Chapter 11

“What If Goodness Ruled the World?”:
Utilizing a Comic Book Series and Puppet Musical to Promote Empathy, A Disabilities Awareness and Stop Bullying Platform in and out of the Schools

Nava R. Silton
Marymount Manhattan College, USA

Patrick Riley
Marymount Manhattan College, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how the Realabilities Comic Book Series and the Addy & Uno Off-Broadway Musical feature five characters with disabilities, who harness the special strengths-associated with their disabilities (Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Visual, Hearing and Physical Disability)-to save their school from bullies. The intent of the following five studies was to utilize pre-post-test designs to examine the efficacy of various iterations of a musical and/or a full comic book series curriculum in enhancing typical children’s empathy, cognitive attitudes on the adjective checklist (ACL) and behavioral intentions on the shared activities questionnaire (SAQ) towards children with disabilities. Following the musical and/or comic book series curriculum, the participants showed significantly improved behavioral intentions and improved cognitive attitudes towards children with disabilities. These findings help demonstrate how creative programs like these may foster empathy and serve as a useful antidote to counter negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

See Figure 1.

What This Paper Adds

The Addy & Uno Musical seeks to improve upon the Kids on the Block (KOB) and Count Me In Puppet Show Programs and research by providing real-life, situated interactional opportunities, information about adherence to the puppet show scripts, information regarding the location of the show performance, and a brief description of the puppeteers. The assessment of the Addy and Uno Musical evaluates the efficacy of presenting new, kid-friendly puppets with disabilities that are openly operated by their users, who are assuming the realistic roles of individuals with disabilities while utilizing music to enhance child viewers’ understanding, empathy, recall and appreciation of their peers with disabilities. Moreover, the researchers in the Addy & Uno Musical intervention are utilizing key valid, reliable and objective quantitative behavioral intention (The Shared Activities Questionnaire (SAQ; Morgan et al., 1996) and cognitive attitudinal (The Adjective Checklist (ACL; Siperstein & Bak, 1980)) measures to assess change in the participants’ perceptions from before and after the musical intervention. In contrast to the findings from the KOB and Count Me In Puppet Show Programs, the fourth and fifth grade participants who viewed The Addy & Uno Musical showed significantly improved behavioral intentions and cognitive attitudes towards children with disabilities. This paper suggests that a brief 50-minute musical intervention may serve as a high quality educational program to help typical students glean more knowledge and positive attitudes and intentions towards their peers with disabilities.

Figure 1. What if goodness ruled the world?