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INCREDIBLE YEARS PARENTS AND TEACHERS TRAINING SERIES: A HEAD START PARTNERSHIP TO PROMOTE SOCIAL COMPETENCE AND PREVENT CONDUCT PROBLEMS

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Kevin is a 42-year-old White man from the Seattle, Washington, area. He is a truck driver and a parent of two young children, Steven (5 years old) and Ashley (4 years old and in Head Start) from his current marriage, and a 20-year-old daughter from a prior marriage. He recently participated in a 12-week-long parenting group. Before joining the group, he acknowledged that he frequently hit and yelled at his children and that he and his wife argued over how to discipline them. He was very reluctant to participate in a parent group, commenting,

The first night I went I couldn't wait for it to be over. I couldn't imagine continuing for 12 weeks listening to these family service workers who

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were two women I didn't know tell me how to raise my kids, and then there were so many mothers and only two other dads in the group.

However, Kevin was drawn to the parent group by the prospect of the support he would receive. He reflected,

I'm not sure if I was abused or not, but I know I used to go to school with welts, from being hit. My parents had an ironing cord that they cut off an iron and stripped the rubber so it was bare metal. That is what we used to get spanked with. So I was raised with that and, you know, it has an effect on how I raise my kids. I would feel really guilty when I spanked my kids, but I always tried to use my hand. I don't want my kids to grow up and be estranged from me. I'm not close to my parents and I don't want the same for my kids. When I'd feel bad about spanking my kids, I'd yell at my wife. I'd get mad at just about anything anyone did and even blow up at work.

Joella is a 23-year-old, single, African American mother who has two children, Gregory (4 years old and in Head Start) and Tajenique (3 years old). Joella also participated in the parenting group. Before doing so, she was at a loss for how to manage her children, particularly Gregory, who was impulsive, inattentive, hyperactive, and aggressive. She commented,

I told the family service worker, please take my son into Head Start, because I can't manage him. Life was chaos. I would put my kids to bed at 8 p.m., and they still wouldn't be asleep by 12:30. They would need a drink, talk back, fight, and it was a battle. There was nothing I could do to change it. I'd spank them and it didn't make any difference. I thought I was the worst parent in the world. They said they would take my son in Head Start if I attended this class.

Once Ashley and Gregory began Head Start, their teacher made the following observations:

Gregory was very difficult in the class. He was oppositional and aggressive with the other kids, and they didn't want to play with him. He demanded attention and was disruptive at circle time. I was at a loss for how to handle him at first. On the other hand, Ashley was practically invisible, she was withdrawn and fearful and usually by herself during choice times. She did not have any friends and did not have the social skills to play with others. At times it was easy for me to forget her because she never demanded anything.

Ashley and Gregory's teacher not only experienced problems balancing the children's needs for attention and discipline but also wanted support and training so that she could be more proactive in her approach to the children. She reflected,

I rarely have the chance to talk to other teachers or to reflect on my teaching style. In the classroom I just have to react to what the children

bring to me, and this can be very frustrating. Sometimes I don't know how to get through to the kids.

INCREDIBLE YEARS PARTICIPANTS

As is illustrated by these case presentations, parents and teachers of young children, particularly those living or working in poverty situations, are often overwhelmed by the task of parenting or teaching. Parents may be struggling with multiple stressors, such as juggling work schedules, child care, difficult relationships, financial problems, or perhaps overcoming a model of harsh parenting they received from their own parents. Teachers are often faced with overcrowded classrooms, multiple children with special needs, and inadequate training in classroom management. Faced with these difficulties, teachers and parents may feel isolated, helpless, unsupported, and stressed about their ability to nurture and educate the young children who are in their care. Prevention and early intervention programs that strengthen the skills of parents and teachers and encourage home-school partnerships can provide the needed support to prevent the escalation of children's aggressive behavior problems and promote social competence and school readiness in young children.

Unfortunately, the incidence of aggressive behavior problems in young children is escalating (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992). Studies indicate that between 7% and 20% of children meet the diagnostic criteria for oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) or conduct disorder (CD). These rates may be as high as 35% for low-income welfare families (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1998). Research on the prevention and treatment of ODD-CD has been identified as one of the nation's highest priorities (National Institute of Mental Health, 1996). This agenda is important because early onset ODD-CD in preschool children (high rates of oppositional defiant and aggressive behaviors) is stable over time and appears to be the single most important predictor of delinquency, substance abuse, and violence for boys and girls in adolescence (Brook, Whiteman, Gordon, & Cohen, 1986; Dishion & Ray, 1991; Moffitt, 1993; Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989; Yoshikawa, 1994), as well as depression, violent behavior, and school dropout (Kazdin, 1985). Moreover, because conduct disorder becomes increasingly resistant to change over time, prevention efforts should start during the preschool years. Unfortunately, recent projections suggest that fewer than 10% of the children who need mental health services for ODD-CD actually receive them (Kazdin & Kendall, 1998). Fewer than half of those children receive empirically validated interventions (Chambless & Hollon, 1998). Even fewer children receive preventive services or programs targeting promotion of children's social and emotional competence.

Head Start, which enrolls over 800,000 children from low-income families in the United States each year, is an ideal context for implementing empirically validated mental health prevention and early intervention programs. The reason for targeting this socioeconomically disadvantaged population is that family, parenting, and child risk factors related to conduct disorders are present at high rates among low-income families (Offord, 1987; Webster-Stratton, Glascock, & McCarthy, 1986; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1998). In fact, in a recent Head Start study in the Northwest region (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1998), 35% of these families reported three or more major family risk factors (e.g., single parenthood, poverty, depression, life stress, psychiatric illness, parent history of drug abuse, child abuse, spouse abuse). In addition, 40% to 45% of these parents displayed high rates of harsh or physically negative discipline, another key risk factor in the development of children's conduct problems. Recent studies have also indicated rates of ODD and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) as high as 35%, as well as high rates of aggression and poor preliteracy skills in Head Start populations (Jones Harden et al., 2000; Offord, Boyle, & Szatmari, 1987; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1998).

THE INCREDIBLE YEARS' THEORETICAL BASES AND PREDICTOR VARIABLES

To prevent children from progressing on the trajectory from early onset conduct problems to later substance abuse, early intervention and preventive efforts should concentrate on reducing known risk factors and increasing known protective factors related to delinquency and substance abuse. The Incredible Years training series does this by addressing four predictor variables: (a) promoting *parent involvement* by helping parents learn how to be more positive and nurturing in their parenting styles and less harsh or abusive in their discipline approaches; (b) promoting stronger *school bonding* by increasing positive teacher relationships with children and with their parents; (c) increasing children's *social competence*; and (d) promoting children's *self-regulation skills* by teaching teachers and parents to help children learn anger management strategies, problem-solving skills, appropriate social behaviors, and friendly communication. This multifaceted approach to early intervention reduces child risk factors, such as conduct problems, and strengthens the protective factors previously listed that will lay the groundwork for preventing later development of substance abuse and other antisocial behaviors.

Parent training has been recognized as one of the most effective means of preventing and reducing conduct problems (e.g., Brestan & Eyberg, 1998). Although parent education is an important mission of Head Start, few programs have placed an emphasis on the use of comprehensive empirically vali-

dated parenting programs to help promote children's social competence and reduce behavior problems. Head Start family service providers have had little formal training in implementing such evidenced-based programs or in running parent groups. Comprehensive and broadly based parent training programs, such as the Incredible Years program described in this chapter, are an important starting place for reducing conduct problems and promoting social and emotional competence and generally result in clinically significant improvements for approximately two thirds of children with diagnosed ODD. However, research suggests that about one third of diagnosed children whose parents received parent training will continue to experience difficulties at school (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997), which points to the need for teacher training as well as parent training.

In fact, assistance with children's challenging behaviors is the largest training need identified by Head Start administrators and teachers (Busecmi, Bennett, Thomas, & Deluca, 1996; Yoshikawa & Zigler, 2000). Fewer than 50% of Head Start teachers have college degrees in child development, education, or related fields, and very few have had training in behavior management or ways to promote social and emotional competence (Scott & Nelson, 1999). The importance of teacher training is emphasized by the clear consensus among child development experts (Bear, Webster-Stratton, Furlong, & Rhee, 2000) that the essence of a successful preschool resides in the quality of the child-teacher relationship and the abilities of teachers to provide a positive, consistent, predictable, and responsive environment.

THE INCREDIBLE YEARS MODEL

The Incredible Years group-based parent, teacher, and child training programs have been empirically validated in randomized control group studies for use as treatment programs for 3- to 8-year-old children with conduct problems (Brestan & Eyberg, 1998; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2004), as well as for prevention programs with high-risk populations (Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2001). Each program consists of over 200 videotaped vignettes of common situations faced by children, parents, or teachers. The vignettes show effective and ineffective ways of handling these situations and provide the framework for group discussions on how to handle common problems. In addition to the vignettes, each program contains detailed group-leader manuals with session-by-session checklists, group-leader scripts, program "principles" to highlight, homework materials, books, and practice activities. Although each of the programs is manualized, and strict adherence to intervention protocol is important, leaders are trained in a collaborative and problem-solving process that stresses the key therapeutic principles of using the particular goals, issues, and circumstances of each group member to tailor the curriculum to the particular context of each family,

classroom, and goals for a child. (For a detailed description of the collaborative process, see Webster-Stratton & Herbert, 1994.)

Videotape Modeling

The teacher and parent programs rely heavily on videotape modeling as a therapeutic method. Videotape vignettes are presented that show teachers or parents and children of different sexes, ages, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, temperamental styles, and developmental abilities. For the teacher training program, teachers and children are shown in their classrooms in unrehearsed situations, during circle time, work time, transition time, and free play. For the parent training program, vignettes are shown of parents and children at home during dinner, at bedtime, or during play interactions. Children in the scenes are shown responding in a variety of ways—some are engaged and compliant, some defiant and aggressive. Scenes depict parents and teachers with a variety of teaching styles and skill levels using many different teaching strategies. The intent in showing negative as well as positive examples is to demystify the notion of “perfect teaching or parenting” and to illustrate how teachers or parents can learn from analyzing their interactions. The videotapes are used as a catalyst to stimulate group discussion, role-plays, and problem solving, with the group leader ensuring that the discussion addresses the intended topic and is understood by the participants. The goal is to have participants grasp the intended concept, and also to have them become actively involved in problem solving and sharing ideas about the vignette.

Practice and Rehearsal

Practice of newly acquired behaviors has been shown to be effective in producing behavioral changes (Twentyman & McFall, 1975). Role-plays help teachers and parents integrate new skills into their repertoires and provide a way for them to illustrate particular situations or problems in their classrooms or homes. The group leader or trainer can help to “freeze frame” the role-play and ask the group questions such as, “Now what should she do?” or “What is the child trying to say by behaving like that?” Next the group can try out some of the proposed strategies, with some of them acting the role of children and others the role of teacher or parent.

Homework Assignments

Between training sessions, teachers and parents are given reading and hands-on assignments to try the new strategies. The assignments help transfer the training material to real life. They also serve as a stimulus for discussion at the subsequent session. Moreover, assignments convey the critical

message that sitting passively in the group is not “magic moon dust”; teachers and parents must collaborate with the group leader by trying strategies in their settings.

Session Evaluations

At the end of each training session, participants complete a brief evaluation form. This provides the leaders immediate feedback about how each participant is responding to the group. When a participant is dissatisfied or is having trouble with a concept, the group leader calls to resolve the issue or, if the difficulty is shared by others, brings it up in a subsequent session.

Individual Behavior Planning Meetings

During the teacher training workshops, teachers break into groups to develop behavior plans for the children whom they have identified as having behavioral difficulties. They complete a functional analysis of the target child to understand the time, setting, antecedents, and consequences of the misbehavior. They target positive behaviors to encourage and set up incentives and their discipline responses to the misbehavior. Teachers are encouraged to share and collaborate with parents on this plan. In the parent groups, parents identify child behaviors they want to increase as well as those they want to decrease. They learn how to apply the management principles they are learning to achieve these goals and the importance of collaborating with teachers to promote consistency in behavior plans from home to school.

THE INCREDIBLE YEARS PARENT PROGRAM AS IMPLEMENTED FOR THE PREDICTOR VARIABLES INITIATIVE

Leader Training and Supervision

Head Start family service workers (FSWs) received a standard 4-day workshop covering the content, methods, and processes of delivering the parent curriculum. The FSWs co-led their first groups with a certified parent group leader (from the Incredible Years staff). To promote program fidelity, group leaders followed a comprehensive manual and session protocols that specified the content of each session, the videotape vignette to be shown, questions to be explored, recommended role-plays, and homework practice assignments. Ongoing technical support, peer review, and trainer supervision were provided weekly. More details of the parenting program and supervision process have been described elsewhere (Webster-Stratton, 1992; Webster-Stratton & Hancock, 1998).

Content of Parent Program

The basic 12- to 14-week parent program (each session 2.5 hours) was offered to groups of 10 to 16 Head Start parents. The basic program consists of topics including (a) building relationships through child-directed play interactions; (b) ways to promote children's emotional regulation and social competence; (c) the importance of encouragement, praise, and tangible reinforcement; and (d) effective discipline through monitoring, ignoring, limit setting, natural and logical consequences, time-out, and problem solving. In addition to learning cognitive-behavioral and child development principles, parents are helped to understand and accept individual differences in their children's temperament and development, as well as how their child's unique "wiring" will determine particular parenting approaches.

In the fall of the kindergarten year, follow-up parent groups were held that included an abbreviated version of the Incredible Years Advance and School Age parent programs. Topics included ways parents can foster their child's positive peer social skills and friendships, approaches for collaborating and communicating with teachers, ways to strengthen children's academic competence, family communication, and effective problem solving for adults and children. These topics were offered in four weekly sessions lasting 2 hours. Makeup sessions in homes were offered to parents who were unable to attend groups, in accordance with Incredible Years protocol. The specific content of the parent curriculum is described in *The Incredible Years: A Trouble-Shooting Guide for Parents of Children Ages 3–8 Years* (Webster-Stratton, 1992). (For tables of objectives for programs, see <http://www.incredibleyears.com>.)

Parents were assigned homework. For example, Joella experienced success using a sticker chart at home to encourage Gregory to share with his younger sister. She gave Gregory a bonus sticker each time he brought home a positive note from his teacher. In the beginning, Kevin did not see the relevance of the homework assignment to play with his children, and he frequently interrupted the group to ask about discipline. At first he did not do the play homework, commenting,

My idea of play was different than the group leaders. One time I had to build some stairs, so I let my children hold my tools and help me, and that was my plan for play. I thought I would get ragged on by the group leaders about not playing. But they said that was good, and that I could just have my kids around me. They said my time with my kids was more important than a particular activity. My kids liked being with me and watching and asked me questions.

On the fourth session, he came back talking about playing with his children that week being one of the best things that had happened to him. He said his parents had never played with him and that there were no "fun"

times in his family. He commented that he did not realize its importance for his children or their relationship with him. He began to take his children on outings and even took some of the other children whose parents were in the group.

In the kindergarten year, Kevin not only attended the follow-up kindergarten group but also helped in a Head Start group as a parent co-leader. He proudly talked about the positive changes in his children and in himself and encouraged parents to do the play homework.

I like having the chance to tell other parents, especially other dads, to take time to do things with their children. They might not realize at first how much this can change their relationship with their children, but after a while they see that it helps. My children are doing really well in elementary school, and I feel like it's partly because I'm more involved with them.

THE INCREDIBLE YEARS TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM AS IMPLEMENTED FOR THE PREDICTOR VARIABLES INITIATIVE

The teacher training program was offered to teachers in 6 full-day workshops held monthly from November to April (approximately 42 hours of training). The program was designed with the broad goals of (a) strengthening teachers' positive classroom management and promoting positive relationships with difficult students; (b) increasing home-school collaboration and bonding and parent involvement in the classroom; (c) promoting child social competence, emotion regulation, and academic skills; and (d) decreasing child conduct problems in the classroom. Trained leaders led teachers in a discussion of the particular learning needs of children with biological deficits, such as ADHD or developmental delays, so that they could think about the relevance of these issues to their interactions with the children in their classes.

The following is an outline of the topics covered in the classroom management program and some of the key principles that our leaders use when leading teacher workshops. An in-depth description of classroom management concepts, scripts for parent-teacher meetings, and sample materials can be found in *How to Promote Children's Social and Emotional Competence*, a book written for teachers by Webster-Stratton (2000) that was used as a text for the teacher training workshops.

Working With Parents—A Partnership

The teacher training curriculum begins with teachers generating a list of ways to promote parent involvement, for example, calling to introduce

themselves to the children and parents, sending welcome letters and newsletters, inviting parents to open houses, explaining classroom policies, inviting parents to help in the classroom, and sending positive notes home. The more parents know about what is going on at school, the more connected they will feel to the teacher and classroom. Forming strong school bonds is particularly important for students with a history of behavior problems. Once a positive relationship is established between teachers and parents, teachers find it is easier to address later problems and concerns that may arise. The core of successful teacher collaboration with families involves contacting parents at the first sign that a child is having an academic or social difficulty. By involving parents early in the planning, teachers may discover family circumstances that are contributing to a child's difficult behavior, or they may gain valuable insights from parents about how to manage a particular behavior. At the very least, they will have included the parent in the problem-solving process before the situation has escalated into a serious problem. The training is designed to help teachers feel comfortable with the process of working collaboratively with parents to develop behavior plans for their children.

Gregory and Ashley's teacher welcomed the chance to collaborate with parents. She commented,

Being part of this project broke down the isolation for these parents. Kevin and Joella felt more free to come into the classroom and to talk with us about their kids. I was able to work with both of them to develop a plan that was consistent between home and school. We also had a larger turn out at regular center meetings as a result of the parents' participation in the parent groups. These groups even brought out the dads to our evening meetings.

Kevin appreciated being encouraged to participate in his daughter's schooling, saying,

I don't think I had talked to Ashley's teacher before I started the parenting class. It changed the way I looked at Head Start and schools. I don't know if I integrated myself into my children's school, or I integrated their school into me. I'm looking forward to being involved in their schools, which is something I never thought about before. I hardly ever got any encouragement from my parents to go to school, so school was a place I had to go. I want my children to enjoy school more. Now I realize schools want parental involvement.

Building Positive Relationships With Students

The next component of the training program emphasizes the importance of building trusting and warm teacher-student relationships. Perhaps the most obvious reason for teachers to develop meaningful relationships

with students is that a positive teacher–student relationship built on trust, understanding, and caring will foster students’ cooperation, motivation, learning, and achievement at school. Relationship building between teachers and students is important for all students, but it is vital for those students who are most aggressive, noncompliant, shy, withdrawn, or depressed. During training workshops, teachers are supported to make persistent efforts to engage the most difficult students. Part of the training with teachers in developing warm and caring relationships with their students involves training the teachers to use child-directed play and coaching skills that involve descriptive commenting. Descriptive commenting builds the teacher–student bond by providing nonjudgmental attention to children. It can also reinforce academic concepts (e.g., numbers, colors, sizes), study skills (e.g., concentrating, working hard), social skills (e.g., waiting, asking politely, taking turns, sharing, helping), and feeling states (e.g., feeling calm, frustrated, happy). This approach has been shown to build children’s expressive language skills, attention span, feeling vocabulary, social skills, and emotional regulatory skills.

Proactive Teaching

During training, teachers discuss the kinds of classroom conditions that are likely to produce disruptive or disengaged behaviors and ways to take *proactive* steps to prevent them. Research has shown that proactive teachers structure the classroom environment and the school day in ways that make problem behaviors less likely to occur (Doyle, 1990; Gettinger, 1988; Good & Brophy, 1994). They establish schedules, routines, predictable transitions, classroom rules, consistent limit setting, and norms of behavior that help students know what to expect. The training focuses on these topics and helps teachers to share proactive strategies they have used successfully in the classroom.

For Gregory, who had a short attention span and difficulty staying still, the plan included allowing him legitimate opportunities to move about during circle time, such as asking him to come to the front to demonstrate a skill or pass materials out to other children. It was also decided that if he left circle time and wandered the room, he would be given no teacher attention until he came back to sit down. In addition, his teacher decided that many children in her class could benefit from more active learning, and she began using more songs and movement to teach new concepts. For Ashley, who rarely put her hand up to answer questions and was reluctant to participate in discussions, the plan included calling on her by name and also providing her with opportunities to participate without having to say anything. Teachers also spent time scaffolding or coaching her play any time she was interacting with other children so as to strengthen her social skills and confidence when interacting with her peers.

Gregory and Ashley's teacher said,

This was a chance to get support and ideas from other teachers and to be more proactive. I tried all the things we learned, and they really worked in my classroom. I do compliment circle now every day with a puppet named Freddy and feel so much more positive with the kids. Also understanding the parents and their particular circumstances and involving them in the planning for their children's learning needs helped me to develop a closer relationship with the whole family.

Promoting Social Competence: Praise and Attention

The quality of the teacher's attention emerges as one of the most important factors in helping students become motivated and successful learners. Consistent and meaningful encouragement and praise from a teacher nurtures and increases children's academic and social competence. Children who are praised are self-confident, have high self-esteem, and seem to internalize these early messages so as not to need them in the future (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). When teachers use their attention selectively to reinforce positive behavior (while ignoring inappropriate behavior), they see a dramatic impact on the behavior of targeted children as well as on the rest of the children in the classroom. During workshops, teachers brainstorm different ways to encourage and praise individual students, targeting prosocial behaviors they want to encourage, labeling their praise, and being genuine and warm in their interactions.

Ashley's teachers made a special effort to notice and praise her for speaking up, both with peers and teachers. They noticed that, at first, Ashley seemed overwhelmed by public recognition and would withdraw when they praised her behavior in front of other people. Consequently, they used a variety of ways to acknowledge her participation. Sometimes they caught her eye and smiled, other times they gave her a "thumbs-up" or a pat on the shoulder. They also praised her indirectly by commenting to each other about her positive behaviors when she was in hearing distance. As Ashley became comfortable with this attention, the teachers began to praise her more publicly and directly. After several weeks they noticed that, although she was still shy and rarely initiated interactions, she was much more willing to respond to questions and overtures from others. She also began to smile in response to the teachers' attention instead of appearing uncomfortable and embarrassed.

Using Incentives

When students have difficulty with a particular social behavior or area of academic learning, praise and attention may not be enough to motivate them. Learning to read, write, and behave in socially appropriate ways are difficult processes for some children, especially for those with developmental

delays or disadvantaged family situations. At times, tangible rewards can provide the extra incentive needed to encourage a child to attempt a difficult learning area. Stickers, special rewards or privileges, and celebrations give students concrete evidence of their progress. These tangible incentives are always paired with social approval from the teacher. The training workshops help teachers to develop plans using incentives that will help to motivate children who are struggling with particular issues.

Gregory was frequently aggressive toward other children during recess or free choice time. This most often occurred over a toy that both children wanted to play with. The behavior plan developed by the teacher included watching for times when Gregory waited and stayed calm during a frustrating situation as well as when he shared with another child. When the teacher noticed these behaviors, she gave Gregory “cool dude” bands or loops to wear on his wrist. When Gregory earned 10 bands, the whole class got to sing a favorite song during the closing circle for the day. In this way the whole classroom was invested in Gregory’s success at staying calm.

The teacher had a conference with Gregory’s mother to include her in the plan. Together they decided that each time Gregory earned his goal, the teacher would send home a special note with a sticker that said “I can stay calm.” At first, the teachers needed to monitor Gregory closely so that they could prompt him to stay calm or share even before he had a chance to become aggressive. Gregory was quite motivated by the “cool dude” loops and, with teacher assistance, was able to begin to use words instead of hitting when he wanted a toy. As his aggressive behaviors decreased and his prosocial behaviors increased, the teachers challenged him to earn 20 loops to earn his reward. Eventually, they phased out the loops and merely praised Gregory each time they saw him behaving calmly.

Managing Misbehavior

Even with the best proactive classroom management, misbehavior still occurs. A discipline plan that clearly spells out rules, expectations, and consequences is fundamental to successful management of disruptive behaviors. In the discipline plan developed by the teachers, consequences are organized in a hierarchy from the least disruptive intervention to the most disruptive. For example, lower level annoying behaviors that are not dangerous or too disruptive are usually ignored or the child is redirected to a more appropriate activity. For behaviors that cannot be ignored, the teacher might first give a verbal warning, then withdraw a privilege, next a time-out may be given, and finally the child misses recess. By making sure that students are familiar with the discipline plan and understand the consequences, the proactive teacher ensures that students know exactly how misbehavior will be handled. The consistency of the teacher’s follow-through with this discipline plan increases children’s sense of security.

Ignoring Misbehavior and Using Redirection

Videotapes shown during the workshops show how minor inappropriate or low-level attention-seeking behaviors such as whining, teasing, arguing, eye rolling, pouting, calling out, and tantrums (i.e., behaviors that are not dangerous or hurtful to other children or adults) can often be eliminated if they are systematically ignored. Teachers learn that by ignoring inappropriate behavior they remove the payoff for children to continue these behaviors, especially if praise and encouragement are given for the opposite prosocial behaviors.

Gregory frequently called out answers during circle time. The teachers decided simply to ignore these responses and make a point of calling only on children who had their hands raised. They used verbal reminders to the whole class, "I'm going to call on a child who has a quiet hand up," to make their expectations clear. They also made a point to prompt Gregory to raise his hand (e.g., "Gregory, I know you have something to say, and if you raise a quiet hand, I can call on you") and called on him when he remembered to raise his hand before speaking.

Natural and Logical Consequences

There are times when misbehavior needs a negative consequence such as removal of a privilege or time-out. Videotape examples are shown so that teachers can see that consequences do not have to be severe to be effective. The key is consistency, not severity. Whenever possible, consequences are presented by teachers as a choice the child has made. For example, "You didn't share those blocks when I asked. That means you've chosen to play in another area today."

Time-Out

The student who displays physical aggression (e.g., hitting a child or teacher, pushing over furniture) cannot be ignored and needs to experience a different consequence. The task for teachers is to use discipline that teaches students that violent behaviors will not be tolerated, establishes positive expectations for future appropriate behavior, and conveys to students that they are valued despite their mistakes. Ideally this discipline plan should be a *whole-school plan* and not just an individual teacher classroom concern. A time-out or calm-down strategy is reserved specifically for high-intensity problems, such as aggression toward peers or teachers and destructive behavior. Time-out can occur in the classroom as a cool-off time, or it can involve temporary removal from the classroom to another classroom or a specially designated area in the school. Time-out is successful only when positive teacher-child relationships have been established and when being involved in classroom activities is rewarding.

Although the teachers were rewarding Gregory when he was able to stay calm in peer interactions, initially he continued to show high levels of aggressive behavior when he was not closely monitored. The teachers decided they would use time-out for times when he was clearly violent or aggressive toward another child. It was not to be used for minor poking or running into someone accidentally or for times he left the circle time. Because the teachers had not used time-out before, they began by using a puppet during circle time to teach the students about the rule of “hands to self” and the consequences of hitting. The children practiced going to time-out and staying calm. Students were also taught that the best way to help a friend in time-out was to ignore and wait until the child in time-out calmed down and returned to the group. In the parenting group, Joella, Gregory’s mother, had also learned to use time-out for Gregory’s hitting. She said that this helped both Gregory and herself to calm down.

I used to get so mad at him for hitting his sister. Now I get him to go to the time-out chair, and what I do is give myself mental time-out. I go sit down and not talk and take some deep breaths.

When problems occur, it is important to keep parents informed of the steps that are being taken to work out the problem at school and to enlist the parents’ help. However, it is not recommended that the teacher send negative notes home to the parent, rather a phone call from the teacher or meeting to discuss the problem personally with a parent is preferable. Moreover, physical restraint, sending the child to the principal’s office, and at-home suspensions for misbehaviors are to be avoided because of the attention focused on the negative behavior.

Moving Beyond Discipline: Repair and Rebuild

Children who are impulsive, oppositional, inattentive, and aggressive will need constant teacher monitoring or scaffolding. This means giving re-direction, warnings, reminders, and consistent follow-through with consequences. One of the hardest and most important things for a teacher to do when teaching a disruptive student is to move beyond discipline to repair and rebuild positive teacher–student relationships. This means not holding on to grudges after consequences have been implemented, welcoming students back as accepted and valued members of the class each day, and continuing to teach them more effective ways of problem solving. It means a philosophy of taking one day at a time, allowing the student a new learning opportunity or fresh start each day, and practicing forgiveness. So, instead of saying, “I hope today is not going to be like yesterday,” the teacher encourages the child and predicts a successful day: “I’m glad to see you. Today is a chance to learn something new.”

Moving to Self-Management

A central feature of children with behavior problems is the absence of self-management and regulation skills. They have difficulty evaluating their own behavior and are likely to perceive the behavior of others as hostile, even when it is not. Difficult and aggressive students will initially need tight external management and consistent discipline to keep their behavior under control. However, the eventual goal is to shift away from teacher management to student self-management skills. This allows students to become less dependent on teachers to provide direction and incentives for their behavior. Such interventions have the potential for producing more durable and generalizable behavior gains in situations outside the classroom.

Self-management interventions generally involve a variety of strategies to help children self-evaluate and self-reinforce their own behavior. For example, teachers are encouraged to invite children to reflect on how they did that day. For a child with poor language skills, a teacher might use a scale or thermometer showing the range from calm to overexcited and ask the child to point to how active or on-task the child thought he or she was during certain times. This gives the teacher an opportunity to provide specific feedback on the accuracy of children's self-perceptions or to help them remember times when they were successful. Often children with behavior problems will focus on their mistakes. By reviewing positive aspects of the child's day, the teacher can help the child to gain more positive attributions. Young children are frequently disappointed when they are not called on or do not get what they want. Self-management interventions also include teaching children strategies for coping with disappointment.

Gregory was disappointed when he was not called on to give an answer in class or if he did not get a turn to help the teacher demonstrate an activity. This disappointment manifested itself in pouting, whining, and tantruming. His teachers decided to provide the whole class with an appropriate way to voice disappointment. They taught the children to say "maybe next time" each time they were frustrated or disappointed. At first teachers predicted disappointment and cued the use of the strategy, "I know some of you might be feeling disappointed. Remember you can say 'maybe next time.'" Children who used the strategy were praised, "Wow! I know Gregory was disappointed that he didn't get to come up here, but he just said 'maybe next time.' I'm so proud of him." Soon most of the children in the class, including Gregory, were able to remember this strategy without teacher prompting. In effect, this taught them to modify their negative emotions and substitute a more positive coping strategy.

Social-Emotional Curriculum

Teaching Students to Problem Solve

Young children often react to their problems in ineffective ways. Teachers have a key role in teaching children who are aggressive and impulsive to

think of more prosocial solutions to their problems and to evaluate which solutions are better choices and more likely to lead to positive consequences than others. In essence, these high-risk students are provided with strategies that correct the flaws in their decision-making process and reduce their risk of peer relationship problems. The training workshops show teachers how they can incorporate specific problem-solving lessons into their curriculum, provide students with opportunities to practice these new skills in small-group activities, and promote newly learned skills throughout the day (on the playground and in the classroom). They are encouraged to use puppets, games, live role-plays, books, and other creative and fun ways to teach children specific problem-solving steps.

Feelings and Emotional Regulation

Before students can effectively problem solve, they need to be able to recognize and regulate their own emotional responses. During training sessions, teachers discuss how to help students think differently about why an event occurred, recognize and talk about their own feelings, read feeling cues in others, and use self-talk and relaxation strategies to keep themselves calm. Teachers also act as powerful models for students by remaining calm and nonaggressive in response to the negative classroom behavior.

Gregory was aggressive and frequently angry. He seemed to have no feeling language except anger, so the teachers decided to give attention to and label his other feelings so he would become aware of them. Times when he appeared calm, happy, excited, caring, and even frustrated were labeled, and less attention was given to his angry outbursts or angry words and more attention to his positive emotions.

With Ashley, teachers focused on helping her to express feelings of discomfort to other children. For example, if another child took a toy that Ashley was using, she passively accepted the outcome. The teachers encouraged her to use words to say, "It makes me sad when you take my toys." Then if the child responded positively, Ashley was prompted to let the child know that she liked it when the child listened to her. The teachers also labeled other feelings for Ashley, such as shy, happy, embarrassed, or pleased. As Ashley began to interact more in the class, she also began to use some of the feeling words to describe her emotions.

Promoting Friendship Skills

Few teachers need to be convinced that friendships are important for children. Through the successful formation of friendships, children learn social skills such as cooperation, sharing, and conflict management. Friendships also foster a child's sense of group belonging and begin to facilitate children's empathy skills. The teacher training covers the importance of specifically teaching children skills such as how to initiate a peer interaction

and enter a group, make a suggestion, wait for a turn, give a compliment, share, trade, and use words to ask for something.

Ashley rarely interacted with other children. Teachers watched for times when other children played near her and then coached her interactions by commenting on sharing, helping, and their enjoyment of each other. Because the children also enjoyed playing with the teachers, the teachers placed themselves near Ashley during some of the free choice times. When other children came over to play in the area, the teachers could facilitate interaction with Ashley.

FINDINGS FROM THE PREDICTOR VARIABLES INITIATIVE

Head Start classrooms were randomly assigned to receive the parent and teacher interventions or to receive usual Head Start services. Results indicated that compared with control teachers and parents, those who received this training used more praise and less criticism with children and used more positive discipline and fewer negative discipline strategies to manage misbehavior. Students whose teachers and parents received training were more compliant and prosocial at home, more engaged in classroom activities, and had greater school readiness than control students (Webster-Stratton et al., 2001). Compared with control students, intervention children who initially showed high levels of conduct problems at home and school showed reduced levels of these problems after the parent and teacher training. Thus, the Incredible Years programs had the desired effect of reducing key risk factors for substance abuse (critical parenting and teaching and disruptive child behavior) and improving key protective factors (parent involvement and school bonding and child self-regulation and social competence). The results of this study show that school prevention programs can be successfully delivered in schools and have the capacity for preventing the heartbreaking negative consequences of children's aggression, for themselves and for society.

HINTS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Parent and Teacher Engagement

Engaging the teachers and parents in their respective training programs was a multipronged process. We began laying the groundwork for the training at least 6 months before the actual training began. Meetings were held with administrators, education and family service coordinators, teachers, and parents to listen to their concerns for their school, classrooms, and children in general, and for particularly challenging students. Logistical support, such as release time for teachers to attend trainings, adequate space for the trainings,

and arrangement for day care during the parent groups were all discussed and arranged with administrators and other Head Start staff. To motivate teachers and parents to attend these workshops, we offered teachers university credits as well as lunches and surprise rewards for doing the assignments (e.g., books for their classrooms). Parents were offered dinners, day care, and surprise rewards for completing the homework. Between training sessions, group leaders–trainers called parents, and teachers were called to check in about their progress with the material.

Training as Collaboration

Our training model for working with teachers and parents is active and collaborative. In this model, the group leader or trainer does not set him- or herself up as an expert dispensing advice about how teachers should teach or parents should parent more effectively. Collaboration implies a reciprocal relationship based on using equally the group leaders' and the teachers' or parents' knowledge, strengths, and perspectives. The collaborative group leader actively solicits the teachers' and parents' ideas and feelings, learns about their classroom or home context, and involves them in the learning process by inviting them to share experiences, discuss ideas, and engage in problem solving. Collaboration implies that participants actively help in setting goals and the training agenda.

Another aspect of the collaborative group leader's job is working with teachers or parents to adapt concepts and skills to their particular circumstances. A collaborative group leader works to process different theoretical frameworks and to help each teacher or parent to use the principles in a way that is consistent with his or her beliefs. For example, one of the teachers in Ashley's classroom, Ms. Wilson, believed that giving children tangible rewards lowered their intrinsic motivation. Although tangible reinforcement is an important part of the classroom management curriculum, the trainer operated from the assumption that this teacher had legitimate grounds for resisting this aspect of the training. The trainer explored alternative ways that Ms. Wilson provided students with positive feedback. It turned out that she did not object to tangible rewards, per se, but did not want to single out one child for a reward. She was happy to use rewards as long as every child in the classroom had the opportunity to earn one. She was also comfortable with the idea of children earning classroom privileges and agreed to use these for individual behavior plans for children who needed an extra incentive to manage difficult behaviors.

Training Groups as Support Systems

Teachers and parents report to us that they often feel isolated as they struggle with day-to-day management problems, often without other adults

to share the burden of the hundreds of decisions that they make each day. The essential goal of collaborative training is to empower teachers and parents so that they feel confident about their skills and their ability to respond to new situations that may arise. It also reminds them that they have powerful supports in other teachers or parents and encourages them to make continued use of these links between training sessions. In the training, participants collaborate in problem solving, express their appreciation for each other, and cheer each other's successes. They also share their feelings of guilt, anger, and depression, as well as experiences that involve their own mistakes or misbehavior from their students. These discussions serve as a powerful source of support. Through this sharing of feelings and experiences, commonality is discovered. Feelings of isolation decrease, and teachers and parents are empowered by the knowledge that they are not alone in their struggles.

CONCLUSION

After our Incredible Years implementation, one of the Head Start family service providers gave this feedback:

This project helped to build an incredible partnership between the school and the families. Our families have learned what partnership and community is all about. It was a wonderful experience. It was a time to bond with the community. The bonding between parents was great. We had moms and dads—and at the end, even the dads hugged each other. The shy parents were also more talkative. Those parents who spoke different languages could communicate with each other because we had translators at the groups. Our group had Vietnamese, Chinese, and Spanish translators, so for the first time the parents could talk with each other. They discovered they had many common goals and family experiences. The success of my first group motivated me to do more groups. Next year I'll start recruiting parents from the first day of enrollment. It's worth the work.

Seconding this view, the Head Start education coordinator said,

Since we have started working with this program, I get fewer referrals for behavioral issues from the classrooms where we offer the programs. I also have fewer requests for help from those teachers who received the training. The staff and parents work more closely to develop individual behavior plans for each child.

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