Addressing Social and Emotional Needs of Students in a Professional Development School

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Provo Peaks Elementary
Overview

I. BYU-Provo Peaks partnership
II. Mental Health in schools
III. Social and Emotional Learning
IV. Strong Kids curriculum
V. Provo Peaks – Strong Kids study
VI. Results
Brigham Young University, Provo Utah
Provo Peaks Elementary School

- Title 1 School
- 466 K-6 Students
  - 61% Hispanic
  - 37% Caucasian
  - 2% Other
  - 88% SES
  - 53% ELL
- 21 Teachers, 2 Interns, & 3 student teachers
Why a PDS partnership?

**Provo Peaks**

- Help meet AYP goals
- Build a stronger connection to the local university for faculty and students
- Further professional development of faculty

**BYU**

- Public School Partnership Site
- Practical experience for students
- Faculty research interests
- Collaborative grant writing
Together we’ve...

- Agreed to create a **professional development school** partnership
- Implemented an **executive committee** for shared governance
- Reached **94% staff agreement** to participate
- Committed to **evidence-based practices** and began implementing
- Designed a **school-wide database** for academic and behavioral data
- Conducted weekly **parent involvement** meetings
- Secured **grant funding**

- Implemented school-wide **Positive Behavior Support**
- Followed up on **top-rated student behavior problems** with teacher training and support
- BYU students participating to support programs and gain school experience
- Created **opportunities for arts experiences**
- **Shared resources**, e.g., financial, staff, professional conferences
- Instituted **proactive screening** to identify at-risk students
- Secured **grant funding**
Identifying Need

- **Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD)** (Walker & Severson 1992)
  - Screens All Students
  - Internalizing & Externalizing
- **Suggests Risk Level**
  - Primary, Secondary, Tertiary
- **51 at-risk students**
  - 24 internalizing
  - 27 externalizing
**Critical Events Index**

Date ___________ Teacher ___________ School ___________

Student ___________ Sex ___________ Grade ___________

Check one: Stage One SSBD Rank: □ 1 □ 2 or □ 3

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Check each behavior from the list below that you are aware the student has exhibited during this school year.

1. Steals.
2. Sets fires.
3. Vomits after eating.
4. Has tantrums.
5. Physically assaults an adult.
6. Exhibits painful shyness.
7. Exhibits large weight loss or gain over past three months. (Significant weight fluctuation would be in excess of 20% change in body weight.)
8. Exhibits sad affect, depression and feelings of worthlessness to such an extent as to interfere with normal peer and classroom activities.
9. Is physically aggressive with other students or adults (hits, bites, chokes, or throws things).
10. Damages others' property (academic materials, damages personal possessions).
11. Demonstrates obsessive-compulsive behaviors. (Student can't get his/her mind off certain thoughts or obsessions.)
12. Reports having nightmares or significant sleep disturbances.

**SYSTEMATIC SCREENING FOR BEHAVIOR DISORDERS (SSBD)**

**Combined Frequency Index for Adaptive and Maladaptive Behavior**

**Instructions:** The numbers 1 through 5 are a continuous scale and are used to indicate your estimate of the frequency with which each item occurs for a given student. Circle a number between 1 and 5 to represent the frequency of a given item. Complete the scale in relation to your observations of the student during the past 30 days.

**ADAPTIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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1. Follows established classroom rules.
2. Is considerate of the feelings of others.
3. Produces work of acceptable quality given her/his skill level.
4. Gains peers' attention in an appropriate manner.
5. Expresses anger appropriately, e.g., reacts to situation without being violent or destructive.
6. Cooperates with peers in group activities or situations.
7. Makes assistance needs known in an appropriate manner, e.g., asks to go to the bathroom, raises hand when finished with work, asks for help with work, etc.
8. Is socially perceptive, e.g., "reads" social situations accurately.
9. Does seat-work assignments as directed.
10. Compliments peers regarding their behavior or personal attributes, e.g., appearance, special skills, etc.
11. Complies with teacher requests and commands.
12. Initiates positive social interactions with peers.

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Summer Collaboration

• Review of screening results
• Discussion of intervention options
• Selection of Strong Start / Strong Kids curriculum
Mental Health in Schools

• 20% students in need of services
  – Only ~5% receive services

• Demands on educators
  – Insufficient resources, overworked
  – Limited time, academic requirements

• Ineffective Programs
  – Not evidence based (e.g., “fads”)
  – Reactive “get tough” approaches
  – Address problems too late, less responsive to treatment
Prevention

– Looks at the “big picture”
– Needs of *all* students
– Move some resources and effort towards those not experiencing severe difficulties
– Address problems before they become severe
Prevention Model

A Triangle of Support For Students With Behavioral and Emotional Problems

**Tier 3: Indicated Support**
- 5%
- High Risk Students With Intense Problems
  - Comprehend Individual Assessment
  - Multi-Method, Source, & Setting Design
  - Protective and Risk Factors, Individual, Family & Community Characteristics

**Tier 2: Targeted Support**
- 15%
- Students At-Risk for Negative Behavioral and Emotional Outcomes
  - Brief Functional Assessment
  - School Records Review
  - Behavior Rating Scales

**Tier 1: Universal Support**
- 80%
- Students Who Do Not Exhibit Significant Behavioral or Emotional Problems
  - Universal Screening
  - Teacher nomination
  - Brief Screening Tools

**Primary Prevention**
- Universal Interventions
  - School-Wide (behavior support)
  - Prevention Curricula
  - Social Skills Training
  - Positive School Climate

**Secondary Prevention**
- Targeted Specialized Interventions
  - Classrooms and Groups
  - Specialized Skills Training
  - Mentoring
  - Increased Support

**Tertiary Prevention**
- Indicated Individualized Interventions
  - Assessment-Based
  - Individual Student Services
  - Special Education/IEP
  - Wraparound Service System
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Promotes *resilience* by teaching the skills to
- Recognize and manage emotions
- Develop care and concern for others
- Make responsible decisions
- Form positive relationships
Strong Kids Series – SEL Curriculum

Strong Start (ages 5-8)

Strong Kids (ages 8-12)

Strong Kids (ages 12-14)

Strong Teens (ages 14-18)
Objectives of *Strong Kids*

- Prevent internalizing disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety)
- Understand emotions
- Learn to:
  - monitor and regulate emotions, thoughts, feelings
  - handle challenges
  - solve interpersonal problems
  - set goals
Strong Kids Programs

• **Semi-scripted lessons**
  - Prevention & intervention
  - Promotion of resilience
  - Developmentally appropriate

• **Practical and easy to use**
  - **Settings**: general or special education, group counseling, treatment facilities
  - **Purposes**: universal or secondary
  - **Leaders**: teachers, school counselors, psychologists, social workers
Strong Kids

• Brief: 10-12 lessons, 45-50 minutes each
• Empirically-based
• Teaches SEL skills directly
Strengths

• Low-cost, low-tech
• Highly structured
• Covers specific objectives and goals
• Time feasibility and ease of implementation

Limitations

• Not a comprehensive program
• May not meet needs of all students
Teaching Strong Kids

Direct Instruction

Use scripts to directly teach concepts and skills

Discussion

Ask students to volunteer to share and discuss experiences

Activities

Conduct small groups, model examples, and role-plays

Additional activities (*Strong Start K-2*)

Read children’s book
Create drawings/posters
Required Materials

- Overhead projector, transparencies
- Handouts
- Chalk or marker board
- Stuffed animal mascot for Strong Start
Overview of Lessons

1. About Strong Kids
2. Understanding Your Feelings (Part 1)
3. Understanding Your Feelings (Part 2)
4. Dealing with Anger
5. Understanding Other People’s Feelings
6. Clear Thinking (Part 1)
7. Clear Thinking (Part 2)

8. Power of Positive Thinking

9. Solving People Problems

10. Letting Go of Stress

11. Achieving Your Goals

12. Finishing UP!
Research

- Empirically evaluated in more than 10 separate studies
  - Increases in emotion knowledge
  - Decreases in negative behavioral and emotional symptoms
  - High student and teacher satisfaction

http://strongkids.uoregon.edu/Research.htm
Provo Peaks Elementary Study

Non-equivalent control group design

X    O    X    :  Treatment School
X           X    :  Comparison School

Timeline

• Introduction of curriculum & 1 hour teacher orientation
• Pre-testing of students
• Fidelity observations of lessons (1 lesson weekly, 10-11 lessons)
• Booster lesson(s)
• Post–testing
• Social validity questionnaire and focus group
Participants

Treatment School

• 17 teachers
  – 13 Caucasian, 2 Hispanic, 2 Pacific Islander/Asian
  – 15 female, 2 male
  – Average teaching experience 8.3 years
  – Average age 36.5
• 360 Students K-6

Control School

• 11 teachers
  - 11 Caucasian, 1 Hispanic
  - 11 female
  - Average teaching experience 9.22 years
  - Average age 36.7
• 266 Students K-6
Measures

- Social Skills Rating System (SSRS: Gresham & Elliott, 1990)
  - Internalizing Symptoms Subscale
  - Peer Relations Subscale
- Treatment Fidelity
  - Checklists
- Social Validity
  - Questionnaire & Teacher Focus group
Results

• **Treatment Fidelity**
  - 37% of lessons observed
  - 82% of lesson components fully implemented
    - Strong Kids: 92% fully implemented
    - Strong Start: 72% fully implemented
  - Average lesson time ~37 minutes
Results
Split Plot Anova

SSBS Peer Relations subscale

SSRS Internalizing Subscale

p = .501

p = .021*
At-risk vs not-at-risk, Peer relations

At-risk vs not-at-risk Internalizing

p<.001*
**Strong Kids Vs Strong Start**, Peer Relations

- **SSBS Peer Relations, means**
- Pretest: Strong Kids, **46**; Strong Start, **47**
- Posttest: Strong Kids, **50**; Strong Start, **49**

\[ p = .004^* \]

**Strong Kids vs Strong Start**, Internalizing

- **SSRS-I mean scores**
- Pretest: Strong Kids, **2.0**; Strong Start, **2.5**
- Posttest: Strong Kids, **1.5**; Strong Start, **2.0**

\[ p = .573 \]
Social Validity

Teachers (scale of 1-5) strongly disagree – strongly agree

- Goals: 4.13
- Outcomes: 3.44
- Procedures: 3.44

- 8 of 14 desired to implement curriculum again
- 4 neutral
- 2 did not want to implement it again

- Highest rating = 4.7 (a child’s social and emotional competence is important to academic success)
- Lowest rating = 2.85 (lesson length was appropriate for my students)
Teacher Comments

Focus Group

“I felt like Strong Kids gave us common vocabulary so if a situation arose we could use the vocabulary and talk about it . . .”

“All of the students had dropped (in negative symptoms). . . Even my really high one that I hadn’t even realized had a problem dropped, and I think it helped her. She, at one point, came up to me and asked me for help when she was having a problem. I think it gave her an avenue to seek help and it really helped her. And she was an internalizer.”
“I had one boy . . . and he was really at risk and had behavior issues, but he really just thrived during the lessons and he was totally engaged in them. We would read a book and he would say, “I need that book. That’s me in that book!”

“It’s very rewarding as a teacher because we spend a lot of time teaching the students academics but we know for our students at this school the most helpful thing for them is emotional help. We can help all the kids academically and they may still not succeed but when you help them emotionally you’re empowering them for the rest of their lives. And seeing them use the things we have taught is very rewarding.”
Critical comments

“I would want more supplemental material. I would love to have photographs of people showing the emotions. The book had black and white pictures that were real, but they were small. . . “

“More games and activities (in the manual) for the students, since this is supposed to be something that we don’t have to plan for very much.”

“If there was a packet that came with it that had supplements with things to do I would be more inclined to go through the section.

(The lessons) were a little too long.

“I thought the (students’) attention span was the hardest thing. . . I think once I became more familiar with the format of it I got a little more comfortable shortening it to their attention span.”
Conclusions

• Strong Kids appears to be a feasible and effective school-wide SEL prevention program

• Strong Start appeared somewhat more difficult to implement and resulted in less student improvement

• At-risk students seemed to benefit the most

• Teachers generally rated the program as socially valid

• Limitations of the study

• Areas for future research