

Executive Summary
Program Evaluation and Research Findings
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Quabbin Mediation's
Training Active Bystanders (TAB)

The evaluation team warmly and sincerely thanks the TAB student trainers, school personnel, police officers, TAB observers and students who completed the questionnaires and participated in interviews. Without all of you, this evaluation would not have been possible. Thank you for your time and energy on behalf of this project.

Project Description

Training Active Bystanders (TAB) is a program created by Quabbin Mediation, a community organization, and Ervin Staub, Ph.D., an international authority on active bystanders in interpersonal violence. The primary goal of the TAB program is to prevent victimization and violence by reducing anti-social behaviors and increasing pro-social behaviors and attitudes, in particular, active bystanders. The TAB Program was piloted during the 2006-2007 school year in partnership with the Athol and Orange Police Departments, the R.C. Mahar Regional School District, the Athol-Royalston Regional School District, and two control schools. Funding through the Mass. Executive Office of Public Safety, the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Programs, and local foundations provided seed money for the pilot project.

Active Bystanders are witnesses to a harmful situation who are in a position to take action, and who act to stop the harm rather than watching passively or joining in.

A twelve-hour TAB curriculum was developed by Quabbin Mediation and Dr. Ervin Staub for middle and high school students. Portions of the TAB curriculum were field-tested in August of 2006 in a summer camp setting. In October of 2006, Quabbin Mediation staff and Dr. Staub provided a series of four, half-day sessions to train three police officers and 24 middle and high school students to teach the TAB pilot curriculum. TAB training teams, two students partnered with one police officer, taught the 12-session TAB curriculum to 800 middle and high school students (at four schools total) from October 2006 to June of 2007. A total of 30 classrooms participated in TAB (17 8th grade classrooms and 13 10th grade classrooms). In an effort to incorporate feedback and improve upon the program, some modifications were made to the TAB program delivery mid-way through the pilot. The curriculum was shortened from 12 to 11 sessions. Journal questions were revised to allow for more in-depth reflection among the trainees.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research and Evaluation

The **Quantitative Evaluation** assessed TAB's impact on middle and high school students' attitudes towards harming and bystanding as well as students' actual harming, and bystanding behavior. Other issues the evaluation explored included students' perceptions of school safety, their comfort and happiness at school, and their attitudes towards the police. Students from four school systems participated in the quantitative evaluation. TAB was

implemented in two of the school systems (Athol-Royalston and Mahar); the other two served as controls (Gill-Montague and Narragansett). Students in both the TAB and control schools completed questionnaires three times: once before TAB was implemented (the baseline); once just after TAB had finished (the post-test); and once about five months after TAB had finished (the follow-up).

The **Qualitative Research** examined the impact of the TAB program on youth and police trainers, teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors, as well as students that received the training. Research also examined, from the perspectives of these stakeholders, the TAB program design and curriculum in order to improve upon the model for future implementation and dissemination. Data were gathered through feedback surveys, student journals; 30 interviews with youth and police trainers, school personnel and program observers and staff; and focus groups with students who received the TAB training at four schools.

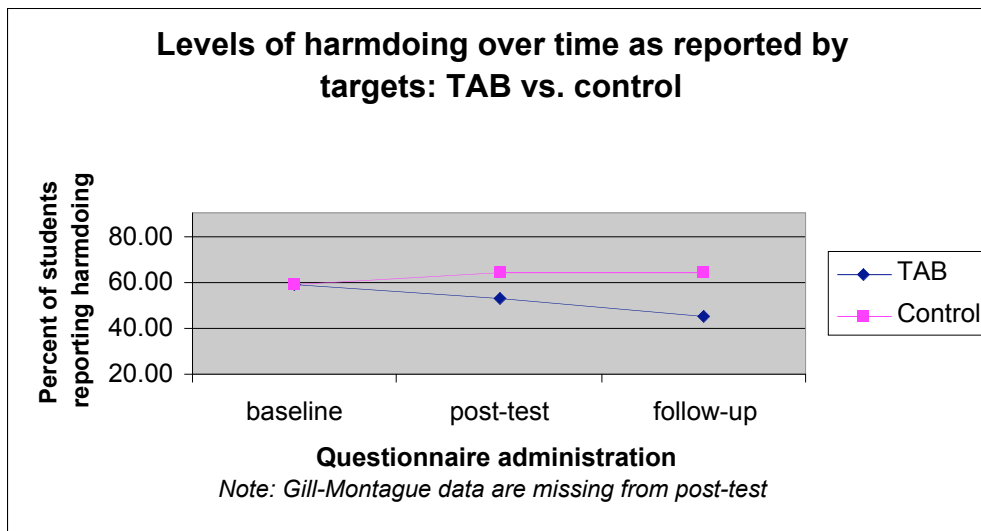
KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Key findings from the quantitative evaluation, below, are followed by findings and selected quotes from the qualitative research. More detailed information is available in the full reports.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Harmdoing, as reported by targets, went down in the TAB schools compared to the control schools. At baseline, around 60% of students in TAB and control schools reported having been targets of harmdoing in the past 7 days. At the follow-up (an average of 5 months after TAB had ended), only 45% of TAB students reported having been targets in the past seven days, compared to 64% in the control schools.

Note that this finding is for all kinds of harmdoing, including verbal aggression, which was the most frequent type of harmdoing.



Harmdoing, as reported by witnesses, went down in the TAB schools compared to the control schools. At baseline, around 83% of students in TAB and control schools reported witnessing harmdoing in the past 7 days. At the follow-up, 73% of TAB students reported witnessing harmdoing, compared to 82% in the control schools.

This research found baseline levels of harmdoing in North Quabbin schools (TAB and control) to be fairly high¹. At baseline, students reported being the victim of an average of 3.5 harmdoing incidents per week. The most frequently reported harmdoing was relational aggression: 1) being called mean names or teased or 2) having lies/rumors spread about oneself.

The top 10% most frequently victimized students reported experiencing harmdoing from 10 to more than 60 times in the 7 days prior to filling out the survey¹. The impact of harmdoing on this “high victim” group was serious. Students in this group reported liking school less, and having less positive feelings about an average week in school¹. They also were less likely to view school staff as trying to stop harmdoing¹.

Students of color were over-represented in the high victim group. While students of color made up 12% of the sample overall, they made up 17% of the high victim group¹.

There was no increase in positive attitudes towards the police in the TAB group versus the control. Tenth graders tended to have less positive attitudes towards the police than eighth graders.

There was no increase in perceptions that teachers and school staff try to keep the school environment safe in the TAB group relative to the controls.

Despite the fact that harmdoing was reduced, students did not report an increase in bystanding behavior. It is possible that TAB had its effect on the students through some means other than increasing bystanding behavior, e.g. perhaps TAB increased students’ compassion for each other. Alternatively, perhaps TAB created a norm that harmdoing was not to be tolerated, even though this norm was not actually enforced by the students. It is also possible that the bystanding questions did not capture this behavior sufficiently accurately and that bystanding actually did increase. Since increasing active bystandership in the schools is a new notion, researchers are still learning how to measure it.

At baseline, across all the schools, the three locations in which harmdoing was most likely to occur were: the classroom, the hallways/stairways and the lunchroom. Also, 92 students reported harmdoing occurring with a teacher present in the classroom. Note that since there was considerable variety in reported locations for harmdoing among the different schools, interested readers should examine their school’s individualized report.

The students perceived at baseline that slightly over sixty percent of harmdoing occurred where adults could see it. This finding varied by school, so interested readers should examine their school’s report.

¹ This figure is based on baseline data only. As the baseline questionnaire administration measured the state of affairs in the schools before TAB’s implementation and because this administration had the highest number of respondents, it was sensible to base these estimates on those data alone.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Youth Trainers:

Leadership, self-esteem and courage increase among youth trainers as a result of teaching the TAB curriculum to peers.

Youth trainers exhibit behavior shifts, demonstrating active bystandership or utilizing TAB language and techniques in peer and family contexts.

“...It’s definitely brought my confidence and self-esteem up... Sometimes [kids] come up to me and ask me questions afterwards. I’m like ‘wow, they are coming to me instead of an adult.’ That’s a big step for me and I guess for them too.” Youth Trainer

“... If I didn’t have TAB I would be like hey, let them be kids, I went through that, let them go through that. But now it’s...no, I have to say something.” Youth Trainer

Police Officer Trainers:

The model of police officers as co-trainers is most successful when power is shared collaboratively with youth trainers and police exemplify a commitment to program content and concepts.

Relationships among police and young people may build trust among youth to come forward with incidents that can avoid potentially harmful situations.

“If we look at the kids who could be the targets or are being locked out, and they are hearing this curriculum... you are building up their software. [Then] You have the kid that is borderline going to be a harm-doer or has taken part in some harmful situation...maybe if they hear it and see it and learn it, they’re going to recognize what they are doing... everybody has everything to learn here.” Police Officer/Trainer

“I was one of the ones in the beginning that said ‘ I don’t know if this is going to work’ ... but I was going to give it my all... I think it worked out a whole lot better than I thought it was going to...” Police Officer/Trainer

Teachers and Observers:

Teacher engagement may support program implementation as they share classroom management strategies with youth and police trainers and model enthusiasm, while supporting trainers to take the lead.

Intra group support among youth trainers aids implementation; extent of group bonding varies from school to school.

Class-time requirement is the primary implementation concern, due to youth trainers excused from other classes and health curriculum content missed among students trained in relation to pressures of MCAS high-stakes testing.

TAB impacts active bystandership among adult stakeholders involved in the project.

“... I’m more willing to speak up ... it’s almost automatic; sometimes it’s subconscious. I don’t feel like I’m always up on a soapbox but I’m definitely [less willing] to let the idle comment go by. ...[I] Take time out of a lesson during school or even between colleagues to say ‘you know, I kind of have an issue with that and here’s why.’”
Health Teacher

I think that I would say whole-heartedly [to another district] that this is something that they should get involved with and it’s getting better all the time... it cannot hurt; it can only help.
Health Teacher

School Administrators:

TAB supports anti-harassment policies, district improvement plans, and civic and social goals of school mission statements.

School Administrators believe systemic and multi-year integration is needed to see full impact of program on school culture and climate—and are interested in program continuation.

“The program is designed to stop [harassment] in the sense that a lot of times we will never hear or see it. The [incidents] that we know about, we can fix or come close...TAB helps those kids who would have never come forward to say ‘I need your help’”
High School Principal

“It aligns with every school’s social and civic expectations of teaching the whole community to be active... whether it’s a participant in social change within a culture, or in becoming a change agent. “
Superintendent

Students:

Students who receive TAB curriculum demonstrate an ability to use new terminology and identify actions they can take as an active bystander. Student journal responses reflect a continuum of integration: resistance to the content or process of the program, new awareness and recognition, self-identification as harm-doer, target or bystander, and transfer through action. While the quantitative evaluation did not identify an increase in bystander behavior, the majority of journal responses conveys an increased awareness and recognition of harm-doing and bystandership in school, peer and community settings and implies development of skills to take action in response to harmdoing.

“If I see a situation that I think needs help, I will be an active bystander and do something or say something instead of pluralistic ignorance”
8th Grader

“I can use what I learned in TAB to help intervene in a situation. I learned how to diffuse a problem quickly and safely. I am now more inclined to act in a situation where someone is being harmed.”
8th Grader

“I am no longer a passive bystander.... People say power comes in numbers but bigger power can come from one person. It only takes one person to create a chain of endless caring that is powerful in many ways.”

10th Grader

Recommendations

- ◆ It appeared that TAB reduced harmdoing. Replicating the program may reduce harmdoing in other schools. Continuing its implementation may maintain or further decrease levels in the schools in which it is already implemented.
- ◆ Since youth of color were over-represented in the most targeted group of children, both Quabbin Mediation staff and school personnel should more closely monitor harm done to these students because they are targeted more frequently. Quabbin Mediation staff and school personnel may wish to address this problem more proactively, modifying existing programs or instituting new ones.
- ◆ Since active bystandership is at the heart of the TAB curriculum, future evaluations should assess whether this or another aspect of the intervention is responsible for the changes in harmdoing. This information will allow Quabbin Mediation to fine tune TAB and increase its impact.
- ◆ Develop clearer criteria for youth and police trainers and implement initial interview and screening process.
- ◆ Emphasize youth leadership development among trainers as a key element of program. Increase emphasis on on-going support for youth trainers by Quabbin Mediation staff, community volunteers or mediators, or peer support models.
- ◆ Clarify roles of classroom teachers and more effectively utilize them as mentors during implementation.
- ◆ Consolidate curriculum content and lessons to increase manageability and ease of implementation by schools. (*Evaluator note: following the pilot curriculum upon which the research is based, Quabbin Mediation pursued this as part of their project improvement effort, refining the basic TAB curriculum to six lessons.*)
- ◆ Continue to incorporate opportunities for student reflection in program content through on-going journal writing and focus groups to assess impact of program while encouraging students to make meaning of TAB content in their lives.
- ◆ Consider efficacy of a program model that provides intensive training during early adolescence (middle school) for the full training, with refresher training in the high school years, towards manageability combined with school-wide integration.
- ◆ Provide schools with professional development that complements the TAB program and illuminates links to curriculum frameworks and district policies. Consider expansion through adaptation of the program for parents and the community.

“...Be an active bystander, just imagine how you would feel.”

8th Grader