Introducing Superheroes Social Skills Program

- Faculty
  - Julie Bowen
  - Elaine Clark
  - The Students
    - Heidi Block
    - Julia Hood
    - Keith Radley
    - Tenisa Gabrielsen
    - Ben Springer
    - Jessie Weeks
    - Utah State Office of Education (USOE)
    - Dr. Scott Bellini, University of Indiana
- Pacific Northwest Publishing

This Webinar

- Social skills as they apply to ASD children
- Social skills as they apply to Externalizing children
Social Skills

• Social skills are what allow us to pass as normal. Whether one can pass as normal depends not so much on whether one can read or write but rather on one’s level of social skill development.  
  —Greenberg

Social Skills Definition

• Social skills are goal-directed, learned behaviors that allow one to interact and function effectively in a variety of social situations.  
  —Farrow

  Seen one ASD child seen one ASD child
  (Comprehensive Skills)
  • Social skills training will not fundamentally alter an ASD child’s condition.
  • It can improve their social interactions.
  • It can make their social life easier (e.g., less bullying, less feeling different, less being left out).
  • It can result in friendship building.
The Purpose of the Research

- Evaluate the effectiveness and generalization of the Superheroes Social Skills Program
  - Pingree Center for Children with Autism, Preschoolers
  - University of Utah Neuropsychiatric Institute (UNI), Outpatient
  - Public education setting, Davis County School District, Elementary
  - Train parents of ASD children to run the program with Skype support
  - Three studies with externalizers (ADHD, CD, ODD) in public schools
  - In public school with ASD students who are bullied

• THIS IS A PROGRAM ABOUT CHILDREN
• and THE RESEARCH THAT SUPPORTS THE PROGRAM
The Major Problem With Social Skills Is:

• THE PROBLEM IS GENERALIZATION
  • Transfer of newly learned behaviors and skills into settings in which the intervention procedures have not been implemented

Ways to Overcome Generalization Problems

• Over-learn the skill.
• Teach the skill in natural environments.
• Reinforce the skill in natural environments.
• Teach many examples.
• Vary the program across people and situations.
• A NEW WAY TO GENERALIZE SKILLS
Teaching ASD Students Social Skills the Superheroes Way

Presented on Aug. 27, 2015

Sticky: The George Costanza Model

Why Some Ideas Succeed and Others Fail

Sticky

- Superheroes
- Superhero Voices
- Pokémon Cards
- Comic Books
- Fast-Hands Animation (Videos and Video Games)
Teaching ASD Students Social Skills the Superheroes Way

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Externalizers

A Meta-Analysis of Social Skills Interventions for Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders

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No Adult Talking Heads Talking About Social Skills

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So What's in the Program?

- Package-Ready Materials

Components shown:
- Facilitator's Guide
- DVDs
- Role-Play Booklet
- Comic
- Social Game Card
- Scooter and Black Hole Card
- Reward Poster
- Group Rules Poster
- Power Poster
- Power Card

Consumable materials may be reordered or printed from the Reproducibles CD.
What Is Superheroes Social Skills?

- Designed for children with ASD (or other disabilities) between 5 and 10 years old
- Incorporates evidence-based practices and research-proven techniques to foster acquisition of distinct social skills
- Consists of 18 lessons taught bi-weekly
- Lasts 30 to 45 minutes
- Uses an enticing multimedia format and high-interest material as integral components
- Integrates generalization strategies (STICKY)

An evidence-based program that enhances the social competence of elementary students with:
- autism spectrum disorders (ASD)
- behavioral disorders
- developmental delays

The Skills

Foundation Skills
- Understanding the Group
- Get Ready
- Following Directions
- Anxiety Reduction (Be Cool)
- Participating

Intermediate
- Turn Taking & Playing Cooperatively
- Responding to Questions & Requests
- Conversation Skills (Staying On Topic)
- Imitation
- Body Basics (FEVER)
- Recognizing & Expressing Wants and Needs
- Joint Attention

Advanced
- Recognizing Emotions
- Perspective Taking (Understanding Others’ Feeling)
- Appropriate Reporting
- Recognizing & Reporting Bullying
- Responding to Bullying
- Problem Solving/Safety
Program Format
(Lessons are taught twice per week)

- **Check in** (review of the previous week/session)
- **Review** posted schedule and posted group rules
- **Introduce** the social skill by watching the **Superheroes** define skills and demonstrate steps to each skill via DVD
- **Watch Peers** perform the skill on DVD
- **Role-play** the skill with a peer
- **Watch** the Superhero **Social Narrative Comic Book** on DVD
- **Engage in a Social Game** based on the targeted skill
- **Free time/snack**
- **Mark** Superhero Power Poster with Power Charges earned
- **Group reward—Superhero of the Day**
- **Explain and give Homework** to be done with Parents
Power Charge Card and Power Poster for Demonstrating a Social Skill Then Self-Recording It

Get Power Charged!

Group Rules and Reward System Behavior Management System
“Get Ready”

• Facilitator says, “Get Ready.”
• Student:
  – Feet on the Floor
  – Hands on Your Knees
  – Make Eye Contact
  – Count to Three

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(Lessons are taught twice per week)

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• Watch the Superhero Social Narrative Comic Book on DVD

Social Narrative: Digital Comic

![Digital Comic Strip]
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Superhero of the Day

- As *Superhero Cards* are earned for following the *Group Rules*, the name of the child who earned it is written on each one:
- The cards are put into a *Bag*.
- At the end of the day, one card is randomly picked from the bag.
- The *Child’s Name* on the picked card is the *Superhero of the Day*.
- That child gets to spin the *Reward Spinner* for a reward for the *Whole Group*.

What Parents Can Do: Generalization

- The Power Charge Card Goes Home
- The Digital Comic Goes Home
- The Parent Reads the Digital Comic Book With Their Child
- The Parent Provides Opportunities for the Child to Practice the Skill
- The Parent Marks the Power Charge Card
- And the Card is Returned to Be Reviewed in the Group
- Power Charges from Home are Self-Recorded By the Children to the Larger Power Poster
The Superhero Social Skills Program for Children with ASD: Examining Its Effectiveness and Generalization in School and Clinical Settings

HEIDI BLOCK, JULIA HOOD, KEITH RADLEY, BEN SPRINGER, BRANDON SEGURA, BILL JENSON, JULIE BOWEN & ELAINE CLARK

Observational Measures

• Analog Play Setting Right After the Group

• Recess at the Elementary School Site

Mean Effect Sizes for Total Social Engagement for Free-Play Period

[Graph showing mean effect sizes for total social engagement by group]
Pingree Video-Based Group

Generalization Effects for Recess: Davis Group
Davis School District Recess

Pre-Treatment Video Clip

During Treatment Video Clip
Dear Superheroes,

I was sitting in a parent training meeting in an autism early intervention school in Philadelphia tonight. As I settled in and looked around, I saw some familiar things on the walls (photos attached). Afterwards, I talked to one of the teachers. It is used in 2 inclusion classrooms for 3-6 year olds. They divided the group (5 kids each) into those who could attend (get ready) and those who were not yet able to “get ready.” Level of language, etc., is similar (higher functioning)—the only difference is the attention compliance with classroom expectations. The attention difficulty group doesn’t really “get” the program yet (which I found in my elem. school last year). The classroom-ready group (including 2 typical peers) loves it. The teacher I talked to says she likes it because it is an actual program instead of just making stuff up every week.

They use everything. They have added all the things. You will see the cups in one of the photos. In addition to power charges in the poster, they get gold coins for power charges in their cups (la poker-chips-in-cups reinforcement). Each group has a chart for showingpower charges that are hidden in a special container with a key for the kids who have earned all their power charges. (While we were busy talking, he dumped all the power charges out of all the cups, so it is a good thing they are recorded on the poster.) In the individual poster photo, you will see they are even using the “bats” of the brackets. The little boy’s mom says he likes to read the comic book every night before bed and in the morning before school. They redressed the classroom with the poster on the wall and the special spaceship that they already did and made it “super cool.” They do Social Skills Tuesdays and Thursdays, exactly as planned. I didn’t see power cards around, but they may be in the classrooms. I saw a stack of black hole cards and the name tags in badge holder. The other teacher apparently throws them away if they were going to be used but didn’t get us in contact. I wonder if they had been collecting any data... but do you know if it goes in their journal?
Where Is the Proof It’s Used

Summer Camp

[Image of a computer screen with text about a summer camp for autistic children]
Utilization of Superheroes Social Skills to Reduce Disruptive and Aggressive Behavior

ROSEFIELD, D.; FRAWLEY, S.; ROBBINS, B.; and DOWNS, L.
University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, USA

The current pilot study investigated the effectiveness of the Superheroes Social Skills program in decreasing disruptive and aggressive behavior of students diagnosed with high-functioning autism. The program is a structured classroom activity in which students are taught social skills through the use of a Superhero character, who uses these skills to resolve conflicts and model appropriate behavior. The program was implemented over 10 weeks and compared to a control group with no instruction. Results indicated that the Superheroes Social Skills program was effective in reducing disruptive and aggressive behavior in students with high-functioning autism. Additionally, follow-up observations revealed maintenance of intervention effects, indicating that the intervention was effective in reducing disruptive and aggressive behavior long-term.

Fig. 1: Group percentage of disruptive behavior across conditions.

Table 1: Proportion of SIB Aggression Across Participants During Pre and Post Assessment

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Note: Values represent the proportion of SIB occurrence at each time point. Mean values were calculated across participants and conditions.
New Superheroes Projects

- Recess-Based Superheroes Program
- Whole Class/Whole School Application (PBIS)
- Combined with The Tough Kid Bully Blockers Program
- Parent Training Program for Parents (run program on their own)
- GETTING READY: A Positive Compliance and Following Directions Program to Help Reduce Disruptive Behavior

THANK YOU

Available from Pacific Northwest Publishing

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