



Blueprints Promising Programs FACT SHEET

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I Can Problem Solve

I Can Problem Solve (ICPS), formerly Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving, is a school-based intervention that trains children in generating a variety of solutions to interpersonal problems, considering the consequences of these solutions, and recognizing thoughts, feelings, and motives that generate problem situations. By teaching children to think, rather than what to think, the program changes thinking styles and, as a result, enhances children's social adjustment, promotes pro-social behavior, and decreases impulsivity and inhibition.

Program Targets

Although the program is appropriate for all children, it is especially effective for young (age 4-5), poor, and urban students who may be at highest risk for behavioral dysfunctions and interpersonal maladjustment.

Program Content

The program was originally designed for use in nursery school and kindergarten, but it has also been successfully implemented with children in grades 5 and 6. Throughout the intervention, instructors utilize pictures, role-playing, puppets, and group interaction to help develop students' thinking skills, and children's own lives and problems are used as examples when teachers demonstrate problem-solving techniques.

With concepts being similar for all studied age-groups, small groups of 6-10 children receive training for approximately 3 months. The intervention begins with 10-12 lessons teaching preschool students basic skills and problem-solving language. For example, children learn word concepts such as "not" (e.g., acting or not acting); "some/all" (solutions may succeed with one person but not all); "or" (discovering alternative solutions); "if...then" (learning consequences of actions); and "same/different" (thinking of multiple solutions).

The next 20 lessons focus on identifying one's own feelings and becoming sensitive to others' emotions. Students learn to recognize people's feelings in problem situations and realize that they can influence others' responses.

The last 15 lessons utilize role-playing games and dialogue to promote problem-solving skills. Students generate solutions to hypothetical problem situations and consider the possible consequences to their decisions.

Program Outcomes

An evaluation of ICPS that included nursery and kindergarten students revealed significant benefits for intervention students. Immediately following and one year after the program ended, ICPS children, compared to control students, demonstrated:

- Less impulsive and inhibited classroom behavior, and
- Better problem-solving skills.

A five-year study of inner-city, low income children in kindergarten demonstrated that children trained in kindergarten or trained in kindergarten and first grade, compared to control students, had:

- Improved classroom behavior and problem-solving skills, even 3-4 years after the program.

A replication with fifth and sixth grade students found that ICPS children, compared to a control group, demonstrated:

- More positive, prosocial behaviors;
- Healthier relationships with peers; and
- Better problem-solving skills.

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