Skills for Academic and Social Success (SASS)

TARGET AUDIENCE
This program is for youth who are in high school and have social anxiety disorder and their parents and teachers.

SUMMARY
Skills for Academic and Social Success (SASS) is a school-based, cognitive-behavioral intervention designed to reduce social anxiety symptoms and help youth become comfortable and competent in a range of social situations.

EVIDENCE
The results of two randomized studies, comparing SASS to a control group condition or a supportive educational treatment, found that significantly more youth participating in SASS no longer met criteria for social phobia* by the end of the intervention compared to youth in the other conditions. Additionally, symptom severity ratings were significantly reduced for SASS participants compared to youth in other conditions. These program effects were maintained for 6 months in one study and 9 months in the other study. An additional randomized trial demonstrated that SASS, delivered by psychologists or by school counselors, resulted in reduced levels of anxiety at the end of treatment and at a 5-month follow-up compared to a control group.

*Note - Social anxiety disorder was previously called social phobia.

COMPONENTS
The SASS program involves the use of multiple components in an attempt to help youth reduce their social anxiety and increase their comfort level in social situations.

- Group sessions - Sessions include learning about social anxiety and the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; receiving social skills training (e.g., starting and maintaining conversations, listening and remembering, assertiveness); obtaining guided exposure to and practice with feared situations; and introducing strategies to prevent relapse after the program ends. Two booster sessions encourage continued improvement.
- Individual meetings - Each youth meets with group leaders to set individual treatment goals and discuss specific challenges;
- Social events - Weekend events provide opportunities to practice and strengthen new skills;
- Parent meetings - Group meetings at the school offer education about social anxiety and techniques for helping youth with their challenges;
- Teacher meetings - Group meetings prepare teachers to provide opportunities in class to help youth practice new skills (e.g., calling on students to answer questions);
- Peer assistants - Students with strong social skills assist with social events and help SASS participants practice skills in the school environment.

PREVIOUS USE
The SASS program has been tested in parochial high schools in New York City and in several suburban public high schools. Modified versions of SASS have been implemented with Canadian adolescents in British Columbia and with Portuguese adolescents in Portugal.
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**TRAINING**

In program evaluations, sessions were co-led by a behaviorally trained clinical psychologist and a clinical psychology graduate student. Facilitators are required to attend training, which consists of a 1-day, interactive workshop with the program developer or another senior SASS psychologist. In addition, follow-up consultation calls to assist with program implementation are recommended. Please contact Dr. Warner, using details in the Contact section, for more information on training and costs.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Considerations for implementing SASS include developing a good relationship with schools to allow for assessment and recruitment of youth participants and operation of program sessions within the school, scheduling youth sessions at varying times during the school day to reduce interference with academic courses, and presenting the program in a way that reduces possible stigma for participants (e.g., assuring confidentiality).

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

**IMPLEMENTATION**

If you are interested in implementing SASS, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

**TIME**

This program is implemented over the course of 3 months in 12-weekly, 40-minute group sessions and two booster sessions after the end of treatment; two, 15-minute individual meetings; four, 90-minute weekend social events with peers; two, 45-minute parent meetings; and two 30-minute teacher meetings.

**COST**

Cost information was not located.

**EVALUATION PLAN**

In order to move the SASS program to the Effective category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence, program results should be replicated by a research team independently of the program developer.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

**CONTACT**

Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program.
Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu

You may also contact Carrie Masia Warner, Ph.D., by mail William Paterson University, Psychology Department, 300 Pompton Rd, Wayne, New Jersey 07470 or email masiac@wpunj.edu

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