DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 443 551 PS 028 712

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| AUTHOR | Bearbower, Beth; Mitchell, Rhonda; Summers, K. Susie |
| TITLE | Improving Student Interpersonal Skills and Social Growth in Diverse Learning Communities through Teamwork. |
| PUB DATE | 2000-05-00 |
| NOTE | 82p.; Master's Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and SkyLight Field-Based Masters Program. |
| PUB TYPE | Dissertations/Theses (040) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC04 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Action Research; *Behavior Change; Change Strategies; Classroom Research; Cooperative Learning; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; *Interpersonal Competence; Intervention; *Prosocial Behavior; *Skill Development; Social Development; Student Behavior; Student Improvement |
| IDENTIFIERS | Social Skills Training |

ABSTRACT

This action research project sought to improve the social skills of targeted first-, third-, and fourth-grade students. Students demonstrated an inability to collaborate with others, a disregard for the feelings and opinions of others, a lack of responsibility, excessive noise, incomplete assignments, unnecessary physical contact, inappropriate language, and a general disregard for classroom rules. Implemented interventions were: physical rearrangement of the classroom, direct instruction of social skills, role playing, use of community circles, establishment of rules, increased interaction within groups, and reflection. Post-intervention data indicated an increase in student use of the targeted social skills. Slight gains were observed in student collaboration and cooperative learning strategies. A decrease in student behavioral referrals signified a decline in inappropriate student behaviors in two of the three targeted schools. (Four appendices include student survey forms. Contains 91 references.) (Author/EV)

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# IMPROVING STUDENT INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND SOCIAL GROWTH IN DIVERSE LEARNING COMMUNITIES THROUGH TEAMWORK

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight
Field-Based Masters Program
Chicago, Illinois

May, 2000

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ABSTRACT

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Title: Improving Student Interpersonal Skills and Social Growth in Diverse Communities through Teamwork

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Students in the targeted classrooms were exhibiting limited interpersonal skills which interfered with social growth. Due to underdeveloped social skills, students demonstrated an inability to collaborate with others, a disregard for the feelings and opinions of others, a lack of responsibility, excessive noise, incomplete assignments, unnecessary physical contact, inappropriate language, and a general disregard for classroom rules. The targeted population consisted of first, third, and fourth grade students.

The probable causes for the lack of interpersonal skills and social growth were: a lack of parental guidance, changes in the family structure, and societal changes. Research literature suggested an indirect correlation between the following characteristics and social growth: lack of a positive classroom environment, lack of cooperative learning activities, and the inability to build consensus, coordinate team efforts, appreciate multiple perspectives, and avoid unproductive conflicts.

After reviewing the research literature, the interventions selected were: physical rearrangement of the classroom, direct instruction of social skills, role-playing, use of community circles, establishment of rules, increased interaction within groups, and reflection.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in student use of the targeted social skills. Slight gains were observed in student collaboration and cooperative learning strategies. A decrease in student behavioral referrals signified a decline in inappropriate student behaviors in two of the three targeted schools.

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# CHAPTER 1

## PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

### General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted first, third, and fourth grade classes exhibited a lack of interpersonal skills that interfered with their social and academic growth. Evidence for the existence of the problem included anecdotal records that documented discipline referrals, teacher observations, and assessments that indicated the level of academic performance.

### Immediate Problem Context

The research setting was comprised of three diverse learning communities: an inner-city elementary school, an urban elementary school, and a rural elementary school which were referred to respectively as School A, School B, and School C.

School A was an inner-city elementary school of 45,619 sq.ft. built in 1939. It was bordered by single-family homes, low-income apartments, and several businesses, and was located at the crossroads of two major thoroughfares. The mission statement for School A was to provide life-long learning skills through expanded learning opportunities.

Student enrollment was 374. The student population was comprised of 50.3% minority and 49.7% of non- minority students. Of these students, 11.5% were special education students. Free or reduced cost lunches were provided for 84.52% of the

student population. The average daily attendance was about 94%. The average class size K-5 was 19 students.

School A had a staff of 40 teachers, an administrator, 18 support staff, and 2 business partners. This school was a Title 1 building which employed five Title 1 teachers. One co-teacher provided support for mathematics and English in fourth and fifth grades, one for support in reading and mathematics at grades second and third, another for one half time Reading Recovery for first grade and as a co-teacher for first grade, another one-half time Reading Recovery and first grade support, and one teacher for a grant manager position. Major programs funded by Title 1 were school-wide reading programs, a parental involvement program, staff development, and two extended day kindergarten sessions. Also provided, in addition to Title 1 programs, were a Solution Focus program of interventions for students at-risk, Academic Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE), and the Boys Town method of behavior management.

The percentage of School A kindergarten students scoring at the needs level in reading performance levels was 22%. Reading and mathematics performance levels for fourth grade students at need were 70% in reading and 6.3% in math. Composite scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) showed 13% of third graders, 7% of fourth graders, and 14% of fifth graders scored in the bottom quartile.

School A had a low socioeconomic status with little parental involvement. The majority of families were single-parents with single-incomes or which received public assistance.

School B was an urban school of 54,497 sq.ft. built in 1955. It was bordered on all sides by single-family housing and located in the northwest quadrant of the city. The mission statement for School B was to provide a safe, positive, and challenging environment where students could learn and reach their full intellectual, emotional,

and social potential; community where students would become successful citizens of the twenty-first century.

Student enrollment was about 500. The student population was comprised of 19.6% minority and 80.4% non-minority students. Of those students, 2.75% were special education students. Free or reduced cost lunches were provided for 32.5% of the students. The average daily attendance was 96%. The average class size K-5 was 20 students.

School B has a staff of 40 teachers, an administrator, 10 support staff, and 2 business partners. The school offered a K-5 curriculum including: fine arts, health and safety, language arts, mathematics, physical education, reading, science, and social studies. Special features were: preschool experience for handicapped and at-risk students, writing across the curriculum, visiting artists programs, supplemental enrichment programs K-3, Peace Builders, special education, talented and gifted programming, and an instrumental music program for fourth and fifth grades. Also provided was a Solution Focus program of interventions for students at risk.

The percentage of School B kindergarten students scoring at the needs level in reading performance levels was 15%. Reading and mathematics performance levels for fourth grade students at need were 33% in reading and 13.6% in mathematics. Composite scores on the ITBS showed 33% of third graders, 37% of fourth graders, 33% of fifth graders scored in the bottom quartile.

School C was a rural school of 29,282 sq.ft. built in 1952. It was located in a small industrial and farming community of approximately 1,000 people and was 17 miles from the nearest major city. The mission statement for School C was to provide educational experience enabling all students to achieve academic, social, physical, and intellectual growth.

Student enrollment was 210. The student population was comprised of 3.8%

minority and 96.2% non-minority students. Of those students, 3.33% were special education students. Free or reduced cost lunches were provided for 37.33% of the students. The average daily attendance was 96.8%. The average class size K-5 was 20 students.

School C had a staff of 40 teachers, an administrator, 18 support staff, and 6 business partners. School C offered a complete K-5 curriculum including special areas. Special programs included Peace Builders, Accelerated Readers, AGATE, and Solution Focus interventions for at-risk students.

The percentage of School C kindergarten students scoring at the needs level in reading performance levels we 37%. Reading and math performance levels for fourth grade students at need were 59% in reading and 3.1% in math. Composite scores on the ITBS showed 20% of third graders, 22% of fourth graders, and 6% of fifth graders scored in the bottom quartile.

## The Surrounding Community

The community in which the targeted areas were located was a metropolitan region in a bi-state setting with a population of over 350,000 people. The area's 300 mile market of nearly 3 million people comprised 15% of the nation's population. The total population of the research community was Caucasian, 84,968; African American, 7,521; Asian, 1,000; American Indian or Eskimo, 388; and other 1,456. The median household income was $13,501.

The area's households numbered 139,800. Twenty percent of the population of school-aged children fell into the 5-17 year range.

The average overall temperature was 44 degrees F. The average annual rainfall was 36.02 inches and the average annual snowfall was 30.6 inches.

The targeted provided culturally rich facilities ranging from concert halls, convention centers, theaters, festivals, civic centers, conservatories, and botanical

centers. Also included were professional orchestras, major performing arts organizations, museums, and art galleries.

Leading sources of employment for the community were a world competitive farm machinery manufacturer, U.S. government employment facilities, numerous major medical centers, and major industrial steel manufacturers. Other sources which supported the employment base were energy companies, retail footwear manufacturers, food service and distributing conglomerates, and major food processing and packaging industries. The unemployment rate was 4.5%.

The transportation system included a full service international airport with major air freight and air passenger carriers, several municipal airports, major rail transportation, and a city bus system.

A major river was the nucleus of the community. This natural resource supported natural power, historical landmarks, and recreational activities. The river provided riverside parks, trails, and overlooks. A total of approximately 100 miles spanned both sides of the river with walkways and bike paths. These urban trails included parkways, playgrounds, marinas, restaurants, boat launches, and picnic areas.

The community provided a variety of recreational activities. The community supported twenty public and six private golf courses and included one course associated with a professional golf tournament. An indoor Olympic-sized and NHL sized sports ice arena allowed year round public and organized athletic leagues to engage in figure skating, hockey, broom ball, and speed skating. Year-round snow skiing and water skiing were available to the surrounding community. Two outdoor recreational water parks were located in the community.

The media included three major television stations, numerous radio stations, two major newspapers, and several advertising publications. Four public libraries, a

county library, and numerous university, college, and branch libraries were available to the community.

The community had three universities, four colleges, and several vocational training centers.

The community school district served one urban and three rural communities. The district had over 17,000 students who lived in areas that were described as inner city, urban, rural city, or farm. Widely diverse, the district's majority population was 73% and the minority population was 27%. The district employed 2,500 staff members and provided innovative programming from prekindergarten through 12th grade.

The district, in the past several years, had seen a declining enrollment. District officials wanted to reverse the trend. The district had lost 1,000 students between 1992 and 1998, while other districts in the county had seen increased numbers. Coupled with that was the number of students the district lost to open enrollment each year. In 1998-1999, 290 students had left the district to attend schools in neighboring communities, while only 90 students from other districts had enrolled in this district. The cost of such a loss totaled between $800,000 and $1 million for the year.

One trait distinctive to the district was the diversity in race and economic standing among its student body. The district's board wanted to see that difference embraced and recognized as a positive in a child's education.

Seventy-two percent of its students were white, 16% were black, 6% were Hispanic, 3% were biracial, 2% were Asian and 1% were American Indian.

Economically, 42% of its students received free or reduced-price lunches. The free and reduced-price program was one indicator used to determine the number of low-income students in the district.

A new mission statement and list of strategic plans was developed by district employees and community members. Strategies included: implementation of a

marketing plan reflecting the district's vision and mission, implementation of a collaborative plan to create effective measures for staff and student performance and accountability, implementation of a plan to provide a physically safe and emotionally secure environment in the schools, and implementation of educational approaches that meet unique needs of students.

District goals had been drafted to include: development of a five-year financial plan, development of a 360- degree evaluation process for the district, promotion of the district-wide student achievement known as All Children Excel (ACE), development of a report card for each school to provide regular information to the superintendent, board, and the public, and the establishment evaluation of learning outcomes and educational goals supported by staff development and assessment.

In March of 1999, voters approved a local option, one-cent increase in sales tax that provided a total of roughly $116 million to the district over a 10 year period. The one-cent sales tax and Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (renewed the previous year) provided the district with a total of nearly $140 million for massive building renovations and upgrades.

In April of 1999, it was recommended that the district enter into an agreement with the Edison Project, a for-profit corporation, to provide instructional programming and technology for one inner-city school for the 1999-2000 school year. The goal of the Edison Project was to improve academic achievement and test scores by implementing its own curriculum, extended instructional days and years, provide more staff development, computers that students would take home, foreign languages, and an emphasis on the arts and science. Representatives of Edison gave assurance that class sizes and the attendance area for the designated school would remain the same. Negotiations were finalized and the board adapted the program in July of 1999.

Decentralization of the district's central administration was also at issue. In May

1999, a plan was announced by the superintendent to reassign 18 staff members in the Administration Service Center to school buildings for the 1999-2000 school year. Administrative staff were to be housed out of schools to more directly support individual buildings, principals, staff, and students.

## National Context of the Problem

The need for improving interpersonal skills within the educational setting is a direct link to equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed in a modern society. Essential skills promoting diversity are cultivated through a theme of teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation. "Success in life depends on successful relationships with other human beings" (New City School, 1994, p. 23).

Supreme Court decisions in this century have supported a school system that is rich in cultural and economic diversity (Parker, 1997). According to Parker (1997), the great task for teachers, administrators, and parents is to seize the opportunity afforded by such diversity and use it to aid children in building the character and necessary behaviors for civilized public life.

Are schools mirroring the moral decay that many believe has infected American society? Recent studies have shown that 83% of the general public believes that schools have not only an obligation to teach academics, but to reinforce those skills which allow us to better understand other people (Wadsworth, 1997). It is in our best interest to promote social goals and the more opportunities children are given through teamwork, the more refined their interpersonal skills will become. The less success young people have in schools, the community, and society, the more social instability we can expect (Sylwester, 1997).

Research has shown that students with strong interpersonal skills do better in their schoolwork and peer relationships. Interaction with others produces cognitive as well as social complexity, creating more intellectual activity that increases learning

when contrasted with solitary study (Joyce, 1996).

The lack of interpersonal skills has impacted student growth by ignoring the diversity of modern society and perpetuating a general ignorance of the values of teamwork. Covey (1990) stated that positive results will be gained from working as a team, and that the excitement of that mutual learning and insight will create an environment conducive for learning and growth. Diverse learning communities will flourish with an understanding and empathy of others. In today's society, there is growing need to study the magnitude of interpersonal skills on student growth and diversity.

# CHAPTER 2

## PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

### Problem Evidence

Students in the targeted first, third, and fourth grade elementary schools exhibited a general lack of interpersonal skills which interfered with the students' social growth. Evidence for the existence of the problem included anecdotal records which documented behavioral referrals, teachers' observation checklists, and student and teacher surveys which described student behaviors.

Anecdotal records were comprised of behavioral referrals and classroom time-outs. The behavioral referrals were issued after verbal warnings, conferencing with students, and classroom time-outs. The behavioral referrals centered on defiance, physical aggression, verbal confrontations and inappropriate language, and failure to return homework assignments. Classroom time-outs involved being off-task, excessive noise, putdowns, distracting others, and not following classroom procedures.

Anecdotal records provided information regarding the degree and severity of problems. Behavioral referrals were recorded from September 1998 through June 1999 of the previous school year. Table 1 notes the grade level, number of referrals, and behavioral categories.

Table 1

Categories and Number of Discipline Referrals September 1, 1998 through June 1, 1999

| Behavioral Category | Grade 1 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Insubordination | 7 | 6 | 10 |
| Verbal aggression | 67 | 42 | 4 |
| Physical aggression | 6 | 26 | 3 |
| Unacceptable behavior | 229 | 86 | 14 |
| Total | 309 | 160 | 31 |

Of the 309 behavioral referrals recorded in first grade, 30 were habitual behavioral problems. Three or more behavioral referrals was considered habitual. In the third grade, which had 88 students, 12 were habitual behavioral problems. In the fourth grade, which had 37 students, 4 were habitual behavioral problems.

Teacher observation checklists were distributed to the first, third, and fourth grade teachers of the respective elementary schools. Researchers devided the survey into three areas: 1. Classroom behavior, 2. Performance skills, and 3. Interaction skills to rate students' behaviors. Classroom behaviors centered around attentive listening, prepared with proper materials, work without distracting others, following classroom rules, and accepting consequences. Performance skills were following directions, making appropriate requests, participation in group activities, and using appropriate language. Interaction skills consisted of appropriate classroom discussions,

responsiveness to praise, and respectfulness and cooperation with others. Tables 2, 3, and 4 note the levels of concern for the aforementioned areas by grade level. High points indicated behaviors infrequently observed by the surveyed teachers.

Table 2

First Grade Observation of Postive Behaviors- September 1999

| Types of Students Behaviors | Points | Range |
|---|---|---|
| Classroom Behavior | 15 | 15-54 |
| Interaction Skills | 22 | 15-54 |
| Performance Skills | 20 | 15-54 |

Table 3

Third Grade Observation of Positive Behaviors-September 1999

| Types of Students Behaviors | Points | Range |
|---|---|---|
| Classroom Behavior | 50 | 35-105 |
| Interaction Skills | 65 | 35-105 |
| Performance Skills | 53 | 35-105 |

Table 4

Fourth Grade Observation of Positive Behaviors - September 1999

| Types of Students Behaviors | Points | Range |
|---|---|---|
| Classroom Behavior | 30 | 20-72 |
| Interaction Skills | 42 | 20-72 |
| Performance Skills | 37 | 20-72 |

All first, third, and fourth grade faculty, including both special education and support staff, were surveyed. The survey of the first grade teachers responded that students had the most difficulty with interaction skills. The majority of the third grade teachers indicated a lack in students' interaction skills. The fourth grade teachers also indicated the students had a difficult time with interaction skills. The major problem was indicated as a need for improvement in following directions.

Researchers compiled results of the direct teacher observation checklist. The checklist was conducted two times within a one week period before interventions were implemented. The observation period for the first grade was twenty minutes in length. The observation period for the third and fourth grades was thirty minutes in length. The teacher observation checklist documented the number of students not on task, exhibiting withdrawn behavior, learning difficulties, and positive team behaviors. The data reflected the number of incidents for first, third, and fourth grades, as well as a

total representation of all respective students. Of the observable behaviors, students not on task and team behaviors were the areas exhibiting the most noticeable lack of skills.

## Probable Causes

The researchers at the targeted elementary schools believed three probable causes existed for the lack of students interpersonal skills which impeded social growth: students lacked direct instruction of social skills, societal changes which impacted home and school environments, and inexperience in teamwork and cooperative learning impacted peer relationships.

Researchers found several reasons that students lacked the direct instruction of interpersonal skills needed for successful social growth. First, staff development at the targeted schools was insufficient; and, therefore, the direct instruction of interpersonal skills was more limited than other academics. District time allotments for the instruction of other curriculum left little time for social skills instruction, which required significant restructuring and planning of the teacher's day.

Second, there was evidence that societal changes impacted the students' home and school environments. Many students resided in single-parent households, or households in which both parents held full-time jobs. The heavy demands of the adults within the students' homes appeared to negatively influence the teaching of social skills and responsibility in the home environment. The decrease in interpersonal communication within the home appeared to be a determinant in the lack of interpersonal skills exhibited within the school environment.

Finally, students were inexperienced in teamwork and cooperative learning. Researchers observed that the skills necessary for successful interaction among peer group members were lacking. Students appeared unable to define their roles within the group. Team members demonstrated inequitable input and division of

responsibilities of assignments. Students appeared unfamiliar with the use of teamwork in accomplishing common goals and attempted to instigate tasks of a more competitive nature.

After examining the research literature, researchers were able to find evidence which supported the mentioned probable causes. Stainback and Stainback (1992) reported that with the increasing diversity of the general education classroom, predefined curriculums with specific goal achievement should no longer solely dictate the success of students, and that socialization and friendships should be among the major educational goals in an integrated society. Finding the time to teach social skills in an already overcrowded teaching schedule was the first objection of many teachers. Although teachers in general recognized the importance of a well implemented social skills program, the restructuring of time and the loss of traditional academic instruction was of major concern. The need for better staff development training was identified by administrators as an important concern in the direct instruction of social skills, (Elias, Butler, and Schuyler, 1997). Cummings and Haggarty (1997) stated that teachers who did not use a social skills curriculum were less satisfied with their classes.

In regard to societal changes, Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Lewis, and Schaps (1999) reported that school is perhaps the only social institution that is able to reach youth from all of the diverse groups in society and to provide a direct connection with the family and society at large. Students who are not taught social responsibility will struggle to cope with the challenges of today's global community. Parents' lack of support and disrespect of education was paramount in students' inability to achieve in their school environment.

Kewley (1998) reported that without varied instructional methods the possibility of meeting all students' needs would decrease; the benefits of peer collaboration by students have been highly underestimated. Research by Schaps and Lewis (1998)

demonstrated that small-group learning benefited children socially only if the students within the group possessed a knowledge of interpersonal skills. Negative responses to children of diverse backgrounds are accentuated by a lack of cooperative experiences (Shechtman ,1997). The use of competition to motivate students needs to be replaced with a sense of community and teamwork to become a successful group member (Battistich et al.,1999). Building consensus, coordinating team efforts, appreciating diverse perspectives, and avoiding unproductive conflicts were reiterated throughout the investigative literature as principal characteristics of effective team members.

In addition to the supportive causes mentioned previously, experts have offered other reasons for improving interpersonal skills and social growth. Goleman (1996) indicated that emotional intelligence contributes nearly 80% to factors that determine success, while only 20% is left to IQ. Emotional intelligence is considered to be the ability to get along with others, persistence, controlling impulses, self-motivation, empathizing, and mood control. Goleman's theory demonstrates the need to devote class time to the teaching and application of interpersonal skills. Goleman (1996) pointed out that the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs supported his theory with research which indicated that emotional and social measures are more accurate predictors of future school success than advanced reading ability or facts a child knows.

Jeweler and Barnes-Robinson (1999) reported that life skills training, with attention to conflict resolution and decision making, is one of the best ways in which to address this growing need in schools in the United States. The integration of life skills training with the academic curriculum is pertinent in teaching students nonviolent ways to manage differences.

Wolin and Wolin (1996) expressed the importance of teaching interpersonal skills to those students with little adult support at home and creating opportunities in

the classroom to build the strengths needed to cultivate supportive relationships. In their study of 25 healthy adults who had grown up in homes lacking parental support, it was found that when given the skills to build positive relationships with others, their successful efforts produced a sense of competence and filled the void left by absentee parents.

Farner (1996) stated that inappropriate behavior continues to be a significant issue in schools across the country. To meet the needs of students with behavior problems he believed certain fundamental elements should be present in any school committed to helping young people. Among those elements were a sense of belonging found in acceptance, the experience of success, the ability to control behavior to gain respect, and the development of cooperation resulting in a sense of usefulness.

After reviewing numerous articles, the researchers at the targeted elementary schools found the probable cause for the lack of interpersonal skills and social growth as: 1) inadequate instruction of social skills in schools, 2) unsupportive and noncommunicative home environments, and 3) a failure to provide sufficient opportunities and strategies for successful teamwork.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Literature Review

The researchers at the targeted elementary schools studied numerous articles addressing the direct instruction of interpersonal skills for social growth, the responsibility of schools in integrating social skills in the academic curriculum, and cooperative learning strategies. The literature supported the initial observations of a deficiency in interpersonal skills instruction and the lack of opportunities for cooperative learning as detrimental to the social growth of students. To develop the interpersonal skills of students, researchers cited literature reflecting the importance of direct instruction of social skills curriculum. Staff development, steps for implementation, and assessment were addressed.

Burke (1992) reported that a new era of education based upon the teaching of fundamental social skills: cooperative learning, positive interaction, teamwork, self-esteem, student responsibility, and student empowerment, should be the foundation for learning in the future. The federally funded America 2000 program offered districts throughout the United States monies to restructure educational policies to meet the needs of students and community. Burke (1995) stated that a major and necessary educational change would incorporate the cooperative learning educational model. The inclusion of teamwork, higher-order thinking, social skills, leadership roles, and

active learning were part of this model.

The problem of teaching social skills directly in an already overwhelming curriculum presented a problem for teachers, yet was seen as part of the solution to build an interactive classroom founded on the principles of teamwork. Burke (1995) stated that the diverse learning communities of today had left many teachers unprepared to manage such classrooms. The implementation of the social skills curriculum needed to be preceded by staff development which aided teachers in managing a more cooperative classroom. Burke believed that college methods courses left teachers unprepared for the rigors of classroom management and academics. Burke cited the state of California's educational reform bill to retrain college professors as a first step toward teacher preparation. The bill required college professors to return to the elementary or secondary classroom once every three years to remain abreast of recent changes (Burke, 1992).

The goal of the cooperative learning educational model is to help students become responsible and contributing members of their community. Teachers contribute to this goal by providing direct instruction in social skills and opportunities to develop interpersonal skills. The successful teacher teaches, models, monitors, and reteaches throughout the school year. Burke (1992) believed the implementation of such skills would alleviate much of the classroom management problems associated with negative and disruptive behavior. The stages in teaching social skills were the hook to grab the students' attention, teaching of the skill, guided practice for internalization, observation and feedback to monitor positive behaviors, reflection on the application of the skill, recognition and celebration affirming the positive behavior, and transfer and encouragement of the skill in real life. Implementation and subsequent assessment of the students' development of interpersonal skills was measured with checklists, group discussion, reflective journals, and teacher

observation.

Burke (1992) concluded that teachers must become efficient managers of cooperative learning teams meeting the needs of all students. It is the job of teachers to provide social skills instruction which can be applied in the classroom and transferred to real life.

Goleman (1995) supported the value of social skills instruction in determining success in life. Goleman described levels of intelligence factors as only contributing approximately 20% to the determination of success. He believed that nearly 80% of other forces made up an emotional intelligence generated from such things as the ability to get along with others, persistence, control of impulsivity, empathy, self-motivation, and the monitoring of one's moods.

Goleman (1996) reported the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs showed a direct correlation between school success and emotional and social skills such as confidence, self-control, effective communication, curiosity, and cooperativeness. Those elements associated with emotional intelligence were believed to enhance a student's ability to get along in groups, therefore, taking the focus from social incompetence to the achievement of a goal.

Goleman cited a formal program of direct skill instruction at Nueva School, in Hillsborough, California, called Self Science. As schools begin to add emotional and social skills to their curriculums, this class exemplified the development of many of these skills. The following skills were addressed in the Nueva School program: self-awareness, personal decision making, managing feelings, handling stress, empathy, communication, self-disclosure, insight, self-acceptance, personal responsibility, assertiveness, group dynamics, and conflict resolution. Although Goleman pointed out that there is no set curriculum for the teaching of intrapersonal or interpersonal skills, he classified this program as effective in aiding students in the acquisition of

necessary skills for success in life.

Weissberg, Shriver, Bose, DeFalco (1997) documented a district wide social development project in New Haven, Connecticut. The project responded to what was believed to be only limited success of character education programs and created a comprehensive K-12 social development curriculum.

A task force was formed and analyzed concerns regarding social and health-related behaviors of New Haven's high school students. Through in-depth surveys it was found that a significant proportion of students participated in behaviors that jeopardized their academic performance, health, and safety.

A Department of Social Development was established at the district level, and a supervisor and staff of facilitators were appointed. The department established social and emotional education opportunities for regular, special, and bilingual education students.

The goals of the Social Development Project were twofold: 1. Educate knowledgeable, responsible, and caring students, and 2. Enable students to acquire a set of basic skills, values, and work habits for real life situations. The curriculum objectives and content considered federal standards, state mandates, and the priorities of teachers, parents, community members, and students. The new curriculum was 25-50 hours of instruction which addressed problem-solving, conflict resolution, communication skills, personal responsibility, respect for self and others, health, culture, careers, and interpersonal relationships (Weissberg et al. 1997).

Professional development programs were included to support and train teachers and other staff prior to the implementation of the Social Development program. Master teachers were enlisted to help coordinate instruction with school and community programming. An improvement in stress-management and problem-solving skills were realized by reachers as well as students.

Evaluation strategies were implemented to assess the effectiveness of the program. Teachers, students, administrators, and parents collaborated in the evaluation of the process and outcomes. The project was documented to have improved students' behaviors and attitudes.

Weissberg et al (1997) concluded by listing recommendations made by The New Haven Social Development Project to aid other districts in establishing system-wide programs. Stated principles were: 1. Programs should address social, emotional, and physical health, 2. Direct instruction of developmentally appropriate material, 3. Students should be encouraged to apply skills to real-life situations, 4. Parents, school, and community should work as a cohesive unit to support instruction, 5. Programs must include students at risk, and 6. Comprehensive, systemic support should be built into system wide programs.

Weissberg et al (1997) suggested that rather than consider single issues for the prevention of negative outcomes, total learning environments should be considered to support the development of healthy children.

Cummings and Haggerty (1997) reported on the positive effect of social skills instruction. The project's goal was to set up a system of interventions to bond students and family to school. The project was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and followed 1,040 early elementary students through high school. Staff development, parenting workshops, home-based services, and student activities were the methods to be used.

Teachers in the program were asked to identify important social and emotional skills from which units were developed. The units were presented during staff development workshops and aided teachers in direct instruction, practice, reinforcement, and generalization of skills. Participating teachers at the elementary level attended workshops together to reinforce the school wide approach. Upper

grade teachers were trained two to three years prior to the arrival of the "program group."

Staff development was offered in five sessions: 1. Proactive classroom management aided students in becoming better self-managers, 2. Motivating at-risk learners focused on self-motivation, 3. Teaching social skills taught teachers strategies for the direct instruction of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, 4. Teaching strategies were taught to increase student participation, and 5. Reading instruction which integrated literature instruction and social and emotional learning.

Cummings and Haggerty (1997) concluded that "The Raising Healthy Children" project did not solve all behavior problems, but long-term improvements were demonstrated through the use of acquired skills. The direct instruction of social skills provided students with greater opportunities to learn pertinent social skills and therefore reduce behavior problems.

Shechtman (1997) conducted an intervention program designated to evoke positive, cooperative interaction among diverse groups of students. Shechtman stated students placed in heterogeneous classrooms were automatically expected to interact in a productive way, were less likely to experience success than students who received direct instruction in intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness. The goal was to form a two-part alternative approach to classroom intervention aimed at promoting positive student interaction.

The approach, therapeutic interaction, was based on counseling and therapy literature. The rationale was formed on the premise that individuals in a group have some basic needs which not only impact the individual but the group as a whole: a sense of belonging, acknowledgment by others, freedom of self-expression, opportunities to express emotion, and open communication. Shechtman maintained that the climate of a group is set by how well those basic needs are met.

The intervention combined intrapersonal and interpersonal factors into a two-part program. The first part of the program aimed to build self-esteem through activities created to empower students. The second part of the program focused on the development of interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, and group interactions through sharing activities and discussion. The therapeutic interaction was led by classroom teachers.

Shechtman's intervention program demonstrated only a partial positive effect on the classroom environment. Younger students improved intrapersonal skills, whereas older students appeared to gain mostly in social acceptance.

Shechtman concluded by reiterating the importance of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in today's increasingly diverse learning communities, and the need for continued teacher training to effectively deal with those needs.

Krall and Jalongo (1999) and Glasser (1995) reported that teachers share an important responsibility in assuring that students are provided a comfortable learning environment. Home and school cannot be separated, and although teachers have argued that their role is one of academic instruction and not solving problems from home, they explained that the use of a teacher's professional power to establish such an environment would in turn promote academic achievement.

As Partnership Liaison for Training and Development with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Connection, Krall and Jalango not only worked as an intervention specialist, but taught in-service programs for practicing teachers. Krall and Jalango believed that many teachers lacked the confidence in their abilities to make a difference in students' lives.

Krall and Jalango (1999) formulated eight important objectives in the establishment of a caring classroom community: 1. Be honest...build mutual trust, 2. Cultivate communication skills.... be a role model, 3. Adjust the schedule... be flexible,

4. Alter perspective... be empathetic, 5. Be human... promote humor, 6. Promote a positive self-image....be kind, 7. Look beyond the classroom walls.... establish interpersonal relationships, and 8. Monitor personal and professional growth... make a good plan.

Included in the article was a variety of helpful activities to support the implementation of the aforementioned objectives. Some of the recommended activities were: a Talk Box where students could leave anonymous notes on topics they wanted discussed, Community Circles to promote communication, Dialogue Journals used to interact directly with individual students, a Help Wanted/Help Offered board where students lent or gained support, a Smile Folder which students kept affirmations, "Thought for the Day" bulletin board provided an opportunity for students to create their own statements , sayings, or slogans, and Treasured Object where students displayed and described an item of special significance.

Also included was a teacher self-monitoring checklist to be included in a teacher's plan book. The checklist was to be used as a reflective tool only, not as a test or judgment of a teacher's abilities.

Krall and Jalongo (1999) concluded that when establishing a caring classroom community, students and teachers identified many of the same needs and desires. Teachers, as well as students, wanted to be appreciated, heard, respected, and needed to build confidence, competence, and commitment. Krall and Jalongo reiterated their goal of providing students with a comfortable learning environment and stated that in doing so both students and teachers experienced success in the classroom.

Kewley (1998) studied peer collaboration versus teacher-directed instruction. The two methodologies were observed in a fifth grade over a five-month period. The goal of the research was to analyze discrepancies between factors which promoted

cognitive growth in teacher-directed learning as compared to those used when students collaborated to solve problems.

Kewley cited previous studies that demonstrated the successful social outcomes attributed to cooperative learning, the direct relationship between cooperative learning and the use of higher-level thinking skills, a higher rate of task completion, and increased levels of motivation. Although cooperative learning was preferred by most students, Western industrial societies devoted only approximately 15% of their instructional time to this style of learning in spite of its social and cognitive benefits. The majority of learning environments used teacher-directed lessons which appeared to promote a more competitive atmosphere.

Videotaped observations, audiotaped interviews, field notes, classroom journals, follow-up activities, and unit assessments in a mathematics class were collected. The data were analyzed in a variety of ways. First, data were categorized as to the fit in existing theories of social learning. Next, narratives were analyzed to determine whether behaviors were repeated from one lesson to another. When repetitive behaviors were observed, they were then transformed into data-based theory. Finally, the different characteristics of each theory were categorized and similarities were identified.

The results of Kewley's research indicated a large discrepancy between teacher-directed outcomes and those of peer collaboration. Most importantly, the findings indicated that although both methodologies promoted learning, peer collaboration, student participation, knowledge of problem solving, and enhanced comprehension.

Schaeffer (1998) noted the importance of moral and social development in a child's education. As executive director and CEO of the Character Education Partnership in Washington, D.C., Schaeffer defined character education as a long-

term process of helping young people develop good character traits that our society needs.

One hundred educators and community leaders were surveyed for recommendations of programs that illustrated good character education. Included in the survey were representatives from diverse racial and ethnic populations. Upon completion of the survey, ten schools which illustrated good character education were chosen for the study.

Common to the ten programs were direct instruction of social skills, involvement of all staff and parents, community participation, identified connections between lessons and students' experiences, and emphasis on community responsibility.

The selected character education programs helped students assume responsibility, created a more positive environment, built a sense of community, and improved academic learning. Kewley (1998) stated that although these programs did not eliminate school violence, they provided outlets for troubled students.

Duggan (1995) described a life skills program at Aztec Elementary, a public K-6 school in Scottsdale, Arizona. The program was based on the LIFE SKILLS Program developed by Susan Kovalik and Associates, Inc. The skills needed to succeed were: integrity, initiative, flexibility, perseverance, organization, sense of humor, effort, common sense, problem solving, responsibility, patience, friendship, curiosity, cooperation, caring, and courage.

Six key steps were identified: 1. Start talking the talk - understand the life skill terminology and use it frequently, 2. Create a life skills classroom display - serves as a reminder to look for and practice the skills, 3. Refer to the life skills when students are disciplined - which life skill did the student forget to use, 4. Point out life skills across the curriculum - help students make connections, 5. Weave in life skills across the curriculum - help students make connections, and 6. Make sure students' parents

understand what the life skills are - explain the terminology and how it will be used.

Duggan also addressed the need for teachers to practice the skills. At Aztec Elementary teachers were rewarded for using the life skills. Teacher's names were submitted to the principal for recognition by other staff when the use of a life skill was demonstrated.

The need for the integration of social skills instruction into the academic curriculum was discussed in several articles. Among the specific issues addressed were the need for conflict resolution and interpersonal skills in a diverse population, the importance of preparing students to become contributing members of society, and the impact of the integration of a social skills curriculum on academic success.

Jeweler and Barnes-Robinson (1999) stated that the integration of a curriculum to teach students management of differences and interpersonal skills is an essential component of nonviolent schools. The need for conflict resolution as part of classroom curriculum is believed to be paramount in our growing global society.

Jeweler cited the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland as an example of how to combine conflict resolution strategies with learning opportunities. MCPS was a large suburban district comprised of 180 schools which served a diverse population.

MCPS recognized conflict as a natural state, where certain skills are required to deal with conflict. The integration of conflict resolution training and opportunities for students to practice the skills taught had a positive impact on self-esteem and the development of higher-order thinking skills.

The emphasis of the program provided tools or strategies which enabled students to transfer what they had learned to real-life situations. The lessons were not considered add-ons, but were to be used within the content areas.

Seven conflict-resolution tools were developed by MCPS. The strategies were

described as brainstorming, questioning, active listening, conceptual thinking, role playing, triggering, and problem solving.

MCPS staff were in-serviced during a two-day workshop and given an overview of the program. Future training was divided into teams made-up of a teacher, counselor, and administrator. Following the training, teachers implemented the program applying the lessons to their content areas. Comprehensive guides were published for each level of teaching.

Vatalaro (1999) stressed the importance of teaching students to resolve disputes with nonaggressive behaviors. Two programs designed to guide students to an understanding of peaceful solutions of problems were conflict resolution and peer mediation. The traditional approach of using adults to settle disputes tended to develop teachers' skills of controlling their students, but left the students without the skills and attitudes to resolve problems themselves.

The implementation of resolution programs needed to allow students opportunities to make decisions regarding socially approved methods of solving problems. Interpersonal confrontations grew when students were unable to regulate their own behavior. Teacher training in conflict resolution was deemed a necessary step in the integration and implementation of student programs with the content areas.

Peer mediation monitored the resolution of problems of an unbiased third party. Students and staff nominated peer mediators, and parental approval was secured before the mediators were trained.

A successful peer mediation program included four goals: 1. Development of an uncomplicated program, 2. The sharing of successes and frustrations by students and staff, 3. Support for the mediators, and 4. Opportunities for mediators to improve their skills.

Vatalaro concluded that conflict resolution and peer mediation addressed the

need for the development of prosocial behaviors. The time and energy required to adequately prepare and equip students with strategies for the resolution of problems was believed to be a necessary responsibility of schools.

Pace and Podesta (1999) categorized conflict-resolution and peace-education programs as principal in building a peaceful global community. To create a safe community interpersonal skills needed to be designed and implemented in schools. One suggested approach was through the use of children's literature. Research indicated a positive impact on moral development through the use of Dr. Seuss books.

Pace and Podesta cited several examples of Dr. Seuss books as a medium by which to introduce values and develop curriculum. And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street (1937) supports an active imagination which enables the reader to envision the ordinary as extraordinary, Horton Hears a Who! (1954) demonstrates the importance of perseverance and dedication in helping others, Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories (1958) describes the roles fear, ignorance, and intolerance play in situations of conflict, Sneetches and Other Stories (1961) addresses the issue of prejudice, and The Butter Battle Book (1984) demonstrates the conflict which arises from an inability to understand and respect cultural differences.

Pace and Podesta concluded by stating that although the proposed Dr. Seuss literature may not stop conflict from occurring, it promoted many necessary social skills valuable to the peacemaking process.

Vollmer, Drook, and Harned (1999) suggested that children with a basic foundation of conflict resolution skills are better able to accomplish compromise. Conflict resolution was cited as a key component of school strategies that address issues of negative behaviors and violence.

The Falk Laboratory School at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania implemented a conflict-resolution program for grades K-8. Teacher workshops, guest

speakers, journal articles, and videos were part of the training provided prior to the design of the program. Activities were selected based upon a common school vocabulary and basic instructional steps of the conflict-resolution model.

Assessment of the pilot program provided several positive outcomes: collaborative problem-solving, increased student responsibility, development of conflict-resolution strategies, transference of skills to the home environment, increased cooperation and teamwork, and fewer prejudices.

Harrington-Lueker (1997) recognized the importance of moving beyond good grades in identifying successful schools. Cited was a charter school in Long Beach, California. Five core principles enhanced the curriculum's goal of building student responsibility and interpersonal relationships: "Anything that hurts another person is wrong. We are each other's keepers. I am responsible for my own actions. I take pride in myself. Leave it better than when you found it" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 7).

Emotional development was considered fundamental in raising caring and informed citizens and schools must feel a responsibility in teaching the skills which enable students to build the survival skills necessary for a democracy. "They must find ways to earn respect, establish a sense of belonging in a valued group, and build a sense of personal worth based on mastery of useful skills, including social skills," as reported in Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century and written by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995).

Goleman, D. (1996) and Harrington-Lueker (1997) stated that research has documented a link between emotional intelligence and academic achievement, further supporting the need for moral and social development opportunities in the school environment. A district wide social development program at Jackie Robinson Middle School and East Rock Magnet School, in New Haven, Connecticut was begun in the 1980's teaching and practicing basic social skills, and resulted in significant

improvement in students' behavior and achievement.

Despite a desire by many schools to develop programs which enlist Daniel Goleman's lessons and strategies regarding emotional intelligence, researchers failed to agree on what constituted a successful program and the proper method of assessment.

Schaps and Lewis (1998) cited educational philosophers Horace Mann, John Dewey, and Ernest Boyer in proposing character education and citizenship as essentials of public schooling. Diverse communities require core values of a regard for self and others, justice and caring, and positive interpersonal behavior to adequately build civic-minded individuals and a sense of community. Schaps and Lewis reported that students who demonstrated traits of empathy, concern for others, enjoyment of helping others, kindness and helpfulness,skills in conflict resolution, altruistic behavior, and social competence were more likely to care about their school community. Research indicated that building community was best attained through "cooperative learning models in which students discussed the democratic values that should guide group work and reflect on whether they lived up to them," (Schap and Lewis, 1998, p. 23).

Schaps and Lewis were not entirely convinced of a positive correlation between academic achievement and an improved sense of community. Experience indicated that teachers initially may inadvertently accept poor work in an attempt to demonstrate caring, and lack consistent assessment practices. An intervention study of six U.S. school districts described gains in civic and social outcomes, however, only one of the six districts exhibited academic gains (Schaps and Lewis, 1998).

The Northeast Foundation for Children in Greenfield, Massachusetts stated that, "How children are treated and how they learn to treat others is the central educational issue confronting our nation", (Feder-Feitel,1997, p.68). Feder-Feitel supported this

statement in recognizing that by adding character education teachers can create a ripple effect which would impact schoolwork, peer relationships, and family relationships in a positive way.

The Character Education Institute in San Antonio, Texas, offered guidelines as to what to teach and when to teach it. In K-2, students distinguished between positive feelings and their negative counterparts, described their feelings when treated nicely, identified just and unjust behaviors and their consequences, and stated how one feels when treated with disrespect (Feder-Feitel, 1997). Students in grades three and four defined and gave examples of positive behaviors, identified ways to improve their treatment of others, identified examples of justice used in school and at home, distinguished between just and unjust acts and explained others' intolerance, and showed an understanding by describing how differences should be dealt with. In grades five and six students explained the importance of responding to others' needs, described and identified kindness and respect, explained how rules and laws benefit people and the difficulties in being just, and described how and why disrespectful acts impact people.

In conclusion, Feder-Feitel recognized Berger, an educator in Long Island, New York, as the impetus behind a task force formed to develop a K-12 character education program. Berger's premise was that children's moral development required the support of everyone at school to make it work. Berger's task force generated ten factors from which children developed a commitment to ethical values: 1. Identified with people important to them who live by those values, 2. Were exposed to role models who had strong ethical values, 3. Internalized others' ethical values, 4. Learned to appreciate the good in themselves, 5. Saw other people put strong positive values into action, 6. Found out that unethical behavior caused negative consequences, 7. Developed perspectives and priorities, 8. Acquired higher levels of

moral reasoning, 9. Experienced ethical values in relationships, and 10) were ethical.

Another program identified as The Responsive Classroom and promoted by the Northeast Foundation for Children was based upon six central components that integrated teaching, learning, and caring: respect, honesty, fairness, cooperation, empathy, and self-control (Feder-Feitel 1997).

An assessment checklist was developed for the classroom teacher to include the following: children were greeted upon entering the room, children appeared on task and respectful, there was varied grouping , children were encouraged to ask questions and explain answers, a familiar signal was used during transition, children were helped to solve their own problems whenever possible, all staff was involved in active role modeling, children's work is displayed, teacher's language was clear and enabling, and discipline was used as a management tool, not a punishment.

Feder-Feitel noted Lickona, of The Center for the Fourth and Fifth Rs, for his approach of using all aspects of school life as opportunities to build character and respect. This approach included: the teacher as mentor, a caring community, moral discipline, a democratic environment, use of values in the curriculum, cooperative learning, consider teaching a craft, ethical reflection, conflict resolution, caring beyond the classroom, creation of a positive moral culture in the school, and the use of parents as partners in teaching respect.

Parker (1997) reported that schools were recognized as diverse communities ideal for nurturing public virtues. Students come to these communities with little exposure to public life. Interactions in the diverse community of school should promote the skills necessary for building a civilized society.

Parker noted three actions imperative for the successful instruction of social skill building: 1. Increase interactions among dissimilar students, 2. Use interactions to problem solve social and academic differences, 3. Teach, model, and hold high

expectations for knowledge-based discussions. Parker believed that the aforementioned actions would enable students from varied backgrounds to share a common ground with mutual problems and concerns.

Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Lewis, and Schaps (1999) discussed three non-academic outcomes important to educational reform and the development of responsible citizens: 1. Social, ethical, and civic dispositions, 2. Attitudes toward school and learning motivation, and 3. Metacognitive skills. The outcomes promoted social responsibility as well as academic abilities.

Social, ethical, and civic attitudes encompassed not only basic skills, but social skills. A democratic society requires the ability to communicate and collaborate with others. Battistich et al. (1999) conveyed a need for schools to address an increasingly diverse society by combining high standards and high expectations for achievement while actively involving students in cooperative activities.

Attitudes toward school and motivating learning addressed the importance of engaging students enough to keep them in school. In the United States, approximately 2,000 students drop out of school each day. The National Center for Education Statistics (1997) reported that at-risk students required instruction and curriculum that was challenging, held intrinsic value,and was achievable. Teachers' trust was viewed as an essential ingredient in developing a responsibility and desire for learning (Battistich et al., 1999).

Metacognitive skills of regulation and monitoring students' own learning were valuable strategies in aiding students in becoming lifelong learners. Students were trained in the use of effective strategies and were encouraged to assess their own efforts. Teachers needed to actively involve students in identifying the relationship between past experiences and current learning and to question, and to learn from mistakes.

Battistich et al. concluded by stating, if educators are to meet the needs of students and the community, then school reform must address not only basic skills, but those with social relevance. School reform is inadequate without the incorporation of non-academic outcomes to the already existing academic outcomes.

Johnson & Johnson (1989) and Kelly and Moon (1998) identified two distinct reasons emotional and social intelligence are important. First, personal talents are required for success in certain occupations. Second, social talents will provide a connection between ability and the communication of talent in work and in life. The goal of Kelly and Moon was to condense recent information dealing with the effect of personal and social talents in academic, career, and personal success.

Personal talents were identified as intrapersonal skills associated with both people and tasks. Two components essential to the development of personal talent were discussed. The affective component was described as one's perception, emotional support for thinking, analyzing and applying knowledge, and reflection. The connative component included strategies for attention control, action control, and self-regulation. Programs to develop personal talents have rarely incorporated direct instruction of basic social skills in the past; however, Kelly and Moon stated the importance of implementing such programs.

Social talents were interpersonal and expressed through social interaction and relationships. Parents, students, and teachers agreed that social adeptness was an essential life skill important for family relationships, as well as success in academics and career achievement. Paramount to the effectiveness of social skills was the evaluation of social outcomes (Kelly and Moon, 1998).

Kelly and Moon concluded through literature research, that emotional and social intelligence, although identified as separate entities, should be researched and implemented as a single unit. A trend toward personal attributes and skills supported

academic intelligence and success in school, work, and interpersonal relationships (Kelly and Moon, 1998).

Sullivan-DeCarlo, DeFalco, and Roberts (1998) cited a social skills program in the New Haven, Connecticut public schools district as an example of the importance of meeting students' social and emotional needs to improve academic achievement. The program which was implemented in the late 1980's built social skills that helped students avoid dangerous behaviors. The goal of the program was to alleviate everyday stresses and improve school success by developing social competency.

To ensure the program's success, the district held community meetings, the program's staff presented the curriculum to parents and addressed concerns, teachers provided feedback through informational meetings, and the district gradually phased in the program. Parents were taught the same problem-solving strategies as the students. The school district offered parents who had completed training a $100 stipend, and provided child care, meals, and bus transportation. Upon completion, parents were required to volunteer ten hours in their children's schools. The program evolved into a two-part team comprised of the School Planning and Management Team and the Student Staff Support Team working together to support the needs of the district's student population.

The Social and Health Assessment Survey, with assistance from Yale University's Child Study Center, showed that the social development program was succeeding. A 1996 survey demonstrated a 9% decline in student concerns about safety, 67% reported liking school, a 9% decline in hopelessness about the future, 91% school attendance, expulsions declined, and 75% of graduates went on to college (Sullivan et al., 1998).

Finally, the implications of teamwork and cooperative learning strategies were investigated. Researchers found the literature on cooperative learning and teamwork

contrasted competitive and cooperative learning styles, addressed the impact on having a sense of belonging, assisted the improvement of higher-order thinking, identified specific strategies for successful learning within a cooperative framework, and recognized the value of cooperative learning in diverse learning environments.

Johnson and Johnson (1986) and Kagan (1992) addressed the importance of cooperative learning over the more traditional competitive-individualistic learning. The Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota conducted eighty-five studies, over a twenty-five year period, which supported the value of working together to accomplish goals.

Social interdependence was defined as individual outcomes affected by other's actions. Competitive and cooperative social interdependence were listed as the two types of learning situations. Cooperative situations produced outcomes achieved by positive interaction of all involved participants, whereas, competitive situations produced individual outcomes attained through another participant's failure to achieve a goal. Johnson and Johnson perceived cooperation to be the least used but more powerful of the goal structures.

The manner in which teachers structured lessons determined the degree to which students learned. To promote positive interaction among the members of a cooperative group, individuals needed to assist others, exchange ideas and resources, monitor tasks and responsibilities, promote higher level thinking by questioning, strive to achieve mutual goals, support others in the achievement of group goals, promote trust, strive toward mutual betterment, and remain nonstressed. Negative interaction was experienced by students who focused on their own achievement. Teachers who built social interaction into their lessons were more successful in accomplishing the goals of cooperative learning.

Working together toward a mutual goal produced greater productivity and

higher achievement. Higher-level thinking, generation of ideas, successful problem-solving, and greater transfer for learning resulted more frequently in cooperative situations. Heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings resulted in successful goal achievement, yet the heterogeneous groupings resulted in more realistic views of others, greater psychological well-being, higher self-esteem, and increased social development.

Important variables affected the functioning of cooperative learning groups. High-ability members may be left to complete the group tasks while less able members sit back and pretend to be contributing participants, stronger members may take over the group leaving less able members hesitant to share ideas, a more able member may learn more while a less able member struggles as a subjugated listener, and unfair divisions of labor may present themselves. It was demonstrated that only under certain conditions were groups able to successfully attain goals without casting members in inequitable roles. An understanding of positive interdependence, several opportunities for interaction, individual accountability, repeated use of interpersonal and social skills, and continuous group reflection were conditions conducive to goal attainment. To ensure cooperative learning is taking place, all members needed to feel dependent upon other members to accomplish desired outcomes.This positive interdependence required that members pool resources, roles were assigned, and work was divided so one member could not continue on without the completion of another member's job.

Johnson and Johnson investigated the need for the basic instruction of social skills in successfully implementing cooperative learning. Students were trained in four social skills each week, and each member was given two bonus points toward a test grade if all members demonstrated three out of the four skills. "Results indicated that the combination of positive interdependence, and academic contingency for high

performance by all group members, and a social skills contingency, promoted the highest achievement," (Johnson, 1986, p. 586).

Johnson and Johnson stated that schools need to change from competitive environments where individuals work separately to cooperative schools which are team-based. Cooperative schools reflected what was happening in the world of commerce. To improve productivity many companies and manufacturers had turned from a structure of individuals working for one large entity, to teams of personnel supporting a common goal. Teachers and other staff at cooperative schools were encouraged to work as teams at all levels which developed into a concurring and supportive structure. Johnson and Johnson believed cooperative learning to be more than instruction, but a total structural revamping from the classroom through administrative levels.

Bellanca (1991) stated several reasons why the cooperative classroom was important to our school systems. The top three factors included in the literature were: 1. The changing structure of the family, 2. The impact of television programming, and 3. Lack of clarity in regard to values.

Sociologists have documented the increasing number of children who come from single-parent, dual working-parent, and no-parent homes (Bellanca, 1992). Student achievement and behavior were directly impacted by this change in family structure. Parents tended to be limited in the amount of time devoted to family, because of the time and energy required in earning enough income to provide food, clothing, and shelter.

Another reason social skills should be taught in school was the negative impact television had on developing children. Television was used as a baby-sitter which modeled a variety of anti-social behaviors. The average student viewed four hours of television a day which promoted negative behavior.

The diversity of the nation led the majority of schools to resist the teaching of values for fear of promoting inequitable environments, therefore, the philosophy appeared to be "each man for himself". Social responsibility, caring, respect, and cooperation fell victim to learning environments without a real focus on value.

As society became better attuned to the needs of a diverse population, one prerequisite stood out; the prominence of people skills. Evidence in the shift of social structure from individuals to teams was first viewed in the business world; teamwork was essential as the global economy began to shrink. Schools looked to these changes as precursors to a new philosophy in education. Academics, higher-order thinking, and transfer of learning were better achieved if the tools and strategies provided by cooperative social skills were taught at the beginning of each school year.

McCabe and Rhodes (1992) pointed out the relationship between cooperative learning and responsibility and the factors which aided the personal and social development of students. Explained was the impact of our changing society on individual responsibility. No longer do students simply need to deal with their immediate society, but a global community comprised of diverse cultures. School systems are accountable for preparing students for the real world; therefore, schools play an imperative role in preparing this population. Changes in family lessened students' support systems while the need for adequate social skills increased.

McCabe and Rhodes (1999) reported that

> "personal responsibility involves taking care of one's health; adopting a set of basic values that may include trust, honesty, truth, openness with self and others; making careful and informed decisions: and accepting the consequences of our actions rather than blaming others or circumstances if our decisions do not result in the outcome we wanted or expected." (p. 210)

The teaching required to develop responsible students included; critical thinking, effective communication, problem-solving, and cooperation.

McCabe and Rhodes described classrooms as "micro-communities" in which teachers should be responsible for instruction in the group development process. The group development process was described in six stages:

Stage 1 - Setting Standards - establish rules and consequences

Stage 2 - Getting Acquainted - take time to build group cohesiveness

Stage 3 - Students Setting Standards - student input on rules

Stage 4 - Completing the Task - work toward a goal

Stage 5 - Breaking Up - take time for meaningful transition

Stage 6 - Conflict - use of problem-solving

McCabe and Rhodes concluded when these stages in group development were followed students began to acquire the necessary tools in becoming responsible learners, learning and retention increased, social skills improved, and students and teachers had more fun.

Cohen (1998) described two ways in which cooperative learning demonstrates differences in rank among students; social isolation and social dominance. Teachers who promoted cooperative learning were troubled by the continued exclusion and isolation of certain students. Cohen believed that once teachers better understood the process which caused inequitable treatment of members within a group, the teachers could then develop methods to alleviate the problem which stemmed directly from the social situation rather than personality characteristics.

A variety of causes of inequality were identified; academic and peer status being the most prevalent. Students ranked one another on their degree of academic success, attractiveness or popularity, social class, race, ethnicity, and sometimes gender. When students were placed in cooperative task groups a self-fulfilling

prophecy often occurred; high-status students were considered more capable while low-status students were expected to be less successful. The expectations of competence and incompetence directly impacted the task outcome.

To make cooperative groups more equitable two interventions were suggested. First, The Multiple-Abilities Treatment was deemed successful in mixing expectations for competence. The implementation of this intervention was based on convincing students of three things: 1. The task requires different intellectual abilities, 2. No one student possesses all of the abilities, and 3. Everyone will possess some of the abilities. The second intervention, assigning competence to low-status students, modified expectations when the teacher publicly identified the strengths of the low-status students. This strategy resulted in increased activity and influence of the low-status student within the group. Three factors in establishing effective assignment of competence are: 1. Evaluation must be public, 2. Evaluation must be specific and truthful, and 3. Abilities must be applicable to the task. To recognize the student publicly was the most important factor, whereas, the greatest danger was a false assessment of competence; students understand the truth. A noted increase in the participation of low-status students occurred with frequent implementation of the two interventions.

Stainback & Stainback (1992) and Johnson & Johnson (1986) discussed the inclusion of special needs students in regular education classrooms and the social impact of mainstreaming. The goal was to suggest strategies for building a curriculum beyond academics which emphasized socialization and friendship.

Stainback (1992) cited five main points in support of establishing a curriculum which developed social skills necessary for productive lives: 1. There is no single curriculum capable of delivering all the information necessary for a productive life; students need to be taught the process for learning, 2. Diversity is not addressed in the

standard academic curriculum, 3. Student driven curriculums build on an existing base of knowledge, 4. Students don't relate to curriculums that lack meaning, and 5. Standard curriculums do not allow for student or teacher concerns.

Negative, as well as positive interactions, were viewed as opportunities to provide all students with strategies for becoming successful members of society. Critical thinking skills, processing skills, and living skills are derived from a more holistic curriculum. Teamwork and interpersonal communication have become valuable in the diverse community.

Muldoon and Myrick (1995) discussed the Model United Nations, and experiential learning program that uses cooperative learning strategies and multicultural education to engage students. The program was started in the 1920's; participants attended conferences across the United States and the world and joined in classroom simulations. The program enlisted more than 60,000 students each year to participate in role-play simulations of U.N. meetings. Students sought solutions to global problems through negotiation and debate.

Learning about teamwork was an integral part of the program. Muldoon and Myrick (1995) quoted the literature of Johnson and Johnson and Slavin to support the fundamentals of the Model United Nations:

* students working together to accomplish shared goals where students are given two responsibilities to learn the assigned materials and make sure that all other members of their group do likewise.
* for high-level cognitive learning outcomes, such as identifying concepts, analysis of problems, judgment, and evaluation, less-structured cooperative techniques may be more effective than traditional individualistic techniques.
* cooperative learning promotes higher achievement, greater motivation, more positive interpersonal relations among students, more positive attitudes toward

the subject area and teacher, greater self-esteem and psychological health, more accurate perspective, and greater social skills (p. 95-96).

Participants in the Model United Nations engaged in activities which represented the global community and worked to accomplish common goals. The program immersed students in a multicultural learning experience by requiring a study of their respective country's politics, customs, and history. Interpersonal and life skills were applied to reach international diplomacy. Students learned to work together and respect each other in preparation for the realities of the real world.

Parker (1997) explained the value of school classrooms in educating a diverse population with mounting social and academic problems. Classrooms were viewed as replications of the larger society; representative of the problems and divergent cultures that make-up our communities. Parker noted that because our homes lack the degree of diversity a classroom provides, the classroom is the logical environment to teach characteristics necessary for public life.

Three pertinent factors were offered in developing habits for civilized public life:

1. Increase the variety and frequency of interaction among diverse groups.
2. Organize interactions to promote problem-solving.
3. Teach, model, and expect competent deliberation.

Parker advised teachers to seize the opportunity to teach deliberation; active listening, respect of others' points of view, and an exchange of ideas, so students learn to flourish in a civilized society.

Lewis, Schaps, and Watson (1996) and Kohn (1993) appraised The Child Development Project (CDP), a program to develop a "caring community of learners." Research indicated that programs such a CDP are essential to a child's learning and citizenship. Students who believed they were part of a caring community of learners demonstrated higher educational expectations and fewer behavioral problems.

The Child Development Project studied and compared students in CDP schools with non-project schools and determined the way children learn and progress, and then developed the program with three aspects in mind: 1. A literature-based, cooperative learning , and problem solving concept; 2. Community building and service activities; and 3. Family involvement.

To become a CDP school of caring learners, the schools followed five principles (Lewis et al., 1996). The first principle was to build warm, supportive, stable relationships. Faculty, staff, parents, and students became collaborators in learning to decrease competitiveness. Second, was to promote constructive learning. Educators connected the curriculum with the student's base of knowledge. Third, was to provide an important and challenging curriculum. Students were involved in learning meaningful content rather than isolated skills. Fourth, was to develop intrinsic motivation. Students needed to be provided a curriculum they felt was worth learning to decrease extrinsic rewards. Fifth, was to place attention on social and ethical dimensions of learning. Students needed to be taught and experience human qualities that society values. A learning environment created with these five fundamentals in mind replaces competitive, individualistic goals with collaboration and a sense of belonging.

Evidence from the literature supported the development of building a safe and caring environment and direct instruction of interpersonal skills as interventions. The combination of direct instruction of interpersonal skills and cooperative learning techniques were incorporated into the action research plan for the targeted first, third, and fourth grade students of the targeted elementary schools.

The interventions chosen by the researchers were the implementation of cooperative learning techniques to promote teamwork, the direct instruction of a social skills curriculum within three diverse learning communities, and the use of community

circles to promote a sense of belonging among group members.

Project Objectives and Process

1. As a result of the direct instruction of social skills during the period of September 1999 through December 1999, the first, third, and fourth grade students from the targeted elementary schools will improve their application of social skills in the classroom as measured by teacher-designed checklists, teacher surveys, student surveys, and anecdotal records.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

a. Adapt the curriculum to emphasize social skills

b. Create lesson plans to include social skills instruction in caring, teamwork, common sense, effort, perseverance, responsibility, and conflict management.

c. Assemble instructional materials which include activities for direct instruction of social skills.

2. As a result of the use of cooperative learning techniques during the period of September 1999 through December 1999, the first, third,and fourth grade students from the targeted elementary schools will improve their ability to work in formal and informal groups in the classroom as measured by student and teacher checklists, surveys, and anecdotal records.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

a. Devise lesson plans to include cooperative learning techniques.

b. Provide direct instruction in cooperative learning procedures.

c. Organize formal and informal cooperative learning groups within the classroom.

3. As a result of the use of community circles during the period of September 1999

through December 1999, the first, third, and fourth grade students from the targeted elementary schools will develop a sense of belonging as measured by anecdotal records and student checklists.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

a. Change the curriculum to include community circle activities.

b. Incorporate community circles into daily lesson plans.

c. Allow students opportunities to practice the procedures of community circles.

## ACTION PLAN

Week 1 (September 6, 1999)
Community Circle-Introduction to the community circle and devise classroom procedures.
The introduction of LifeSkills in the classroom.

Week 2 (September 13, 1999)
Community Circle-Classroom procedures reviewed.
Student/Teacher Surveys.

Week 3 (September 20, 1999)
Community Circle-Teamwork rules and Job descriptions.
Teamwork group rules reviewed.

Week 4 (September 27, 1999)
Introduce Lifeskill of Active Listening.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 5 (October 4, 1999)
Introduce Lifeskill of Teamwork.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 6 (October 11, 1999)
Culminating activities for Active Listening and Teamwork.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 7 (October 18, 1999)
Introduce the Lifeskill of Caring.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 8 (October 25, 1999)
Introduce the Lifeskill of Effort.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 9 (November 1, 1999)
Culminating activities for Caring and Effort.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 10 (November 8, 1999)
Introduce the Lifeskill of Responsibility.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 11 (November 15, 1999)
Introduce the Lifeskill of Problem Solving.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 12 (November 22, 1999)
Culminating activities for Caring and Effort.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 13 (November 29, 1999)
Introduce the Lifeskill of Perseverance.
Two lessons-forty minutes each.

Week 14 (December 6, 1999)
Culminating activity for Perseverance.

Week 15 (December 13, 1999)
Review all LifeSkills
Complete teacher checklist and student survey.

## Methods of Assessment

To assess the effects of the interventions of direct instruction of social skills, the application of cooperative learning strategies, and the incorporation of community circles in the instructional day, teacher observation checklists, student surveys, and anecdotal records were used to measure behavior. The interventions were implemented and monitored by all members of the research team. Teacher checklists, student surveys, and anecdotal records were used as a means to collect data at each targeted grade level. Identified behavioral characteristics and skills were ranked

according to the students' degree of demonstration and application.

The teacher observable classroom behaviors rating form (Appendix A) was used once prior to implementation of interventions to determine teacher concerns in regard to the development of social skills in students. A compilation of past student referrals at each of the targeted grade levels was evaluated before interventions were implemented and established the need for improved interpersonal skills of the first, third, and fourth grade students at the targeted schools.

In addition to the teacher classroom behaviors rating form and students' behavioral referrals, student surveys were developed to be used before and after interventions. The student survey (Appendix B) allowed students to rank individual behavioral strengths and weaknesses. Student surveys were explained, examples of varying degrees of behavior were given, and students anonymously completed the survey.

Teacher classroom behavior rating forms and anecdotal records were recorded following the implementation of each 40 minute skill lesson and 15 minute community circle meeting. A new skill lesson was introduced each week and community circles met each morning. Observations were conducted during the direct instruction of the week's social skill and morning community meetings.

Following monthly cooperative learning activities, students completed Self-Assessment: Groupwork forms (Appendix C) and Group Assessments (Appendix D). Results of the Self-Assessments and Group Assessments were collected and tabulated to determine any shift in attitude regarding cooperative situations within the classroom.

Upon completion of the research, researchers for the targeted elementary schools completed the teacher classroom behavior rating form (Appendix A), tallied the results, and noted changes. Student surveys (Appendix B) were again completed

following the implementation of all interventions and changes were measured.

Behavioral referrals used to show evidence of the problem prior to implementation of the interventions were again gathered at the end of the implementation period to assess any changes.

# Chapter 4
# PROJECT RESULTS

## Historical Description of the Intervention

The project had three objectives for the first, third, and fourth grade students of the targeted elementary schools. The first objective was to improve the students' application of social skills in the classroom as measured by teacher-designed checklists, teacher surveys, student surveys, and anecdotal records. The steps used to implement this objective included adapting the curriculum to emphasize social skills instruction. Instructional materials were assembled which included activities for direct instruction of social skills.

The second objective, as measured by student and teacher checklists, surveys, and anecdotal records, was to improve the students' ability to work successfully in formal and informal groups within the classroom. The strategies used to implement this objective included cooperative learning techniques and direct instruction in cooperative learning procedures. Formal and informal cooperative learning groups were formed within the classroom.

The third objective, as measured by anecdotal records and student checklists was to develop a sense of belonging. The processes used to implement this objective included modifying the curriculum to include community circle activities in daily lesson plans and to provide students with frequent opportunities to practice the procedures of community circles and the various roles within the group.

In order to determine if students lacked appropriate social skills, the teacher survey (Appendix A) was issued to the first, third, and fourth grade teachers at the targeted schools. Teachers of the respective schools, who had no contact with the targeted students, were not issued the survey. The survey was collected and the data were categorized into areas of behavioral skills, social skills, and performance skills. The researchers found that most important to the teachers at the respective grade levels were their students' social skills.

To reinforce the need for the direct-instruction of social skills, behavioral referrals for the first, third, and fourth grades the previous year were collected, analyzed, and the results were recorded. Student population of each of the schools varied little from year to year, and the referrals collected followed consistent trends in student behavior.

Prior to the implementation of interventions, student surveys (Appendix B) were distributed to the targeted group. The student surveys given prior to the interventions were collected and compared with those following the interventions. Student surveys were issued to all students anonymously.

An overview of the skills that were covered was introduced at the beginning of the project followed by the direct instruction of social skills. The project covered a 15-week period. The length and frequency of the lessons varied, but usually occupied two or three days per week. Some weeks a single lesson would be taught over the course of two or three days, while other weeks two individual lessons would be taught. The researchers found that the time allotted for the interventions was insufficient. The project was completed four weeks after the planned date. Standardized tests administered during the research, in-service days, and holiday breaks factored into the delayed date of completion.

Direct instruction began with an introduction of Community Circles and the four

procedures for using Community Circles: 1. Attentive listening, 2. No put-downs, 3. Right to pass, and 4. Mutual respect. Community Circles formed the foundation of each lesson, which made the transition into cooperative groups smoother. Job descriptions for group members were also discussed at this time.

The next step was to introduce the students to the skill components of active listening: 1. Look at the person who is speaking, 2. Sit quietly while the person is talking, 3. Think about what is being said, 4. Answer questions, and 5. Ask questions. Rules and procedures were posted in the targeted classrooms for quick references. This portion of the intervention took a great deal of time and practice. The first grade students had difficulty remembering and applying the skills and needed continuous review throughout the project. The third and fourth grade targeted students were better able to understand and use the skills; however, when new students were enrolled in the targeted classrooms, a thorough review was again necessary.

The lessons were based upon themes of caring, teamwork, common sense, effort, perseverance, responsibility, and conflict management. Students would gather in Community Circles for a discussion of the lesson and teacher modeling. When students had an understanding of the task, they would return to their cooperative areas and group jobs would be decided. The students then moved forward in the activity while the teachers moved about the room for support and observation of conflict management skills. Each theme concluded with a celebration project. Although lessons were modified for the specific grade levels, researchers noted that the first grade students were confused by the complexity of some of the lessons and needed more teacher guidance. The third grade students encountered some problems with conflict management at this time, because the more assertive students wanted to do everyone's job; however, as the project progressed, this subsided. The fourth grade cooperative groups were impacted by the arrival of a new student who was highly

disruptive, and a student teacher who felt uncomfortable with classroom management.

The action plan concluded with the completion of the teacher survey (Appendix A) by those teachers of the targeted groups and the student survey (Appendix B) by the targeted students. First grade students were given the same survey as the other targeted students, but were given only three choices: 1. Agree, 2. Uncertain, and 3. Disagree. It was determined that the first graders, although the survey was read to them, needed more time in vocabulary instruction. Many of the first grade students wanted to color the smiley faces without understanding the questions being asked. The third and fourth grade students enjoyed the surveys and thought it was fun that they were being asked for their opinions and appeared to have more knowledgeable responses to the final survey. Researchers believed that the third and fourth grade students understood the questions better for the final survey because of the direct instruction they had received throughout the project.

## Presentation and Analysis of Results

The effects of improving interpersonal skills and social growth through the interventions of direct teaching, cooperative learning, and Community Circles were assessed with various methods. Behavior referrals were analyzed to determine the extent of behavioral problems and those behaviors which were most problematic. Teacher surveys and anecdotal records were used to observe changes in behavior. Data from the student surveys were used to measure growth and the students' perceptions of their social skills.

In order to assess the effects of improving social skills, the researchers compared teacher surveys to document any changes in teacher attitudes before the interventions and following the interventions. The data in Table 5 indicated the changes in social skills observed by the teachers of the first, third, and fourth grade targeted classes. A decrease in the post survey average score indicated an

improvement in social skills.

Table 5.

Average Points in Social Skills given by Teachers in Targeted First, Third, and Fourth Grade Classrooms

| | Pre Survey | | Post Survey |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SCHOOL A** | | | |
| BEHAVIOR | 5 | | 5 |
| **INTERACTION SKILLS** | **7.3** | | **8** |
| PERFORMANCE | 6.6 | | 6 |
| **SCHOOL B** | | | |
| BEHAVIOR | 7.14 | | 5 |
| **INTERACTION SKILLS** | **9.29** | | **6** |
| PERFORMANCE | 7.57 | | 5.25 |
| **SCHOOL C** | | | |
| BEHAVIOR | 7.5 | | 7.25 |
| **INTERACTION SKILLS** | **10.5** | | **9.5** |
| PERFORMANCE | 9.25 | | 8.5 |

Teacher surveys were completed by the teachers of the first, third, and fourth grade targeted students in September, 1999, prior to the interventions, and again in January, 2000, following the interventions. The surveys measured the ability of students to work cooperatively and use appropriate social skills. The measured areas were behavior, use of skills, and performance. The behavior of first grade students remained the same, there was a slight decline in positive social interactions, and a minor decreased in their performance. The targeted third grade students demonstrated a nominal increase in positive behavior, an improvement in social skill interaction, and a slight increase in performance. Fourth grade students showed a subtle increase in positive behavior, a slight improvement in social skills interaction, and a positive increase in performance areas. Researchers believe that September was too early in the school year to assess the ability of students' social interactions. The teachers and students are still getting to know one another which impacts the validity of the September survey which is highly subjective.

Another method of assessment involved a self checklist (Appendix C). The student checklist was a self-reflection on how targeted students worked in cooperative groups. Students were anxious to respond independently when assessing interpersonal skills.

A student survey (Appendix B) was given to the students before and after the implementation of direct teaching of lifeskills and cooperative learning techniques. First grade students ranked the skills as agree, uncertain, or disagree. Third and fourth grade students ranked the skills strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, or strongly disagree. Before direct teaching, the majority of students in the targeted classes ranked themselves on the survey as compliant social learners. The same student survey given afterwards resulted in more thoughtful and reflective responses. The student survey reflected students' attitudes regarding their own intrapersonal and

interpersonal skills.

Behavioral referrals were analyzed to determine the extent of behavioral problems among the targeted students and were compared to referrals from the previous year. Table 6 and 7 show the number of referrals over the course of the research project as compared to those from the previous year.

After implementation of all interventions, behavioral referrals were tallied for the targeted first, third, and fourth grade students. Two of the targeted schools had significant decreases in the number of referrals, the third school had an increase in referrals. School A had an average decrease of referrals per student of .7 from the previous year, School B had an average decrease of referrals per student of 1.35, and School C had an average increase of referrals per student of 1.05. Researchers believe that the dynamics of the targeted fourth grade class changed drastically with the arrival of three new students labeled as attention deficit/hyperactive. The staff at School C was so concerned for the targeted fourth grade class, that eventually the most unruly student was moved to another section, yet he had already left an impact on the research.

Table 6.
Pre Intervention Referrals Results: Average number of referrals per student during the 1998-1999 school year.

| | Number of Referrals | Average Number of Referrals Per Student |
|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL A (ENROLLMENT=80) | 320 | 4 |
| SCHOOL B (ENROLLMENT=88) | 160 | 1.8 |
| SCHOOL C (ENROLLMENT=34) | 31 | 0.9 |

Table 7.
Post Intervention Referral Results: Average number of referrals per student during September 1999 through January 2000 school year.

| | Number of Referrals | Average number of Referrals Per Student |
|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL A (ENROLLMENT=18) | 60 | 3.3 |
| SCHOOL B (ENROLLMENT=20) | 9 | 0.45 |
| SCHOOL C (ENROLLMENT=22) | 43 | 1.95 |

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation of the data on teacher surveys, student surveys, and discipline referrals, the students of the targeted elementary schools made many gains using the interventions that were introduced. The greatest gains were observed by School A.

School A was an inner city school with a large number of low socioeconomic, minority students, and had a higher rate of mobility than the other targeted schools. The direct instruction and modeling of social skills was lacking in many students' lives. Researchers hoped the 15-week intervention would show an improvement in a school that deals with behavioral problems on a regular basis. The interventions used throughout this project innundated the first grade students with positive interactions between people. Many of these students have few interactions with others that are not negative. Positive experiences with others make students feel safe, and for many of the students from School A it was the only place they could feel safe. The researchers' objectives were met at School A. The only changes that would be recommended for the direct instruction of social skills at the first grade level would be to simplify all assessment tools.

School B, situated in an urban setting, saw less dramatic changes than the other targeted schools. School B had a large parent network for support and few at-risk students. There was an influx of English as a Second Language (ESL) students at the beginning of the research, but this had a positive impact on the other students who felt a real responsibility for these new students. The targeted third grade students were very receptive to the lessons and activities. These students worked quite will together with the exception of two overly assertive students who wanted to take charge of not only their jobs, but of those around them. The school psychologist at School B taught a weekly lesson to the targeted third grade students and never failed to mention the fun

she had in their classroom because they were so easy to work with. Near the end of the research period, the teacher of the targeted third graders was called away on afternoon and left the class in the charge of another third grade teacher, the next day the absent teacher asked the other teacher how their afternoon had gone. She continued to state that the targeted third graders were cooperative and wonderful listeners, and she wanted to know what the secret was. This was an indication that the success experienced by School B was not solely due to the low mobility rate of the student population, but most likely was impacted by the direct teaching of social skills and the continuous experiences with cooperative learning.

School C was the biggest surprise to the researchers. The targeted school was located in a rural setting with a student population that rarely changed. Most students at School C came from supportive two-parent families. There had been little problem with bad behavior in the past. The fourth grade students at School C experienced success with the project lessons and activities until the middle of the year. Three new students were enrolled in the fourth grade at School C at that time. School C was only a two-section school and the other section was full, so the targeted class ended up with the new students. The arrival of the new students altered the research. One of the new arrivals was extremely hyperactive and disruptive. This student was threatening the peace and eventually was removed from the targeted classroom, but not before leaving his mark on the research. In addition to the disruptive student, the teacher of the targeted fourth grade class had to turn her class over to a student teacher who was not adept at handling discipline problems. With the exception of the increase in behavioral referrals for School C, the students felt positive about their abilities to work with others cooperatively.

All of the objectives were met in the targeted schools. The changes in disciplinary referrals were the most dramatic and researchers believed this was an

effective tool in assessing the need for intervention. The self-assessment by students using the student survey was valuable, yet the researchers felt that it should have been given a third time in the middle of the research project, so the actual growth would be more noticeable. It became very apparent to the researchers that a project of this magnitude, when it involved three different schools and sixty different students, required much more than 15 weeks. The targeted first, third, and fourth grade students continued to use their newly developed skills in the classroom. Finally, the researchers recommend for the following academic year, that a project which included the direct instruction of social skills, cooperative learning, and Community Circles could be effective vehicles to promote positive interactions among students, but that it must be done district wide to eliminate some of the problems with transient students, and it must be done with frequency. The outcome of the research indicates improvement in student awareness of social behavior and community building among targeted students.

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# Appendix A

# Observable Classroom Behaviors

(Teacher Rating Form)

*Please rate the _____'s behaviors at this time.

3=Never Observed
2=Occasionally Observed
1=Frequently Observed
0=Not Applicable

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Follows Directions | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 2. Attentive Listening During Discussions | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 3. Prepared With Proper Materials | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 4. Works Quietly On Assignments | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. Follows Classroom Rules | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 6. Contributes Appropriately To Discussions | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 7. Responsive To The Teacher's Praise and Attention | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 8. Makes Requests Appropriately | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 9. Participates In Group Activities | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 10. Follows Hallway Procedures | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 11. Respectful Toward Others | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 12. Obtains The Teachers Attention Appropriately | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 13. Cooperates With Others | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 14. Uses Appropriate Language | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 15. Disagrees Appropriately (No "Putdowns") | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 16. Accepts Consequences Appropriately | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

Appendix B

# STUDENT SURVEY

| | STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE | UNCERTAIN | DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am a responsible person. | | | | | |
| 2. My schoolwork is very good. I do my personal best. | | | | | |
| 3. I am an honest person. I am trustworthy. | | | | | |
| 4. I am a patient person. I use the lifeskill of patience. | | | | | |
| 5. I can solve problems. I use the lifeskill of problem solving. | | | | | |
| 6. I am different from others. | | | | | |
| 7. I am comfortable talking in front of others. | | | | | |
| 8. I get along with others. | | | | | |
| 9. I return my homework on time. | | | | | |
| 10. I follow classroom procedures. | | | | | |
| 11. I follow hallway procedures. | | | | | |
| 12. I follow lunchroom procedures. | | | | | |
| 13. I follow bathroom procedures. | | | | | |
| 14. I follow recess procedures. | | | | | |

Appendix C

Name: _____

# Self-assessment: Groupwork

1. I shared in my group today.

 

2. I encouraged others in my group to share.

 

3. I listened to others.

 

4. Others talked with me.

 

5. I felt supported by people in my group.

 

6. We worked on the task cooperatively.

 

Appendix D

Group: _____



# How are We Doing?

* Give 2 examples for each statement.

1. We each contributed ideas:

often___ sometimes___ not very much___

2. We listened to each other:

often___ sometimes___ not very much___

3. We encouraged each other:

often___ sometimes___ not very much___

4. We built on each other's ideas:

often___ sometimes___ not very much___

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