



Training Active Bystanders (TAB)

Key Language and Concepts

- Bystander – a witness, someone who is in a position to know what is happening and is in a position to act.
- Active Bystander – a bystander who acts to stop harm rather than ignoring, watching passively, or joining in.
- Complicity – any action or inaction by which a bystander supports harmdoing.
- Harmdoing – hurtful teasing; excluding, or ignoring someone; telling lies, spreading false rumors; threatening; forcing someone to do something; physical violence including hitting, kicking, shoving; stealing or damaging someone's possessions; making negative comments or gestures with a sexual meaning, about someone's sexual orientation, or about someone's race or color.
- Consequences – Harmdoing without active bystandership has a negative effect on targets, harmdoers, bystanders and community culture.
- Community values -- Certain behaviors are desirable and expected, others are not.
- Moral courage – Doing what you believe is right even when acting contrary to the values, beliefs or expectations of people around you.
- Promoters of active bystandership:
 - Empathy
 - Responsibility for others
 - Inclusive caring
 - Competency to help
- Inhibitors of active bystandership:
 - Pluralistic ignorance
 - Diffusion of responsibility
 - Ambiguity of the need for help
 - Danger or cost of helping
 - Fear of disapproval

TAB's goal is to prevent harmdoing and violence by reducing anti-social behaviors and increasing pro-social behaviors and attitudes, in particular, active bystandership. According to the comprehensive evaluation, that goal was attained: a significant reduction in harmdoing occurred in the TAB schools and not the control schools, a 20% difference.

Students' behavior first began changing when they were taught TAB and those changes continued to grow through completion of the evaluation. TAB schools also showed a decrease in witnessing harmdoing and perpetration of harmdoing over time compared to the control schools. These results were from the pilot of a twelve-lesson TAB curriculum for nearly 750 middle and high school students during the 2006 – 2007 school year in North Quabbin schools.

TAB outlines specific skills for safely intervening to interrupt harm, develops bystander awareness of their power, and teaches how bystanders can generate positive actions by others. Being a positive bystander does not mean aggression against the aggressor. Participants learn ways to create a safe environment for themselves and others. They practice skills such as speaking up, recruiting allies, supporting the target and the harmdoer. The interactive curriculum includes large and small group discussion, role plays, journal writing, games and exercises.

A literature review shows TAB differs substantially from other anti-bullying and violence prevention curricula. It applies to everyone because each of us has had the experience of being a bystander, of having needed help, and of doing harm (even if unintentionally).

TAB Application in the Schools

In the fall of 2006, in a Train the Trainers, the TAB curriculum and teaching techniques were taught to 24 middle and high school students, 3 police officers, 4 guidance counselors and 4 health teachers. Between October '06 and May '07, co-equal training teams of 2 students and a police officer taught in Athol-Royalston Regional and Ralph C. Mahar Regional middle school and high school health classes. Gill-Montague Regional Schools and Narragansett Regional Schools served as controls.

Observers filled out evaluation forms to measure the fidelity with which the curriculum was being taught. The schools set aside 15 time slots, 12 for the curriculum and three for the evaluation questionnaire which the evaluation team administered just prior to the TAB lessons, just after their completion, and five months afterwards.

The Evaluation

The evaluation team was led by Deborah Habib, Ed.D. who gathered and analyzed qualitative data, and Alexandra Gubin, Ph.D. who carried out the quantitative evaluation. The qualitative research, using surveys, student journals, interviews and focus groups showed leadership, self-esteem and courage increased among youth trainers. They exhibited behavior shifts, using active bystander language and techniques in peer and family contexts. Students who received the TAB curriculum used the new terminology and identified actions they can take as an active bystander. School administrators reported that TAB supports anti-harassment policies, district improvement plans, and civic and social goals of school mission statements.

The quantitative research is the first to attempt to identify strategies used to interrupt harmdoing. The questionnaire to measure harmdoing was adapted from the Olweus Bully/Victim Scale (1996), a proven measurement tool for school violence and victimization. The analyses of the quantitative data present a clear and consistent picture that TAB reduced harmdoing. At baseline, 60% of students in TAB and control schools were targets of harmdoing in the past 7 days; at the follow-up, only 45% of TAB students were targets, and more than 64% of the control school students reported having been targets. Harmdoing was reduced, but the quantitative evaluation did not show an increase in bystanding behavior. The questionnaire did not capture this behavior because measuring active bystandership is a new concept and quantitative researchers have never before attempted to measure it. To develop a measure of bystandership, Quabbin Mediation, evaluators and the schools are creating a taxonomy

of active bystanders so as to develop a quantitative tool that can appropriately measure this behavior.

Origins of TAB

After reading the *Psychology of Good and Evil: Why Children, Adults and Groups Help and Harm Others*, Quabbin Mediation's executive director Sharon Tracy and training director Susan Wallace, met with author Ervin Staub, Ph.D. at his office on the UMass-Amherst campus. From that meeting grew a partnership between academia and the grassroots to further expand the violence prevention work Quabbin Mediation has carried out in the North Quabbin region of Massachusetts for many years.

Creation of the curriculum's first draft, critiques from the readers' group, and a field test at the Athol-Area YMCA's Camp Wiyaka were funded by the Mass. Executive Office of Public Safety. Funding made possible by Congressman John Olver through the Dept. of Justice, and from private foundations allowed development of the evaluation, TAB application and evaluation. TAB has created a new and enduring partnership among Quabbin Mediation, regional schools, police departments, and community organizations. Partners were involved in the evolution of TAB from its inception, through strategy development, refining, applying and modifying the curriculum, and the evaluation. This involvement has led to a demand for TAB in the community setting, in elementary schools, continuation of the basic TAB and creating an advanced TAB.

TAB Partners

Police: Police chiefs of Athol (Tim Anderson) and Orange (Brian Spear) met early on with Quabbin Mediation and Dr. Staub to create a structure for police involvement. Officers Peter Buck from Athol and Robbie Haigh and Chad Softic from Orange co-taught TAB.

Schools: The schools are wholeheartedly involved in TAB. Dr. Reza Namin, Superintendent of the Ralph C. Mahar Regional School District; Anthony Polito, Superintendent of the Athol-Royalston Regional School District, Mahar principal Dr. Frank Zak, Athol High School principal Kent Strong and vice-principal Bill Chaisson, Mary Ann Miller from guidance, Kathy Horrigan, health teacher; Athol Middle School principal John Doty and Trudy Berkovitz from guidance; Paula Swenson, guidance at Mahar.

Readers: Dept. of Social Services area director Joe Collins, Mahar teachers Penny Smith and Pam Smith, student Stephanie Harris, executive director of the North Quabbin Community Coalition Rebecca Bialecki, Dept. of Youth Services and DSS staff, youth activist Brian Eno, retired teachers Jane Manring and Donna McKay, Brian Spear, Ria Windcaller, Robbie Haigh, Chad Softic, Peter Buck.

Evaluators: Sandi Gubin; Deb Habib; Katya Goldengur; Deen Leonard; AnnMarie Meltzer.

Control Schools: Gill-Montague Regional School District and the Narragansett Regional School District, whose principal and vice-principal respectively were extremely helpful.

Observers: Jennifer Tyson from the Mass. Office of the Attorney General, Cindy Boyle from the Northwest District Attorney's office, Brian Eno.

Trainers: 24 middle and high school students, a diverse mix, have been invaluable in translating TAB concepts and skills for over 750 of their fellow students, and in refining the curriculum.

Research Basis for TAB

A substantial body of research was drawn on in developing the TAB curriculum and structure. (A bibliography is available upon request.) TAB is based on the power of bystanders, a subject extensively researched by Dr. Staub and others. For example, often children are passive bystanders when other children are being harmed by their peers. Passivity encourages harmdoers. Boys who are aggressive toward their peers are more likely to get involved with criminal activities as they get older. Studies on the effects of passivity on bystanders themselves found that children who witness harmdoing and remain passive report less positive feelings about their school experience. Harmdoing, in combination with passivity by bystanders, teaches that people are not to be trusted, that they can be cruel and uncaring, and that the world is dangerous. When bystanders remain passive, this substantially decreases the likelihood that other people will help.

In contrast, children and adults who engage in positive, helpful actions, tend to become more helpful and have a more positive outlook about themselves and others. Analysis of the actions of “rescuers” of people during the Nazi Holocaust, shows an evolution of helpfulness in a community. Active bystandership, in response to harmful actions, leads to more positive interactions among people. For children, it creates an improved classroom atmosphere. This can be an important contributor to children’s positive socialization, and lead to improved learning.

TAB addresses protective factors preventing violence that studies have identified, including: respect for one's self and others; lack of aggressive tendencies; pro-social attitudes and behavior; positive social relationships; positive self-concept, a sense of competence and good leadership skills; a sense of belonging in the school and the community; attachment and commitment to the school and the community; and decreased victimization, violence, delinquency, truancies and suspensions.

Replicating TAB

The TAB structure and curriculum have been modified based on the pilot. Co-equal teams of youth and an adult now teach a 6-lesson basic TAB. In Massachusetts schools, the curriculum meets requirements for the educational frameworks for health classes and other subjects. Youth trainers are selected from a diverse mix of peer mediators and others; adults can be a school resource officer, staff of a community mediation program, school staff, or a community member. Time commitment is 30 hours per person per year if 16-24 trainers teach 400 students.

Executive Summary

Program Evaluation and Research Findings
Prepared by Alexandra Gubin, Ph.D. and Deborah Habib, Ed.D.
December 2007

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.

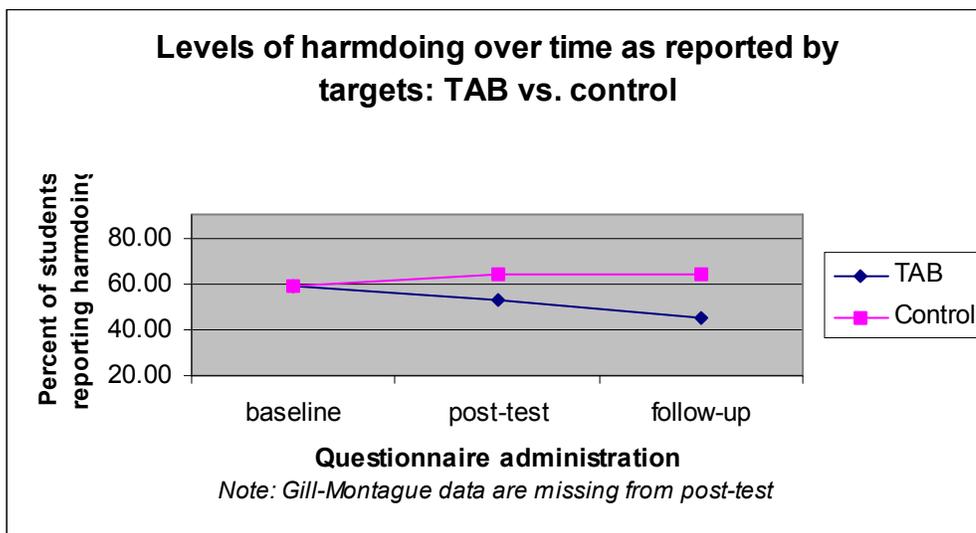
KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

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.

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.

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.

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 bystanders 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