

Barb Gunn, Ph.D.  
Oregon Research Institute

Barrera, M., Jr., Biglan, A., Taylor, T. K., Gunn, B.K., Smolkowski, K., Black, C. et al. (2002). Early elementary school intervention to reduce conduct problems: A randomized trial with Hispanic and non-Hispanic children. *Prevention Science*, 3, 83-94.

**Abstract:** Children's aggressive behavior and reading difficulties during early elementary school years are risk factors for adolescent problem behaviors such as delinquency, academic failure, and substance use. This study determined if a comprehensive intervention designed to address both of these risk factors could affect teacher, parent, and observer measures of internalizing and externalizing problems. The study randomly assigned 116 European American and 168 Hispanic children (kindergarten through third grade) from 3 communities selected for aggressiveness or reading difficulties to an intervention or no-intervention control condition. Intervention families received parent training, and their children received social behavior interventions and supplementary reading instruction over a 2-yr period. At the end of intervention, playground observations showed that treated children displayed less negative social behavior than controls. At the end of a 1-yr follow-up, treated children showed less teacher-rated internalizing and less parent-rated coercive and antisocial behavior than controls. The authors discuss the study's limitations and implications for prevention.

Biglan, A., Metzler, C.W., Fowler, R.C., Gunn, B.K., Taylor, T., & Rusby, J.C. (1997).

Improving childrearing in America's communities. In P.A. Lamal (Ed.), *Cultural contingencies: Behavior analytic perspectives on cultural practices* Westport, CT: Praeger.

**Abstract:** Focuses on how a science for improving childrearing in American communities might go forward. The authors offer it as an example of one direction the behavioral sciences might take, if behavioral scientists wish to ensure that our knowledge leads to widespread improvements in the human condition. From a behavioral analysis perspective, the sections in the chapter summarize current knowledge about problematic and beneficial family, school, and peer environments. Each section discusses how existing knowledge may grow in each of these areas in order to increase the prevalence of beneficial family, school, and peer environments. Substantial increases in the prevalence of beneficial environments will require changes in the way communities are organized. The chapter concludes by focusing on how researchers might influence community organizations to adopt and maintain practices that would benefit children and families.

Gunn, B.K., Smolkowski, K., Biglan, A., & Black, C. (2002). Supplemental instruction in decoding skills for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in early elementary school: A follow-up. *Journal of Special Education*, 36, 69-79.

**Abstract:** This article describes a follow-up study that experimentally evaluated the effects of supplemental reading instruction for children in kindergarten through Grade 3. The authors screened students from 10 elementary schools in three school districts, using the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*. They identified 256 K-2 students for participation, then randomly assigned those students to receive or not receive 2 years of

supplemental reading instruction that taught basic decoding and comprehension skills. The authors measured reading ability in the fall prior to the first year of the intervention and again in the spring of Years 1, 2, and 3. At the end of the 2-year intervention, children who received the supplemental instruction performed better on measures of word attack, word identification, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. One year after the intervention, children in the supplemental instruction group still showed greater improvement in word attack and oral reading fluency than the comparison students.

Gunn, B., Smolkowski, K., Biglan, A., Black, C., & Blair, J. (in press). Fostering the development of reading skill through supplemental instruction: Results for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students. *The Journal of Special Education*.

**Abstract:** This paper reports the effects of a two-year supplemental reading program for K-3 Hispanic and non-Hispanic students that focused on the development of decoding skills and reading fluency. The authors identified 299 students for participation and randomly assigned them to either the supplemental instruction or a no-treatment control group. The study assessed participants' reading ability in the fall, before the first year of the intervention, and again in the spring of Years 1, 2, 3, and 4. At the end of the two-year intervention, students who received the supplemental instruction performed significantly better than their matched controls did on measures of entry level reading skills (i.e., letter-word identification and word attack) and on measures of oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The benefits of the instruction were still clear two years after instruction had ended. Students in the supplemental condition had significantly greater growth on measures of letter-word identification, word attack, oral reading fluency, and comprehension. Results support the value of supplemental instruction focused on the development of word recognition skills for helping students at risk for reading failure.

Gunn, B., Biglan, A., Smolkowski, K., & Ary, D. (2000). The efficacy of supplemental instruction in decoding skills for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in early elementary school. *Journal of Special Education*, 34, 90-103.

**Abstract:** The number of children who speak languages other than English has risen dramatically in the last 20 years and continues to grow. According to Goldenberg (1996), the number of students in the United States who learn English as a second language (ESL) grew from 1.5 million in 1985 to almost 2.7 million in 1992. Hispanic students constitute the largest group of ESL students and are particularly at risk for reading difficulties. In spite of gains in achievement, Hispanic students are about twice as likely as non-Hispanic Whites to be reading below average for their age (Snow, Bums, & Griffin, 1998). Limited English proficiency may be partially responsible for low reading achievement among Hispanic students. However, research suggests that even when learning and testing in their native language, many Spanish-speaking students still attain low levels of achievement (Gersten & Woodward, 1995; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991). Educators know little about the value of systematic reading instruction in English for Hispanic students. Some evidence suggests that learning to read in one's native language can lead to higher levels of literacy in both first and second languages (Collier, 1995), but direct tests of the efficacy of teaching reading in English have not been conducted. This study should contribute to the resolution of this important policy issue by examining the degree to which Hispanic students can benefit from supplemental instruction for reading in English. The purpose of this study was to (a) experimentally evaluate the effects of supplemental reading instruction in phonological awareness and basic decoding skills on word recognition, (b) examine, the degree to which

such instruction contributes to growth in oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, and (c) examine the utility of teaching Spanish-speaking children decoding skills in English.

Metzler, C.W., Taylor, T.K., Gunn, B.K., Fowler, R.C., Biglan, A., & Ary, D.V. (1998). A comprehensive approach to the prevention of behavior problems: Integrating effective practices to strengthen behavior management programs in schools. *Effective School Practices*, 17, 8-24.

**Abstract:** Children's antisocial behavior is the result of a complex set of factors and requires solutions that encompass the family, peers, and community organizations, in addition to the school. This paper describes steps that schools can take to strengthen their behavior management programs by ensuring that families and students who might most benefit are reached by effective programs to assist them and by involving community organizations in the implementation of a comprehensive behavior management approach. Parent training (and other parenting resources for families), social problem-solving training, mentoring, and after school programs for students all have the potential for reducing levels of problem behaviors over and above the effects of schools' behavior management programs. Empirically supported exemplars for parent training and social problem-solving skills training are presented. Where research is more limited, the authors describe promising approaches based on the best available evidence (e.g., communications to parents about effective parenting, mentoring, and after school programs). The authors discuss strategies for how schools and the larger community might incorporate these programs into a comprehensive approach to the prevention of problem behaviors and emphasize the need for empirically based practices, since many popular approaches to handling problem behavior are ineffectual or—worse—harmful.