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ABSTRACT

This sixth chapter in "The Challenge of Counseling in Middle Schools" presents four articles on academic achievement in early adolescence. "Succeeding in Middle School: A Multimodal Approach," by Edwin Gerler, Jr., Nancy Shannon Drew, and Phyllis Mohr, describes a study conducted to examine the effects of the multimodal program, "Succeeding in School," with potential dropouts in grades six through eight. "Effects of a Classroom Guidance Unit on Sixth Graders' Examination Performance," by Natalie Wilson, presents a study designed to examine whether students who participated in a classroom guidance unit would make significantly higher grades on their final examinations than would students in a control group and to determine whether students participating in the unit fail significantly fewer examinations than control group students. "Transforming Low Achieving and Disruptive Adolescents into Model Students," by Thelma Blumberg, addresses the problem of discipline in middle schools and discusses the use of Daily Progress Reports to deal with problem students. "Conflict Resolution and Interpersonal Skill Building Through the Use of Cooperative Learning," by Amalya Nattiv, Gary Render, David Lemire, and Kristin Render, looks at the need for integration skills and conflict resolution development and discusses how cooperative learning encourages interactive skills.

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Chapter 6

The Challenge of Academic Achievement in Early Adolescence

Americans are becoming increasingly aware of the need for schools to promote academic excellence. Individuals in the business community and elsewhere complain that young people do not have the basic academic skills necessary for economic success in a competitive world. Governmental and private commissions have noted the high dropout rate in America's schools and the generally poor record of public schools in promoting excellence. Politicians and other public figures point to Japan and some European countries as having a monopoly on excellence in education. Although many of these claims are exaggerated, educators in the United States must account for the failure of schools to motivate young people to stay in school and to strive for high levels of academic achievement.

The main issue raised in Chapter 6 is how middle school counselors can contribute to schools' efforts at improving academic achievement among young teenagers. These days middle schoolers often have considerable freedom. Many are latchkey children who may choose what to do when they arrive home from a day at school. More often than not they choose leisure, neglecting their academic responsibilities. This chapter presents classroom guidance strategies for middle school coun-

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selors to use in helping youngsters develop a reasonable "work ethic." These classroom programs cover such topics as the following:

- Helping students feel comfortable in the classroom
- Teaching students to listen carefully to classroom instruction
- Suggesting appropriate ways for students to cooperate with teachers
- Identifying and practicing effective time management skills
- Developing effective ways to study academic material
- Helping students view themselves as capable learners
- Affording students opportunities to consider the benefits of hard work
- Identifying public figures who model beneficial work habits

Middle school counselors can play an important role in helping young people see themselves as capable students who have the potential to realize academic success. As Thelma Blumberg's article in Chapter 6 suggests, counselors often take the lead in "transforming low achieving and disruptive adolescents into model students" and thus play a significant part in the academic mission of middle schools.

Succeeding in Middle School: A Multimodal Approach

**Edwin R. Gerler, Jr.
Nancy Shannon Drew
Phyllis Mohr**

Does counseling help students learn the basic school subjects? Can counseling improve students' attitude toward school and classroom behavior? Research on school counseling programs over the last two decades has shown that counselors can affect the learning climate in schools through behavior modification (Thomas, 1974), affective education (Wirth, 1977), interpersonal communication training (Asbury, 1984), and imagery/relaxation training methods (Danielson, 1984; Omizo, 1981). Gerler's (1985) review of elementary school counseling research from 1974-1984 provided conclusive evidence that counselors can make a difference in children's grades, classroom behavior, attitude toward school, and self-esteem. Similarly, St. Clair's (1989) review of middle school counseling research showed that counselors can improve classroom behavior, reduce students' anxiety, and improve self-concept. St. Clair noted, however, that published studies of middle school counseling constitute only a small part of counseling literature. Much remains to be done in terms of examining the effects of counseling programs on the learning climate in middle schools.

The Multimodal Model and Learning

Lazarus (1985) has argued persuasively that cognition and learning are parts of a psychological whole in human functioning. He delineates the domains in human psychological makeup with the convenient acronym, "BASIC I.D.," which stands for Behavior, Affect, Sensation, Imagery, Cognition, Interpersonal Relations, and Diet/Physiology. Lazarus and proponents of the multimodal counseling model believe that cognition and learning are affected by what happens in the other domains so that

students who have behavior problems, emotional disturbances, interpersonal difficulties, or any number of other psychological difficulties are likely to experience learning problems. Further, proponents (Gerler, 1982, 1987; Keat, 1979) of this viewpoint have suggested that to promote cognitive development and success in learning, teachers and counselors should collaborate to provide students with classroom experiences that stimulate growth in a variety of domains.

Research and various case studies have shown the multimodal approach to influence variables important to children's learning. Case studies, for example, have demonstrated the positive effects of multimodal programs on children's interpersonal skills and emotional growth (Keat, 1985), on children's self-concept (Durbin, 1982), and on children's school work (Starr & Raykovitz, 1982). Another case study (Keat, Metzgar, Raykovitz, & McDonald, 1985) showed that a multimodal counseling group improved the school attendance of five third-grade boys. Studies of multimodal approaches to group guidance and counseling in elementary schools have yielded positive results in such areas as school attendance (Gerler, 1980), classroom behavior (Anderson, Kinney, & Gerler, 1984), achievement in mathematics and language arts (Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985), and reducing procrastination (Morse, 1987).

Although various studies have tested multimodal approaches with children in elementary school settings, research on the effects of multimodal programs with young adolescents in middle schools has been limited. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the multimodal program, "Succeeding in School," with potential dropouts in grades 6-8. Previous research on "Succeeding in School" (Gerler & Anderson, 1986) with 900 fourth and fifth graders across North Carolina showed the program to have positive effects on attitude toward school, classroom behavior, and language arts grades.

Method

Participants

This study involved 98 students in grades 6-8 from five middle schools in an urban North Carolina school district. The participants were from varying economic, social, and cultural environments and all were identified as potential dropouts by the school system. Counselors at the

five middle schools volunteered to conduct classroom guidance sessions for the study.

Procedure

The middle school counselors who volunteered to participate received packets of study materials that included (a) directions for implementing the study, (b) a ten-session, classroom guidance unit entitled "Succeeding in School," (c) instruments to measure the effects of the unit and directions for scoring the instruments, and (d) forms for recording the data collected. The counselors also participated in an orientation session prior to implementing the program. Parent permission was required of all students involved in the program. (A 20-page packet of materials for conducting this study is available for elementary and middle school counselors who are interested in implementing and evaluating this program in their own schools. Persons interested in obtaining a copy of this packet should write to: Edwin R. Gerler, Jr., Department of Counselor Education, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-7801.)

Counselors' directions for implementing the study. Counselors received careful written instructions for implementing the classroom guidance study in their schools. The instructions identified the purpose of the study and outlined specific steps for counselors to follow in carrying out the study. These steps directed counselors (a) to explain to school principals the purpose of the study and to assure principals that all data collected would be kept confidential and that no student would be identified individually to anyone outside the school, (b) to discuss the nature of the study with teachers whose pupils were participating and then to assign students randomly to treatment and control groups, (c) to conduct the classroom guidance unit "Succeeding in School" once per week for ten weeks with the treatment group participants [control group members received the same unit after the study was complete], (d) to administer an *Attitude toward School* (Miller, 1973) instrument to each student during the week before and the week after the classroom guidance unit was presented, and (e) to have teachers complete an *Elementary Guidance Behavior Rating Scale* (Anderson, Kinney, & Gerler, 1984; Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985) for each student and record students' conduct and subject matter grades immediately before and after the guidance unit.

The classroom guidance unit. The classroom guidance unit, "Succeeding in School," which counselors conducted with the treatment group children involved the following ten 50-minute sessions (Gerler, 1987):

SESSION 1: SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

- A. Discuss reasons for the unit and ground rules for discussion.
- B. Place the names of several successful people on the chalkboard (Sally Ride, astronaut; Michael Jackson, singer; Jesse Jackson, politician) and have the students discuss what these successful persons have in common. Focus the discussion on success and what it takes to be successful.
- C. Have students add names to the list of successful people and continue to discuss ingredients of success.
- D. Have students discuss times they have worked hard at school and experienced success.
- E. Ask students to consider what successes they expect to experience in the future.

SESSION 2: BEING COMFORTABLE IN SCHOOL

- A. Review highlights of the first session.
- B. Introduce the topic of relaxation. Discuss why and how different people relax.
- C. Discuss several methods of relaxation and have the students practice some of these methods.
- D. Discuss times that the students felt relaxed at school. (Differentiate between feeling relaxed and being excited or having fun.)

SESSION 3: BEING RESPONSIBLE IN SCHOOL

- A. Review the session on relaxation.
- B. Discuss how the students can sometimes learn the meaning of responsibility from reading stories about responsible people.
- C. Suggest some stories or books the students might read.
- D. Define responsibility in terms of self and others.
- E. Discuss times that the students behaved responsibly at school.

SESSION 4: LISTENING IN SCHOOL

- A. Review the meaning of responsibility and ask students to share examples of their responsible behavior since the previous session.

- B. Ask students to close their eyes and listen to the sounds in the room.
- C. Have students discuss the experience and the importance of careful listening at school and elsewhere.
- D. Define a good listener as someone who pays attention, knows what is said, and does not interrupt or distract.
- E. Conduct some listening roleplay experiences.
- F. Discuss times that students listened in school with good results.

SESSION 5: ASKING FOR HELP IN SCHOOL

- A. Review listening skills.
- B. Conduct the activities to help students practice the skills of listening and asking questions.
- C. Discuss times that the students have had to ask questions in school and have received help.

SESSION 6: HOW TO IMPROVE AT SCHOOL

- A. Review the skills of listening and asking questions.
- B. Have students discuss how these skills might help to improve their school work.
- C. Ask students to identify a subject they would like to improve in and to discuss how they might work toward the improvement.
- D. Have individuals identify improvements they have already made in their school work.

SESSION 7: COOPERATING WITH PEERS AT SCHOOL

- A. Review student reactions to the previous session.
- B. Write the word "cooperation" on the chalkboard. Have students suggest words using each letter of "cooperation" to reflect the spirit of cooperation (e.g., caring, others, etc.).
- C. Conduct roleplay activities that help students practice cooperation.
- D. Discuss times that students have cooperated with each other at school.

SESSION 8: COOPERATING WITH TEACHERS

- A. Review the session on cooperating with peers.
- B. Have students complete the following sentences: "If I were teacher for a day, I'd..." "I wish my teachers would..." "I would like to talk with a teacher about..."

- C. Conduct a "Dear Abby" activity. Hand out blank cards and have students finish the statement: "I would like to get along better with my teacher, but my problem is..."
- D. Have students discuss ways they have cooperated with their teachers.

SESSION 9: THE BRIGHT SIDE OF SCHOOL

- A. Review the discussion about cooperating with teachers.
- B. Have students identify some things about school they dislike and then consider what might be positive about those things.
- C. Have students describe some positive happenings at school.

SESSION 10: THE BRIGHT SIDE OF ME

- A. Review the highlights of the previous nine sessions.
- B. Have students describe what they learned about themselves and their strengths during the sessions.
- C. Give students the opportunity to receive positive feedback from one another.

Instrumentation and data collection. Counselors used the following five measures to assess students' progress resulting from participation in the classroom guidance unit:

1. *Ratings of student behavior.* Teachers completed the *Elementary Guidance Behavior Rating Scale (EGBRS)* for each pupil in the treatment and control groups during the week before and the week after counselors led the classroom guidance unit. The *EGBRS*, which was designed by a team of counselors, counselor educators, and education consultants and used in two previous elementary school guidance studies (Anderson, Kinney, & Gerler, 1984; Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985), consists of 20 items in which teachers rate negative classroom behaviors on a Likert scale ranging from "behavior observed constantly"=5 to "behavior observed never"=1. The highest total score possible on the scale is 100 and the lowest possible is 20, with lower scores indicating preferred classroom behavior. Items from the *EGBRS* include "How often does the student interfere with the activities of others, fail to give attention to the task at hand, or use available time unwisely?" No data on reliability or validity are available on this instrument.

2. *Students' conduct ratings.* Teachers who volunteered their students to participate in the study recorded classroom conduct ratings for treatment and control group members before and after the classroom

guidance unit. Conduct ratings were based on a 10-point scale with 1 being the highest rating and 10 the lowest.

3. *Students' attitude toward school.* Participants in the treatment and control groups completed a modified version of the *Attitude toward School* instrument (Miller, 1973) during the week before and the week after the guidance unit. This instrument has been used by the Minnesota Department of Education to assess the effects of psychological education activities. The instrument consists of 25 multiple-choice sentence completion items which assess students' attitudes toward such matters as teaching, subject matter, and homework. Each item offers four choices to students with the first choice indicating the most negative attitude toward school through the fourth choice indicating the most positive attitude. The highest total score possible on the scale is 100 and the lowest possible is 25, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes toward school. No data on reliability or validity are available on this instrument.

4. *Students' grades.* Teachers who volunteered their students to participate in the study recorded grades for treatment and control group members before and after the classroom guidance unit. The grades were based on a 12-point scale with A (or A+) = 12 through F = 1. The pre-treatment grades were regular classroom grades averaged from the grading period immediately prior to the guidance unit. The post-treatment grades were regular classroom grades averaged from the grading period during which the guidance unit was implemented.

Results

No significant changes were observed on any of the dependent measures with the exception of the *Attitude toward School* instrument. Table 1 shows the pre/post means and standard deviations of participants' scores on the *Attitude toward School* instrument. All groups showed improved scores on the instrument, with the treatment group showing a mean increase of 2.19 and the control a mean increase of 1.21. The treatment groups' improvement was significant, $t = 1.981, p < .05$. This improvement seems to have been largely accounted for by the increased scores among females in the treatment group. Females in the treatment group showed a mean increase on the instrument of 3.36, a significant gain, $t = 2.758, p < .01$. Male participants in the treatment group showed a gain of only 1.56 on the measure.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations on Pre/Post-Scores for
Attitude Toward School Measure

Groups	Pre		Post	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
All Participants:				
Treatment (<i>n</i> = 49)	65.55	10.42	67.74	10.28
Control (<i>n</i> = 49)	66.69	10.59	67.90	11.08
Female Participants:				
Treatment (<i>n</i> = 17)	65.88	11.15	69.24	9.90
Control (<i>n</i> = 17)	65.65	9.94	68.71	12.23
Male Participants:				
Treatment (<i>n</i> = 32)	65.38	10.19	66.94	10.55
Control (<i>n</i> = 32)	67.25	11.03	67.47	10.60

Note. School attitude scores ranged from 25 to 100 with higher scores indicating positive attitudes toward school.

Discussion

The "Succeeding in School" program seemed to have a positive influence on middle school students' attitudes toward school. This finding is consistent with results of an earlier study (Gerler & Anderson, 1986) in North Carolina which showed the program improving the school attitudes of children in grades four and five. The finding is also consistent with reports of the program's effects on elementary school children in Florida's Dade County Public Schools (Ruben, 1989). The implications of these results are important because truancy and dropping out of school appear to be rooted in the upper elementary and middle school years. A previous longitudinal study (Gerler, 1980) showed, in fact, that guidance strategies of this kind have positive effects on school attendance. Thus, counselors and teachers who implement such programs in

their classrooms may contribute to dropout prevention efforts of school systems.

Interestingly, the middle school girls participating in the "Succeeding in School" program seemed to improve their attitudes toward school more than did the boys. This finding raises questions about the content and implementation of the program and other similar classroom guidance strategies: How can we tailor these programs to meet the developmental needs of middle school boys? What aspects of the content or implementation of the programs are better suited to girls than boys? A component that could have been included in this study and probably should be included in future studies of this kind is a pre-, post-measure of psycho/social development. Interestingly, a recent study of moral reasoning (Mohr, Sprinthall, & Gerler, 1987) indicated that girls in early adolescence reasoned at higher developmental levels than boys when confronted with social dilemmas related to drug use. These findings suggest that psychological education programs and classroom guidance strategies need to pay special attention to apparent developmental differences between boys and girls in early adolescence.

The outcomes of this study must be viewed cautiously. To begin with, since the *Attitude toward School* measure has undetermined reliability and validity, the scores collected from the instrument cannot be viewed with complete confidence. Some caution is also necessary regarding the assignment of students to the treatment and control groups. Because of practical considerations, counselors could not always randomly assign individual students to the treatment and control groups. Analysis of pretest data, however, showed no significant differences between the groups, thus providing reasonable assurance that random assignment was effective.

Another limitation of this study was the lack of a placebo group. Critelli and Neumann (1984) have argued persuasively in favor of using placebos in studies of psychological interventions. The lack of a placebo creates the possibility that other factors, including the novelty of the experience, or perhaps the intensity of it, caused the observed changes. Virtually all the students involved in the study, however, had experienced classroom guidance in elementary school. It seems likely, therefore, that the content of the guidance sessions rather than the novelty of the experience contributed to the treatment group's progress on the *Attitude toward School* measure.

Conclusion

The "Succeeding in School" program has been shown to have important effects on the educational process in elementary and middle schools. The present study adds some additional information about the influence of the program on middle school students. Many other questions about the program need to be studied, in particular, how the effects of the program differ between boys and girls. Additional research with "Succeeding in School" is currently being completed in several North Carolina school systems and should help to answer some of these questions.

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Effects of a Classroom Guidance Unit on Sixth Graders' Examination Performance

Natalie Susan Wilson

Helping low-achieving and underachieving students to improve their academic performance is one of the greatest challenges now facing counselors and other educators. During the past 25 years, many counseling approaches have been used in an attempt to assist these students, including group counseling (Altmann, Conklin, & Hughes, 1972; Benson & Blocher, 1967; Finney & Van Dalsem, 1969), individual counseling (McCowan, 1968; Schmieding, 1966), alternate group and individual counseling (Mezzano, 1968), peer counseling (Vriend, 1969), and behavioral strategies (Andrews, 1971; Ladouceur & Armstrong, 1983).

Although no single method has consistently produced positive results, a recent review (Wilson, 1986a) of studies evaluating counselor interventions with low-achieving and underachieving elementary, middle, and high school pupils found that characteristics of successful treatment programs included (a) counseling with study skills instruction, (b) leader-structured rather than client- or group-structured approaches, and (c) group rather than individual counseling. The review also revealed that, among programs providing study skill training, most offered such instruction through individual or small-group counseling formats. Recently, interest has been increasing in the use of classroom-based study skills units that allow counselors to work with more students than can be served by traditional one-to-one or small-group approaches. Although descriptions of classroom guidance programs focusing on study skills and habits are now appearing in the literature (Beale, 1981; Castagna & Codd, 1984; Maher & Thompson, 1980), the impact of these programs on academic performance is unclear because very few have been evaluated with experimental designs or any other method of assessment.

Students making the transition from elementary to middle school may need special assistance in developing appropriate study and test-taking skills, habits, and attitudes. In middle school, pupils typically encounter for the first time examinations covering the work of a semester or a full year. Faced with this new academic requirement, they may become anxious, study ineffectively, and perform far below their ability (Wilson, 1986b). Low-achieving students, who already are struggling to cope with the greater demands of the middle school curriculum, are especially at risk of acquiring poor examination-related habits and attitudes that may handicap them throughout their educational careers.

In this study I evaluated the effectiveness of a guidance unit offered on four consecutive days and intended to help classroom-sized groups of low-achieving middle school students to prepare for final examinations. I designed the unit to include the dimensions of successful treatment programs described above: (a) a combination of study skills training and counseling support, (b) a structured or leader-directed format, and (c) a group setting. Because researchers had suggested in previous investigations that peer group influence can be a powerful tool in positively affecting achievement (Anderson, 1976; Vriend, 1969), a group-centered rather than a lecture approach was used in the classroom to achieve maximum peer interaction.

The purpose of the investigation was to address the following questions:

1. Would students who participated in the guidance unit make significantly higher grades on their final examinations than would students in a control group who did not participate in the unit?
2. Would students participating in the unit fail significantly fewer examinations than would students in the control group?

Method

Participants

The participants were sixth-grade students at the only middle school in a rural Virginia county, which has a total enrollment of about 3,000. Students with one or more failures in their five academic subjects (English, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies) at the end of

the fourth of six marking periods were included in the study. Failure was defined, according to the school district's policy, as grade below 74.5%. Students enrolled in special education programs, including classes for the mentally retarded and learning disabled, were excluded from consideration. The school reflected a mixed ethnic composition (65% White and 35% Black), with the largest proportion of students from families of middle socioeconomic status.

Counselor

The middle school counselor conducted the four-day unit. Her orientation program consisted of two sessions with me, in which I gave her an overview of the study, a detailed guide to conducting the activities, and all student handouts. The orientation also included an observation component, in which the counselor observed me conducting the third session of the unit with a sixth-grade class used as the pilot group. The counselor had a master's degree in education, had completed a one-semester practicum at the middle school level, and was certified as a secondary school counselor. Her experience included a one-year, half-time position as a counselor for Grades 7 and 8 and several years of teaching at the secondary level. The middle school position was her first full-time job as a counselor.

Treatment Materials

The unit consisted of four 50-minute sessions of activities that I developed to assist students in exploring study skills, habits, and attitudes related to preparing for and taking examinations. Two weeks before the study began, I conducted a field test of the unit in the same middle school in a sixth-grade art class. I selected this class from among the nonacademic exploration classes because it included a high proportion of students (8 out of 24) with one or more failures. As a result of feedback from the pilot group, I revised portions of several activities for the final experiment. Students participating in the field test were not considered in selecting participants for the study.

The unit capitalized on adolescents' involvement and interest in peer relationships by using a small-group rather than a lecture approach, in which students worked together in groups of five or six to explore problems and solutions related to taking examinations. The sessions followed a four-part process: (a) identification of problems in preparing for and

taking examinations, (b) assessment of examination-related habits and attitudes, (c) exploration of causes of examination problems and development of possible solutions, (d) application of knowledge and concepts acquired in the unit to typical examination problems. Activities included small-group discussions, completion of a checklist and profile of study and test-taking habits, and group problem-solving exercises. A counselor's guide to the unit contained objectives for each session and step-by-step instructions for conducting the activities. A summary of the four sessions is provided below. The unit is presented in its entirety in Wilson (1986b).

First session. The counselor began by explaining that she would be working with students for the next four days to help them do their best on the upcoming examinations. After reviewing the purposes of tests and examinations, the counselor listed on the board four areas relating to test preparation: (a) study habits at school, (b) study habits at home, (c) test-taking habits, and (d) study and test-taking attitudes. Students then formed small groups, selected a recorder to take notes on their discussion, and, using the four areas as a guide, identified problems they encountered in preparing for and taking tests and examinations. Such problems included difficulty in organizing study material, conflicting demands on after-school time, postponing study until the night before a test, difficulty in concentrating during tests, and failure to proofread tests. After recorders presented their groups' responses orally, the counselor led a class discussion focusing on the most frequently cited problems. The counselor collected the recorders' papers for use in the third session.

Second Session. Each student received a multiple-choice *Checklist of Study and Test-Taking Habits* developed for the unit. The checklist was designed to promote self-examination of students' present study and test-taking habits and attitudes and consisted of 28 multiple-choice items assessing the four areas identified in the previous session. The counselor guided the students through the checklist as a class, with volunteers reading the questions aloud. Students then took turns guessing which answers were most appropriate, awarded themselves 0, 1, or 2 points for their own responses according to the counselor's instructions, and discussed the choices. The counselor collected the checklists for use in the next session.

Third Session. The counselor returned the checklists and helped the students plot their scores in each of the four areas on a *Study and Test-Taking Profile* created for the unit. This profile is a chart on which

students can graph their scores in each of the four areas assessed in the *Checklist of Study and Test-Taking Habits*; study habits at school, study habits at home, test-taking habits, and study and test-taking attitudes. Scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 14 for each area. A shaded strip across the center of the graph allows students to see where average scores will fall for each area.

After separating into their original groups from the first session, the students used the recorders' papers from the first day and their own profiles to review and expand the list of examination problems they had developed during the first session. Each group then discussed possible causes of these problems and suggested ways to solve them. The recorders presented the results of group discussions to the entire class as they did in the first session.

Fourth Session. After the class had formed the same groups as before, each group received one of five Exam Emergency handouts, vignettes depicting problems typically encountered by middle school students in preparing for and taking examinations. For example, the "Football Fred" vignette described a student who has trouble finding time for both football practice and his school work. Groups discussed the possible causes of and solutions to their examination emergencies, and recorders presented the vignettes and the results of group discussions to the class. The counselor concluded the unit by helping students summarize what they had learned and develop goals for improving their own examination performance. Some of the more common goals included organizing a regular study time and sticking to it; bringing home all necessary study materials, such as textbooks and notebooks; reviewing old texts and quizzes before examinations; and studying well in advance of examinations rather than the night before.

Procedure

The school's printout of student grades was first examined to determine how many sixth graders had at least one failure at the end of the fourth marking period. The 52 identified students were randomly assigned to one of two groups, and the two groups were then randomly assigned to either the experimental or the control condition by flipping a coin.

The experimental students participated in the guidance unit with the middle school counselor during their sixth or seventh period, when they ordinarily would have their nonacademic exploration class (music, art, band, or library skills). The unit was presented for four consecutive days

two weeks before final examinations. I did not tell exploration class teachers whether the experimental students were in the treatment or control group, but it was necessary to give the teachers these students' names so they could be excused from the exploration class. On the four days of the unit, the experimental students reported directly to a designated sixth-grade classroom that was available for both periods. Students in the control group received no additional guidance services and remained in their exploration classes.

At the end of the unit, the counselor prepared a summary of the sessions for use in evaluating treatment fidelity, the degree to which the unit had been delivered according to my specifications. The counselor's summary and posttreatment conferences with me revealed that, with the sixth-period group, she had conducted the unit according to the guide. In the seventh period group, however, the counselor had presented the Exam Emergency vignettes on the fourth day of the unit as an individual activity rather than as a small-group activity in an effort to keep students on task.

Because of the brevity of the unit, students missing one or more sessions were excluded from the final analysis. This resulted in five participants being dropped from the study—two in the sixth-period group and three in the seventh-period group—leaving 24 experimental students and 23 control students for the final analysis. To determine whether loss of participants had resulted in nonequivalent groups, students' grade quotients and pretreatment failure rates were compared using *t* tests. The results indicated that, although the mean grade quotient of the experimental group was slightly higher and the pretreatment failure rate somewhat lower than the quotient and rate of the control group, the differences were not statistically significant (see Table 1). Moreover, the statistical analysis was designed to adjust for these differences.

Instruments

For analysis, the scores of the experimental students in the two periods were pooled, as were the scores of the two groups of control students. For each student involved in the study, a final examination mean was calculated from examination grades in the five academic subjects. Grades were analyzed in their original values on a 0-100 scale with grades below 74.5 designated as failing. A mean final examination score was calculated for the treatment group and for the control group. The

Table 1
T-Tests for Initial Differences Between Groups

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Grade quotient</i>						
Experimental	24	96.25	13.37	-1.31	45	.196
Control	23	91.61	10.66			
<i>Pre-treatment failure rate</i>						
Experimental	24	2.00	1.14	0.51	45	.612
Control	23	2.17	1.19			

number of examinations failed was also determined for each student and a mean was calculated for each group.

Results

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze the data collected, with treatment or participation in the guidance unit serving as the independent variable. Pretreatment failure rate was employed as a covariate to control statistically for any potential pretreatment differences that could confound posttreatment differences between the groups. A level of significance of .05 was used in evaluating the results. Results of the ANCOVA revealed that there was a main effect for treatment on examination average (see Table 2).

Students in the treatment group ($M = 73.96$) scored significantly higher on examination average than students in the control group: $M = 65.62$, $F(1,44) = 4.33$, $p < .05$. There was no significant difference in examination failure rate between experimental students ($M = 2.25$) and control students ($M = 2.65$), $F(1,44) = 1.19$, $p > .05$. Table 3 presents unadjusted means for examination average and examination failure rate for each group, as well as posttreatment means and differences adjusted for the effects of the covariate.

Table 2
Analysis of Covariance for Exam Average and Exam Failure Rate Using Pretreatment Failure Rate as a Covariate

Source of Variation	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Exam average</i>				
Covariate				
Pretreatment failure rate	1	1542.13	20.02	.000
Treatment				
Guidance unit	1	333.64	4.33	.430
<i>Exam failure rate</i>				
Covariate				
Pretreatment failure rate	1	16.93	10.97	.002
Treatment				
Guidance unit	1	1.83	1.19	.282

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Effects of the Guidance Unit on Exam Average and Exam Failure Rate

Item and Group	Unadjusted		Adjusted <i>M</i>	Adjusted Differences
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
<i>Exam average</i>				
Experimental	74.39	6.09	73.96	5.34*
Control	68.17	13.62	68.62	
<i>Exam failure rate</i>				
Experimental	2.21	1.29	2.25	-0.40
Control	2.70	1.46	2.65	

*Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

After the differences were adjusted for examination average, the experimental students scored 5.34 points higher than the control students, a difference that is significant at the $p < .05$ level. The adjusted difference between groups for examination failure rate was only $-.40$ ($p > .05$). The finding of no significant difference between groups for examination failure rate may have been partly due to the coarseness of the measure. Nevertheless, the effect was in the predicted direction, with the experimental group failing fewer examinations than did the control group.

Discussion

The findings indicated that students who participated in the unit attained significantly higher examination averages than did students in the control group. Some cautionary notes are needed, however. First, variability in the control students' examination grades was greater than in the grades made by the experimental students (see Table 3). Two of the control students each had a grade of zero on one examination and one had zeros on two examinations, because of their failure to attend examination sessions for certain courses and subsequent failure to attend examination makeups. Some of the experimental students had extremely low grades on their examinations, but none had a zero on any examination. The three control students' scores were included in the analysis, just as the middle school included them in calculating those students' final examination averages and yearly cumulative averages. Although the control students' zeros certainly contributed to the difference between the experimental and control groups, deleting their scores from the analysis would have had the effect of ignoring the practical considerations operating in a public school setting and removing the lowest performing participants from the study, thus biasing the results in a negative direction.

Second, the possibility of a Hawthorne effect (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939) cannot be discounted in evaluating the results. Although the original research design called for the counselor to conduct guidance activities unrelated to study and test-taking skills and attitudes for an equal amount of time with the control students in the week after the experiment, this procedure would have interfered with her preregistration activities with seventh graders and disrupted exploration classes for two

consecutive weeks instead of one week. Consequently, the plan was modified, and the control students received no special activity to control for the attention factor potentially present in a novel intervention. Like all sixth graders in the middle school, however, the control students had participated in several classroom guidance sessions regularly conducted by the counselor during the year as part of the developmental guidance program.

Given these limitations, this study provides additional evidence that treatment programs combining study skills instruction with counseling in a structured group setting can have positive effects on the academic performance of low-achieving and underachieving students. Because the treatment consisted of several different elements, such as study skills training, counseling support, small-group format, and classroom setting, precisely which components contributed to achieving these results is not clear. Nevertheless, the superior examination performance by the students in the experimental group lends support to the use of brief classroom guidance programs by school counselors. Because many treatment programs of much greater duration fail to obtain positive results (Wilson, 1986a), the effectiveness of a four-day intervention merits continued investigation.

The study suggests several directions for further research on this type of counseling intervention. First, subsequent investigations should involve more counselors. Although the unit was highly structured and the counselor was given detailed directions for conducting all activities, the possibility of confounding counselor characteristics with treatment outcomes could not be avoided because the middle school had only one counselor. Second, including more students in treatment groups would provide a more precise test of the efficacy of classroom-based interventions. Loss of participants resulted in treatment groups of only 15 and 14 students, larger than the average group counseling size but smaller than the typical class size. Finally, a variation of the experimental design could be used, in which the unit's effectiveness with a sample of individual students or several small groups of students is contrasted with the efficacy of the same unit with one or more classroom-sized groups. Such a design would permit a systematic comparison of a classroom guidance intervention with traditional strategies for working with low achievers and underachievers.

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Transforming Low Achieving and Disruptive Adolescents into Model Students

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The growing problem of discipline from mild behavioral disruptions to criminal activity, confronts the junior high school counselor daily. The topic has been reviewed by many researchers in terms of both etiology and treatment (Birman & Natriello, 1978; Doyle, 1978; Feldhusen, 1978; Litt, 1978; Quay, 1978). Doyle (1978), for example, has discussed the question of whether students today behave worse than they did in the past. He concluded that problems caused by disruptive behavior in the classroom were less serious at the turn of the century than they are now because disruptive students could be removed from school or did not attend at all. The same year, Feldhusen (1978) outlined four broad reasons for current school problems: (a) psychological and sociological variables, (b) television, (c) political and social influences, and (d) the school itself.

Intervention: An Overview

Regardless of the reason, those who have reviewed current research on behavior management do agree that the use of behavior management through social and material reinforcement systems can be highly effective and rewarding (Feldhusen, 1978; Jenson, 1978). Harris (1972) and Ulrich, Stachnik, and Mabry (1974) have reviewed numerous studies that demonstrate the successful use of behavior management strategies for adolescents in school. Social and material reinforcement in the schools using such systems as token economies, contingency contracting, and group contingencies have been described by Blackman and Silberman (1975), Buckley and Walker (1973), Harris (1972), Homme (1977), Patterson (1977), and Zifferblatt (1970).

Intervention: On the Scene

Important questions face the school counselor. How can these tried and proven techniques be sandwiched into busy schedules: Is it possible to serve many children on an individual basis? How can a counselor learn what a student is doing on a daily basis in all classes when the child moves from one classroom teacher to another? An exciting and flexible tool that helps counselors respond to these needs has been designed. It is a Daily Progress Report (DPR), an ordinary, simple device that resembles the conduct slip sometimes used by school counselors and administrators (see Figure 1). The results of using it have been so dramatic and rewarding that it is believed to be adaptable for use in a variety of institutions by almost anyone whose service is related to the field of mental health.

Daily Progress Report: Description

The DPR has a space for teachers to enter a grade of "poor, fair, good, or excellent" for behaviors that are selected as basic. Those that can be chosen are "on time for class, brought materials, previous home assignment completed, drill, completed classwork, and conduct and cooperation." There is also space for teachers to add special remarks and for parents to sign and write comments.

Case Study: Billy

The story of Billy demonstrates the power of the DPR to reverse the disruptive behavior pattern of a junior high school student who had been experiencing serious behavior problems since kindergarten. Although the DPR works even on a short-term basis, Billy, a seventh grader, carried one for an entire semester. When first referred, his behavior was so disruptive that his teachers were certain he was seriously emotionally disturbed. A review of Billy's earlier evaluations, however, suggested that he was a learning-disabled child. Because his behavior had prompted nothing but scolding and punishment all of his life, Billy genuinely believed he could never behave appropriately in school.

DAILY PROGRESS REPORT

Student's Name _____

Grade _____

Date _____

To Teacher: Please evaluate this student in the areas stated during your class. Use appropriate words such as **POOR — FAIR — GOOD — EXCELLENT**

To the Student: This form is to be presented to each teacher at the beginning of the class and picked up at the end of the class. The completed form is to be returned to:

Teacher's Signature:		On Time For Class	Brought Materials	Previous Home Assign Completed	Drill	Completed Classwork	Conduct cooperation	Comments
1								
2								
3								
4	LUNCH							
5								
6								
7								

Parent Signatures: _____

Comments: _____

Figure 1
Daily Progress Report

Background and Description

Billy had recently returned to his mother's home after spending most of his years in foster care. By the age of eight, he had already lived in four different homes. He was a blond, blue-eyed child, short for his 13 years, and thin. Although he had average to high average intellectual potential, he was a low achiever, and he was on medication for hyperactivity. His spelling ability, his weakest area, was five years below that expected of someone his age.

Billy's Specific Problems

When I first met Billy in February, he had already failed all subjects for the first semester and had received all "Us" in conduct on his report cards. Classroom behaviors included constantly taking and interrupting the teachers, daily altercations with peers, and scratching his arms and face until they bled. Billy's mother was so discouraged with his frequent disciplinary removals from school that she spoke of returning him to foster care.

Techniques Used

1. Billy was seen each day before school, very briefly, at which time each favorable item on the DPR was reviewed orally, and he was praised enthusiastically.

2. When Billy made even small changes in behavior in the beginning, material rewards were used to motivate him. Based on how many good ratings he earned each week, he could choose from various pens, pencils, erasers, and other school supplies.

3. As Billy's behavior improved, the use of these items was phased out. For larger blocks of good behavior he could earn such rewards as being escorted to the teachers and administrators of his choice to share his improved DPRs with them, choosing from a variety of used American Automobile Association city and state maps that he treasured highly; and choosing from various good behavior certificates to take home.

4. Conferences were held with Billy's cluster teachers. They were asked to verbalize their good comments to Billy as they wrote them on the DPR.

5. While seeing Billy daily, I found it required little additional effort on my part to offer him structure for learning to spell, which was his greatest weakness. Also, he enjoyed bringing in pictures he had drawn to be hung on my office walls.

6. Conferences were held with Billy's mother, and she too was urged to praise him for his good efforts with DPR.

The following results in Billy's progress were realized by June when (a) he received all passing grades on his report card and "satisfactory" for conduct from all of his teachers, (b) the destructive scratching of his face and arms was eliminated completely, and (c) his mother reported she was much better able to manage him at home.

Beneficial Side-Effects

Billy's progress provided poignantly touching experiences for me. One day I had a backup of students waiting in my office; consequently, in my haste, I skipped something important on Billy's DPR; "Excellent +++" had been marked in the column for conduct. When he brought this to my attention, I was struck with its importance to him; I realized the extreme significance of the smallest success in a young life so lacking in any success until then.

On another occasion, I suggested to Billy's mother that she let him know she was pleased with his changing behavior. When he came in the next day, I could tell by his satisfied expression that he had something very special to tell me. I was stunned when he described in dramatic detail the simple fact that his mother hugged him. Best of all, I have my own permanent written records documenting the change in his teachers' comments, which have evolved from remarks such as "does obscene things" and "had to be restrained" to "conduct is excellent."

Directions for Daily Progress Report

Only important highlights of how to maintain a daily progress report are outlined here, because space does not permit in-depth explanations.

1. *Gather background information.* Examine cumulative, confidential, and even elementary records for strengths and weaknesses.

2. *Establish rapport.* Use any strengths, hobbies, interests, or talents uncovered in the records that you can sincerely praise to build confidence and self-esteem.

3. *Determine reinforcement.* Make a judgment about which reinforcement to use to stimulate good DPR ratings. For some students a mere pat on the back is sufficient; however, others need material motivators just to get started. There is an opportunity to be innovative in determining what reinforcement to use by searching for desirable prizes that cost little or nothing.

4. *Build enthusiasm.* Getting a student to carry a DPR is a delicate matter. Examples of questions to ask include:

- Is there anything you would change in school?
- How can I help you in school?
- Do you sometimes do good things in school that nobody notices?

Students' responses to these questions will inevitably provide openings for the following statements, which must always be presented enthusiastically: "I have a great way to show everyone the good things you do," and "When you show me your DPR, I am going to be looking only for the good things and I will ignore the bad things.

Quite often, in the beginning, the students will show the counselor the DPR and complain about their own behavior. The counselor is then placed in the position of reassuring the student that it really is not so bad and that there is a chance to improve the following day. The emphasis placed on the "good things" is a crucial strength of the entire procedure.

5. *See the student daily.* Take time to read aloud with the student all the positive or improved teachers' ratings and comments on the DPR. When the comments are good, the opportunity is there to discuss why the ratings are improved and to praise the behavior, thus strengthening it. The visit with the student can be very brief, before school, after school, or during lunch.

6. *Involve teachers, administrators, and parents.* Meet with teachers to explain the counseling process. Suggest that they verbalize good comments in addition to writing them. Praise them for their efforts, thus reinforcing their cooperation. Ask administrators or lunchroom monitors to sign the DPR during lunch period also. This completes the picture of the student's entire day. When possible, encourage the parent to reinforce at home the student's good behavior in school.

Implications for Counselors

1. The DPR provides an accurate, complete, immediate picture of a student's daily activities.
2. The DPR can be adapted to an infinite variety of situations and serves as a ready-made contract either for a few days or for an entire semester.
3. Use of the DPR requires a minimum amount of time and can provide maximum individual therapeutic service to a large number of students.
4. The environment is changed so that the students and administrator may view each other positively rather than as criminal and policeman.
5. The counselor plays an exciting role as intermediary for better family relationships.
6. A collection of DPRs may be used as a research tool for preparing scholarly works.
7. It is possible for the counselor to enjoy instant gratification by reading teachers' comments and observing the student's euphoria.

As students progress using the DPR the counseling process poses challenges worthy of further exploration. Student dependency on the therapist and administrative inflexibility sometimes become issues. Needs arise for teaching children who have made great strides to deal with setbacks and, better still, to internalize their new positive behaviors. In view of the drama taking place, some of these are stimulating issues.

Conclusion

Close examination of disruptive students reveals much frustration at being trapped into hopeless roles with few exits. It becomes the responsibility of the school to use tools such as the DPR to persuade these youngsters that acceptable conduct need not be an impossible dream. Inevitably, when behavior improves, so does self-esteem and achievement.

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Conflict Resolution and Interpersonal Skill Building Through the Use of Cooperative Learning

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As counselors and educators, many of us are concerned about a lack of classroom harmony and inadequate interaction and conflict resolution skills among our students. These are issues about which we complain, along with worrying about how to teach all the required content and still do the hundreds of other things that educators are expected to accomplish. Unfortunately, many of us salve our consciences by feeling badly and stop there, blaming our lack of action on being overworked.

The Need for Integration Skills and Conflict Resolution Development

Johnson and Johnson (1975) reviewed the literature on the inability of students to work together and revealed some startling findings:

1. The tendency for children to compete in conflict-of-interest situations often interferes with their capacity for adaptive cooperative problem solving.
2. American (United States) students so seldom cooperate spontaneously on experimental tasks that it seems that the environment is barren of experiences that would sensitize them to the possibilities of cooperation.
3. Not only do American (United States) children engage in irrational and self-defeating competition, but the American (United States) children (in comparison with children from other countries) are willing to reduce their own rewards to reduce the rewards of a peer.
4. The socialization of American (United States) children in competitive attitudes and orientations is so pervasive that students

often believe that helping a person in distress is inappropriate and is disapproved of by others.

These findings are not limited to school-age individuals. The negative effects of competition are widespread in the adult world of work. The business world has focused on the widespread lack of interpersonal communication skills, which are among the problems facing American (United States) employers today. With 70% to 80% of jobs today requiring a complex coordination of effort and ideas (Graves & Graves, 1985), it is imperative that we integrate effective communication skills and conflict resolution into the curriculum of American (United States) schools.

Beyond the reasons of economic health and preservation of a way of life, the hope for world peace is in the hands of the younger generation: World Peace begins at a personal level. Peace begins in the hearts and minds of individuals as they interact in families and classrooms. Unless we equip our students with the specific skills needed to develop effective ways of interacting, peaceful coexistence will remain a dream.

Educator Frustration

One of the greatest frustrations faced by well-meaning educators and counselors is that they do not know how to teach cooperative skills, except by making these skills the content of a unit of study. Such an approach takes valuable time away from other content areas that educators feel pressured to address. Many educators feel vulnerable to the criticism that teaching conflict resolution and addressing interpersonal skills fall into the category of the social curriculum and are, therefore, not legitimate content areas for schools, which should focus only on academics. Because affective goals are included under the scope and sequence for democracy and citizenship for most school districts, and because the learning process is an integrated one that does not artificially separate cognitive and affective components, interpersonal skill development is a valid component of instruction. Nevertheless, the time factor discourages some educators. Even the opportunity to involve school counselors in affective skill development is lost because the average secondary school "counselor" is often involved in noncounseling tasks. A second drawback is that spending one to three weeks on a unit without follow-up practice or reinforcement may not be an effective way to teach complex skills. Much practice in communication and cooperative skills is necessary to achieve mastery.

A Solution

There is a way of teaching important cooperative and communication skills that does not detract from other content areas and can be practiced and reinforced throughout the year. By using a cooperative learning instructional strategy, students can engage in learning all sorts of content through a process that helps students develop communication abilities. The skills on which the educator wants to focus become not only the "what" of instruction but also the "how" of learning. Before explaining how this method of teaching works, we need to examine some of the specific skills involved in learning to resolve conflicts.

Skills Prerequisite to Conflict Resolution

First of all, conflict resolution is a complex skill built upon practice and mastery of simpler communication skills. The ability to interact requires awareness of others, awareness of the distinction between self and others, a desire to connect with others, the ability to lower negative psychological defenses when they get in the way, skill in listening and hearing, awareness of one's feelings and thoughts, and the ability to respond to the feelings and thoughts of others. This partial list represents a set of assumptions that we take for granted that children have learned by the time they arrive at school; these assumptions are unwarranted.

Task and Social Emotional Skills

Cooperative learning focuses on group interaction skills that are often divided into task skills and social/emotional (maintenance) skills in the literature (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1983). Skills that focus on the task at hand include the following: listening to ideas of others, contributing ideas, paraphrasing, checking for understanding, clarifying, summarizing, staying on the subject, distributing the task according to the amount of time available, gathering data, analyzing data, and arranging data in a presentable form.

Maintenance skills have to do with the affective tone of the group. Maintenance skills overlap with task skills, but the purpose of these skills is to help the group maintain favorable interpersonal interactions and cohesion. Positive maintenance procedures can assist with effective task accomplishment. Maintenance skills include the following: reflective listening, encouragement, praise, gatekeeping (making sure

that everyone has a chance to participate), guarding against dominance by one or two members, compromising, harmonizing, appropriate joking to alleviate tension, and expressing feelings.

Dishon and O'Leary (1984, p. 57) have categorized classroom task and maintenance skills in the following way:

Task Skills	Maintenance Skills
Check others' understanding of the work	Encourage
Contribute ideas	Use names
Stay on task	Encourage others to talk
Get group back to work	Respond to ideas
Paraphrase	Use eye contact
Ask questions	Show appreciation
Follow directions	Share feelings
Stay in own space	Disagree in an agreeable way
	Keep things calm

Interaction Orientation

Another way of conceptualizing interaction skill development focuses not so much on the specific behaviors as on the desired value orientations. For instance, democratic participation, appreciation of diversity, reciprocal respect, and Dewey's scientific method can be considered components of the conflict resolution process. Many activities that develop these orientations have been developed for use in schools. These cooperative activities, in turn, help individuals develop the specific behaviors described earlier, which are prerequisite skills to conflict resolution.

How Cooperative Learning Encourages Interactive Skills

Cooperative learning strategies help students develop specific skills as well as value orientations through activities that progress from the simple to the sophisticated. Conflict resolution is one of the more sophisticated activities toward which students work. Although a more detailed description of cooperative learning is available (Nattiv, 1988), the key components relevant to the skill-building process are excerpted here. Cooperative learning includes several instructional strategies in which students are grouped in teams in which they work together toward

a common goal. Cooperative learning strategies are appropriate for teaching all age groups, content areas, and cognitive levels. A typical learning cycle might follow the following pattern:

The teacher or counselor introduces the unit, as might be done in a traditional classroom, including motivating material and, perhaps, some direct instruction. Then teams work together on learning the content. This task could be accomplished through such diverse methods as: (1) peer tutoring with flash cards, (2) role differentiation (which involves each person in the group becoming an expert on a part of the material and then teaching the rest of the group), (3) worksheets, or (4) the creation of a group project in which each student contributes a component. Team members make sure that everyone in the group understands all of the material. Then students are individually assessed through quizzes, completion of individual materials, or other means. Last, teams receive recognition for their effort. This learning cycle typically takes a week and can be repeated weekly in a four-week unit.

Each cooperative learning team is ideally heterogeneous in the sense that the team reflects a microcosm of the diversity of the class as a whole along the dimensions of academic achievement, ethnicity, and sex. For instance, a high-achiever, a low-achiever, and two middle-achievers on each team of four students would provide academic heterogeneity. The ratio of boys and girls as well as different ethnic backgrounds should also be reflected on each team. Heterogeneity on these three dimensions has been instrumental in increasing achievement and breaking down ethnic barriers or stereotypes.

Each student on a cooperative learning team is responsible for doing his or her share of the work and is held accountable through some form of evaluation, such as a worksheet, oral report, quiz, presentation, or teacher observation. Generally, teams are rewarded based upon the contributions of each member. Thus, there is a great deal of attention by team members to make sure that all teammates have an understanding of the content and skills necessary to complete the work successfully. Ensuring accountability is a safeguard to make certain that no individual is rewarded on the merit of the group's work without contributing his or her fair share of effort.

Students in both cooperative learning groups share a common feeling: They feel like a team. As experienced by the authors, students have frequently reported an increased feeling of mutual concern and liking for

others; they want to help each other; they want the team to succeed. Such outcomes are fundamental to the success of the cooperative learning method. Such outcomes are a result, in large part, of the emphasis placed on the initial teambuilding efforts in which students first learn how to help each other work together toward the common goal of learning more successfully.

Teambuilding

Team identity building is practiced when teams first form. Students get to know each other better and learn some essential skills of group work. Activities for getting to know teammates can begin with low-risk exercises and, as trust builds, activities can become more personal. First, teams engage in exercises in which they learn more about each other. Members play name games or interview each other on a selected topic. Then the group decides on a team name by reaching consensus. Many cooperative learning activities encourage differences of opinion. But in this initial phase, learning the skill of reaching a consensus is valuable. Team members feel much more a part of their team if they all agree on the name of the team. Students practice the three rules of coming to consensus: (a) each member has a say, (b) no decision is reached unless all members consent, and (c) no one is to consent if one has a serious objection (Kagan, 1988).

Deciding on a team name by consensus or creating a team banner, logo, mural, or cheer add to the feeling of group cohesion. The mural or logo is often displayed in each group's area so teams can be identified more easily. In addition to the finished product, these activities are also used to demonstrate the process of group decision making, which includes participation, consensus, and respect for others. Additional types of teambuilding activities include the following: learning to respect individual differences, experiencing mutual support, discovering improvement in team performance that comes with practice, and finding out that four heads are better than one. Exercises in valuing individual differences demonstrate that it is acceptable to have different viewpoints. Everyone has a right to an opinion or perspective. In fact, diversity can enrich the group. Additional games and activities can further reinforce group cohesion. Usually this initial teambuilding process can be conducted in less than an hour.

Ongoing Skill Building

Initial teambuilding sets the stage for developing further interaction skills through ongoing skill building. Educators or counselors usually introduce cooperative learning by beginning with simple strategies, such as *Student Teams Achievement Divisions* (STAD) (Slavin, 1980), in which all students work together to master basic factual material, tutor each other, cooperate within their group, and compete against other groups. At this initial level, the teacher may notice a lack of ability in some skills, such as maintaining eye contact or knowing the difference between giving help to a teammate and just giving the answer.

One positive aspect of ongoing skill building is that it can be practiced while students are focusing on academic content. Additional time is often not necessary. We suggest that teachers or counselors select one skill to work on at a time. For instance, if the deficient skill is "giving supportive encouragement," the teacher or counselor can perform pretests by tallying the number of positive remarks that are heard in five minutes of walking around the room listening to groups. The educator can tell the students that encouragement is an area in which the class can improve and that this skill will be the focus for the next week while students are engaged in learning academic content. The counselor or teacher can then explain the rationale for developing this skill.

The next day another five-minute tally can be made of the frequency of the desired behavior. The tally can be done either by the teacher, the counselor, or a student. A third tally can be made later in the week. It is not recommended that teams compete to see who can get the most tallies. Rather, a class tally indicating progress of the whole group reinforces the message that cooperation is a joint effort. Having special attention focused on improving one behavior at a time, students' awareness of that behavior can be increased. By engaging in the behavior and focusing on practicing that behavior, students or teachers can improve that behavior.

As students become comfortable with the simpler cooperative learning techniques, they can be introduced to more complex methods in which individual tasks and separate roles are assigned to each team member and in which competition between teams is discontinued. Such methods as Jigsaw (Aronson, 1978), and project methods like Co-op Co-op (Kagan, 1988) and Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan, 1976) are examples of more complex cooperative methods. At higher levels, encouraging different opinions and multiple points of view are often part

of the methods, so conflict resolution becomes an essential skill. The earlier skills that students have developed, such as listening to others and valuing others' contributions, are useful for resolving conflicts.

Kagan (1988, p. 109) has emphasized the multiple approaches to conflict resolution between two members of a group. Kagan has used a poster that displays eight strategies and has recommended direct instruction, role-playing, and processing of the consequences. Kagan's approaches to conflict resolution are the following:

1. **Sharing:** We can both do it.
2. **Taking turns:** We can do it your way this time and my way the next.
3. **Compromising:** Give up some and get some.
4. **Chance:** Flip a coin or toss dice.
5. **Outside help:** Let's ask a teammate, classmate, teacher, or counselor.
6. **Postpone:** Later—when we cool down, we can deal with this.
7. **Avoid:** Agree to disagree—with respect.
8. **Humor:** Express, but not at the expense of another person.

Another approach is to make conflict resolution the focus of the content as well as the process of a lesson. The teacher creates a structured conflict or dilemma, gives students the opportunity to interact, and includes the most essential component of learning from the experience—time to talk about the experience and consider it afterwards. Kagan adapted a scenario called "Truck Driver" from Thayer (Kagan, 1988), which is an appropriate example. Scenarios involving conflict can also easily be chosen from relevant content that is part of the curriculum. Team members can choose to defend opposite sides in a debate. Teams can be asked to rank-order items on a list according to their importance and give a set of criteria. Any content involving attitudes and values (i.e., politics or religion) can become fertile ground for conflict resolution skill development. The key to successful conflict resolution is to build upon previously developed skills and to allow processing time after the experience. Some of the prerequisite skills include the following:

1. **Sharing**
2. **Appreciating or showing appreciation**
3. **Letting everyone have a say**
4. **Valuing diversity**
5. **Contributing, giving ideas**

6. Checking for understanding.
7. Checking for consensus or lack of consensus
8. Disagreeing politely
9. Paraphrasing

The greatest advantage of using cooperative learning for improving students' interpersonal skills and the consequent positive classroom atmosphere is that cooperative learning is a process that offers opportunity for practice. Opportunity for practice occurs even when no time is devoted to dealing with the skills as the content focus of a lesson. Many educators and counselors believe that interpersonal skill development is important in its own right and deserves special attention. Interpersonal skill development arranged in a cooperative learning classroom or school is highly effective.

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