
A Teacher-Focused Approach to Prevent and Reduce Students' Aggressive Behavior

The GREAT Teacher Program

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to describe the GREAT (Guiding Responsibility and Expectations for Adolescents for Today and Tomorrow) Teacher Program, a prevention program for middle school teachers to deter students' aggressive behavior. It was developed on the basis of an ecologic understanding of aggression and on specific constructs of Social Cognitive Theory. The goals of the program were (1) to increase teacher awareness of different types of aggression, risk factors, role of the classroom teacher, and influence of the school climate on the child's behavior; (2) to develop strategies that will prevent aggression; (3) to improve teacher management skills to reduce power struggles and aggression; and (4) to enhance skills to assist students who are the targets of aggression. To accomplish these goals, teachers participated in a 12-hour workshop and 10 support group sessions. Training, manuals, and supervision were provided to maintain program integrity and to assure the quality of implementation. (Am J Prev Med 2004;26(1S):29–38)

Introduction

During the past decades, schools have implemented prevention programs to reduce aggression in schools and to increase academic performance. The majority of these programs implement a student curriculum that is taught by a teacher or by a violence prevention specialist, such as Responding In Peaceful and Positive Ways,¹ the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program,² and Second Step.³ At the middle school level, few programs have been specifically designed to reduce aggression by modifying the school environment through increased recognition and control of the problem by teachers.⁴

Programs specific to training middle school teachers are crucial. First, teachers are often involved in implementing aggression-prevention programs, and their knowledge and self-efficacy about prevention strategies, and their attitudes and beliefs about aggression, may be important determinants of the quality of implementation.⁵ Teachers' personal involvement with aggression-prevention programs and the commitment from the school may also be associated with how frequently programs are implemented. In one middle school study, students who received more aggression-prevention lessons from their teachers were less likely to

endorse aggressive behaviors than were students receiving fewer lessons from their teachers.⁶ This difference in implementation could be due to a stronger commitment from teachers. Second, student aggression is not an isolated event. It occurs in a context that involves peers, teachers, administrators, and, in general, characteristics of the school environment. Modifying the school environment, including teachers' attitudes and behaviors, may be an important factor to consider in reducing aggression. On occasions, teachers who victimize students in the name of discipline may contribute to student aggression.⁷ Most frequently, teachers can play a fundamental role in preventing bullying behavior.^{8,9} Third, students are not the only victims of aggression. Results from a national survey of public school teachers conducted in the 1999–2000 academic year indicated that almost 10% of teachers had been threatened with injury, and 4% had been physically attacked by a student during the 12 months preceding the survey.¹⁰ In other words, almost 300,000 teachers are threatened and more than 125,000 are attacked each year. Fourth, helping students develop their social skills will also aid them with their academic skills. Students' lack of social competence and aggression is directly associated with low academic achievement.¹¹ In addition, teachers frequently report that their students' disruptive behaviors keep them from teaching effectively.^{10,12} Thus, it is important for teachers to help students enhance their social skills. Finally, teachers often suffer from stress when trying to manage aggressive and disruptive students, which can lead to burnout and abandonment of the profession. Teachers frequently

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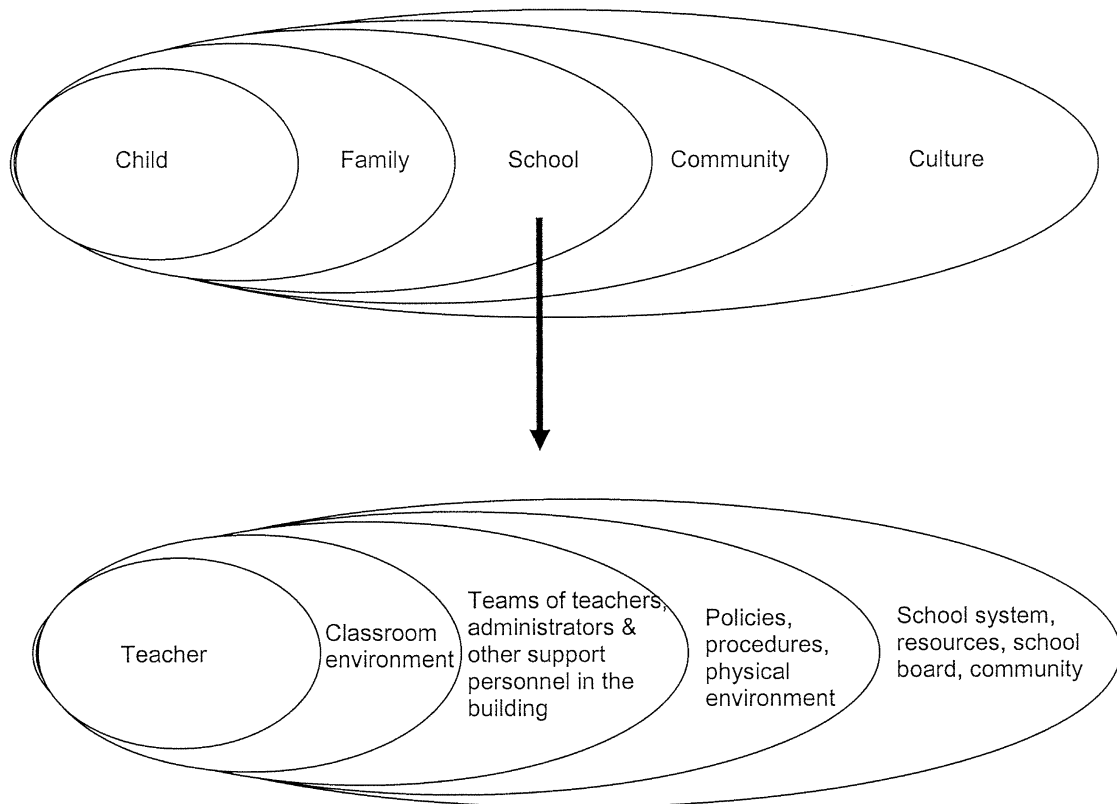


Figure 1. Ecologic model used to explain the interplay of personal, sociocultural, policy, and physical-environmental factors that may be associated with aggression.

express the need for more training to successfully handle students' behavioral problems.¹³

Considering how important teachers are in creating a positive school climate, one of the key components of the Multisite Violence Prevention Project is the GREAT (Guiding Responsibility and Expectations for Adolescents for Today and Tomorrow) Teacher Program, which incorporates state-of-the-art knowledge in teacher training for aggression prevention. The goals of the GREAT Teacher Program are to increase teacher awareness of the problem of aggression in middle school schools, to reduce tolerance of aggression and bullying, to provide assistance to students who are the targets of aggression, to develop strategies to prevent aggression from occurring, and to improve teachers' management of aggressive behaviors when they do occur. The purpose of this paper is to describe the GREAT Teacher Program. This paper is composed of four sections. In the first section, the theoretical foundation of the program is examined. In the second section, previous programs that this program builds on are analyzed. The third section presents a detailed description of the different components of the program, and, finally, the last section discusses specific issues related to training, implementation, and supervision.

Theoretical Background of the GREAT Teacher Program

The GREAT Teacher Program is based on an ecologic model used to explain the interplay of personal, socio-cultural, policy, and physical-environmental factors that may be associated with aggression.¹⁴ This multilevel approach, depicted in Figure 1, is used to describe the problem and to determine the array of interventions that are necessary to prevent and reduce aggression. The problem of school aggression, as well as its solution, is conceptualized to be a function of contributions from several different levels of influence (top section of Figure 1). Although the GREAT Student Program¹⁵ focuses on the behaviors and cognitions of students and how they interact with their peers and teachers, and the GREAT Families Program¹⁶ focuses on the students' families, the GREAT Teacher Program focuses on the teachers and the school environment. Within the school, another ecologic model can be described, as presented in the bottom section of Figure 1. The model reflects the multiple factors within the school that may influence the problem and the feasibility of possible solutions. This model does not intend to minimize the factors outside the school setting that play a role in a teacher's ability to perform. However, it does focus on

Table 1. Social cognitive constructs used in the GREAT Teacher Program

SCT constructs	Definition	Examples of applications
Behavioral capability	Teachers' knowledge and skills to prevent and reduce aggression.	Teachers practice verbal and behavioral responses to de-escalate power struggles and discuss classroom organization strategies that minimize the opportunities for aggression.
Self-efficacy	Teachers' confidence in their ability to prevent aggression and to manage power struggles.	Role-playing and small-group meetings are used to brainstorm and practice strategies that will increase the probability of success and, therefore, confidence.
Outcome expectations	Teachers' expectations that all students can perform academically and behave according to classroom rules.	Management of difficult students is discussed in small groups. Teachers develop creative strategies that will increase the probability of success among all students. Teachers analyze the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behavior and how negative thoughts about students may lead to negative expectations.
Emotional coping responses	Strategies used by teachers to transform their negative feelings toward students or situations into constructive ones.	Teachers apply a solution-focused approach to distinguish between problems they can solve and those that are out of their realm of influence; to distinguish between strategies that are helping to solve the problem and those that are not; and to develop better, constructive strategies. As before, the analysis of their thoughts, feelings, and behavior helps them use thoughts that will lead to constructive situations. To reduce their own stress, the use of support groups and stress management is emphasized.
Reinforcements	Responses from teachers to students that increase the likelihood of positive behaviors and reduce the likelihood of aggressive behaviors.	Teachers discuss how they may inadvertently reinforce negative behaviors. They practice using positive communication and how to avoid negative communication. Age-specific reinforcements are implemented.
Environment	Availability of a student-friendly reporting system.	A drop box or other student-friendly reporting mechanisms are encouraged at each school. Teachers rehearse how to respond to students who are victims of aggression.

SCT, Social Cognitive Theory; GREAT, Guiding Responsibility and Expectations for Adolescents for Today and Tomorrow.

the environment that teachers and other educators can influence.

A key element of the program is that teachers should maintain a positive, caring relationship with students. The importance of positive relationships has been described in educational settings,^{17,18} in therapeutic relationships,¹⁹ and in familial relationships.²⁰ Creating a positive and trusting relationship with students is also a core component of preventing bullying behavior, and it has been considered a prerequisite to all interventions.²¹ Teachers can learn specific techniques to handle behavior problems, but they are not likely to result in lasting change if they are not implemented in a positive classroom environment.

In addition to emphasizing the development of a positive relationship with students, strategies to prevent and reduce aggression are included. Key Social Cognitive Theory constructs (behavioral capability, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, emotional coping, reinforcements, and environment) were translated into specific strategies to enhance teachers' management of behavioral problems,^{22,23} as described in Table 1.

The third body of literature on which this program is founded is the solution-focused approach to solving problems, which is based on William Glasser's *Reality Therapy*.²⁴ Teachers learn to apply a step-by-step approach to evaluate problem situations in their classroom and school. By focusing on the solution rather than the problem, and by focusing on future possibilities rather than the past, teachers are more likely to develop positive strategies for change.²⁵

In order for teachers to enhance and apply the skills discussed in the workshop, they must receive continuous reinforcement and modeling of the new behaviors,²² which is accomplished through teacher support groups. Several researchers have emphasized the importance of support groups after teacher training. Rohrbach et al.²⁶ found that teacher level of implementation was not related to whether the training was intensive or brief. They suggest that teacher training is necessary but not sufficient and that continuous training or coaching may be more important than a one-time, pre-implementation training. Shapiro et al.²⁷ reported that teachers with group support applied the

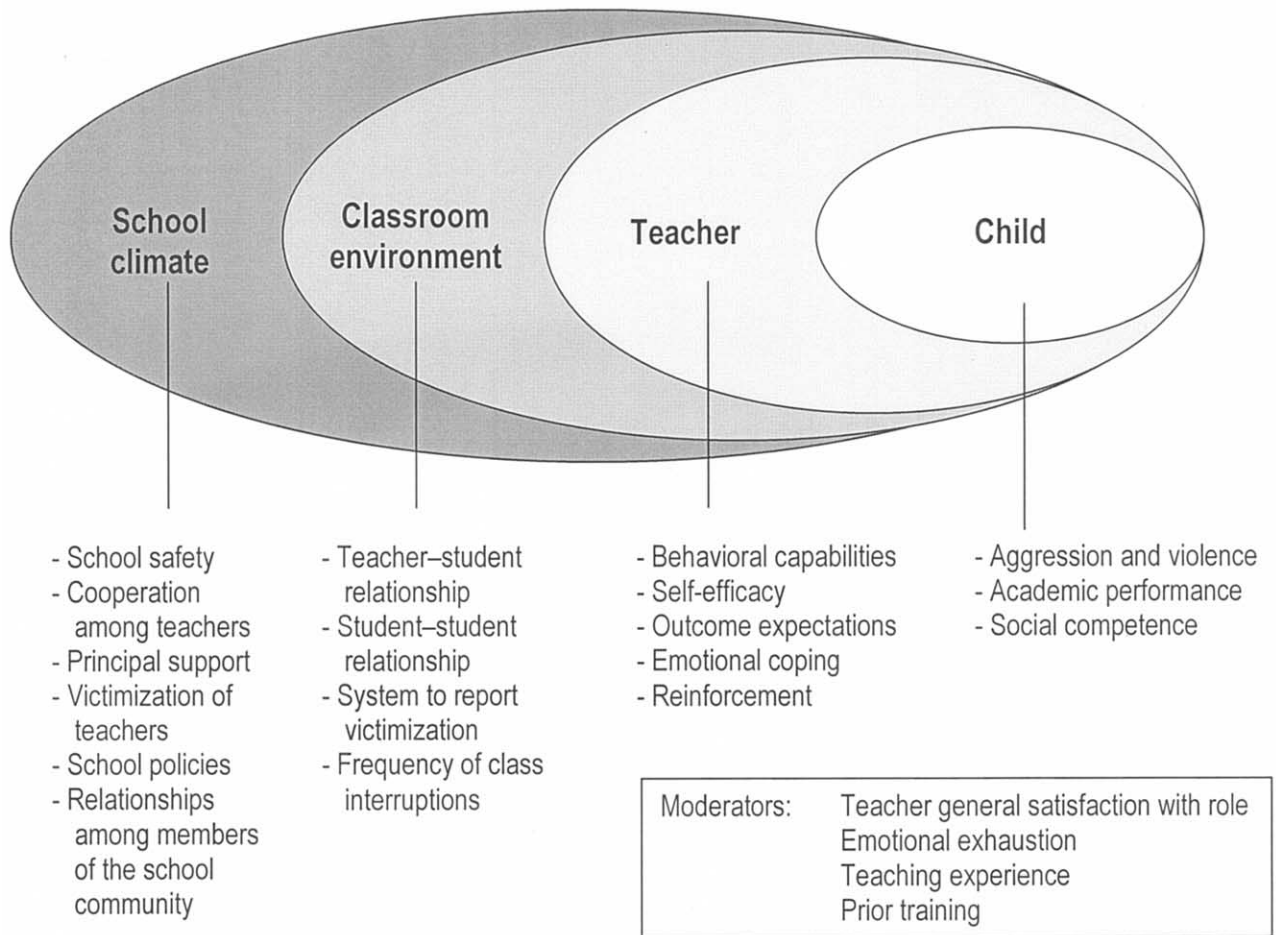


Figure 2. Theoretical model for the GREAT Teacher Program.

material learned, whereas teachers who did not receive group support were less likely to incorporate the new material into their classroom management style. The Johns Hopkins Prevention Intervention Research Center has implemented several universal prevention trials since 1985, in which teachers have been involved directly in implementing the interventions. In one evaluation of a classroom-centered intervention directed to enhance the curriculum and improve behavior management practices, the researchers reported that teachers' behavior management practices were improved by weekly group meetings to solve problems.²⁸ Olweus²⁹ has also emphasized the need for continuous support group meetings for teachers to help prevent bullying.

Figure 2 identifies the complete theoretical model for the GREAT Teacher Program. The overall goal of the project is to reduce student aggression and interpersonal violence and to improve academic performance and social competence. In the classroom, the child is influenced by the teacher's personal characteristics for the prevention of aggression and management of the classroom. Both the children and the teacher create a specific type of classroom environment that

also influences their behavior. A child may act very differently in various types and sizes of classrooms, with different levels of supervision, or with teachers with different management styles. The classroom environment is influenced by the overall school climate. Other factors that act as moderators of the efficacy of this program are teachers' general satisfaction with their role, their level of emotional exhaustion, their teaching experience, and their prior training in aggression prevention.

Discussion of Prior Programs

The GREAT Teacher Program is based on the work of two earlier promising prevention approaches—ACT Early, a program designed to increase positive classroom management strategies,³⁰ and Bully Busters, a program designed to increase teacher self-efficacy for handling bullies in the classroom.⁴

ACT (Addressing the Context of Teaching for Behaviorally At-risk Young Students) Early is a 6-year longitudinal study that began in September 1996 (<http://www.coe.uga.edu/actearly/>). Its overall goal is to advance the competency of elementary teachers to

intervene early in the behavioral and emotional problems of students. Teacher professional development is centered on the behavioral assessment of children on multiple dimensions, technology-assisted decision making, and collaborative consultation methods. ACT Early was initially implemented in four elementary schools with 72 teachers and approximately 1600 students in kindergarten through third grade. At the end of the first 3 years, the program was expanded to include students in kindergarten through fifth grade in six elementary schools. The goals of the ACT Early program were to document individual, interactional, and environmental contributors to behavioral risk in elementary school and to use this information to help teachers work more effectively with students at risk for poor behavior and low academic performance. This program demonstrated the effect teachers have on children at risk for behavioral, emotional, and academic problems. In that study, the researchers identified strategies to increase teachers' efficacy for working with at-risk children and to improve their classroom management and relationship skills, which affected their expectations for student learning. The study also provided evidence of the importance of ongoing teacher support groups.

The Bully Busters Program was established in 1994 to examine effective procedures for reducing bullying and aggression in middle schools. The program focused on changing the school climate by increasing teacher awareness of the problem of bullying and by providing training to manage bullying and victimization in the classroom and school environment. Two studies of the effect of Bully Busters showed that the program increased teachers' knowledge and use of bullying prevention skills, increased teachers' self-efficacy in working with students, and reduced discipline referrals of students.^{4,31} The GREAT Teacher Program followed a training model similar to the Bully Busters Program, using a workshop followed by ongoing support groups to enhance teachers' relationships with students and to increase their classroom management skills and self-efficacy.

The current GREAT Teacher Program contains several aspects of the ACT Early and Bully Busters programs, including an emphasis on changing the school environment by increasing teacher awareness and skills and by providing ongoing support to maintain change. The GREAT Teacher Program focuses more specifically on classroom management skills and on the importance of a uniform application of teacher skills throughout the grade level and provides more in-depth training on some specific strategies than does the Bully Buster Program. The emphasis of the GREAT Teacher Program is not only to change teachers' skills, beliefs, and self-efficacy but also to produce a broader level of change in the classroom and in grade-level practices. Although teachers do not teach the student curricu-

Table 2. Goals of the teacher workshop

Sections of the 12-hour workshop (allocated time)	Goals. At the end of each module, teachers should be able to:
Introduction (1½ hours)	Provide an overview of the GREAT Teacher and GREAT Student Programs; discuss the values of the Teacher Program.
Module 1 (1½ hours) Violence in schools: What is happening?	Describe the magnitude of the problem of aggression and violence in the nation and at school; examine the different behaviors that constitute interpersonal violence in schools; analyze the types and characteristics of bullies, victims, and bystanders; and list the major risk and protective factors for violence.
Module 2 (3 hours) Reflections: Developing long-term goals	Reflect on personal and institutional characteristics that will help to prevent aggression; apply a solution-focused approach to the problem to bring about the desired behavioral outcomes; analyze how to respond in healthy ways to stressful situations; evaluate the role that feelings have on how behavior problems are handled; and increase the use of support systems and other available resources.
Module 3 (3 hours) Setting up for success: Preventive approach to reducing aggression	Examine personal characteristics that prevent aggression (e.g., classroom management style, caring relationships, positive communication patterns, high expectations) and describe strategies to manage the classroom for success (e.g., discipline plan, routines, procedures, transitions, physical environment).
Module 4 (3 hours) Management of power struggles and aggression	Describe and apply strategies to manage power struggles and aggression, and develop strategies to help students who are the victims of aggression.

lum, they are expected to reinforce key concepts from the GREAT Student Program.

Description of the GREAT Teacher Program

The GREAT Teacher Program is composed of an initial 12-hour training workshop, followed by 10 teacher support group meetings to discuss problems related to implementing the strategies discussed in the workshop. The 12-hour workshop is organized into five sections: an introduction and four modules (Table 2).

Teacher Workshop

Introduction. The workshop begins with an overview of the project, and in particular of the GREAT Student Program, followed by a discussion of the core values of the Teacher Program. These values are the basis for creating a positive school environment, and, without embracing the values, it may be difficult to promote lasting change. The first value of the program is that a successful classroom depends on teachers' having a positive relationship with their students. In the context of this workshop, a successful classroom refers to an environment in which aggressive behavior is least likely to occur and positive social behaviors are most likely to happen. A positive relationship has been considered a key element for implementing successful strategies to prevent and reduce aggression^{17,32} and for preventing substance abuse.³³ A positive relationship between teachers and students fosters connectedness to the school, which is a protective factor against students' high-risk behaviors and a predictor of adolescent well-being.³⁴ An important element of a positive relationship is to have high and realistic expectations for students.¹⁷

The second value, which is closely related to the first one, is that all members of a school community deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Although it is easy to treat well-behaved students with respect and dignity, extending this attitude to problem students is sometimes a challenge. Teachers should also maintain their own self-respect when dealing with difficult students. When they respond with aggression, allowing the student to be in control, they are losing their self-respect and possibly losing the respect of their students.³⁵

The third value is that bullying, aggression, and interpersonal violence are not acceptable in schools. Teachers need to demonstrate that they believe this value. Adult excuses for aggression like "Boys will be boys" and student excuses like "He started it" are not acceptable. In many classrooms, we observe a parallel process: Students engage in inappropriate behavior such as yelling, and teachers, in turn, copy students and yell back at them. To stop these ineffective interactions, teachers must model appropriate skills. Because modeling is an important learning tool, teachers need to be able to model nonviolent solutions to conflict.²² Frequently, teachers have the opportunity to model how to respond to conflict without aggression, and this challenge is addressed through this workshop. However, students learn how to respond without aggression in the GREAT Student Program¹⁵ and will be more tuned in to observing their teachers' behaviors.

At the end of the introduction, teachers describe their own school's values, for knowing these values is the first step in violence prevention. School values help teachers and administrators set rules and conse-

quences, model strategies that are consistent with these values, and eliminate interventions that violate them.³⁶

Module 1. Aggression in schools: What is happening?

The objective of Module 1 is to increase awareness of the problem of aggression in schools. It focuses on the first two steps of the public health model.³⁷ The first step is to define the problem by examining the prevalence of the most common forms of physical, verbal, relational, and sexual aggression in schools. With the use of the ecologic model as a framework, the second step is to identify risk and protective factors at the student, school, family, and community levels.

Module 2. Reflections: Developing long-term goals.

The purpose of Module 2 is to increase teachers' positive emotional coping responses and outcome expectations about students. To accomplish this goal, three elements are included.

First, teachers assess their classroom goals and determine what is important to change and whether these changes are possible. This assessment is guided by a solution-focused approach, which is operationalized by five questions. The first question focuses on establishing goals, followed by examining personal and environmental characteristics related to the problem, evaluating whether these characteristics promote or hinder those goals, defining new strategies to achieve the goals, and, finally, evaluating whether the new strategies help advance the goal. Teachers are encouraged to define goals and strategies over which they have some control, those within their sphere of influence.

Second, teachers examine personal characteristics that may influence the problem and, in particular, evaluate their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about a situation and the consequent response. Understanding these thoughts may be an important mechanism for stopping or changing a negative thought process.³⁸⁻⁴⁰ In addition to personal characteristics, teachers analyze the characteristics of the school that may influence the problem. This analysis is based on the ecologic model of the school (Figure 1).

The final part of Module 2 addresses how teachers can take care of their emotional and physical well-being. In particular, stress management and developing a support network are presented as key elements for prevention of interpersonal violence in schools.³⁵ Many stress management techniques are discussed and some are practiced. The need for a support network is accomplished partially by participating in the support groups.

Module 3. Setting up for success: Preventive approach to reducing aggression.

The goal of Module 3 is to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy to establish a classroom and school environment that prevents aggression. The prevention of aggression is based on the assumption that aggressive behaviors are

frequently the result of a sequence of events. For example, a physical fight between two boys may be traced back to name-calling that occurred the prior day. The name-calling may be traced to a conflict that occurred while completing a difficult task that the boys were assigned to do together, even though they would have preferred to work separately. Teachers are encouraged to examine how possible sequences of events can be prevented through thoughtful classroom management. Teachers share successful and unsuccessful strategies for developing rules and routines, arranging the physical environment of the classroom, managing transitions, and developing assessments and assignments that take into account individual characteristics of students. In addition, the values of the workshop are addressed again, and teachers are asked to analyze the effect of their classroom management style and teaching philosophy on the prevention of aggression. Teachers describe their style within a continuum from student-directed, to collaborative, to teacher-directed practices.⁴¹

Module 4. Management of power struggles and aggression. Even experienced teachers will have conflict in their classes. Despite the best prevention strategies, some students will be physically or verbally aggressive, and some will refuse to accept the consequences of that behavior. The goals of Module 4 are to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy to manage power struggles and aggression when they occur in the classroom and to help students who are the victims of such aggression. To provide a broad understanding of the problem of aggression, theories of youth aggression are discussed, including social learning theory and, in particular, the role of modeling,²² attribution theories and the aggressive attributional bias,⁴² and attachment theories with particular emphasis on the role that unsatisfactory and frustrating relationships with significant others could have on aggression.⁴³ However, the central component of this module is the application of skills to manage power struggles and aggression. The same strategy that is presented in the GREAT Student Program is used to help teachers manage student conflicts. An acronym to help organize the social-cognitive steps to stop or prevent aggression among students is introduced and explained (i.e., SCIDDLE for Stop, Calm down, Identify your choices, Decide among your choices, Do it, Look back, and Evaluate).⁴⁴ Teachers are asked to display a poster with this acronym in their classroom to remind themselves and their students to use it when conflict arises. It is of particular importance to recognize and effectively handle power struggles with students (e.g., when a student says "I don't want to, and you can't make me do it."). Thus, specific strategies for diffusing power struggles are rehearsed.³⁵ The final part of this module is to discuss strategies for helping students who are the victims of

Table 3. Goals of the teacher support groups

Enhance skills	Applying new skills is difficult. The teacher support groups are designed to rehearse and discuss alternative skills for violence prevention.
Develop creative solutions to problems	Support groups are a medium to develop creative ways of solving conflicts by incorporating the experiences and knowledge of the group and by using group members as problem-solving collaborators. As a consequence, the groups help build a stronger sense of team and cooperation.
Provide support	The teacher groups are a source of support to help teachers handle daily stress related to teaching and classroom management.
Manage schoolwide problems	Some problems are not unique to single teachers but are related to general issues of school climate, discipline management by the administration. Support groups can help teachers develop a common understanding and an action plan to address these issues.
Support the GREAT Student Program	Teachers review the violence-prevention skills taught in the student curriculum, discuss ways to reinforce those skills among students, and examine ways to help students apply them.

GREAT, Guiding Responsibility and Expectations for Adolescents for Today and Tomorrow.

aggression, including the availability of a student-friendly reporting system.

Teacher Support Groups

Although the 2-day workshop provides information and specific content to enhance teachers' understanding and skills for reducing aggression in schools, the application of those skills can be mitigated by the stress and obligations teachers face day to day. Thus, to help sustain changes over time, support groups are conducted for teachers from the same school. Teachers are enriched by the sharing of different perspectives, particularly in schools that have a heterogeneous group of teachers. This approach is also advantageous because teachers view their own classroom experiences and the experiences of other teachers as the most valuable source of in-service education.⁴⁵

The goals of the teacher support groups are presented in Table 3. Each support group is generally composed of two parts. The first part is devoted to examining the positive and negative experiences that teachers had during the prior weeks with the prevention of aggressive and disruptive behavior. For exam-

ple, a teacher may explain a problem with a child who continues to tease another student. Because children rotate among different classes, other teachers may also have had a problem with the same child and may share how they handled it. Teachers brainstorm solutions to the problem and discuss which strategies were most effective and how to apply them. The second part of each support group is devoted to activities designed to reinforce key elements of the workshop and to discuss the implementation of teachers' own goals for the prevention of aggression.

Training, Implementation, and Supervision of the GREAT Teacher Program

The facilitators of the GREAT Teacher Program have graduate degrees in education, psychology, or counseling and preferably have experience in the school setting. Educational experience is highly desired because credibility and empathy with the teaching and administrative staff is considered so important it is almost a requirement for successful school program implementation. Facilitators from each site were trained on how to conduct the workshop and the support groups. The training included understanding and applying the principles of group dynamics, such as how teachers working together will develop better solutions than individual teachers; how groups provide a sense that the problems teachers face in the classroom are universal; and how participants can turn to the expertise of fellow educators to seek help, learn new skills, and develop effective methods of classroom management. Groups are particularly helpful for facilitating problem solving through behavior rehearsals and role-playing that occur in the safety of a support group with fellow educators. The group setting provides teachers with the opportunity to give feedback to one another about how they appear to be using communication skills, classroom management procedures, and school resources, such as counselors and parent interviews. Further, teachers observe the group leader demonstrate effective group process skills (e.g., end sidetracking, handle resistance, engage all members, develop a collegial relationship, and be positive).

To assure fidelity of implementation at all sites, several strategies were implemented. First, detailed manuals were developed to train the facilitators, to conduct the workshop, and to facilitate the support groups. The manuals include an extensive theoretical background; group management training; and a detailed, step-by-step description of implementation, including slides and activities. A manual for teachers, which contains the skills discussed in the workshop and their applications, was also developed. Second, all facilitators participated in a trainer's workshop and observed one teacher workshop conducted by the

authors before they implemented it at their sites. Third, weekly conference calls were used to assure quality implementation, to solve problems, and to provide support to facilitators. Detailed process evaluation forms were maintained to record the fidelity of implementation and participants' program satisfaction.

Teacher workshops were conducted either during school days (the project reimbursed the schools for substitute teachers) or during a weekend (the project paid the teachers for their time). Lunch and refreshments were provided. The workshops were conducted with teachers from different schools, and the exchange of information among teachers was highly valued. Because of financial constraints, only core academic teachers were invited to attend the program. To encourage teacher participation, continuing education credits were given for attending the workshop and the support groups. For the program to be successful, however, teachers must see the value of the training, not only for the continuing education credits and money they receive but also as a practical method for preventing and stopping aggression.

Teacher support groups, called the GREAT Groups, convened after the teacher workshop and were conducted in each school with teachers from only that school. Ten support groups, conducted every 2 to 3 weeks, were scheduled during the academic year. All sixth-grade teachers who participated in the 2-day workshop were expected to attend the support groups, which were scheduled to last 60 to 90 minutes. Teachers who could not attend the workshop were invited to participate in the GREAT Groups from their school. Support groups were scheduled at a convenient time for teachers, usually after school or during a planning period. Teachers decided the support group schedule early in the school year according to their availability. Refreshments were provided at each group.

Conclusions

Educators who are committed to children, aware of the problem of aggression in schools, and skilled on how to prevent and reduce these problem behaviors can have a powerful effect on the lives of children. Because of economic and educational trends in the last decades, however, teachers have had insufficient training and support for managing behavioral problems. Teachers are frequently pressured to increase academic performance and feel frustrated when they realize that, more often than they would like, they are forced to use their teaching time to manage problem behaviors. Because academic performance and behavior are frequently linked, reducing aggression and improving classroom behavior are likely to result in a more positive learning environment, which increases academic performance. Many teachers have expressed the need for more training to manage students' behavioral problems, and

the GREAT Teacher Program may help fill this need. The program, which is based on a strong theoretical background, provides a step-by-step method to train teachers to reduce and prevent student aggression and problem behaviors in the classroom. In addition, support groups help teachers consider differences among teachers, students, and social environments, as basic skills can easily be adapted to fit these differences. Because teachers are active participants in this process, they can easily embrace the solutions they have brainstormed in the group.

One of the limitations of implementing the GREAT Teacher Program as part of a multisite research evaluation project was the need to limit the implementation of the program to core sixth-grade teachers only because of financial constraints and the need to standardize the implementation across sites. Ideally, training of paraprofessionals, administrators, staff members, and all teachers from all grade levels may be a stronger approach to influencing the whole school environment. However, a comprehensive, schoolwide approach frequently has real-world constraints, which make it difficult to implement in a 1-year timeframe.⁴⁶

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