upstander to a) defend the recipient of bullying and b) confront the bully. These interventions rely on actionable scenarios with steps of how to react in each situation. Both upstander responses can take place simultaneously, depending on how the witness/bystander evaluates the situation.

The following video shows empowered youth who explain how to be an upstander:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qmA-rp1FV0

ACTIVITY 3 – How to be an Upstander
From Bystander to Upstander
Instructions
1. Watch the following video on the different ways of reacting to a bullying incident: https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/bystanders-to-bullying

2. Focus on the highlighted actions presented in the video:

- Change the subject
- Interrupt
- Question behavior
- Use humor
- Embrace your differences
- Report bullying/cyberbullying
- Protect/be kind to others
- Include others in your response

3. Pick a scenario from below and find specific examples of how one can exemplify these upstander responses. For example, what does one say in order to question the bully's behavior in Scenario 1? What do upstanders do in order to show that they are embracing our differences?

Scenario 1

While your students share their weekend news before the lesson starts, one of your students says that he/she went to the Pride Parade. Another student immediately says "I don't have a problem with gay people, but I don't understand why they should be so proud of themselves and even march in the streets to show it off. I believe that there is nothing to be proud of when you are gay, that's too much". What would you do?

Scenario 2

You approach a student to ask him/her why he/she is absent so often recently. He/she informs you that he/she has been bullied for a month now. A specific group of classmates keep calling him/her homophobic names and sometimes they push him/her. What would you do?

Scenario 3

A student tells you that during a fight another student called her "lesbian" in order to offend her. What would you do?

ACTIVITY 4 – How to be an Upstander—Confronting the Bully
Instrucciones
1. Watch the following video and discuss the ACT protocol:

2. Discuss with participants how the ACT protocol can be applied in the different scenarios below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyV6OFm2KxQ

ACT
Ask: Do they know what that word means? Did they intend to be hurtful? Do you know the implications of the abuse you just witnessed?

Choose: Being an Upstander is a choice. Doing or saying nothing implies that you agree.

Teach: Teach by the example of how you live your life. I cannot be an upstander if others do not witness me as such.

Scenario 1

During a literature lesson, a student makes a joke about the writer's sexual orientation. How do you respond?

Scenario 2

During a lesson, a student makes the following comment: "That's so gay!". What would you do?

Scenario 3

You find that during Religious Studies, the students come across views, norms and values that are not compatible with the values you try to teach during "Personal, Social and Health Education" or "Science". During one of your lessons, a student cites your colleague and tells you that everybody has to get married and have children, otherwise they won't meet their ultimate goal. What would you do?

Green Dot Bystander Intervention Programme

The initial goal of the Green Dot Bystander Programme, founded in 2006 by Dr. Dorothy Edwards, was **to promote** safety on college campuses; now, after 15 years of implementation and scientific evaluation, it is being developed **in high-schools and schools.** The goal of the Green Dot programme is to perform a bystander intervention strategy that has proven successful in preventing and reducing power-based personal violence. It is built on the premise that no one has to do everything, but everyone can and has to do something, because **violence can be systematically reduced with a community approach.**

Essentially, **a green dot is** a behaviour, a choice, or **an action which promotes safety.** On the contrary, a red dot is any violent or discriminatory attitude or action. The idea is to visualize the spaces of an institution, such as a high-school, and to be able to neutralize red dots with as many green dots as possible, consequently helping reduce red dots. Therefore, the approach is **both based on prevention and resolution.**

A key to the success of the Green Dot is to incorporate its community approach into the institution culture, especially regarding youth behaviour. Essential to that integration is the **training of "popular opinion leaders",** that is, youth who are considered especially valued in the groups, which could be athletes, class delegates, class leaders, or any other young people valued by their peers. **They have reached relevant social impact disseminating and normalizing the bystander intervention, the zero-tolerance and community approach,** by reinforcing the rest to do their part.

Green Dot involves the whole community, not just students and teachers, in violence prevention. Initially, instructors learn how to work with whole school systems and how to incorporate all agents, including parents, coaches, and other important and influential figures in the institutional setting.

Green Dots can exist of two types: proactive and reactive:

• **Proactive/Preventive Green Dots** are actions carried out not to respond to a specific incident, but general strategies and actions that help set the basic norms in the culture of zero-tolerance to violence and the expectation that everyone can and should do their part to contribute to have a safe community.

Examples of proactive Green Dots include the creation of **social media campaigns, promoting awareness, checking-in with friends, and hosting green dot sports games.**

• **Reactive Green Dots are direct responses** to situations where concerning behaviours, or potential or real dangers are witnessed, whether they could happen or if they are happening or have happened.

Within reactive Green Dots, there is not only one way to act: Indeed, there are many different options so that people can help others without putting them at higher risk, which helps also protect upstanders. The green dot programme shows this with the **3 D's: Direct, Distract, and Delegate.** Other projects such as "Right to Be" (formerly "Hollaback!") which are based on Green Dot include up to two more D's: Document and Delay. For the usefulness of these strategies, each of them is now explained with more detail and examples; in most cases they can be used in digital settings as well.

Three D's of Bystander Intervention

DIRECT INTERVENE IN THE MOMENT TO PREVENT A PROBLEM FROM HAPPENING

DISTRACT: INTERRUPT THE SITUATION WITHOUT DIRECTLY CONFRONTING ANYBODY

DELEGATE: GET HELP FROM SOMONE WHO IS BETTER EQUIPPED TO HANDLE THE SITUATION

1. Direct: stand up next to the victim and against the aggressor. Speak up.. Focus on the victim, not on the aggressor. First, briefly call the bully out: "We will not tolerate this behaviour", or "That's inappropriate, leave them alone"; then, turn all your attention to the person being harassed, asking if they are okay, if they need anything or if they want to get out of there and come with you. In this direct approach, if the harassers respond, ignore them, do not escalate as they are not in for a dialogue, so it is counterproductive trying to initiative one. Before you decide to respond directly, assess the situation: Are you and the person being harassed safe? Does it seem

unlikely that the situation will escalate? Can you tell if the person being harassed wants someone to speak up? If you can answer yes to all of these questions, you might choose a direct response: be clear, firm and final.

2. Distraction: Through *Distraction* a bystander can create a diversion to diffuse the situation. Examples: change the conversation and the energy of the interaction by distracting the individuals; pretend to be a friend of the victim, ask for the time, casually stand next to them or get in between; ask the victim if they are coming with you, or tell them that someone is calling them.

3. Delegate: Through Delegation a bystander can ask for someone else to help intervene in the situation. Examples: delegating by finding someone in a position of authority (teachers, a police officer, other adults, etc.) or who will be more successful in tackling the problem (popular peers, older youth, a more self-confident friend, etc.) and ask them to intervene. Delegating can also mean, more generally, to involve more people, more bystanders. You can ask other friends to join in by saying "I think that is wrong, let's do something okay?"; but it can also be anyone: "Excuse me, that person is being harassed, can you help?"

4. Document: the idea of this strategy is to have evidence of what happened. However, it is not the priority, which is stepping up, stopping the situation and caring for the victim. Options of documenting, when all that is already being taken care of, are: writing down or filming the situation, or taking snapshots of mobile or computer screen (for digital contexts). In all cases, give the evidence to the victim so that they are in control of that.

5. Delay: comfort the harassed person after the incident and acknowledge that the behaviour was wrong. Be a friend and let them know they do not deserve that for any reason whatsoever. Offer to help in any way you can, either by just talking about it, inviting them to join your group or helping report.

With all these possibilities, the idea is that professionals, youth, families, or any agent in the community follows the following steps:

1. Notice that something is wrong, that violence is taking place

2. Realise that you have to do something

3. Thinking what the best strategy is in order to first put the victims to safety and then to show the aggressors and bystanders that such behaviours are not cool and will not be tolerated or passed by.

Preventive upstander actions

We want to also give professionals specific strategies that help change the culture towards zero-violence and everyone's intervention. This will be an introduction to modules 4 and 5, which cover essential concepts and proposals that successfully cover this preventive approach in a very comprehensive way.

As educators, from our privileged position, we can do different things:

• Explicitly tell them you will stand up: "I will not tolerate any violence against LGBTI+ collective (or any other person)"

• Show yourself available and trust-worthy to youth: "You can always send me an email or let me know when something like this happens to you"

• Teach them about these contents: train them to learn the knowledge and skills

• Live by the Upstander approach: be an example

• Have frequent group spaces for reporting and breaking the silence, such as in class assemblies, or at the beginning or end of some sessions

• Organise dialogical activities where bystander intervention for LGBTI+ can be discussed, such as in film forums or dialogic gatherings

• Give attractiveness to upstanders who act. Let them know that they are brave, not "informers" (more on this on Module 4)

As an educational institution, whether it is a high school or an NGO, you can:

• Foster bystander intervention training in your institution

• Integrate references to bystander intervention and the importance of violence prevention into speeches and public addresses.

• Organise campaigns and prepare posters with Upstander messages and zero tolerance: "If you know something, do something"

• Review the institution and educators' procedures and

leave behind non-scientific approaches to tackle violence prevention

• Lead the creation of norms agreed by the whole community that do not tolerate violence against LGBT people (or anyone) (Module 5)

• Create a mixed committee of zero violence, made of all educational agents in the community (module 5)

• Foster the creation of clubs or groups of students against violence, such as GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances), which are explained in more detail later.

The Green Dot starts with training for the professionals that deal with the most important ideas for a successful implementation of the program. Their four-module training courses include knowledge to recognise power-based violence that could develop into potentially risky or harmful situations; they also educate on bystander's own obstacles to standing up, such as shyness, unwillingness to upset peers, the belief that others will intervene or fear of embarrassment or making a scene. Last, they focus on building upstanding skills and generating confidence in the performance of the program.

Training efforts can then translate in different institutional actions, such as strategic planning, bystander mobilization, communication, and coalition building. The teaching materials used with students include group and individual activities, group discussions, video vignettes made by other students or from the media.

According to the evaluations conducted, the Green Dot bystander intervention program is one of the most scienti-

fically and systematically assessed. In a study it proved to **reduce more than 50% the self-reported frequency of sexual violence perpetration by students at schools which received the training.** It also showed a 40% reduction in self-reported frequency of overall violence perpetration, including staking, dating violence, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Another recent study of over 2.500 university students found that hearing a Green Dot speech, but specially receiving bystander intervention training, resulted in more reported active bystander actions compared to non-trained students. Almost 50% of students had heard at least one Green Dot speech on their college campus, proving a notable dissemination of the program.

To know more:

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