Secondary-level Interventions for Students At-Risk for Emotional Disturbance: What We Learned from a Pilot Semester of Achievement Plus

Andrew Armstrong, Darlene Anderson, Ellie L. Young
Brigham Young University
Introduction

“Preventing Emotional Disturbance with Secondary Age Students”

*BYU-Public School Partnership (BYU-PSP) Five-year Grant*
Primary Prevention: School-/Classroom-Wide Systems for All Students, Staff, & Settings

Secondary Prevention: Specialized Group Systems for Students with At-Risk Behavior

Tertiary Prevention: Specialized Individualized Systems for Students with High-Risk Behavior

~80% of Students

~15%

~5%

(School-Wide Positive Behavior Support) (Rob Horner, 2004.)
Grant Research Questions

• First, “is the Achievement Plus class more effective than a wait-list to increase academic performance and decrease behavioral and academic difficulties?”

• Second, “what components of the Achievement Plus class contribute to positive behavior change?”
Screening Instrument

Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) (Walker & Severson, 1992)

A multi-gated procedure that assesses externalizing and internalizing behavior problems.
Teachers considered all of the students they taught over the course of a day before nominating the top 2-5 students in internalizing and externalizing categories.
SSBD Stage One: Data Summary

1. Frequency Scores = # of teacher nominations (how many teacher’s wrote the student’s name)

2. Composite Ranking = Sum of ranks across all nominations

3. Students were ranked in descending order based on the frequency score, then the composite ranking.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Comp Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Descriptive Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>Junior High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Int</strong></td>
<td>22/60 (37%)</td>
<td>36/72 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ext</strong></td>
<td>38/60 (63%)</td>
<td>36/72 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Nominated</strong></td>
<td>238/1075</td>
<td>179/1050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Nominated</strong></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top Problem Behaviors

Externalizers
1. Ignores teacher warnings or reprimands
2. Physically aggressive
3. Damages others' property
4. Is teased, neglected, and/or avoided by peers
5. Has tantrums

Internalizers
1. Painful shyness
2. Sad affect, depression, and feelings of worthlessness
3. Is teased, neglected, and/or avoided by peers
4. Gets lost in own thoughts
5. Ignores teacher warnings or reprimands
Curriculum

• Social Skills
• Self-management
• Learning Strategies
• Emotional Resiliency
Resources – Social Skills

*The PREPARE Curriculum*
Golstein
Research Press

*Skillstreaming the Adolescent*
Goldstein & McGinnis
Research Press
Social Skills

“Pro-social skills typically increase students’ academic engaged time which, in turn, increases academic achievement.”

Howard Knoff, Ph.D., NCSP
How to Listen

1. Look at the person.
2. Think about what is being said.
3. Wait your turn to talk.
4. Say what you want to say without changing the subject.
Resources – Self-management

Teaching Self-Management Strategies to Adolescents
Young, West, Smith, Morgan
Sopris West
Self-Management Point Card

Name ____________________________ Date ____________________

Period ____________

H = Honors
S = Satisfactory
N = Needs Improvement
U = Unsatisfactory

1. Be in your seat when tardy bell rings
2. Bring needed materials and homework to class.
3. Follow teacher directions the first time they are given.
4. Raise hand to be called on or get permission to leave your seat.
5. Pay attention to your work the entire class period.
6. Show respect to teacher and other students with words & actions.

POINT CARD

Student Rating

Teacher Rating

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____

Subtotal: ______
Add 1 Bonus Point for each match ______
TOTAL = ______
Point card – Criteria Example

Rule: Bring needed materials and homework to class.

H – Brings own pen or pencil, paper, and book as assigned and all work is current
S – Brings materials needed to work or borrows them from someone else
N – Some materials missing
U – No materials brought to class
Resources – Learning Strategies

Academic Success Strategies for Adolescents with Learning Disabilities & ADHD
Minskoff & Allsopp
Brookes
Sample Learning Strategy

**CHECK:** To help me start studying

- Change environments
- Have all equipment nearby
- Establish rewards for yourself
- Create a checklist of tasks to be done
- Keep a worry pad
Resources – Emotional Resiliency

Strong Kids
*A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum for Students in Grades 4-8*
K. Merrell, D. Carrizales, & L. Feuerborn
The Oregon Resiliency Project

Strong Teens
*A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum for Students in Grades 9-12*
K. Merrell, D. Carrizales, & L. Feuerborn
The Oregon Resiliency Project
Emotional Resiliency

Strong Kids/Strong Teens - Sample lesson topics:

“Understanding your feelings”
“Dealing with anger”
“The power of positive thinking”
“Solving people problems”
Teacher Responses

“The classroom skills made for a much more enjoyable classroom and most behavior problems were eliminated.”

What is the ideal class composition for Achievement Plus?

“Boy/girl ratio didn’t seem to make any difference, but Internalizer/Externalizer ratio makes a big difference. In a class of 10 students, the ratio of Internalizers to Externalizers should be about 3 to 7.”
Avoiding Stigma

- Preventative and pro-active approach
- Administrative support
- Strong teachers
- Blending of students
  
  25% were already identified and had IEPs
  
  Several students were “A” students

- 28 out of the 32 students who were given the opportunity to repeat the class (for a full year this time) chose to do so.
Achievement Plus
Student Responses

“I learned to realize when I’m doing something wrong”

“My grades really improved because now I care about my life; I don’t fight a lot with my parents anymore; I can control my anger now.”

“I can talk to my teachers, I study more and I get better grades.”
Student Responses (cont.)

“He’s a really funny teacher, but we love him.”
Discussion / Conclusion

Positives about the pilot semester

1. Refinement of screening procedure
2. Reputation
3. Expansion of Achievement Plus to full year
4. Curriculum development
5. Changes in the lives of class members