Social skills intervention for students with emotional/behavioral disorders aged six through 12 years

A combination of a literature-based curriculum and

telecommunications

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ABSTRACT   The purposes of the study reported here were to investigate the social competence of students aged from six to 12, diagnosed with emotional/behavioral disorders (E/BD) in a public self-contained school setting, and to increase the students' social competence by using a literature-based method that employs multi-age grouping, impersonation, and telecommunications. By providing intensive, literature-based training in a multi-age classroom, the social skills training (SST) gave students opportunities to practice skills in a natural, real-life environment and, therefore, increased the likelihood of generalizing these skills in other settings. The employment of impersonation and telecommunications also enhanced students' acquisition of social skills and their interest to learn.

The development of social skills is essential to the quality of life of each individual. Social competence allows individuals to build positive and rewarding relationships and to reduce or eliminate negative ones. Research has shown that deficiencies in social competence have been associated with poor academic achievement (Kauffman, 2001); social maladjustment (Gresham, 1995); peer rejection (Coie, 1990); and psychopathology that may carry over into adulthood (e.g. Meadows et al., 1991). For students with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD), the existence of this particular disability further interferes with their acquisition of social,

academic, and vocational skills and negatively affects adult adjustment (Gresham, 1998). However, due to the emphasis on academics, social skills instruction is not a common curriculum component (Kolb and Hanley-Maxwell, 2003).

In recent years, many researchers (e.g. Bos and Vaughn, 2002; Gresham, 1995; Walker et al., 1995) have acknowledged the need for an increased emphasis on social skills development and have noted that by providing formal and informal social skills training (SST), the school can potentially become an optimal setting that fosters the development of social competence. There is a plethora of theoretical and empirical literature suggesting that social skills instruction involves the purposeful and structured presentation of materials and direct instruction of the target skills. However, students with E/BD typically learn in a non-traditional manner, and it is unlikely that they will naturally acquire learning of skills in a commensurate manner with their peers without E/BD.

In an effort to respond to the increasing demand for effective social skills intervention, numerous programs have been developed and made commercially available to educational professionals, yet, their effectiveness remains questionable in terms of meeting the various needs of different students. Currently, many programs do not design training with regard to a student's existing deficits and areas of competency and challenge. Several authors (e.g. Gresham et al., 2001) indicate that only when social skills intervention is matched to the particular needs and strengths of a given student, is it likely to produce positive results. The purposes of the study reported here were to investigate the social competence of students, aged from six to 12, diagnosed with E/BD in a public self-contained school setting, and to increase the students' social competence by using a literature-based method that employs multi-age grouping, impersonation and telecommunications. Based on the current literature review, it was assumed that this study would be a valuable contribution to the field of social skills research.

In this study, telecommunications are operationally defined as communications on the international computer network via emails, while the term *impersonation* refers to the pretending to be human beings or the imitation of the behavior of human beings (Pearsall and Trumble, 1996). The study used character impersonation by incorporating the online mimicking of the language and persona of the major fictional characters in the textbook.

Methodology

Research questions

The following research questions set the direction of the study:

1 Does each student with E/BD exhibit a decrease in problem behaviors within the context of the classroom following the social skills intervention as determined by the *Behavior Dimensions Rating Scale* (BDRS; Bullock and Wilson, 1989) and structured interviews?
2 Does each student with E/BD exhibit an increase in pro-social behaviors within the context of the classroom following the social skills intervention as determined by the BDRS and structured interviews?
3 What information can this study provide concerning interventions based on SST that will support teachers in helping students with E/BD as determined by the qualitative analysis of feedback provided by the teaching staff through the structured interviews?

Setting

The training occurred in natural settings, including the classrooms, library and the computer lab in the research site.

Subjects

The subjects (eight males and one female; letters A to I were assigned to each student to protect his/her privacy) for this study were students from one of the most comprehensive regional programs for students with E/BD in north central Texas. Students who attended the research site had a history of significant behavioral, emotional, social and school-related problems at their home campuses, and all of them were eligible for and received special education services. The particular program served an average student population of 30, grades kindergarten through 12, from five rural districts. Up to 80% (n = 17) of the students qualified for free lunch. Conversations with the staff revealed that the majority of the students in the research site were from poor families; some of the students did not have telephones or televisions at home.

Subjects involved were in grades one through seven. The SST class was divided into two groups: Group I (five subjects; aged six to eight) and Group II (four subjects; aged nine to 12). Each group received training from Monday through Thursday for a 30-minute session for eight weeks, for a total of 32 sessions.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation included teaching staff ratings of subjects and structured interviews. Baseline test, which consisted of the pre-intervention teaching staff ratings and teaching staff interviews were carried out on the subjects before the development and implementation of the SST.

Teaching staff ratings

Together there were four teaching staff members who participated in the study (Teachers A and B were Group II's classroom teachers and Teachers C and D were Group I's classroom teachers). Both before and after the intervention, the four teaching staff members were asked to rate their students' behaviors by using the BDRS (Bullock and Wilson, 1989), that is, Teachers A and B rated subjects in Group II and Teachers C and D rated subjects in Group I. The BDRS is a standardized screening instrument that measures behavior patterns. The BDRS yields standard scores and percentile ranks on four behavior subscales: (a) aggressive/acting out; (b) irresponsible/inattentive; (c) socially withdrawn; and (d) fearful/anxious. The BDRS has been shown to be an effective social skills assessment instrument with favorable reviews pertaining to standardization and behavioral properties (Bullock and Wilson, 1989). It has been used by various researchers as a tool to assess behaviors of social and emotional difficulties (e.g. Johnson, 1983; McCrary, 1998). Consistent results of these studies indicate the reliability of the instrument. To determine the effectiveness of an SST curriculum like this study, a reliable instrument such as the BDRS is vital.

Baseline data from the first BDRS rating was used to develop a baseline for each subject's behavior problems against which the possible progress in social skills intervention may be measured. The subjects' profile information, along with the qualitative information from pre-interviews (interviews before the intervention), served as a guide for the development of the SST curriculum. Data from the second BDRS administration were used as indicators of the students' social competences and results of the first and second BDRS ratings were compared and contrasted.

Teaching staff interviews

Before the intervention, the senior author conducted 20-minute interviews with each of the four teaching staff members separately. The baseline data on the teaching staff's perspectives on each student's strengths and weaknesses in social skills were analysed and taken into consideration as the curriculum was being developed. Interviews with the same teaching staff were conducted separately following the completion of SST for the purpose of gaining their perceptions of possible progress in terms of the students'

social skills. Qualitative data obtained from these interviews were valuable and were used in delineating each of the subjects' backgrounds and the progress made in terms of the subjects' social skills. Two sources of data from two teaching staff members on two occasions (before and after the SST) concerning a single subject strengthened the validity of this study.

Intervention

According to the BDRS subject profile information and findings from interviews, the subjects' major challenges and needs in the area of social skills were identified. Using the data from the BDRS and pre-interviews as a guide for the development of the SST curriculum, the senior author selected 16 social skills and presented them in 32 lessons in the eight-week training.

The 16 social skills that comprised the SST represented a cross-section of skills addressing two major domains: (a) environmental social skills, and (b) social interaction skills. Environmental social skills are skills that are essential to perform tasks in an educational setting (e.g. paying attention to a speaker, following instructions, taking turns, making decisions, using positive thinking pattern). Social interaction skills are skills that facilitate positive social interaction (e.g. being a friend, using kind words/appropriate language, using good manners, cooperating with others, using table etiquette, making compliments, dealing with anger appropriately, solving problems, accepting differences, accepting no, apologizing, sharing). The pace of introducing new social skills was determined by the senior author's judgment of the class' readiness and the relatedness to the story in the textbook *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Lewis, 1950).

Building students' social skills through literature: the use of the textbook

The selection of a specific book for SST was based on the assessment results of the students' social skills deficits and needs. Since students with E/BD are often found to experience low quality of relationships, the SST placed emphasis on helping students develop their cooperation skills, learning appropriate ways to express feelings, and facilitating and enhancing their participation in group activities which as a result may improve the quality of relationships with peers and adults. In this study, an age-appropriate storybook, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* was selected as the text and used to promote social skills. Though it is not a book for social skills per se, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* was used as the textbook for the study for several reasons. First, the themes the book highlights include courage, siblings, friendship (e.g. with siblings and friends such as the faun, the beavers), relationships with authority figures, sacrifice, adventure and good

versus evil (Lewis and Mayes, 1998). The second reason this text was chosen was that the length of the story was suitable for the two-month storytelling and training. Lastly, the story is very well-written, both in terms of the plot and the characters.

To address the issue of different reading abilities, the method of reading aloud (either the more able peers or the senior author read the book aloud) was used while teaching Group II (aged nine to 12). In another session, subjects in Group I (aged six to eight) listened to the same book on an audio tape at the same pace. A movie of the story book was also used. Subjects in both groups had the opportunity to watch the movie (about three hours) of the story about 20 minutes a week. The movie-watching helped subjects understand the text and enhanced their interest to learn more about the characters and the incidents in the story.

The use of telecommunications and the worldwide web

The study incorporated the online mimicking of the language and persona of the major fictional characters in the textbook who are roughly the same age as the subjects. The senior author and Group II (aged nine to 12) portrayed the main characters online by using character impersonation. A website for the story was developed, maintained, and made accessible for students in both groups in the school.

Telecommunications played a key role in the SST. Group I (aged six to eight) used telecommunications to question the characters about the event of the stories, while Group II answered the questions and explained those events in more detail by using their imagination. Telecommunications allowed for contact in real time between the subjects and for maintaining a record of the conversation that could be viewed by the researchers. Subjects were excited about corresponding with the characters/readers through writing.

Each subject in both groups had a voice in the telecommunication process. They had to learn to work with each other to maintain their credibility and achieve success as a team. Subjects not only had to carry out their responsibilities – asking appropriate questions and handling the replies, they also had to speak with a common voice on issues of fact in the story. Subjects in Group II were also required to respond appropriately to questions dealing with different aspects of the story, such as the characters' life in the land of Narnia and incidents in the story. In the implementation process, the senior author served as coordinator and monitored the emails closely.

In addition to the use of emails, web-based resources appropriate for the SST were utilized. For example, at the end of the semester, subjects in Group II were divided into small teams and assigned to research information on the web on Christmas and cultures (this topic was related to the

story in the sense that there is no Christmas in Narnia before Aslan returns and when the Witch is the ruler) and to present their research results to the class. The team that did the best presentation was chosen to use the information they found to teach the younger subjects in Group I. When both groups finished reading the story, they were asked to take an online quiz on the story collectively. A distinct advantage in using the web in this way was the promotion of social interactions as the subjects were encouraged to work in cooperative teams to complete their projects. In addition, the research itself was a good opportunity for the subjects to practice various skills such as cooperating, disagreeing appropriately and accepting feedback. During the research process, students were reminded of the steps of these skills and were commended for using them appropriately.

In addition to using emails and web-based resources, students' projects (e.g. pictures, story boards) related to the story were published on a regular basis on the website. Subjects were excited to see their projects published on the web and were, therefore, motivated to learn more about the story. Recognizing the students' work and effort seemed to be effective in raising their self-esteem and confidence. Subjects were also able to access resources that were related to the story on the internet. During the training, they listened to stories about the writer and to the music of the movie online. The researchers' observation showed that the application of technology resources added zest to the SST class; motivated the subjects to participate; and enhanced the subjects' experiences and the effectiveness of the training.

The use of social skills activities and games

Once the data of the primary assessment was systematically analysed, the target behaviors needed were identified and specified, the SST intervention ensued. Teaching methods in the classrooms included discussion, behavioral rehearsal of skill, and integration of activities in classroom instruction. Cooperative group games and activities (e.g. birthday parties, singing friendship songs, crafts, skit) were incorporated so as to promote positive social interactions, raise the students' self-esteem and help them apply the new-learned skills in real-life situations. The multi-age grouping method was used based on the belief that organizing groups that are more heterogeneous (i.e. variable levels of ability and knowledge) may encourage positive reinforcement of lower-functioning students by higher-skilled ones (e.g. Winsler and Espinosa, 1990).

Some strategies used in the training were based on cognitive behavioral therapy, which helped subjects modify their thinking patterns and develop more functional behaviors. Subjects were taught to use cognitive strategies such as self-evaluation and self-recording to mediate their own behaviors.

In the study, opportunities were provided for the subjects to teach others the skills they learned. Subjects were taught to use various methods (e.g. PowerPoint presentations, demonstration and modeling, posters) to teach the skills. These activities provided extended practice, helped students to be creative and motivated, and countered the boredom which is common in social skills intervention.

As the class read the story, subjects were asked to portray pro-social behaviors described in the book. Characters with pro-social behaviors thereby served not only as models for the students but also as a springboard for a more in-depth discussion of the target skills and how they are used in real-life settings. Role-plays predicting how characters would deal with specific situations also enhanced the subjects' ability to investigate a variety of behavioral strategies and experience the outcome in a safe environment. The characters' actions were discussed to help the subjects gain valuable insight into the feelings and actions of others as well as improve their social behaviors.

Questions one and two: results determined by the *BDRS* and structured interviews

Results determined by the *BDRS*

According to the BDRS manual, whenever raters differ substantially in their ratings on the same individual, they should confer and discuss their different perceptions (Bullock and Wilson, 1989). However, in the case of this study, teaching staff's ratings on the same subject on the same occasion (i.e. either before or after the intervention) were all very similar. Also according to the BDRS manual, it is proper to average several scores for an individual (Bullock and Wilson, 1989). In this study, to reflect the average rating, standard scores shown on each subject's profile were the average of the two teaching staff members' ratings on an individual subject on the same occasion. As a result, by utilizing the BDRS, four average Subscale scores and the average Total Score (TS) were obtained for each subject profile both before and after the intervention. Due to the limited space, figures of subject profiles are not included in the article.

The BDRS standard scores have a mean of 50 with the standard deviation of 10 (Bullock and Wilson, 1989). Scores below 59 (i.e. between the rows of 50 and *less than* 45 on the BDRS scales) are within the normal range, which represents about 80% of the population. Standard scores between the rows of 59 and *more than* 80 on the scales are within the problem range. Within this range, standard scores between 65 and *more than* 80 represent approximately 7% of the population. Standard scores between 64 and 59 represent approximately 13% of the population.

Interpretation of subjects' total scores, percentile ranks, and percentage of population represented

As noted in the BDRS manual, although reliability coefficients based on the BDRS standardization sample were adequate to good for the Subscales, only the TS should be considered as a general measure of behaviors related to emotional problems (Bullock and Wilson, 1989). Bullock and Wilson's caution is warranted primarily because inferences based on small numbers of items in a Subscale are generally less reliable than those based on all BDRS items combined. To compare and contrast the pre- and post-rating TSs and depict any possible improvement in the subjects' behavioral patterns, Table 1 and Figure 1 were created to display the BDRS TSs on each subject obtained before and after intervention.

In the BDRS, percentile rank (PR) reflects the percentage of subjects in the sample scoring at or below a given raw score (Bullock and Wilson, 1989). Table 1 shows the TS, PR and percentage of population represented (PPR) of each subject, while Figure 1 presents each subject's BDRS TSs obtained before and after intervention. As indicated in Table 1 and Figure 1, Subject C, Subject D, Subject E, Subject G, Subject H and Subject I's (a total of 6, 66.7% of the subjects) post-rating TSs are higher than that of the pre-rating, while the other subjects' scores fluctuated to some degree.

According to the BDRS TSs, the majority of the subjects did not seem to have severe behavioral problems, since only Subject F's pre- and post-rating TSs were above 65 (within the problem range) and represented approximately only 7% of the population. This could be explained by comparing the school management system and standards, as well as the teachers' expectations and tolerance levels with that of other regular

Table 1 **Subjects' total scores, percentile ranks, and percentages of population represented**

Subject	Before intervention			After intervention		
	TS	PR	PPR	TS	PR	PPR
A	55	69.1%	80%	55.5	72.6%	80%
B	60.5	86.4%	13%	61	86.4%	13%
C	54.5	69.1%	80%	48.5	46%	80%
D	60.5	86.4%	13%	59.5	84.1%	13%
E	53	61.8%	80%	51.5	57.9%	80%
F	71.5	98.6%	7%	73	98.9%	7%
G	60	84.1%	13%	52	57.9%	80%
H	53.5	65.5%	80%	52	57.9%	80%
I	48.5	46%	80%	48	42.1%	80%

Note: TS = total score; PR = percentile rank; PPR = percentage of population represented.

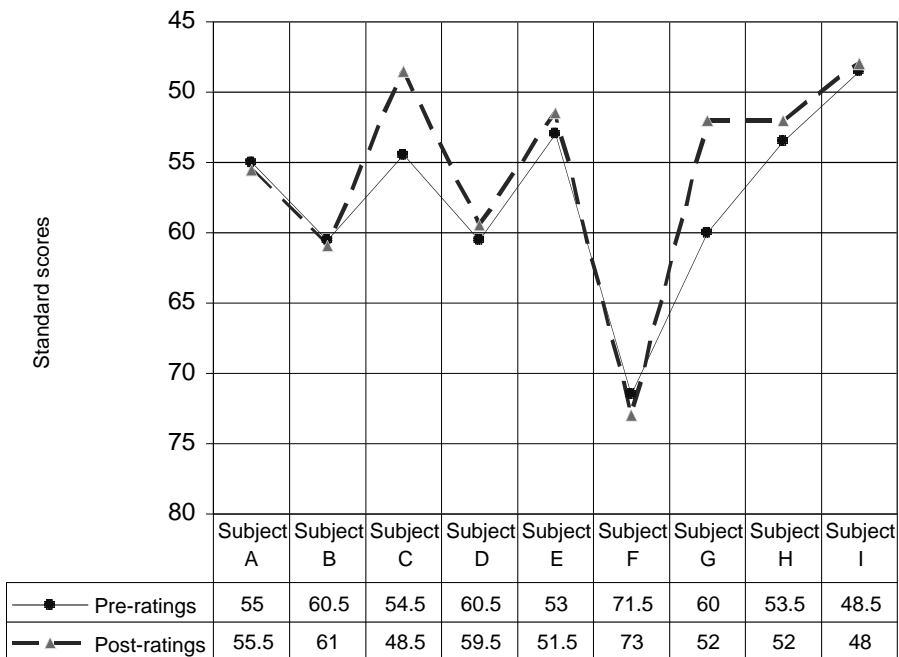|	Subject A	Subject B	Subject C	Subject D	Subject E	Subject F	Subject G	Subject H	Subject I
Pre-ratings	55	60.5	54.5	60.5	53	71.5	60	53.5	48.5
Post-ratings	55.5	61	48.5	59.5	51.5	73	52	52	48

Figure 1 **Subjects' total scores: based on pre- and post-ratings by teaching staff members utilizing the *BDRS***

education settings. Since the research site was a special program for students with E/BD, it was reasonable to assume that the teaching staff who partici-pated in the study may have had expectations that were different from that of teachers in regular schools. That is, it was highly possible that teachers' tolerance level of problem behaviors in the research site could be higher than that in many other general education schools; behaviors that are con-sidered normal in the research site may be regarded as problematic in general education school settings.

Results determined by the pre- and post-interviews

Data accrued from the interviews were analysed through a descriptive format that identifies the small narrative units of the meaning within it and the themes of the information they provide (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). The sections below interpret these qualitative data (qualitative data are not included in the article due to the limited space).

Pre-interviews   The first question the researchers raised in the interviews before intervention was about the student's overall strengths in terms of his/her social skills. The teaching staff gave a variety of responses. Almost

all of them were able to give reasons in terms of why they perceived a certain characteristic as a subject's strength. The second question dealt with how the teaching staff members perceived the subject's major challenges or needs in the area of social skills. Again the teaching staff was able to identify the subjects' major needs and their concerns. These comments provided valuable information and were taken into consideration as the curriculum was being developed. The next item asked the teaching staff members what they expected the subjects to learn from the SST. The teaching staff all responded with answers similar to the previous question, as they all wanted the subjects to work on their areas of needs and challenges. Finally, the teaching staff members were asked how they would rate these subjects' social competence on a scale of 0–10 (0 is socially inept and 10 is socially competent). Most teaching staff members rated the students from 3 to 5.

Post-interviews   Similar interviews with the same teaching staff were conducted following the completion of SST for the purpose of gaining their perceptions of possible progress in terms of the students' social skills. The first question asked the teachers what changes in the student's behaviors they saw in the last two months while the SST was implemented. The four teaching staff members all stated that they had seen some positive changes in the majority of the students' behaviors (except Subject A, according to Teacher B's responses and Subject F, according to Teacher D's responses). One teacher noted that one of the students' (Subject H) manners had improved greatly. Another teacher stated that there was an increased level of patience in her class. One teacher noticed a clear decline in the number of arguments with adults and peers. Teaching staff reported that after the SST, the subjects' overall cooperation skills had increased, and that social engagement had increased between the subjects. One teacher commented that the classroom atmosphere became more positive. All of the four teaching staff members indicated that, in general, there seemed to be some positive changes in the social skills of their students. The majority of the subjects exhibited a decrease in problem behaviors and an increase in pro-social behaviors within the context of the classroom.

   The next two questions again dealt with the teaching staff's perceptions of the subjects' strengths and areas of needs and challenges in terms of social skills. Interestingly, not all teaching staff members responded with similar answers to the interview before the intervention. The next question again asked the teaching staff to rate each subject's social competence on a scale of 0–10 (0 is socially inept and 10 is socially competent). Most of the teaching staff members rated the students from 6 to 8. A comparison of

the pre- and post-ratings on the 0–10 Likert Scale shows that there were improvements in the subjects' social competence. Finally, the teaching staff were asked for further suggestions for social skills interventions. All of them responded with insightful suggestions for changes to the intervention given. Data accrued from responses to this question and comments concerning interventions based on the SST will be analysed and discussed in the section that addresses the third research question later in this article.

In general, according to the interviews with the teaching staff, with this eight-week SST program for subjects with E/BD, the least success was achieved in regard to decreasing problem behaviors and increasing pro-social behaviors. As mentioned above, the research results indicated that more subjects (77.8% of the subjects, according the data from interview questions) displayed apparent positive changes in their behaviors than those who showed no progress or regression.

Question three: results determined by the structured interviews

The third research question was adequately addressed by the teaching staff involved in the study. Data accrued from their responses are valuable information that will support teachers in helping students with E/BD and contribute to the emerging knowledge base on the effectiveness of social skills intervention in several aspects:

a) The present study extends social skills intervention by integrating the teaching of social skills with literature and the use of telecommunications. Results once again confirmed the need for direct intervention within the targeted setting to ensure students use learned social skills (e.g. Mathur and Rutherford, 1996).

b) While the SST did not completely eliminate problem behavior, overall levels were reduced (as indicated by the BDRS TSs and the interviews). In interviews with school staff present in the SST classes, anecdotal information suggested that the use of literature and telecommunications seemed to be effective with students with E/BD.

c) The present study provides guidance for a larger group replication of teaching social skills with technology and literature. The study shows that teachers can implement instructional strategies which results in reductions of problem behaviour.

d) Interventions should be tailored to meet individual needs and account for the unique contextual variables of the targeted setting. Further, all procedures used in the study can be generally accepted practices found within schools.

Summary

Overall, data yielded from both of the instruments showed that this research endeavor had decreased problem behaviors and increased pro-social behaviors to a certain degree. The data provided through the *BDRS* TSs indicated that there was a decrease in problem behaviors among the majority of the subjects (i.e. Subjects C, D, E, G, H and I; 66.7% of the subjects); however, it did not clearly indicate prevalent patterns of behavioral improvement among the other three (i.e. Subjects A, B and F; 33.3% of the subjects). Likewise, the *BDRS* TSs revealed that there was an increase in pro-social behaviors among the six subjects (i.e. Subjects C, D, E, G, H and I; 66.7% of the subjects) of the identified students, yet it did not give evidence of progress among the other three subjects (i.e. Subjects A, B and F; 33.3% of the subjects).

The qualitative data accrued from the structured interviews with the teaching staff revealed that there were positive changes in the behaviors across seven of the nine subjects (i.e. Subjects B, C, D, E, G, H and I; 77.8% of the subjects). The teaching staff stated there was clear evidence of decreased rate of problem behaviors and increased rate of pro-social behaviors among most of the subjects (except Subject A, according to Teacher B and Subject F, according to Teacher D). In general, the SST was successful in answering each of the three research questions positively. The aim of investigating and enhancing the social competence of young students (aged from six to 12) with E/BD was achieved.

Limitations

Given the exploratory nature of the present study, there were a number of limitations:

a) Although the results indicated that educators can reduce problem behavior through proactive means, the actual long-term effects of the intervention on reducing the prevalence and incidence of antisocial behavior patterns are unknown.
b) Due to the limited numbers of subjects, it was not feasible to have an experiment group and a control group; therefore, there was a lack of generalizability of the study results.
c) Given the long-standing nature of social skills deficits in E/BD, 32 sessions of instruction may only be sufficient to manage rather than remediate the students' negative behavior patterns. Therefore, time restraints were considered as a limitation.

Conclusions

Analysis of the BDRS data and interviews revealed that the majority of subjects (66.7% of the subjects, according to data from the BDRS and 77.8% according the data from interviews) had demonstrated evident improvement in their social competence. In spite of the fact that the data were not very powerful, the study was viewed as a success by the school staff.

According to the study findings, there appear to be several implications for teachers of students with E/BD. First, structured, cooperative learning activities in the classroom allow students with problem behavior patterns to develop social skills in the context of a reinforcing peer community. Interviews with the teaching staff revealed that subjects did well in the SST in that it stressed the development of interpersonal skills, and that motivating and creative activities kept the subjects actively engaged in the training. Second, effective social skills instruction involves individualization. Social skills interventions that teach specific behaviors to students based on their individual strengths and needs are more likely to be effective. According to the study, identifying and understanding the specific needs of a student with E/BD plays a critical part in designing an appropriate educational program for that student and in providing needed emotional and behavioral supports. Finally, though reading or listening to stories alone will not teach social skills, literacy experiences are tools that can be an integral part of the process for teaching/learning important behaviors.

In her experience with the SST research, the senior author has found that support from teachers and administrators in the school to be of primary importance, even if the intervention may not involve all of the students in the school, which was the case of the study. When an entire school community feels a sense of ownership of the SST, it is more likely that students will enjoy a far greater degree of success.

The need to understand the critical components of effective social skills interventions for socially unskilled children is also critical. This research outlines a creative approach to bringing technology into elementary and intermediate classrooms which can be utilized by teachers who may have only minimal knowledge of computer programs and how to use technology in the classroom. It would be an attractive project for other school teachers to develop in conjunction with district technology support teams or local universities who can provide technology support.

Finally, though books/storytelling can be used as a vehicle for guiding individuals in appropriate ways to behave, while using literature as a tool to teach social skills, it is important to ensure there is a good match between

the skill being taught and the lesson(s) presented in the story. In addition, to maximize generalization of skills to natural settings, it is critical to consider how these social behaviors interrelate within meaningful and socially important situations. Social skills that are meaningful to the subjects are more likely to lead to successful intervention outcomes and will therefore enhance the social validity.

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