Reading and social skills programmes had limited effectiveness on behavioural maladjustment in primary school children


**QUESTION:** In primary school children (up to grade 3), what is the effectiveness of a social skills programme, a partner reading programme, or a combination of the 2 in preventing behavioural maladjustment?

**Design**

5 year randomised [allocation concealed†‡],† unblinded,* controlled trial.

**Setting**

Primary divisions of 60 schools in 11 boards of education in Ontario, Canada.

**Participants**

(Children in participating schools who were in the primary grades (mean age 6.5 y). At the beginning of each school year during the study period, samples of students were randomly selected for follow up, stratified by levels of emotional and behavioural risk. In programme schools about 150 students per school or the entire primary division were sampled. In control schools a 15%–20% random sample of students was selected. 89% of students were followed up.†‡)

**Intervention**

(In each year of the study, 1 or 2 schools were randomly selected from each board of education and were randomly allocated to 1 or both programmes (social skills [SS] and partner reading [RE]). Programme schools maintained their programme status until the end of follow up. Schools that were not selected to implement a programme served as control schools until selected by chance to be assigned to a programme. The programmes were implemented by classroom teachers with coaching from trained facilitators.†‡)

**Main outcomes measures**

Positive playground behaviour, inappropriate classroom behaviour, reading level, externalising problems rated by teachers and parents, and social skills rated by teachers and parents. Outcomes were assessed using interviewer administered and self completed questionnaires and standard testing in the home, and teacher completed questionnaires and observation in the school.

**Main results**

Positive playground behaviour increased in all programme schools to a greater extent than in comparison schools (linear effect was $\beta = 5.96 \pm 1.78$, respectively, $p < 0.05$ but did not differ among the 3 programmes. Inappropriate behaviour in the classroom worsened in all schools except for those assigned to SS alone, but none of the growth trajectory slopes were statistically significantly different. Reading improved in all schools including comparison schools with no difference among them. The combination of SS and RE and SS alone showed modest effects on teacher and parent rated externalising problems ($p < 0.05$).

**Conclusions**

In primary school children (up to grade 3), programmes to enhance social skills and reading to prevent behav-
Reading and social skills programmes had limited effectiveness on behavioural maladjustment in primary school children

Evid Based Mental Health 2000 3: 46
doi: 10.1136/ebmh.3.2.46

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/3/2/46

These include:

References
This article cites 1 articles, 0 of which you can access for free at:
http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/3/2/46#BIBL

Email alerting service
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Topic Collections
Articles on similar topics can be found in the following collections
Clinical trials (epidemiology) (989)
Epidemiology (1570)

Notes

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/