

ED293681 1988-03-00 Classroom Strategies for Teaching Migrant Children about Child Abuse. ERIC Digest.

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Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

Classroom Strategies for Teaching Migrant Children about Child Abuse. ERIC Digest.....	1
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TEXT: The migrant educator has always been much more than a teacher of the 3 R's. Divorce, teen pregnancy, and child abuse may have to be addressed in their daily lessons. Teachers have attempted to overcome the effects of the migrant child's poverty, frequent moves, poor living conditions, and health problems through innovative programs that go beyond those of the regular classroom. Research conducted by ESCAPE (Eastern Stream Child Abuse Prevention and Education) from 1982-85 clearly identified migrant children as a population at high risk of being maltreated, adding yet another area of concern. Teachers need to find ways to incorporate education for

recognizing and dealing with such problems into the curriculum in order to meet children's needs and still fulfill curriculum requirements. This digest will provide teachers with strategies and techniques for accomplishing this task.

WHY SHOULD WE TEACH ABOUT CHILD ABUSE?

Bringing child abuse education into the migrant classroom can accomplish five major goals. It can:

- Provide support to the child who has suffered some form of maltreatment in order to lessen its devastating effects;
- Teach children prevention strategies that will help them wherever their migrant lifestyle takes them;
- Teach all children to accept those who have special problems;
- Improve the self-concepts of all children in the class; and
- Encourage the maltreated child to confide in an adult regarding the maltreatment.

CHOOSING MATERIALS FOR CLASSROOM USE

We are all aware of how sensitive the problem of abuse and neglect can be. It is important that you evaluate materials carefully, paying attention to the specific objective at hand and the special population you are trying to reach, before you use materials with children, parents, and staff. Consider these points:

- What is my goal?
- What strategies should I use to reach that goal?
- Is this material appropriate for my intended audience? (Consider reading level, interest level, ethnic and cultural concerns, age)
- Will this material encourage discussion?
- What procedures should I follow if use of the material results in disclosure of maltreatment?

WHAT CAN READING ABOUT CHILD ABUSE ACCOMPLISH?

If a child is, or has been, in an abusive situation, reading about others who have endured a similar experience can help the child deal with his or her own thoughts and emotions. Other children in the class who may have heard or read of a case of maltreatment will be curious or even uneasy around the abused child, but through literature your students can gain some understanding of and empathy for abused children, which may help them respond more positively to their classmate. Keep in mind that the child who is unable to read a particular book can be read to or can listen to the book on tape.

WHAT IS BIBLIOTHERAPY?

Bibliotherapy is the process of offering guidance through reading; i.e., helping students find books through which they can explore a personal problem, develop life skills, improve self-concepts, and enhance personal growth. Through bibliotherapy a child can release pent-up emotions and confront pain. For the maltreated child, realizing that others have suffered in much the same way will reduce feelings of isolation and shame.

Bibliotherapy can be used to help children cope with existing problems or as a preventive measure to address problems common to all children at various stages of their development. The main qualifications for teachers who want to use books to help children are an interest in and a concern for children, supported by a willingness to become familiar with children's literature.

HOW IS BIBLIOTHERAPY IMPLEMENTED?

The following specific steps will ensure that use of bibliotherapy will be successful:

Preparation

--Identify students' needs--at what level does the student need to be read to, should a certain topic be addressed? --Match student needs to appropriate materials. Books are available for all ages, all reading levels, and all interest levels. Consult THE BOOKFINDER, A GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE ABOUT THE NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF YOUTH for books that relate to special topics, reading levels, and interest levels. --Remember that there are special series of books for the older reader with limited skills, such as the Skinny Books by E.P. Dutton and Scholastic's Action Series. --Decide how the book chosen will be used, the guidance to be given during reading, and any follow-up activities.

Implementation

--Motivate students with activities that create a positive atmosphere. --Provide opportunities for the child to experience the book--write about it, talk about it. --Follow-up with creative discussion. --Evaluate what has been learned and begin follow-up activities.

Creative Book Sharing Ideas with Groups

Often a group of children will choose or need to read a book on the same topic. This offers a great opportunity for a shared learning experience. Give the students several titles to choose from, but have them decide on the one book to be read by the whole group. Discuss what the book may be about and provide a purpose for reading part of the book. Afterwards, have children return to the group to discuss what they read. Children can then continue reading until the book is finished, frequently stopping to jointly discuss the story. This technique offers many opportunities for sharing feelings, discussing the story, and developing overall communication skills. Even the poorest reader can participate because the joint discussion helps to assure understanding of the story. After the reading is complete, creative extending activities can be assigned.

Shared Reading

A good book is even better when it is shared with someone else. Shared reading

involves two people who read the same book, taking turns reading a few pages or paragraphs at a time. Discussion goes on, and at the end creative activities can be assigned. This is another method that offers great support to the less capable reader.

Book Extension Ideas

A "good" book lives on in the mind of the reader. You think about the characters, wish to talk with them, or long for another chapter. Extending activities allow the student to fulfill all of these wishes and more. Additionally, many skill areas are put to use in creative ways that can be adapted for varying levels of ability. This is particularly valuable for the migrant student who may only be in the district a brief time. The teacher can use activities that stress the immediate skill needs while involving the student in the same unit as the rest of the class. Note that the following extension ideas encourage independent thinking, writing, and reading skills.

1. Pretend to be a character in a story you have read. Write or tell what the character is like.
2. Write a letter to the main character in the story, sharing your reaction to something the character did.
3. Did you like the ending of the story? Write another one.
4. Tell about your family. Who in your family do you turn to when you have problems. How is your family like families you have read about? How is it different?
5. Write a description of a character you've read about that you would like to have as a friend and tell why.
6. Write a riddle about a story others have read, too; let them try to guess which story it is.
7. Write a diary of the main character showing the story from his point of view.
8. Write a sequel to the story.

Activities for Older Students

The older, more capable student can be a great resource for the teacher, the school, and other students in dealing with the issue of abuse and the special problems of the migrant student. One problem is providing the migrant child with the resources to continue learning about maltreatment and how to find help for herself should she move. Many of these ideas help students develop vital skills for communication, research, writing, and decisionmaking.

1. After reading a particular book, such as *THOSE TRAVERS KIDS*, decide what services could help this family. Where are those services located in this state? How would you find them in other states? Interview people who work in service fields. What services do they offer? What training did they need for this job? Transcribe the interviews so they can be shared with others.
2. Have students roleplay, reporting a case of abuse. What information would they need to share? Where would they find the number to call?
3. Have students prepare a card for their wallet that gives important safety numbers: fire, police, ambulance, child abuse hot line. Have children determine how they would find these numbers in another state.
4. Have students write a brief synopsis of a book about child abuse telling the plot, recommended age and grade

level, and why they liked it. Compile the write-ups in a list to be given to each child to provide a resource list of books to help him continue to learn about abuse even if he should leave. 5. Students could organize an Information Day on Child Abuse. After deciding what needs to be covered, speakers such as local Social Service Agency workers and school guidance staff could be invited. This could be a learning experience for faculty, parents, and students. By preparing materials, reviewing, and choosing audio-visual materials, students would greatly increase their own knowledge. 6. Have students write stories of their own families using the "Roots/Foxfire" approach. Explore the family history, making comparisons of how changing times affect family practices. The changes in parent-child relationships through the generations can be one of the focuses. Compile the histories into a book for sharing. 7. After your class has read about a case of child maltreatment, you can have them follow it from reporting to conclusion. This would introduce them to the social services system and the legal system. Do they agree with the outcome? 8. Have the students collect articles about maltreatment and discuss what seems to be the cause. This would assume you have shown films or presented other material to provide the background material they would need.

The important characteristic of all these activities is that the students' opinions, background, and interests will determine their direction and outcome. Each activity can be the basis for continuing investigation and interaction between students and ideas.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CONCEPT?

One of the primary characteristics shared by the abusive parent and the abused child is low self-esteem. Such feelings prevent a child from reaching out to the world, learning new concepts, making new friends, or simply liking himself. An individual's self-concept is learned behavior, something which develops over time. It is generally affected by the environment in which we function and determines how we feel about ourselves and others. Poor self-concept leads a child to expect failure, experience difficulty making decisions, and hesitate to express feelings or opinions. It is easy to see why a child with a poor self-concept would have problems in the classroom.

Fortunately, research shows that self-concept can be improved. Through a positive attitude and a supportive classroom environment, the educator can bring about change and greatly enrich a child's life.

SELF-CONCEPT ACTIVITIES

--Star of the week: Put a picture of a child in the center of a bulletin board and have everyone write something supportive about the "star." Put up that child's best work. At the end of the week, put the picture and the writings in booklet form and send it home with the child.

--Pat on the back: Cut out hand shapes. A child prints another child's name on the palm and writes five positive descriptive words on the fingers. Then the hand is delivered to the child whose name is written on the palm. This activity often points out to students positive characteristics about themselves of which they were unaware.

--"Me" collage: Children find pictures and words that tell about themselves, then paste them on a sheet of paper or on a tracing of their bodies. To appreciate themselves, children need to be aware of their own characteristics and preferences. They need to know it is okay to like things that are different from those chosen by their peers, to look different, and to react differently to similar situations.

--Make birthdays special: Be sure to put each student's birthday on the class calendar. Plan a monthly celebration for all the students who have birthdays during the month. Design unique birthday cards that stress each student's special qualities.

Using a variety of techniques to enhance self-esteem can help abused children to develop a firmer sense of self, as well as give them the incentive to reach out for assistance. Self-concept activities, in conjunction with bibliotherapy, can enhance awareness and ease the burden many migrant children experience.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Resources for Self-concept Activities

Bean, R., and H. Clemes. HOW TO RAISE CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM. Los Angeles, CA: Price/Stern/Sloan, 1980.

Borba, M., and C. Borba. SELF-ESTEEM: A CLASSROOM AFFAIR, Volumes 1 and 2. Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1982.

Canfield, J., and R. C. Wells. ONE HUNDRED WAYS TO ENHANCE SELF-CONCEPT IN THE CLASSROOM: HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976.

Clark, A., and Others. HOW TO RAISE TEENAGERS' SELF-ESTEEM. Los Angeles, CA: Price/Stern/Sloan, 1987.

Children's Books on Child Abuse

Armstrong, Louise. SAVING THE BIG DEAL BABY. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1980. Plot: Physical abuse by parents. For ages 12 and up.

Bauer, M.D. FOSTER CHILD. New York: Seabury, 1977. Plot: Sexual abuse by a foster father. For ages 11-13.

Bradbury, Bianca. *THOSE TRAVERS KIDS*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1972. Plot: Physical abuse by a stepfather. For ages 12 and up.

Bulla, C. R. *BENITO*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1961. Plot: Physical abuse by an uncle. For ages 8-10.

Byars, Betsy. *THE PINBALLS*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977. Plot: Neglect and physical abuse by parents. For ages 8-12.

Hunt, Irene. *THE LOTTERY ROSE*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976. Plot: Physical abuse by mother and her boyfriend. For ages 11-14.

Mackey, Gene, and Helen Swan. *DEAR ELIZABETH*. Children's Institute of Kansas City, 9412 High Drive, Leawood, Kansas 66206, 1983. Plot: Sexual abuse by father. For ages 12 and up.

Roberts, Willo Davis. *DON'T HURT LAURIE*. New York: Atheneum, 1978. Plot: Physical abuse by mother. For ages 10-14.

Ruby, Lois. *ARRIVING AT A PLACE YOU NEVER LEFT*. New York: Dell, 1977. Plot: Teen problems including physical abuse of sibling. For ages 13 and up.

Finding Books for Children

Dreyer, S. *THE BOOKFINDER: A GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE ABOUT THE NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF YOUTH*. Volumes I, II, and III. American Guidance Service. (Note: Each volume reviews books from the previous few years.)

Pardeck, J. A., and J. T. Pardeck. *YOUNG PEOPLE WITH PROBLEMS: A GUIDE TO BIBLIOTHERAPY*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984.

Zaccaria, J. S. and H. Moses. *FACILITATING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: THE USE OF BIBLIOTHERAPY IN TEACHING AND COUNSELING*. Champaign, IL: Stipes, 1968.

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