

URBAN IMPROV FOR THE CLASSROOM: A 4TH GRADE VIOLENCE PREVENTION CURRICULUM [5216]

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Workshop Summary

Urban Improv (UI) is a school-based interactive and educational program being implemented in public schools in a large, urban city. UI utilizes structured drama improvisation to teach decision-making, conflict resolution, problem solving, cooperation, leadership, and values clarification skills and to provide students the opportunity to deal creatively with major issues in their lives.

According to the research, UI has helped to prevent increased or new-onset of aggressive behaviors in 4th graders while increasing their prosocial behaviors and classroom engagement—making this program potentially useful in other venues. However, transferring the UI program to other school districts requires a considerable investment of trained staff time and resources, and the best practice guidelines for youth violence prevention programming emphasize total school community involvement and the fostering of stronger relationships between students and school staff. Therefore, to extend the application of UI violence/problem resolution strategies within a broader context and cement learning through increased practice, a classroom-based, teacher-led component of the UI program was developed. This UI teacher curriculum can be used as a stand-alone intervention in schools not participating in standard UI or as a supplement to standard UI.

The UI teacher curriculum, which was developed and manualized by a team of 4th grade public school teachers, UI actor/educators, and psychologists, can be incorporated into standard school lesson plans. Extending for nine weeks, the curriculum consists of three parts. Part I presents classroom activities that address specific content themes that are highly relevant to 4th graders, such as self-esteem, peer pressure, friendship, and conflict resolution. It utilizes read-aloud sessions featuring selections from books and poems, as well as action-oriented games, both of which reinforce the theme of the week. The manual includes suggestions for class discussion about the texts and games. Part II incorporates behavior management and positive reinforcement strategies into the classroom. These strategies provide opportunities for students to practice the UI approach to problem solving as they address real-life problems that arise in the classroom. The strategies also provide reinforcement for students' prosocial behaviors. Part III consists of utilization logs that teachers can use to monitor their implementation of the curriculum and evaluate its effectiveness.

This year, a pilot evaluation of the curriculum was conducted by introducing the curriculum in two of four classrooms across two inner-city schools that were also receiving the standard UI program. The pilot data suggested that the curriculum was beneficial, although a larger evaluation is necessary to determine the added

benefit of the teacher curriculum on post-program outcomes, as well as the effectiveness of the curriculum as a stand-alone intervention.

This workshop will focus on the process whereby an interdisciplinary team developed the curriculum and the general structure for implementing the curriculum in classrooms. Presenters will introduce the curriculum and discuss examples from each of the parts. Through an experiential component, participants will have an opportunity to actively rehearse sample activities that are included in the curriculum and to discuss ways that the curriculum can be modified to fit their own school district's existing curriculum.

Workshop Goals

Participants will be introduced to a violence prevention curriculum for 4th graders that can be incorporated into standard school lesson plans as a stand-alone intervention or taught as a supplement to the Urban Improv program.

Workshop Objectives

1. To present and describe the process of developing the curriculum and its three parts.
2. To use small groups to help participants identify texts in their existing state curricula that fit the themes of the Urban Improv teacher curriculum and could be used in Part I.
3. To provide participants with active practice in the read-aloud activities, games, and behavior management strategies in the curriculum.

Workshop Activities

1. 20-25-minute presentation by Dr. Zucker on the development of the curriculum and its components
2. 5-10-minute question and answer period
3. 25-minute break-out groups led by Drs. Zucker, Spinazzola, and Alley to complete a read-aloud activity from the curriculum and discuss texts from participants' own curricula that could be used to illustrate the theme
4. 25-minute experiential component to practice selected games and classroom management strategies from the curriculum
5. 10-minute question and answer period

Assessment

Four indicators of success for this workshop will be measured through observation and discussion with workshop participants and through formal and/or informal feedback that they may provide. At the end, participants will be asked to complete an evaluation form (attached). The four indicators are as follows:

1. Participants will demonstrate an understanding of the curriculum and have an opportunity to ask questions of the presenters that will enhance their understanding of and ability to utilize the curriculum.
2. Participants will be inspired to utilize the curriculum, or selected components, in their classrooms/schools.
3. Participants will gain some ideas for adopting the curriculum to fit within their own school district's existing curriculum.
4. Participants will demonstrate a high level of engagement and active participation in the

experiential training components of the workshop.

Resources

<http://www.traumacenter.org>

<http://www.urbanimprov.org>

Reference

Zucker, M., Villaflor, E., Holden, J., Jones, R., and Spinazzola, J. (2004). Urban Improv for the Classroom: 4th Grade Curriculum. Unpublished

THE TRAUMA CENTER AT JUSTICE RESOURCE INSTITUTE

Evaluation Form

Trainer: Marla Zucker, Ph.D.
Site: Persistently Safe Schools 2005

Training Topic: Urban Improv for the Classroom: A 4th Grade Violence Prevention Curriculum

Please rate the overall training by circling a number for each statement.

	Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Strongly Disagree
I was satisfied with the quality of the workshop.	1	2	3	4	5
I found the training useful to my work.	1	2	3	4	5
I will be able to incorporate material from the workshop into my work.	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter had adequate knowledge of the topics covered.	1	2	3	4	5
Presentation of the material was understandable.	1	2	3	4	5
My questions/needs were addressed	1	2	3	4	5
The opportunity to actively participate in and practice curriculum components was helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
The handouts provided were helpful.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

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