A Treatment Package for Eliminating Bullying and Improving Playground Behavior

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Overview

- Since the 1980s those involved in bullying increased by 50% and an increase in weekly bullying problems by 65%. (Olweus, 2003)

- 76% of students report majority of bullying occurred on the playground (Olweus, 1993)

- Can a treatment package decrease bullying behavior on the playground?
Findings from the Literature

- Antisocial acts committed by children and youth are a concern to our society (Sprague & Walker, 2000)

- Trends toward common incivilities in our school, such as bullying, aggression, rule infractions, and defiance of authority leave us with concern for the safety of our children (Lane, Gresham, & O’Shaughnessy, 2002; Mayer, 1995; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995; Sprague & Walker, 2000; Walker & Sylvester, 1998)

- Children and youth with antisocial behavior problems typically lack the social skills needed to have appropriate social interactions with their peers (Pepler, Craig, & Roberts, 1998; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995)
Findings from the Literature (continued)

- Teachers and administrators often report disruptive and aggressive behavior as their foremost challenge and concern (Kauffman, Mostert, Trent, & Hallahan, 1998; Rhode, Jeson, & Reavis; 1992; Walker & Sylwester, 1998)

- A context that lends itself to antisocial behavior is the playground (Dougherty, Fowler, & Paine, 1985; Murphy, Hutchison, & Bailey, 1983; Walker et al., 1995)

- One study surveyed students’ opinion as to where bullying occurs--76% reported majority occurs on the playground (Olweus, 1993)
Literature Summary

Olweus defined bullying as “repeated negative, ill-intentioned behavior by one or more students directed against a student who has difficulty defending himself or herself. Most bullying occurs without any apparent provocation on the part of the student who is exposed."

Bullying...
• Puts safety of students at risk
• Is a challenge for teachers and administrators
• Is especially likely to occur on the playground
• Is not effectively extinguished thru punitive measures
Playground Interventions Investigated

Murphy, Hutichinson, & Bailey (1983)

- **Intervention**
  - Organized games
  - Adult supervision of entire playground—praise paired with timeout

- **Outcome**
  - Significant decrease of aggression, property abuse, rule violations
Playground Interventions Investigated

(Continued)

Doughtery, Folwer, & Paine (1985)

- **Intervention**
  - Social skills instruction
  - Peer mediation and self-monitoring
  - Recess supervisors—token economy earned for group activities paired with response cost

- **Outcome**
  - Significant reduction in negative interactions with peers
Playground Interventions Investigated (Continued)

Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin (1998)

- Intervention
  - Social skills instruction
  - Group contingency

- Outcome
  - Modest decrease in problem behavior of students,
  - Limited affect on 5-7% of kids who account for most of problem behavior
Effective interventions include:

- Social skills instruction
- Adult supervision
- Organized games
- Group contingencies
- Peer mediation
Areas needing additional research:

- Individualized assessment of students who account for majority of problems
- Intervention plans that attend to their specific needs
Purpose of the Study

To determine if aggressive behavior would decrease using a treatment package:

School-wide
- Teaching playground rules during PE
- Providing reminders of the rules
- Modifying the playground to facilitate appropriate play
- Encouraging playground monitors to take a more active supervisory role

Target students
- Conducting a self-management program for students with aggressive behavior
Participants

- Urban elementary school
  - Grades 1-6

- Students
  - 3 boys
    - 2 First grade
    - 1 Third grade
  - Ages 6-9
  - Normal functioning intelligence
  - None identified with EBD
  - Referred by P.E. teachers and principal for bullying behavior
Participants (Continued)

- Two P.E. Teachers
  - Caucasian Male in 30s
  - Caucasian Female in 40s

- Eight Playground Supervisors
  - The P.E. teachers
  - Six reading tutors
    - Caucasian ages 20s and 40s
  - High school graduates and college graduates
Student Assessment

- Irwin

- Bully during transitions and rug time
- Physically aggressive on playground
- Rarely participated in organized games
Student Assessment

Joseph

- Play Power Rangers
- Tease and hit peers
- Rarely participated in organized games
Student Assessment

- Mitchell
  - Temper tantrums during P.E. and recess
    - Yelling and threatening to harm others
  - Play fighting
Settings

- School Gym
  - 50’ x 40’
  - Basketball hoops and stage

- Playground (Lunch Recess)
  - Two grassy fields
  - Playground equipment
  - Basketball hoops and four square boxes
What We Measured...

Physical Aggression
- Kicking, kneeing, hitting, poking, pushing, shoving, tripping, and throwing objects

Verbal Aggression
- Name calling, taunting, or criticizing another individual while in their presence

Appropriate Play
- Following the five playground rules while participating in an organized activity or while using playground equipment
Treatment

- Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Support Plan
  - New playground rules
  - Teacher reminder of rules
  - Modification of playground
  - Playground supervisors trained, prompted, and reinforced

- Individual Positive Behavioral Support Plan
  - Self-management program
Data Collection

- Observers
  - Three observers
    - One primary observer on the North (grades 1-2)
    - One primary observer on the South (grades 3-6)
    - One reliability observer

- Observers training
  - Memorize behavior definitions
  - Acquire 90% accuracy using observation system
Data Collection Sheet

- 10-second intervals
Anecdotal Information

Data were not recorded for the following conditions:

- Behavior
- Weather
Experimental Design

Multiple baseline across students

The phases included:
Baseline
School-wide Playground Program (SPP)
Self-management training period
Self-management implementation
School-wide Playground Program

- During this condition
  - Students taught new rules during P.E.
  - Reminders provided about rules
  - Playground modified
  - Playground monitors received instruction
Five Playground Rules

FOLLOW THE RULES OF THE GAMES.
USE EQUIPMENT IN A SAFE WAY.
EVERYONE CAN PLAY.
KEEP HANDS & FEET TO YOURSELF.
USE KIND WORDS.
Playground Modifications

Playground divided into three sections:

• Grassy section for soccer

• Middle section for kickball

• Cement area for smaller games and activities (e.g. jump rope and four square)
Supervisor Responsibilities

- Assigned to one of the sections
- Circulate and monitor their section
- Initiate organized games
Self-management Training Period

- During this phase students were taught to
  - Rate their own recess behavior
  - Compare their rating with recess supervisors
  - Meet with supervisor twice each lunch recess
Self-Management Card

NAME: ___________________________

DATE: ___________________________

Recess Rules:
1. Follow rules of game
2. Use equipment in safe way
3. Everyone can play
4. Keep hands and feet to yourself
5. Use kind words

Points:

😊 = 3 points

😊😊 = 0 points

Matching = 1 bonus point

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<th></th>
<th>Hands and feet</th>
<th>Kind words</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>😊😊</td>
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<td>😊😊</td>
<td>😊😊</td>
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Self-management Implementation

During this phase students
- Matched with supervisors
- Exchanged points for reinforcers
- Received praise and encouragement from the supervisors
Irwin’s Aggression Graph

Rate of Aggression

Baseline  .50/min
SPP       .79/min
Self-Man  1.00/wk & SPP
Irwin’s Appropriate Play Graph

Rate of Appropriate Play

Baseline 7.56%
SPP 20.77%
Self-Man & SPP 91.00%
Joseph’s Aggression Graph

Rate of Aggression

Baseline 0.65/min
SPP 1.00/min
Self-Man 1.00/wk & SPP
Joseph’s Appropriate Play Graph

Rate of Appropriate Play

Baseline 12.22 %
SPP 36.67%
Self-Man 75.00%
& SPP
Mitchell’s Aggression Graph

Rate of Aggression
Baseline  .44/min
SPP       .60/min
Self-Man  0.00/wk & SPP
Mitchell’s Appropriate Play Graph

Rate of Appropriate Play

Baseline  2.78%
SPP        11.25%
Self-Man   86.00%
& SPP
Reliability

- 25% of all sessions
- Mean 96%
- Range 83%-100%
## Mean Interobserver Agreement Scores

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<th>Verbal Aggression</th>
<th>Physical Aggression</th>
<th>Appropriate Play</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irwin</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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BYU Peaceable Walk Program
Playground Supervisor Questionnaire
Date: ____________________

Please select one statement that describes the first and second-graders behavior during lunch recess THIS WEEK.

(a) The students behaved well during recess this week—there were very few behavior problems.

(b) The students behaved ok during recess this week—there were a few behavior problems.

(c) The students behaved poorly during recess this week—there were many behavior problems.
Findings from the Study

- Treatment package influenced decrease in aggressive behavior and an increase in appropriate play
- Anecdotal evidence indicates school found treatment acceptable
Limitations

- Was SPP really needed?
- Could self-management be sufficient?
- No systematic measures of social validity
Implications for Future Research

Needs for…

- Additional research on the effect of universal interventions
Implications for Future Research (Continued)

- Pair universal interventions with individualized intervention plans for target students
Implications for Future Research (Continued)

- Collaboratively designing playground interventions that are acceptable and practical to school staff and students
Implications for Future Research (Continued)

- Eliminate tangible reinforcers
- Replace playground adult supervisors with peer mediators
- Use with students already identified with EBD who demonstrate bullying behavior
Implications for Future Research (Continued)

- Use reinforcement without self-management