

CAPSLE: Creating a Peaceful School Learning Environment

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Background

- CAPSLE was developed as school-wide intervention to promote a safe educational environment for children and reduce bully-victim-bystander issues
- The intervention is designed to be implemented in elementary school settings

Goals of the Program

- Instill self-esteem, respect and compassion in students by building social and physical skills
- Make students, teachers and parents aware of bully-victim-bystander power dynamics so that they can quickly recognize them
- Give students the tools to deal with conflict in a non-physical manner and teach them more effective coping skills and how to use them.

Components of CAPSLE

- Zero tolerance for bullying, witnessing bullying, and being a victim
- Discipline Plan
- Gentle Warrior Program
- Bruno Program
- Peer Mentorship

Zero Tolerance

- Have everyone at a school involved: students, teachers, administrators, janitors, etc.
 - Make all more aware of coercive power dynamics and give them the skills to deal with them
- There are posters placed around the school that display desirable behaviors to reinforce the program
- Every semester there are open discussions about bullying among students and teachers
- Patches, buttons and other rewards for positive behavior are given to the students

Discipline Plan

- More reward than punishment based
- When an event occurs, the whole class stops and looks at the behavior from the standpoint of the bully, victim, and bystander
 - If a child cannot be managed in a classroom, they are sent to work individually with a school counselor, who also intervenes without discipline
 - If a child still does not respond, they will go to the principal and receive more traditional consequences, or even suspension

Gentle Warrior Program

- Component intended to give children the psychological and physical skills to defend themselves
- Two 12-week training programs each year, and students attend once a week
- The moves taught are not offensive, they are defensive (positioning, blocking, falling safely, etc.)
- The Bushido Code of Conduct is used to emphasize self-respect, self-control and respect for others

Bruno Program

- An adult mentor is placed with a child to help monitor power dynamics in the school
- Mentors come before school, for lunch, for recess and after school and are paired with an honor patrol student to help intervene in conflicts
- The mentors are Brunos that are clearly identified by their t-shirt
 - They provide surveillance and kids can come to them if they have conflicts

Peer Mentorship

- A high school student is assigned to an elementary school child that is likely to benefit from the relationship (as decided by the school)
- The mentor, who has generally had problems in school (i.e. disruptiveness, violence, etc.), and student spend time together weekly at the elementary school
- The mentor has been trained to deal with the child's secrets and physical violence, while also modeling compassion, forgiveness and self-control. Additionally, the mentor and child role-play scenarios that the child may encounter and how to deal with them (ex: how to deal with an uncooperative peer)

Implementation

- The materials for implementing the program are online
 - Training manual for elementary schools
 - Appendix with training information for Bruno's and Peer Mentors, as well as other information for successful implementation
- Once the intervention has begun, it usually becomes stable after 3 years
 - Regular meetings and trainings are required to keep the intervention on track
 - Consultation is available if necessary

Personnel

- The school staff of teachers and administrators should be part of the project. Additionally, custodial staff and lunch room staff should also be trained and aware of the intervention
- Other organizations within the community, and especially parent organizations within the school, should participate to some degree
- Parents also have the opportunity to be involved and can attend a family power struggles workshop

Personnel

- The most critical aspect of this intervention, as identified in the manual, is having a good staff. These people are:
 - Enthusiastic about the intervention
 - Willing to work with other staff members in order for the intervention to succeed
 - Alert and mindful of the situation around them
 - An aid for the vulnerable
 - Willing to be optimistic and see the potential in others

Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco, 2001*

- Two inner-city, low income schools with severe disciplinary issues (ex: fighting that required police assistance)
- One school received the CAPSLE intervention, while the other received a traditional psychiatric consultation model
- Data were collected from 1994 to 1998

*The cited study was published in Shafii & Shafii's *School Violence: Assessment, Management, Prevention* (2001)

Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco, continued

CAPSLE

- Gradual decrease in out-of-school suspensions (to 5%)
- Lowered rates of serious infractions (both aggressive and non-aggressive)
- Academic achievement increased significantly
 - Victims became less withdrawn and less dependent on others for their self-esteem

Non-CAPSLE

- Stable amount of out-of-school suspensions (14-24%)
- No change in the number of serious infractions (both aggressive and non-aggressive)
- Academic achievement did not differ

Fonagy et al., 2009*

- 9 elementary schools were in this study
 - 3 received the CAPSLE intervention
 - 3 received School Psychiatric Consultation (SPC)
 - 3 received “Treatment as Usual” (TAU) – no intervention
- Data were collected for two years, and there was a third year of maintenance

*Fonagy, P., Twemlow, S. W., Vernberg, E. M., Mize Nelson, J., Dill, E. J., Little, T.D., & Sargent, J. A. (2009). A cluster randomized controlled trial of child-focused psychiatric consultation and a school systems-focused intervention to reduce aggression. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 50, 607-616

Fonagy et al., 2009, continued

- CAPSLE worked better than TAU in reducing children's experiences of aggression and victimization
 - SPC had little impact on reducing aggression and victimization
- Aggressive bystanding in the CAPSLE schools declined more than in the SPC or TAU schools
- The CAPSLE school children reported increased empathic mentalization

Pros of CAPSLE

- The program uses a mentalization and power dynamics focus for the whole school, and does not just target problem students
- Teachers, parents and other staff are all trained and should be a part of the program
- Materials for training are available online, and supplemental videos, posters and books are available for order
- Consultation is available if needed

Cons of CAPSLE

- The intervention is only for elementary schools
- Ongoing staff meetings and trainings are needed, as are assemblies for the children
- Full integration of the program into the curriculum is necessary
- Takes a long time to stabilize

Order Information

- To download the CAPSLE manual and appendix, go to:
<http://www.backoffbully.com/Pages/peacefulSchools.html>
- To order CAPSLE supplemental products, go to:
<http://www.backoffbully.com/Pages/school.html>