Travis and Presley's Bullying Curriculum

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Introduction

What is a bully?

According to Travis and Presley (2009) bullies bother others, are not good friends, break the rules, make people feel bad , and might even push you down. This definition is worded with the intent of helping 4 and 5 year olds understand what is a bully. According to Monks (2006), different age groups including children, teens and adults, have different ideas of how bullying should be defined. Not everyone agrees upon a specific definition. Some definitions state bullying is a repeated situation and others believe that it can be a one-time incident (Curtner-Smith, 2006; Monks, 2006). Children's interpretation of the meaning of bullying changes as they grow and develop cognitively. For example, Monks research with young children stated that they describe bullying as verbal or physical interactions with another person. Older children are able to think of the outcome that their actions would cause and are able to cope or ignore others more than younger children.

Prevalence

Boys are more aggressive than girls in kindergarten, about 16% of African- American preschoolers frequently or always engage in bullying while over half do so occasionally (Cutner-Smith, 2006; Nagin and Tremblay, 1999). Bullying is a social behavior and a problem all over the world. It is common for siblings to both be bullies (Vlachou, 2011). Bullying is beginning to happen more often (Heimes, 2009) and it is emotionally detrimental for both the bully and the victim (Gartrell, 2011).

Researchers have suggested that children with aggression be placed in prevention and intervention programs (Nagin & Tremblay, 1999). However, it has been demonstrated that something as simple as a mother's empathy can keep a child from bullying (Cutner-Smith, 2006).

Why children bully?

Bully victims are more likely to react because they are being attacked and the bully usually has a goal in mind, to hurt this person (Vlachoau, 2011). Gartrell (2008) says that bullies bully to gain superiority by lowering the self-confidence of the victim.

Who is likely to be bullied?

Bullies pick on vulnerable victims, for example, a child who has had a family member die (Gartrell, 2008).). Boys and girls have the same likelihood to be bullied.

Boys tend to bully physically and girls tend to bully emotionally , although girls engagement in physical bullying is increasing (Gartrell, 2011). Males are more aggressive and more likely to be a bully than females (Vlachoau, 2011).

Recommendations for adults

•Create games to build positive relationships between the children (Heimes, 2009).
•Provide opportunities for "down" time in the children's daily schedule. (Heimes, 2009).
• A teacher might act out a situation to help children understand what is happening and respond properly.
•Teach children to use words to let the teacher know what is going on instead of fighting back.
•Teachers should maintain good communication and keep parents of bullies informed (Gartrell, 2011).

Travis & Presley's recommendations for children

•Tell your teacher
•Tell your parents
•Play it cool

Research Question

•What were the gains, if any, of the children's knowledge about how to deal with a bully as measured through concept maps ,before and after, a month long exposure to the Travis and Presley curriculum?

Method

Participants

STEP 1: Secure approval to carry out the research from:

The OSU Institutional Review Board of Human Subjects

The Enid Public School district

The Stillwater Public Schools district

STEP 2: Identify Prekindergarten and kindergarten teacher volunteers willing to gather data from their students.

1. An email inviting the Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers from Enid and selected Stillwater public schools was sent inviting them to attend a training where they would learn how to utilize concept maps as an assessment tool effectively. They were remunerated $150 for attending the training.

2. Three one hour trainings were offered at interested schools. Training was conducted by Dr. Julia Atiles, Nikole Dominique-Maikell, and Rachel Greer.

3. Upon completion of the training, teachers were invited to volunteer for a study of the Travis and Presley curriculum . As an incentive the school with the highest percentage of concept maps would receive a visit from Travis and Presley themselves. Many of the teachers agreed to participate in this study.

Instrument

STEP 3: Explanation to the participants/teachers how to proceed with the data collection.

1. The teachers were to follow the curriculum exactly as specified in the Travis and Presley curriculum materials.

2. This study used concept maps as a pre- and post- assessment tool. Participants were asked to create concept maps with "BULLY" as the central concept. The teacher worked with small groups of 4-6 children, creating a concept map of the knowledge of the children in each small group before introducing the curriculum (pre-assessment) and a month later after having implemented the curriculum (post test). It was stressed that the children in the small groups had to be the same in the pre and post assessments.

3. The concept maps were collected and coded by both Nikole Dominique-Maikell and Rachel Greer. The maps were scored quantitatively using the measures outlined in Table 1 which was adapted from Hough, O'Rode, Terman, and Weissglass (2005). Inter rater reliability of the coders was established at 1.0

Table 1

Description of Concept Map Structural Variables

Word	Definition	Use
Width	Greatest number of concepts at one level on the map; the widest point on the map	The width is a measure of breadth of knowledge.
Depth	Total number of levels on a map; length of the longest chain on the map	The depth is a measure of the depth of a person's knowledge.
Hierarchical Structure Score (HSS)	Width + Depth	HSS measures the complexity of the map structure.

Note: Adapted from Hough, O'Rode, Terman, and Weissglass (2005).

Mentors

Dr. Julia Atiles and Nikole Dominique-Maikell

Methods continued

Procedure

STEP 4: Data analysis

The pre and post concept maps were used to determine changes in the participants' thoughts about the topic "Bully" from the beginning to the end of the one month curriculum implementation. Figure 1 is an example of a pre-concept map, and Figure 2 is an example of a post concept map. Together they show the change in complexity from Pre to Post assessments.

Figure 1

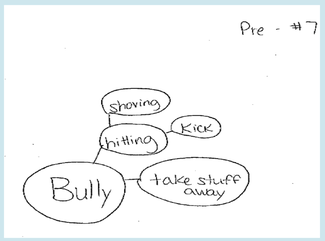
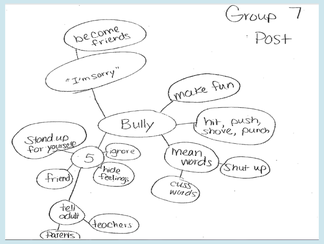


Figure 2



Results

Teachers collected data from eleven small groups of 4-6 children each. Thus a total of 44-66 children participated. An exact number is not known as teachers were asked to not record any identifiable information on the concept maps in order to protect the children.

Changes in the concept map score totals, as well as, the changes in the pre and post Hierarchical Structure Scores (HSS) were analyzed. In order to analyze change in children's knowledge about how to deal with a bully pre- and post- assessments, dependent t-tests were utilized to examine total number of concepts and HSS scores. Results for total concepts indicate a significant increase in children's knowledge [t (10) = -3.39, p < .05] from before training (M = 7.45, SD = 3.21) to after training (M = 11.64, SD = 3.26). Results for HSS scores indicate a significant increase in children's thoughts about how to deal with a bully [t(10) = -2.67, p < .05] from before exposure to the curriculum to (M = 7.64, SD = 3.44) to after exposure to the curriculum (M = 10.00, SD = 2.49). In other words, children had more complexity in their concept maps at the end of the curriculum exposure than before it.

Conclusion

Based on the result of this research study the Travis and Presley's "How to Deal with a Bully" curriculum is an effective way to teach prekindergarten and kindergarten children strategies to dealing with bullies.

References

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