I Can Problem Solve

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Context

- Effective problem solving skills are lacking

- Unaware of alternatives so act on impulse

    - Aggression

    - Avoidance

- Consequences are negative rather than positive

- Peer relationships and social skills suffer

- Teachers discipline rather than guide

- Poor problem solving role models

Theory and Research

- Boys more likely to externalize problems:

    - Aggression

        - "Overall classroom level of aggression in the first grade increased boys' risk of being aggressive in middle school"

        - "Well-developed antisocial patterns coupled with high levels of aggression early in a child's life are among the best predictors of delinquency in later years"

    - Conduct Disorder

        - "Constitute a major social problem...disruptions in the classroom interfere with teaching"

        - "Physical aggression, stealing, fire setting, truancy, running away"

Research from At Risk Youth by McWhirter et al, p. 181-182

Theory and Research

- Girls more likely to internalize problems:

  - Covert Relational Aggression

    - "Girls normatively use relational aggression to bully their victims, [it] is characterized by high frequency and invisibility to teachers, and that girls are often reluctant to acknowledge that it occurs"

    - Gossip, Exclusion, Slander, Humiliation, Grudges, etc.

  - Avoidance

    - "Some at-risk young people get into trouble because they are timid and withdrawn and appear to be incapable of dealing with other students, teachers, and family members in effective ways"

      Research from At Risk Youth by McWhirter et al, p. 247, 269

Theory and Research

- Spivack and Shure:

  - "The earlier these skills can be learned, the greater the cumulative benefit and the broader their usefulness for confronting life challenges"

  - "Problem solving as the integration of two skills: thinking of alternative solutions and understanding the consequences of behavior"

- Youngstrom et al 2000:

  - "The quality of children's interpersonal problem-solving solutions was at least as important as the quantity of solutions"

  Research from At Risk Youth by McWhirter et al, p. 260, 117

Theory and Research

- Piaget

  - Sensitivity to children's readiness to learn

    - Appropriate learning experiences that are based on children's current level of thinking

  - Egocentrism Trendy

    - Inability to see the viewpoints and opinions of others

    - Generalization of their beliefs unto others

  - Emphasize concrete and tangible

    - Increase motivation and relevance

    - Children work poorly with abstract ideas

Parental Involvement

- Disintegration of traditional family system

  - "The American family has changed more during the past 50 years that at any other time in history"

- Lack of support system and positive role models

  - "The significance of positive parental involvement, healthy parent-child interaction, and consistent discipline is supported by the fact that when parents change their discipline and monitoring styles to become more consistent, more positive, less physical, and more aware and observant, their children's antisocial behavior almost invariably declines significantly"

- ICPS requires parental involvement during the sessions:

  - Complete Heppner's "Problem Solving Inventory" for reference

  - Promotes consistency in expectations in all settings and situations

  - Build trusting relationships between youth and adults

Research from At Risk Youth by McWhirter et al, p. 66, 189

ICPS Program Overview

- Target Population
  - Elementary aged students
    - Grades K-6
    - All races, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds
    - All problem solving levels
  - Parents and Teachers

Program Set-Up

- After School

  - Once a week

  - Two hour sessions

  - One per quarter (9 weeks)

- Parents accompany students

- Teacher volunteer leaders

Strategies

- Role Play

- Video

- Puppets

- Story-telling

- Games

Thinking Process

- Student Steps to Success:

    1. Stop and give yourself five seconds before expressing feelings

        - High Five (stop signal)

    2. Calmly communicate how you are feeling to the other person involved in situation

        - Say Hi (wave)

    3. Think about several solutions to the problem

        - Brainstorm (point to head)

    4. Suggest the best solution to the problem in order to resolve the issue

        - Investigate (hold up imaginary looking glass)

    5. Analyze the effectiveness of the solution that was chosen- consequences

        - Evaluate (write on a notepad)

Thinking Process

- Parent steps to success in the home:

  1. Approach calmly stopping any hurtful actions

  2. Ask child to take five seconds to calm down before expressing feelings

  3. Acknowledge children's feelings

  4. Gather information

  5. Restate the problem

  6. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together

  7. Be prepared to give follow up support and evaluation

Evaluation

- Pre-test/Post-test Measures:

  - Parents and teachers answer the following question about their student:

    - "What strategies does Jane Doe use to problem solve"

  - Students answer the following question about themselves:

    - "How do you solve problems?"

  - Compare before and after responses to these questions

- Small writing assignment about what they learned

  - Expectations vary by grade level

  - Present to teachers and parents at end of program reception

Outcomes of Program

✓ Ability to identify problems

✓ Use effective alternative solutions rather than acting on impulse

✓ Anticipate positive and negative consequences

✓ Recognize what they should and should not do

✓ Learn how to think not what to think

✓ Increase confidence and self-assurance

✓ Build stronger communication skills

Implementation Timeline

- School year before program begins:

  - Meet with board seeking approval and funding

  - Send home informational packets:

    - Surveys, fliers, pamphlet, sign up sheet

    - Four weeks prior to the end of the school year

  - Informational Meeting for parents:

    - Role plays, video presentation, Q&A

    - Two weeks before school ends

  - Sign up sheet due back by the last week of school

  - Make session schedules of participants based on availability

Implementation Timeline

- Beginning of the next school year:

  - Program reminder information sent home

    - Mailed with new school year info packet

    - Contains session schedule of participants

  - Teacher in-services

    - Prepare teacher volunteers

    - During the week before school begins

  - First session begins the Thursday of the first week of school

Expenses

- One year funding for:

    - Fliers, pamphlets, posters, parent informational packets

    - Building use (energy and space)

    - Story-telling books, Videos, Puppets, Games

    - Certificates and "I brought my parent to ICPS" Stickers

    - Reception cookies and punch

    - Teacher volunteers will not be paid

- Seek second year funding if program is successful

References

- Heppner, Witty and Dixon (2004). Problem-solving appraisal and human adjustment: A review of 20 years of research using the problem solving inventory. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 32(3), 344-428.

- McWhirter, J.J., McWhirter, B.T., McWhirter, E.H., and McWhirter, R.J. (2007). *At Risk Youth: A Comprehensive Response for Counselors, Teachers, Psychologists, and Human Services Professionals* (4th Edition). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

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