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A Research-based Social Skills Curriculum for Middle School Students With Special Needs

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A RESEARCH-BASED SOCIAL SKILLS CURRICULUM FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Abstract

Social skills instruction is an essential part of special education programming. There are many different approaches to social skills instruction, and there are studies that show the benefits to these different approaches. The research presented here seeks to answer this question: What methods of social skills instruction are most effective for middle school students? Studies included explore the use of literacy-based interventions, direct instruction, group-orientated contingency, and other methods of social skills interventions. Following the literature review this researcher created a three-year social skills curriculum designed for special education students in the middle school setting.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Relationships with other people are essential to the human experience, and through these relationships people are able to meet a variety of goals. Interactions with others are complex and require individuals to make many decisions. For many, interacting with others comes naturally, and they do not need to focus on social skills. For others, including some individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), social skills can be a challenge. People do not just need to interpret and express language. They need to be able to use language in a social way and understand the meanings behind the actions of others (Winner p. i). Students can speak clearly and yet still struggle to connect with others. In school, students who struggle with social skills can have difficulties interacting with peers and teachers. This makes social skills instruction necessary in the educational setting.

The term social skills encompasses many social competencies that are required for social interaction. Michelle Garcia Winner defined social skills as, "Sharing space with others effectively" (p. ix). There is no sequential list of social competency skills. In order to share space effectively, humans make many decisions, and it only takes a subtle difference in social communication to make others uncomfortable. Many methods of social skills instruction teach students specific behaviors, which may help change one particular behavior in that specific situation. For students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), it is beneficial to change the way they think in order to help them socially adapt (Van Loan et al. 2019). Teaching students who struggle with social skills how to 'think socially' can enable them to understand social situations in order to interact in expected ways (Winner p. v).

Common topics and difficulties need to be considered when identifying and working with students with social skills challenges. Rekha Sapra (2019) listed the following domains of social

and emotional competence: "self-awareness, relationships with peers and adults, problem solving skills, self-concept, confidence, and emotional regulation". The goal of social skills instruction is to help students develop in each of these domains. Effective interventions can support students who struggle in these areas. Michelle Garcia Winner identified several areas that contribute to social cognitive challenges. Individuals with ASD often experience some of these deficits. Michelle Garcia Winner identified this list of deficits: "poor initiation of communication or action, listening with eyes and brain, abstract and inferential, understanding perspective, gestalt processing; getting the big picture, humor and human relatedness" (p.xi-xi). Individuals with average and above average intelligence quotients (IQs) can have difficulty functioning in classrooms, completing academic work, getting along with others, and making friends. These individuals can also present a discrepancy between their scores on standardized tests of social skills and their actual abilities to establish relationships. This is because they can logically figure out the correct answers during testing, but they are not able to decode the complex interactions in the very short opportunities they have to do so during live conversations (Winner p. ii). Students with ASD can make progress in these areas with effective treatment. The ability to interact socially directly impacts students' ability to think critically and collaborate. These skills are related to academic achievement and independence so social skills instruction is part of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Through social skills instruction, students with ASD and other social cognitive challenges have greater access to education.

Social skills are incredibly important within the school setting, and can dramatically influence the way students experience their education. Children who learn social and emotional skills can manage conflict with others. As a result, they develop better relationships with their

peers and their teachers. Children who do not acquire social and emotional skills develop relationships with others that are too often based on correcting behaviors (Sapra 2019). Increased interactions involving conflict do not allow children to learn the skills to navigate a variety of social encounters. Children with EBD who are taught in restrictive educational settings do not have the same opportunities as their peers to develop close relationships (Van Loan et al. 2019). Children with a history of conflict and misbehavior have fewer opportunities to learn social skills, driving the need for comprehensive social skills instruction.

Social skills are incredibly important for middle school students. Classes are more likely to stray from the routines and structure of elementary school. Teachers expect students to read verbal and non-verbal cues and behave according to rules that are not clearly defined. By this point, students are expected to understand the general expectations within each classroom and the expectations within transitions throughout the school day. Peers are harsh social skills critics, and students lacking certain skills will have difficulty making and keeping friends. Students with difficulty reading others can either believe others are angry when they are not or miss signs of irritation. The middle school years are a critical period for social skills development and an opportunity for targeted instruction.

Following a Social Thinking conference in fall of 2018, I volunteered to lead the social skills instruction class. I teach in a middle school with students in grades five through eight. The social skills group I lead, Lunch Bunch, meets at lunch. Each student attends one day per week. The groups range in size from two to six students who are grouped intentionally with others who have similar needs. All of the students in Lunch Bunch have an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and there is a range of disabilities within the group. I work with students diagnosed with ASD, EBD, Developmental Coordination Delay (DCD), Specific

Learning Disability (SLD), and anxiety. All of the middle school students with goals in the area of social skills attend Lunch Bunch. This is an opportunity for students to socialize with their peers about a range of topics.

As the Lunch Bunch teacher, I am responsible for curriculum development. I address a wide range of topics relating to social skills based on students' IEP goals. I use Social Thinking resources and terminology with students. I take a cognitive approach to teaching social skills. The content of Lunch Bunch is also based on the students and things happening in the school. Occasionally, other teachers will mention suggestions of topics to cover when they are seeing specific issues. I also have days when a student comes in with a pressing issue that we need to discuss, and I make room for those conversations within the curriculum. While I have lessons planned for each week, my goal is to meet the individual needs of each student and group. This does mean that I vary the topics and their delivery based on the group of students I am working with.

I chose social skills instruction as a topic for my thesis because it is very applicable to teaching Lunch Bunch. My school has been able to give me access to resources, and I have learned a great deal from my personal experiences. Researching methods of social skills instruction will allow me to add relevant methods of instruction and create a more data-driven program. My social skills group requires investment of time from both my students and myself. Students give up their lunch period with friends once a week in order to attend Lunch Bunch. I want to use research-based methods of instruction to ensure that this program will help them make progress towards their goals.

Social skills instruction is an incredibly important topic to me because I see the struggles first hand. I teach students who just want to make a friend. I work with students who have

difficulty keeping friends because they misread social situations. I see students who have such difficulty with perspective taking that they feel others are out to get them. I work with students who engage in attention-seeking behavior without realizing how this impacts the way others view them. I teach students that get incredibly anxious at the idea of communicating with classmates out of school, and yet they crave those connections. My goal as their teachers is to help them find answers and make progress during their time with me. I am hoping that this research will allow me to create plans for effective instruction and help these students through difficulties that impact their lives in major ways. The following research was done to answer this question: What methods of social skills instruction are most effective for middle school students with a range of disabilities?

Definition of Terms

Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior (DRO)- Regularly reinforcing behavior during time periods in which a problem behavior does not occur (Gresham, Van, and Cook 2006).

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)- Carefully observing a student to determine the purpose of one specific behavior (Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013).

Group Contingency- A group works together toward a common goal in order to gain reinforcement (Vidoni and Ward 2006).

Literacy-Based Behavioral Interventions (LBBI)- Interventions used to improve social skills that involve literacy, sometimes in the form of social stories, as well as media and positive behavior strategies (Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013).

Percent Nonoverlapping Data Points (PND)- The percent of data points that are below the lowest or above the highest baseline measurement, depending on whether the goal was to increase or decrease that behavior (Gresham, Van, and Cook 2006).

Perseverative Speech- Speaking about one topic without changing topics as others give cues that they would like to speak about something else. This is common for individuals with ASD (Noell and Rubow 2018).

Pragmatic Language- Communication skills required for social interaction. This includes verbal and nonverbal communication (Angell, Bailey, and Larson 2008).

Noncontingent Reinforcement (NCR)- Giving a reinforcer on a schedule independent of the performance of the goal behavior (Noell and Rubow2018).

Social Story- A short story about one specific social situation that is designed to help students understand that social situation (Graetz, Mastropieri, and Scruggs 2011).

Target Behavior- A behavior that is unexpected that an intervention seeks to replace with an expected, more acceptable behavior (Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013).

Tiered Intervention- A variety of levels of support are provided, depending on the needs of the students. The first tier is usually a class or school wide intervention that is in place for everyone (Albrecht, Mathur, Jones, and Alazemi 2015).

Chapter II: Literature Review

Methods of Social Skills Instruction

Searches of Academic Search Premier, EBSCO, ERIC, and JSTOR provided the articles used in the following literature review. The search terms used included "social skills instruction," "middle school," "cognitive social skills instruction," and "social stories." The articles selected provided a description of research used to determine the effectiveness of different methods of social skills instruction.

Literacy-Based Behavioral Interventions

Literacy-Based Behavioral Interventions (LBBI) involve writing social stories and using video and behavioral supports for individuals with ASD to improve social behavior (Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013). Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning, and Haines conducted a study in 2013 that demonstrated implementation of LBBI and documented effects of this intervention with one student diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Francis et al. sought to determine how Literacy-Based Behavioral Interventions (LBBI) could be used, and how it impacted individuals with ASD. The subject in this study was Ella, a fourth grader diagnosed with ASD. Ella's behavior often prevented her from attending general education classes with typically developing peers. Her behaviors also prevented her from forming friendships with her peers. Ella's greatest struggles occurred during unstructured time, such as recess, where Ella's negative attention-seeking behaviors increased.

The 2013 Francis et al. study detailed the eight steps that Ella's instructor used to create the LBBI designed to increase Ella's social behavior at recess. The first step was to determine the skill deficits that led to negative behaviors like running, pulling her own hair, and speaking in

a high-pitched voice along with where the behaviors occurred. Ella had difficulty participating in recess with her peers due to challenging behaviors. Social initiation, social response, and reciprocal play at recess were the behaviors chosen for this intervention. The next step was to develop the literary component, which was the social narrative. This was done using data from a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), which determined that seeking attention from peers was the purpose of Ella's behavior. The social narrative labeled red and green behaviors, and indicated that red behaviors earned negative attention, but green behaviors received attention plus positive things Ella desired, including friendships. The next step was to develop the behavioral component. For Ella, this involved videotaping her and taking pictures of her performing the goal behaviors. It has been well-documented that videotapes and pictures should only include correct behaviors, not the undesirable behavior. Adult prompting should be edited out of videos (Sansosti Powell-Smith, 2008). The literacy and behavioral components were combined in a PowerPoint. Ella was instructed on how to use the PowerPoint created for her. She was encouraged to complete the program independently right before recess. Data was collected by observing Ella's social behavior before and during the intervention. The final step phased out the use of the LBBI. This happened once Ella consistently met her goals. While the LBBI was being phased out, Ella's instructor continued to track the behaviors. Any regression resulted in continued use of the LBBI. This process was used with Ella, and the results were remarkable.

Ella's instructor broke the first ten-minutes of recess into ten-second intervals. These intervals were analyzed to determine if Ella engaged in the skills targeted by the LBBI. Data was collected noting Ella's social behavior at recess before the LBBI, during the creation and the use of the LBBI, and following the phasing out of the LBBI.

The three goal behaviors measured for this LBBI included social initiation, social response, and reciprocal play. Prior to the LBBI, Ella did not exhibit any of the goal behaviors at recess, nor was she able to participate in many activities. In addition, she was not meeting her Individual Educational Plan (IEP) social goals. During the creation of the LBBI, the percentage of time Ella engaged in social initiation and reciprocal play increased. Ella recorded the video self-modeling during this time, which explained the increase in these behaviors. After three weeks using the LBBI and watching the self-modeling video before recess, Ella demonstrated a significant increase in the goal behaviors. She demonstrated social initiation 80% of the time, social response 83% of the time, and reciprocal play 86% of the time. This change allowed Ella to participate at recess with her peers and make friends, which was something she desired. The authors concluded that using LBBI was both effective and worthwhile. They encouraged others to take the time to create LBBI, based on the dramatic change for this student.

One drawback of this study was the small sample size of one student. It would have been helpful to see a more detailed timeline, as it was unclear how long it took to create and phase out the LBBI. The study stated LBBI was created for outdoor recess, as this was a particularly troublesome time for this student. The intent was that the student generalized and used the skills elsewhere, however there was no mention of whether the student generalized the skills.

This study was helpful because it not only provided the results showing LBBI as an effective method for teaching social skills, but it detailed the steps used to create and implement the LBBI in the school setting. The purpose of the study was to enable educators to use these steps to create LBBIs for other students. The detailed steps could easily be implemented by any teacher. This was the first intervention that positively impacted this student. Other interventions used by the same instructor did not create significant changes in social behaviors compared to

the LBBI. This was a promising method to use with students who have had difficult challenging behaviors in the past.

Richter and Test (2011) sought to understand how the implementation of a program using multimedia social stories impacted a group of high school students with significant cognitive disabilities. The purpose of this intervention was to increase students' knowledge about adult opportunities in order to express their preferences and make informed choices about their futures (Richter & Test, 2011).

Richter and Test used three cognitively disabled adults between the ages of 17 and 21 as study subjects. The students lived with their families and planned to work in supported environments when they finished school. The students had no previous classes that addressed their future employment options. Three other students who met the same criteria were monitored but did not access the social stories, and were used as the control group. Richter and Test gathered baseline data by attending informal transition planning meetings with the students. Sixteen multimedia social stories were created illustrating four adult outcomes: educational opportunities, employment opportunities, residential opportunities, and recreational opportunities. These social stories consisted of a PowerPoint that played automatically and included an audio recording that played aloud. Symbols and pictures were included in these two- to three-minute presentations. After viewing six multimedia social stories on consecutive school days, the researchers tested for mastery. If students had not mastered the goal concepts, they were provided Skill Builders. They reviewed the multimedia social stories that covered areas of weakness in order to clear up misunderstandings. If an area of weakness remained, students participated in Skill Builder Two. Skill Builder Two consisted of multimedia stories with opportunities for student response. If students still did not demonstrate mastery, they participated

in Skill Builder Three. Skill Builder Three was similar to the other interventions, but it also included reinforcements for correct responses. One of the three students needed Skill Builder Three. Following the use of multimedia social stories, the researchers asked the students 16 questions about the adult outcome areas to measure understanding. When the students were asked to share a preference, they provided three valid reasons to support their preference. Researchers repeated this for three weeks in one-week intervals to check for maintenance. Richter and Test also attended another informal transition planning meeting a minimum of one week after the intervention.

Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observations in meetings. A 16 item questionnaire outlining adulthood options was given to the three participants every week throughout the study. Results included the means of the three baseline scores, scores that students received during the intervention, and three maintenance scores taken one, two and three weeks after the intervention was completed. All the students demonstrated increased knowledge of the life options that they would have as adults. The degree of knowledge generalization was assessed through observations during informal transition meetings. Alex increased from a score of six at his initial meeting to a score of nine at his follow-up meeting. Donna's increased from initial six to 14, and Eric progressed from a score of 12 to a score of 15. All three students discussed their adult options more effectively following the intervention. Researchers interviewed the three students to see if the use of multimedia social stories could assist them in establishing and understanding their preferences for the four main areas of transition (education, vocation, residence, and recreation). Students were asked about their preferences, and gave three reasons to support the preferences they shared. In the initial interview, Alex shared preferences for each of the four areas, but he did not have an explanation for any of his preferences.

Following the intervention, Alex shared preferences, and he had five different pieces of reasoning that related to his preferences. Donna had preferences in three out of the four areas with one explanation in the pre-intervention interview. After the use of multimedia social stories, Donna shared preferences in all four areas and explained seven different pieces of rationale. Prior to the intervention, Eric had four preferences and five explanations for his preferences. Following the intervention, Eric had four preferences and could explain eight reasons for his preferences. Each of the three students had slight changes in their preferences following the intervention due to understanding their options better. These results indicated that all students who participated in the intervention grew in knowledge, in understanding their preferences and in expressing themselves within the meeting setting.

Richter and Test concluded that multimedia social stories were an effective teaching strategy for transition planning. The data supported this conclusion. Students with cognitive disabilities understood their transition options. Richter and Test believed that social stories contributed to this understanding as a result of increased scores measured from baseline and post-intervention assessments. These students now understood their options and expressed preferences for life choices following their transition program. The ability to explain the reasoning behind their preferences showed that the students understood the decisions being made. Overall, this study supported the use of multimedia social stories, particularly for students with cognitive disabilities.

Limitations to the study completed by Richter and Test included the small number of participants. While the results showed growth for these three students, it is possible that a similar intervention would not be effective for other students. Richter and Test also noted that the transition meetings were only attended by three people, not typical for transition meetings. This

may have made it easier for participants to share their viewpoints. Richter and Test mentioned that the questionnaire provided students with three different options for the correct answer, making it easier for participants to potentially guess without having real knowledge of the answer. From a practical standpoint, the intervention model may also be difficult to implement in a school setting. Students who did not show mastery were entered into Skill Builders, which extended the intervention time. One participant, Alex, took three Skill Builders classes, so he participated in the intervention for several weeks longer than Donna, who did not take any of the Skill Builders. This type of programming may be difficult to schedule (Richter & Test, 2011).

In their 2011 study, Graetz, Mastropieri, and Scruggs sought to determine the effectiveness of social stories for adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). They noted the evolution of social stories since the creation by Gray and Garand in 1993. For this study, Gratez, Mastropieri, and Scruggs used social stories that included colored pictures and callouts. Callouts were designated times within the reading of the social stories when students would respond aloud. Researchers wanted to determine if modified social stories effectively increased appropriate behaviors for adolescents with ASD; whether the appropriate behaviors generalized and maintained; and whether school staff would describe the uses and guidelines for implementing social stories following the intervention.

The research methodology was described in detail. The three participants were between the ages of 12 and 15. All three students had ASD with cognitive impairment and no prior experience with social stories. These students demonstrated difficulties with social interactions. These difficulties included limited interaction with others, a lack of language skills, refusal to participate in non-preferred activities, use of a falsetto high-pitched voice, sucking on fingers, and screaming when redirected. The researchers identified a target behavior for each student and

wrote a social story from the student's perspective that was descriptive and directive. The stories were written in the first person, and designed to match each student's reading comprehension level, age, and attention span. Photographs of teachers and students were included in the social stories. School staff members were trained to use the social stories with students. Staff members read the stories aloud, commented on the pictures, and asked students questions during the story. Throughout the intervention, school staff members read students' social stories at least twice per day at designated times. Social stories were read directly prior to the time the target behaviors most typically occurred. Baseline, intervention, and maintenance data was collected consistently for each student with data recorded every 15 seconds for 20 minutes. Two out of the three students were observed in an alternate setting to determine if generalization occurred. One student had a target behavior that was connected with a specific class (P.E.), so generalization data was not collected. Staff interviews followed the interventions, and included questions about using the social story and what effects were noted.

For each student, one target behavior was identified and carefully tracked throughout the process. The first participant, Ronnie, struggled in his P.E. class. Ronnie dropped to the floor and refused to get up or participate in the activities. Ronnie's target behavior was sitting or lying on the floor during P.E. class. Throughout the four days of baseline data collection, researchers observed Ronnie on the floor for a mean of 83.41% of the time he was observed in P.E. During the nine days Ronnie read the social story at least twice before attending gym class, Ronnie was on the floor a mean of 13.37% of observation time. Maintenance data four weeks later showed Ronnie on the floor 4.5% of the observation time. The second participant, Bobby, had a tendency to speak in a high-pitched voice that was not his natural voice. Teachers worried about Bobby getting teased and having difficulty socializing with peers when using this voice. This high-

pitched voice was identified as Bobby's target behavior. Bobby spoke in a high voice a mean of 30.95% of the time during baseline data observations. Bobby used this target behavior a mean of 5.21% of the time throughout the intervention and a mean of 10.36% of the time during the maintenance observations, 22 days after the intervention. Bobby was observed in a different class to evaluate generalization of skills. He used a high-pitched voice a mean of 3.91% of the time in a new setting. The third participant, Cathy, put fingers, objects or hair into her mouth during class. When teachers asked her to put her hands down, Cathy sometimes screamed. Putting non-edibles into her mouth during class was identified as Cathy's target behavior. Cathy's baseline data showed that she put things into her mouth a mean of 50.62% of the time. While Cathy participated in the intervention, she used the target behavior a mean of 7.01% of the time. During the intervention, Cathy was observed in a different class in order to evaluate generalization to new settings. She used the target behavior a mean of 12% of the time in another class. Following the intervention, Cathy put things in her mouth 0-2% of the time. For each of the students, the target behavior decreased during the intervention, and was maintained at a decreased rate following the intervention. The staff members involved in these interventions effectively described a social story, the purpose of social stories, and explained how to create social stories. These staff members also felt that social stories was an effective intervention, and expressed that they would use social stories with other students in the future.

Gratez, Mastropieri, and Scruggs expressed that the results ultimately demonstrated the effectiveness of social stories as an intervention for adolescents with ASD. The researchers hoped to see no overlap between baseline and intervention data. Cathy's percentages increased and decreased with some percentages higher than baseline. The mean of Cathy's percentages, however, indicated that overall she less frequently put things into her mouth. The researchers

believed that the changes made to the social story (including color photographs and callouts) were effective. They also believed that staff acceptance of social stories was an important factor in the successful intervention.

Gratez, Mastropieri, and Scruggs noted that the number of participants, time frame, and the fact that all participants were in the same class limited the study. Two of the original participants were not included because one refused to respond and data for another was unreliable. It is possible that students would have similarly not responded to the use of social stories. During the interviews school staff members questioned whether the intervention was practical for a larger group of students, as the social stories would need to be individualized.

In a 2016 study, Gül explored the impact of computer-based modeling and social stories with young adults who had intellectual disabilities. The purpose of this study was to determine how computer modeling and social stories worked together. Gül examined the way combined interventions taught a behavior, how that behavior was maintained over time, how subjects generalized this behavior, and how subjects felt about the use of both computer modeling and Social Stories.

The three study participants were young adults between the ages of 20 and 25 with identified cognitive disabilities and limited social skills. The subjects could all imitate verbal and nonverbal skills, focus on a screen, and follow one-step directions. A peer model was also selected who provided an example of a target skill filmed for the video modeling. This student attended the same rehabilitation center as the subjects, but had more developed social skills. The peer model and the subjects did not know each other. The peer model understood the purpose of the video, and was taught how to model the behavior prior to taping. The video modeling and Social Stories were designed to teach young adults to appropriately use the phrase “Get better

soon." The participants had the common IEP goal to respond to familiar social situations with expected phrases, and the phrase "Get better soon" fit within these goals. "Get better soon" was identified as a phrase all participants had not used prior to the intervention. Baseline data was collected by giving each participant five opportunities to use the target skill while recording the responses. During the intervention sessions, participants watched the video with modeling and listened to a social story depicting the target skill. The participants watched the video and transitioned to the setting where they were observed. In order to gather data, selected students and staff members fictitiously coughed or sneezed while in the presence of the participants. When the participant asked how the student or staff member felt, they responded with, "I am sick, very sick." Participants were observed to see if they made eye contact and commented, "Get better soon." Maintenance data was collected four weeks after the intervention sessions. Participants were given five opportunities to perform the target skill. Generalization data was collected by giving participants opportunities to perform the target skill in different settings and when provided with a variety of expressions that prompted the use of the phrase, "Get better soon." One limitation of this study was the length of time it took to prepare the video, which was two and a half hours. Another limitation of this study was that it only included three subjects.

In the 2016 study, Gül collected participant data before, during, and after the intervention to determine the impact of video modeling and Social Stories. During the baseline observations, none of the students responded to the "sick" students and staff members using the phrase, "Get better soon." Throughout the intervention and when maintenance data was collected, all three participants said, "Get better soon." Each of the participants went from using this phrase 0% of the time to using the phrase 100% of the time. Students generalized this

behavior, and they responded using the target skill in different settings and when given different signs of injury or illness. In the follow-up survey, all three participants expressed enjoyment when asked about the intervention, and said they liked learning something new. The teachers completed a survey as well, and all of the teachers expressed that the intervention was easy to implement and benefited the students. Based on the data collected, Gül determined that video modeling and Social Stories worked well as intervention tools for this group of young adults with intellectual disabilities.

Schoolwide Programs

Laugeson, Ellingsen, Sanderson, Tucci and Bates examined the use of a school-wide social skills program with middle-school aged children in a 2014 study. A school-wide social skills intervention program can provide social skills instruction in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for many children. This type of program also promotes generalization of skills. Laugeson et al. researched the impact of this school-wide program on ASD students without intellectual disabilities. They hypothesized that ASD students would demonstrate an overall improvement in social skills.

The subjects in this study were diagnosed with ASD and between the ages of 12 and 14 years. All students attended the same private school for students with ASD without intellectual disability. In their 2014 study, Laugeson et al. used student, parent, and teacher questionnaires to assess the subjects' social abilities. The same questionnaires were used for baseline, and follow-up data after the 14-week intervention. This study used the *Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills* (PEERS), implemented by classroom teachers and included 30-minute lessons five days a week. Topics covered in this program included making and keeping friends, social etiquette, and peer rejection. The curriculum focused on one topic per week, with

additional homework assignments related to the topics covered. Lessons involved instruction and role play around specific topics. Parents were educated on the students' learning targets. A control group of peers at the school continued to receive their current social skills instruction.

The students in the PEERs classrooms for full class instruction showed positive growth following the 14-week intervention. Laugeson et al. reported the mean differences for both the treatment and the control group using 14 different measures of social skills. For each of these measures, the treatment group showed more significant gains than the control group. According to student surveys, students in the treatment group showed greater knowledge of social skills, were more frequently engaged in reciprocal social interaction, hosted and attended more get togethers. Teacher surveys revealed that students in the treatment group showed greater social responsiveness, social awareness, social communication, and social motivation. There was a low response rate from parents, but those who responded indicated decreased social anxiety for the students in the treatment group. Laugeson et al. concluded that the school-wide social skills program was an effective intervention. The improvements made during the 14-week intervention were greater than those made by the control group. Laugeson et al. noted that researchers were unable to randomly assign students to the intervention and the control groups because classrooms were already established. One campus was assigned as the intervention group and the other was assigned as the control group, so the assignments were not random. They also received limited parent feedback. A school like the one in the study, where all of the students are diagnosed with ASD, may be more likely to adopt the model of school-wide social skills instruction.

Albrecht, Mathur, Jones, and Alazemi conducted a study in 2015 that described and evaluated the results of a three tiered school-wide intervention program. This involved teaching

all students specific skills. Small groups of students were selected for further instruction, modeling, and role play. Individual students who needed more support were given additional support and coaching. This program included Social Skills Training, Aggression Reduction Techniques and Time-Away. This study examined three elementary schools within one district over three years as they implemented the three tiered approach to teaching social skills. The purpose of this study was to determine how a three tiered intervention program impacted school attendance, time away, referrals, and academic achievement.

Three elementary schools within the same rural Midwestern district participated in this study. This district chose to implement this program as a result of increased concerning behaviors. There were 661 children in grades kindergarten through sixth grade in schools that participated in this study. The study was conducted over the course of three years at three elementary schools within the same school district. Teachers participated in 14 hours of training prior to beginning interventions. Teachers were also given guidance and coaching throughout the process. Tier one interventions occurred school-wide. Skills of the Month were taught to all students within the three schools. This involved modeling, role-plays, and posters hung throughout the school. Tier two interventions were provided to targeted groups of students. Small groups met with a social worker for 45 minutes per day to work on specific skills. These groups were formed based on teacher referrals. Tier three interventions included time-outs, redirection, and conflict resolution for the most disruptive students following an incident. The attendance, time outs, referrals, and academic performance were monitored over the three years of the study.

The results of this study illustrated the impact of the three-tiered intervention program. This study included data for attendance, Time-Away and office discipline referrals. The data

was measured each of the three years. Overall attendance improved during the three years. The need for time outs, and the number of students with office referrals decreased throughout this study. After the first year, attendance or stayed the same 54% of the students. Attendance increased or stayed the same in 66% and 61% of the students after the second and third years. Within the first and second years, 8% of the students had Time-Away referrals. Reduced Time-Away referrals were noted in year three with 5.6%. During the first year 93.5% of the students had no office referrals, fewer referrals, or stayed the same. Data was somewhat reduced for the second and third years with scores of 88.2% and 96%. In year two of the study, 77% of the students had improved or maintained their scores on academic tests. In year three of the study, 94% of the students had improved or maintained their scores on academic tests. The authors stated that this data supported the use of the three-tiered approach to social skills instruction. Attendance, Time-Away, and office referrals improved. The authors noted mixed results when including the academic achievement data, so they could not conclude that the three-tiered approach improved academic achievement.

Some study limitations were noted. The three tiers were described in detail, however more information on the tier two intervention would have been helpful. Also, in year three the district schools reconfigured grade levels. One of the schools added grades seven and eight. There was no data from the previous two years on these cohorts, so students were not included in the study. These changes however, may have had an impact on school culture. The authors also noted that school staff could have benefited from more intensive training before implementing the interventions. Overall, this three-tiered system positively impacted the schools that implemented it.

Group-Oriented Contingency

In a 2006 study, Vidoni and Ward examined the impact of group-oriented contingency on fair play within a physical education class. Group-oriented contingency involved rewarding members of a group for meeting common goals. Vidoni and Ward focused on dependent group-oriented contingency, which occured when the entire group's reward was dependent upon one person or a small group of people. They studied how dependent group-oriented contingency impacted supportive, positive statements that middle school students made to their peers during gym class.

This study was conducted in three sixth grade gym classes with the same teacher in an urban middle school. Each class selected a boy and a girl as the subjects, carefully observed by researchers. The subjects were selected because they provided very few or no supportive behaviors to their peers, according to their gym teacher. Researchers confirmed and verified the observations before baseline data was collected. The students were grouped into teams of six to eight and remained in these groups throughout the intervention. Next, the gym teacher instructed the classes on how to give positive, supportive behaviors. Each day teams selected a mystery student. Teams were given points when the mystery students exhibited positive, supportive behaviors. The gym teacher provided intermittent goal reminders. Each team had a target goal for supportive behaviors recorded on a board. If the team met their goal, team members were given a physical reinforcer (a pencil, figurine, or other small item). Throughout the intervention, the subjects were observed. Researchers recorded supportive and non-supportive physical, gestural, and verbal behaviors. Researchers also collected follow-up data with the same subjects. During this time, the gym teacher did not instruct students on supportive behaviors, prompt students, keep students in the same teams, or reinforce teams. The students in the three gym

classes also completed questionnaires and shared their feelings about the group contingency model that was used.

The six subjects showed improvement during the intervention. The collected data included the number of supportive and non-supportive behaviors per minute. All six students showed more supportive behaviors during the intervention period ranging in mean baselines from .01-.21 to follow-up rates of 0-.98. The follow-up data showed that students reacted differently following the observation, showing increased, decreased, or declining supportive behaviors. Non-supportive behavior data was also collected for the same six students. Most of the students had zero non-supportive behaviors during baseline, intervention, and follow-up observations. One student, Terry, had a baseline of .02, an intervention rate of .006, and a follow-up rate of zero non-supportive behaviors. Vidoni and Ward concluded that using dependent group contingency increased supportive behaviors for these students. While not all of the students showed improvements during the follow-up, most did. All the students showed improvements during the intervention.

There were some limitations to this study. As noted on a questionnaire, some students expressed frustration when they did not receive a reinforcement on days they supported their peers. This was part of the dependent group-oriented contingency because the reinforcement was dependent on one student or a small group. The maintenance data raised some concerns about the subjects' ability to maintain the skills learned through group contingency. Natural consequences and a different method of fading might have resulted in better maintenance for the students who did not show supportive behaviors frequently during the follow-up. In this study, no data determined whether the subjects generalized the skills or were more supportive of their

peers in other situations. Group contingency was a helpful option that increased supportive behaviors and decreased non-supportive behaviors in this gym class (Vidoni & Ward, 2006).

In a 2005 study, Hansen and Lignugaris-Kraft examined the use of dependent group contingency with middle school students with emotional behavior disturbance. They noted that there was a great deal of research using group contingency as a way to increase positive behaviors with younger students. This study used group contingency to decrease negative behaviors like throwing and out-of-seat behaviors with a group of middle school students.

This study was conducted with eight boys in a math class within a self-contained special education classroom. The boys were in grades seven, eight, and nine. As part of the intervention, the students were provided with social skills instruction teaching positive statements and negative statements. In math class, two students were randomly and anonymously selected each day. If those two students made four positive statements, the class was given the reinforcer for the day. Reinforcers were selected by having students fill out a preference checklist prior to the intervention. The high-value items included soda and rest time instead of gym class. These reinforcers were put into a grab bag, and students drew from the grab bag on days when the class earned the reinforcer. The teacher also tallied all of the positive statements that students made on a white board and verbally praised students when they made positive statements. During this process, all of the positive and negative verbal statements were recorded. The teacher did not react to negative statements. The group contingency faded through a gradual process. First, the teacher stopped marking statements on the white board. Then, the class could earn rewards for three days during the week, rather than five. Finally, a student rolled a die if the class met the goal, and certain numbers earned the reinforcer. The class did not receive a reinforcer every time that they met the goal. The teacher continued verbal

praise for students who made supportive statements. Data was taken at baseline, during the social skills training, during the group contingency, and as the group contingency faded.

The results showed an increase in positive statements and a decrease in negative statements. Subjects made very few positive statements during baseline, and each student made at least one negative statement. During the social skills training, five out of the eight students increased their number of supportive statements. The average rate of negative statements did not change for the class during the social skills training. The second baseline, taken following the social skills instruction, showed one student with positive statements, and six students engaged in negative statements. All of the students increased their positive statements, and the number of negative statements decreased during the first group contingency. As the group contingency faded, students decreased the rate of positive statements, but the rate of negative statements also decreased. Hansen and Lignugaris-Kraft concluded that their findings showed that group contingency paired with social skills training increased the number of positive statements and decreased the number of negative statements. As the students learned positive statements, they shared that positive statements were more difficult to think of than negative statements. Throughout the time that students were observed, the quality of the positive statements improved, and the statements were more diverse and less formulaic. They went from exclusively using the phrase, “I like your…” to saying things like, “Is that a new jacket? I like it a lot.” As students learned and practiced this skill, it became easier for them to make positive statements. While a group contingency model like this may be difficult to facilitate within the school setting, this study showed that it was effective for a group of middle school students with emotional behavior disturbance.

Noncontingent Reinforcement

In a 2018 study, Noell and Rubow examined the use of noncontingent reinforcement (NCR) to reduce perseverative speech. NCR involves using a reinforcer that is not reliant on the behavior that is being encouraged or discouraged. While NCR is considered an acceptable way to decrease problematic behaviors for individuals with ASD, it was unclear whether this could be used to decrease perseverative speech. The purpose of this study was to determine if noncontingent reinforcement could be used to decrease perseverative speech in a seven-year-old with ASD.

The child in the study, Oliver, had frequent perseverative speech about *Spoungebob Squarepants*, which interfered with his ability to socialize and engage in his education. The functional behavioral assessment (FBA) determined that the purpose of this behavior was to get attention. For ten-minutes during Oliver's daily social skills class, his instructor spoke to Oliver using neutral statements unrelated to *Spongebob Squarepants.* These interactions served as the NCR because Oliver was given attention regularly about something that did not relate to the topic of his perseverative speech. The instructor used a vibrating timer to ensure that the NCR was given on time, and all of the sessions were videotaped. The research used one baseline period followed by an experimental period and repeated. An ABAB pattern was used with four days of control followed by four days with the NCR, then both were repeated for a total of sixteen ten-minute social skills lessons.

Data was taken for engagement and perseverative speech throughout the study. Oliver's perseverative speech occurred on average 9.4 times per ten-minute session. During the first intervention, Oliver's perseverative speech decreased. During the second baseline, Oliver's perseverative speech started out less than the first baseline. In the absence of the NCR, Oliver's perseverative speech increased throughout the second baseline. When the NCR began again,

Oliver's perseverative speech rapidly decreased. The average occurrence of perseverative speech decreased from 9.4 times per ten-minutes session to 2.6 times per ten-minute session. Oliver's engagement was almost the inverse of his perseverative speech. During the baselines, Oliver's engagement was lower, and during the times of intervention, Oliver's engagement was higher. Oliver improved from being engaged 38.8% of the time during a ten-minute session to being engaged 70% of the time during a ten-minute session through the use of NCR. The researchers concluded that this data supports previous research that NCR effectively reduced non-desired behaviors and increased desired behaviors for individuals with ASD. The research showed that perseverative speech had a social function, and NCR reduced the use of perseverative speech. Engagement could be improved through NCR for high-functioning individuals with ASD.

Several limitations were noted in this study including the sample size of one child with ASD, and the data was taken over limited periods of time. While the student may decrease perseverative speech during ten-minute lessons, it was unclear if this would be possible for longer periods of time. Perseverative speech is complicated because there are situations in which discussion of the topic of interest is socially appropriate. Oliver was able to decrease his perseverative speech for short intervals, but this does not mean that he understood when it would be appropriate to discuss *Spoungebob Squarepants*. Overall, NCR effectively reduced perseverative speech for Oliver (Noell & Rubow 2018).

Direct Instruction and Cooperative Learning

Rutherford, Mathur, and Quinn (1998) examined the effectiveness of combining direct instruction and cooperative learning to teach female students with a history of delinquency. The subjects in this study were 14 females ages 12 to 17 in a juvenile corrections facility. The girls

were put into groups of four or five to focus on three target skills: conversational questions, positive comments to/about others, and positive self-references. The students received instruction for each skill which included the rationale for the skill, modeling, and practice. Students were assigned homework and asked to perform the skills they learned in each lesson. Interdependent group contingency reinforced the target skills. If all students exhibited the target skill, the group earned points towards a snack party. Following the social skills instruction, students were brought to a separate room, where they were given questions that they needed to discuss, problem-solve, and answer as a group. Baseline, intervention, and maintenance data was collected.

All three groups showed increased performance of the goal behaviors between the baseline and intervention phases and declined slightly during the follow-up session. There were variations in scores of the three groups for each skill.

Rutherford, Mathur, and Quinn concluded that direct instruction with cooperative learning and group contingency was effective for teaching these three skills. The students performed the skills at a higher rate in follow-up than at baseline. Unlike the 2005 study by Hansen and Lignugaris-Kraft, Rutherford, Mathur, and Quinn did not mention fading the group contingency. The instruction for the skills included the reasoning behind them, and the students were given cue cards to allow for self-prompting. One limitation for this study was that no long-term was collected to determine how the subjects continued to generalize these skills. Overall, the methods used in this study were effective for the group of students over a short period of time.

In a 2008 study, Angell, Bailey, and Larson used direct instruction to increase the pragmatic language skills with a group of high school students with intellectual disabilities.

Students with intellectual disabilities often struggle to build friendships and have reciprocal relationships with others their age. The setting for this study was the lunchroom, and the students were taught skills that they could use to interact socially with their peers. Angell, Bailey, and Larson adapted Light and Binger's 1998 instruction program. The target skills for this study were the use of partner-focused questions, obligatory turn-taking, non-obligatory turn-taking, appropriate eye contact, and appropriate tone of voice. The purpose of this instruction was to allow students with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to build positive relationships and friendships with their peers.

Five high school students between the ages of 15 and 19 with moderate cognitive disabilities were the subjects of this study. All students were identified by their teachers as having difficulties with pragmatic social skills. Oral speech was the primary mode of communication for all of these students. The intervention consisted of six 20-minute group instruction sessions, with two sessions dedicated to each of the target skills. These skills included partner-focused questions, obligatory turn-taking, or responding to direct questions, and non-obligatory turn-taking, or responding to a partner's comment or statement. Appropriate eye contact and tone of voice were identified as secondary target skills. After each of the instruction sessions, subjects participated in individualized role-play activities for 20-25 minutes. Graduate students were partnered with the subjects during the lunch period, and the graduate students gathered data on these skills. The graduate students were given scripted lines to allow for the subjects to use the target skills. The graduate students also were given statements to use for additional prompting if the subjects did not respond correctly. If the subjects required additional prompting, they were given positive verbal reinforcement from the graduate students, but their response was recorded as incorrect. The graduate students used pictures to prompt subjects to

use appropriate eye contact and tone of voice. These pictures were introduced in the instruction and used during roleplaying. Baseline, intervention, and generalization data was taken in the lunchroom setting by the same graduate students throughout the study.

Angell, Bailey, and Larson collected data that shows some improvements in the target skills. There was quite a bit of variation in the data for each individual subject. The data was recorded in percentage of correct responses per day. All three of the graphs of data for each of the target skills shows quite a bit of up and down from one day to the next. There are points in the baseline where the subjects responded correctly 80-100 percent of the time. Overall, the instructional and generalization data points are higher than those within the baseline. The first subject, Bob, increased his mean for using obligatory turns 27%, his mean for using non-obligatory turns 24%, and his mean for using appropriate partner-focused questions 9%. The other four subjects all increased the mean percentage for each of their skills. Almost all of the subjects increased their use of the secondary skills, appropriate eye contact and volume. One subject, however, decreased his use of these skills throughout the intervention. Angell, Bailey, and Larson concluded that these results supported the use of direct instruction to improve pragmatic communication skills for young adults with cognitive disabilities. The instruction model used within this study may be difficult to follow in a school setting, as graduate students were able to work one on one with the subjects using individualized role play. Although the data does show an overall increase in the use of these skills, the data points in the baseline show that the subjects did have some capabilities in these areas. Direct instruction, role play opportunities, and prompting did positively impact the use of pragmatic communication skills for the students in this study.

In a 2016 study, McDaniel and Bruhn evaluated the impact of a social skills intervention curriculum. The curriculum called *Stop and Think* includes teaching, modeling, roleplay, and feedback. McDaniel and Bruhn studied the use of this curriculum as an intervention in a self-contained classroom for students with EBD. The *Stop and Think* curriculum teaches students to stop and think, identify good and bad choices, identify the steps for implementing a good choice, implement steps, and reflect. McDaniel and Bruhn asked whether the *Stop and Think* instruction would decrease negative behaviors, and whether any reductions in negative behaviors could be maintained following the intervention.

This study was done in a self-contained K-12 school for children with challenging behavior. The school used Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The subjects in this study were five elementary aged students from two different classrooms. These students were identified as having social problems that were not diminished by the programs in place, including PBIS. Throughout the study, the negative social behaviors (NSB), which included arguing, teasing, and noncompliance, were measured. Students were observed an average of three times a week in 20 second intervals during 45-minute academic lessons that followed the social skills instruction. The *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (SDQ) was also used to measure the impact of the intervention. The *Stop and Think* lessons were scripted, and teachers delivered 30-minute lessons three days a week and one hour one day a week. The teachers prioritized the *Stop and Think* lessons and ended up delivering five lessons over 12 sessions. The five lessons were on the topics of listening, using nice talk, accepting consequences, ignoring others, and following directions. Students were trained on the five steps of the *Stop and Think* program: 1)stop and think, 2)identify good and bad choices, 3)identify the steps for

implementing a good choice, 4)implement steps, and 5)reflect. These lessons took place over the course of three weeks.

The data showed a decrease in NSB for all five students in the study. Each student decreased their NSB between the baseline and the follow-up. Some students did have slightly higher percentages of NSB between the intervention and the follow-up, but every student had a lower percentage of NSB between the baseline and the follow-up. The SDQ scores for the students showed that each of the five students had fewer total difficulties following the intervention. McDaniel and Bruhn concluded that the short intervention using direct instruction using the *Stop and Think* curriculum did decrease the negative behaviors of the subjects in this study. McDaniel and Bruhn mentioned some limitations to their study. There were only two classes included in the study, and three classrooms would have given more conclusive data. It is also noted that while five students were observed in this study, the instruction was delivered to the entire class. It would have been helpful to have data on the other students in the classes. It would have been particularly useful to evaluate the impact that this program had on students with fewer NSB prior to the intervention. McDaniel and Bruhn also did not collect generalization data, and the data was all collected in the same setting. While additional data would have been useful, the data that was collected showed a clear improvement for the five subjects in this study. This method of direct instruction was effective for these students with EBD (McDaniel & Bruhn 2016).

Cumming et al. evaluated the use of a combination of teacher led instruction with student-generated DVDs in their 2009 study. Students with emotional disabilities often need social skills instruction to be successful in their classes, interacting with their peers, and eventually in finding employment. Cumming et al. noted that the existing research did not

consistently show generalization and maintenance when using social skills instruction with students with emotional disabilities. Multimedia education and video self-modeling were two strategies used to increase student engagement in social skills lessons. Cumming et al. sought to determine whether combining traditional instruction with student-created multimedia modules would increase students' knowledge of social skills and maintenance of the social skills learned.

For this study, 25 middle school students with emotional disabilities from three different middle schools within the same district participated as subjects. Data was collected over the course of 12 weeks. The instructors in the three classrooms delivered five 50-minute social skills training sessions per week. The instruction was based on a program called Skillstreaming the Adolescent, a program that the teachers had not used previously. This program focused on a different skill each week. During the first four weeks, the three teachers used traditional instruction to teach listening, following instructions, dealing with someone else's anger, and asking permission. Lessons were followed by discussion, modeling, and role play activities. Students had homework each night that was related to the social skills lessons. The four weeks of traditional instruction were followed by two weeks of maintenance. During these weeks, students were trained on using video cameras and the software that they used to create videos. This was followed by a four-week intervention period using both traditional instruction and video modeling. Direct instruction was used to teach how to use self-control, keeping out of fights, dealing with group pressure and staying on task. After students received instruction, they used cameras and the Imagemaker software to create videos reflecting what they had learned. A two-week maintenance period followed this intervention. The social skills were measured before, during, and after the interventions using parent, teacher and student Skillstreaming

Checklists. This allowed researchers to determine the extent to which the students understood, generalized, and maintained the skills.

The data collected indicated improvement in social skills for the student with emotional disabilities in this study. The Skillstreaming Checklists completed by the teachers indicated that the teachers felt the students maintained their skills better following the combined (direct instruction and video modeling) intervention. The Skillstreaming Checklist completed by the students and their parents did not indicate either group believed there was a difference in the use of combined and traditional instruction. Pre-test and post-test data showed that both the traditional instruction and the combined instruction increased student knowledge of social skills, but neither method had more of an impact than the other. The teachers preferred the combined intervention and they indicated this in their responses to the Skillstreaming Checklist. This may have been because the teachers better understood the student performance, or it was possibly due to instructor bias. While students responded that the two programs had equal impact, observers noted greater enthusiasm from students during the combined intervention. Researchers mentioned that the students behaved responsibly with the equipment, which may have impacted the self-perceptions of students with EBD.

Cumming et al. concluded that the results supported social skills instruction for students with emotional disabilities. They also felt that their results supported combined programs of direct instruction and student-generated DVDs for student motivation. One study limitation was that this program was used in self-contained classrooms, as students did not generalize these skills in inclusive settings. Also, the results were measured using subjective questionnaires. The variation in the responses between the teachers, parents, and students shows different perceptions

of the stakeholders. Everyone, however, agreed that the students showed social skills improvement throughout the 12 weeks of study.

Gresham, Van, and Cook (2006) observed the impact of high intensity social skills instruction that included differential reinforcement of other behavior (DRO) with a homogenous group of students with similar needs considered to be at risk for EBD. DRO involves reinforcing behavior during times when the behavior does not occur. DRO was combined with traditional social skills instruction in this study. Gresham, Van, and Cook used an intensive social skills program where students received 60 hours of social skills instruction over 20 weeks. They sought to determine the impact of intensive small group instruction.

Four students, two boys and two girls, all ages six or seven participated in this study. These students were identified as students with social skills issues that put them at risk for emotional behavioral disorders. Students were carefully selected based on their similar struggles with behaviors. General education instructors nominated students who showed social skills difficulty based on specific criteria. Teachers completed standardized measures of social skills and problem behaviors. The Social Skills Rating System and a total of 23 direct observations per student measured student social skills and progress. Disruptive behaviors, alone time during recess, and negative social interactions were measured through observation. All of the small group instruction was filmed, and the films were studied to ensure correct implementation of the plan. The students received 60 hours of social skills instruction using methods within the Social Skills Intervention Guide over a period of 20 weeks. The social skills instruction involved direct instruction, rehearsal, feedback/reinforcement, and reductive procedures. In addition to small group social skills instruction, parents and teachers were trained in Differential Reinforcement of

Other Behavior (DRO). The treatment was carefully administered by one of the authors, so there was a great deal of treatment fidelity.

The program results showed a positive impact for the four students. This study also used Percent Nonoverlapping Data Points (PND) to show growth. All four students showed improvement in the number of total disruptive behaviors. The students had fewer disruptive behaviors than their baseline scores. There were mixed results in how much time students spent alone during recess. Most, but not all, of the students decreased their alone time during recess. While three students spent less time alone, one student did not significantly decrease the amount of time she spent alone. Overall, the students also decreased their negative social interactions. One study limitation was that it did not compare a high and an average intensity intervention. It would have been helpful to compare the high intensity intervention of 60 hours over 20 weeks with a program that involved meeting with students for an hour per week. The comparison within one study would show more clearly if there was a substantial benefit to dedicating more of the school day to social skills instruction. The authors expressed that the results supported more time dedicated to social skills instruction to improve behavior. The authors concluded that, while further research was necessary, increased amount of time spent in social skills instruction positively impacted students' social skills.

In 2002 Lo, Loe, and Cartledge determined the impact of combining small group social skills instruction with classroom social skills instruction. The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether combined instructional methods improved the social skills for children identified at risk for EBD. Five third and fourth grade students in general education classes with behavioral concerns were chosen for the study based on teacher ratings and pre-baseline observations. Five students were also selected as socially competent controls to participate in the

small group sessions based on teacher ratings and observations. One classmate identified as having EBD was included in each of the three small groups, but these students were not the subjects of the study. The social skills instruction was based on a curriculum called *Working Together: Building Children's Social Skills Through Folk Literature*. This instruction included an introduction to a skill using folk literature, discussion, modeling, activities, feedback, homework, review and reinforcement. Classroom teachers reinforced the lessons, which students learned in the small group setting. Teachers also administered classroom instruction based on the social skills learned in the small groups three times a week for 25-30 minutes. Teachers gave students paper flags for participation and for prosocial behavior and took away paper flags for antisocial behavior. Students could trade paper flags for tangible rewards like pencils and candy. Students were observed in their classrooms and in the lunchroom, and antisocial behaviors were recorded.

Antisocial behavior decreased overall with some fluctuation noted in the antisocial behavior. Four out of the five subjects decreased antisocial behaviors when they began participating in small group social skills lessons, and the fifth student decreased her antisocial behaviors when the classroom component was added to the social skills instruction. The mean number of antisocial behaviors decreased for each subject in both settings between the baseline and the end of the data collection. Lo, Loe, and Cartledge concluded that social skills instruction was helpful for these students who were determined to be at risk for EBD. They believed that the instruction in the classroom helped students generalize and maintain the social skills. Limitations to this study included variations within the data points and the use of three different classroom teachers. The observers included behaviors that were not part of the direct instruction

of the recorded antisocial behaviors. Overall, this intervention had a positive impact and decreased the antisocial behaviors.

Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment

Lopata et al. (2006) wanted to determine the impact of a summer program that included social skills instruction and cognitive behavioral components. Lopata et al. studied the specific social skills instruction and social skills instruction paired with behavioral treatment. They hypothesized that both programs would improve social skills and reduce atypical behaviors in their subjects with Asperger's Syndrome. This study was conducted during a summer program over two summers with 21 children between the ages of six and 13. Researchers used the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) to evaluate the subjects at the beginning and ending of the six week program each summer. During the first summer (2003), the four subjects participated in a program that included social skills instruction paired with behavioral treatment. During the second summer (2004), the seventeen subjects were divided into two groups where one group received social skills instruction and the other group received both social skills instruction and behavioral treatment. Students attended the program for six hours per day five days a week for the six weeks. Lessons included direct instruction, modeling, and role play. Therapeutic activities including team games were incorporated into the daily program schedule. Group contingency and a point system were used with the group that received social skills instruction and behavior therapy. The groups earned edible reinforcers daily and a field trip at the end of the week. The social skills instruction only group was given positive feedback throughout the day and edible reinforcers regardless of their behavior and also participated in the weekly field trip.

The BASC results in the areas of social skills, atypicality, and adaptability were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the two different programs used in this study. The parent and teacher BASC forms were used. The parent ratings showed an increase in social skills and atypicality and a decrease in atypicality. These results matched what the researchers hypothesized. There was variation in the results from the teacher questionnaires. According to the teacher results, social skills improved and there was not a substantial change in adaptability. Atypicality, however, increased, which was the opposite of what Lopata et al. hypothesized. There was a significant increase in social skills between the baseline and the post intervention data. Lopata et al. also mentioned anecdotal changes noted by parents. Children who were not invited to social events prior to the intervention were invited to birthday parties and other activities with their peers following the intervention. While Lopata et al. stated the need for future research in this area, they believed their results from this study supported the use of cognitive social skills instruction with and without the behavioral therapy components. The discrepancies between the teacher and parent forms was a limitation of this study. The initial teacher questionnaires were completed eight days into the program, and it is possible that the teachers understood the atypicality of the students better after working with them for six weeks. Other limitations to this study included the sample size and the lack of a control for either treatment (Lopata et al. 2006).

Collet-Klingenberg and Chadsey-Rusch studied a cognitive-process approach to teaching social skills. According to Collet-Klingenberg and Chadsey-Rusch, traditional social skills instruction involves focusing on a specific behavior, explaining the importance of the behavior, giving examples of the behavior, and giving students feedback on their use of the behavior. The cognitive-approach involves helping students to create social goals, decode social cues, make

decisions based on their social goals, and evaluate the choices they made and their impact. Collet-Klingenberg and Chadsey-Rusch wanted to determine whether students with cognitive disability would generalize social skills using a cognitive-process approach to teaching social skills.

Three young women ages 19-21 with a diagnosis of a cognitive delay participated in this study. All three women worked as part of their transition program, and all had a history of difficulty receiving criticism both at school and at work. The social skill goal for the program was handling criticism appropriately. Tape recorders captured interactions both at school and at work in 30-minute intervals each day during pre-baseline, baseline, and intervention. During the taping, any responses to criticism were recorded as either appropriate or inappropriate. The vocational trainer was enlisted to provide three accurate criticisms during the 30-minute taping period three times a week. Appropriate responses included acknowledging the criticism, taking responsibility, and attempting to fix the problem. Inappropriate responses included a lack of response, blaming others, and reacting emotionally. Students were also shown pictures and scenarios and asked how they would respond during baseline and throughout the study. Social skills instruction involved teaching students how to identify what was happening, make a decision on what to do, perform the action, and evaluate the situation. The study called these skills social decoding, social decision, social performance, and social evaluation. Subjects learned these skills through three 20-30 minute training sessions per week. The instructor explained the purpose of the skill and modeled all four steps using a picture and a scenario. The subject used the same picture and scenario to role-play how to respond to criticism. The scenarios were developed based on criticism that the students would likely receive in a work

setting. One student received intensive skills training due to a lack of progress. This intensive training included more instruction and modeling during the social decoding step.

Data was collected from the training sessions and video recordings of school and work. All three subjects began with higher levels in the areas of decoding and evaluating. Once the instruction began, all four skills (decoding, deciding, performing, and evaluating) increased. One student, Diane, increased in these skills at a much slower rate. After the intensive training began, Diane's average for each of the skills increased, but she did not increase her performance of these skills to the same extent as the other subjects. When using untrained scenarios, two students increased to 100% throughout the training, but Diane remained at 0%. Generalization was not noted in the tapes. Although the vocational trainers were asked to provide real criticism during the taping, they did not do this often, so the subjects did not have many opportunities to respond to criticism when recorded. There was some anecdotal data to suggest improvements in school and work settings, but it was not objective or measurable in this study. Collet-Klingenberg and Chadsey-Rusch concluded that the cognitive-process approach was effective for two out of three of the subjects. They believed that the data supported the use of this type of social skills instruction with students diagnosed with a cognitive delay. The two limitations of this study were the lack of generalization data and one somewhat unresponsive subject. While two students responded correctly to untrained situations in the classroom, there was no real evidence to show they responded this way at work. The student who did not respond, Diane, had the lowest level of interest in her job and had a slightly lower IQ than the other subjects. Collet-Klingenberg and Chadsey-Rusch noted that she may not have been motivated to make changes that would help her at work due to her disinterest in her job. The process and the vocabulary presented may have been too complicated for Diane to understand. Collet-Klingenberg and

Chadsey-Rusch suggested that alternative uses of vocabulary and pictures may make this process easier to comprehend for students like Diane. Overall, teaching the thought process behind making social decisions empowered these students to gain a better understanding of social situations.

Van Loan et al. (2019) evaluated the impact of cognitive problem-solving on middle school students with an educational label of Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD). According to Van Loan et al., individuals with a diagnosis of EBD often have difficulty understanding and adapting to social situations. This can be particularly problematic for students in self-contained settings, with fewer opportunities to build relationships with their peers. Curriculum that teaches students how to think through a variety of interactions can have a positive impact on the social abilities of students with EBD. Van Loan et al. used a social problem-solving curriculum called *Take CHARGE!* The purposes of this study were to measure whether this intervention would improve student knowledge of social problem skills and to measure whether it improved problem-solving skills.

The participants in this study included 92 middle school students with a diagnosis of EBD within 11 self-contained classrooms over the course of 10 weeks. Six classrooms were selected as control classrooms, and those classrooms maintained the same instruction throughout the study. Five classrooms were part of the intervention group. During the intervention, core lessons with a combination of presentation of new material and review were delivered three times a week for seven weeks. Following the core lessons, booster lessons were used twice a week for three weeks. The *Knowledge Questionnaire* (KQ) was used as a pre- and post-measure. This test contained social problem-solving questions based on the lessons within the *Take*

CHARGE! curriculum. The *Social Problem-Solving Inventory-Revised* (RPS) was also used to measure students' problem-solving behavior before and after the intervention.

The control group delayed using the *Take CHARGE!* curriculum until the completion of this study, and they scored similarly to the intervention group on the pre-measures. Significant differences were noted between the scores on the post-measures of the control group and the scores of the intervention group. The intervention group improved 67% while the control group showed a 10% change on the KQ measure. Likewise, the intervention group outperformed the control group on the RPS with a 28% improvement. There was a statistically significant difference in the post-test scores for the intervention groups in both measures of growth. The students with EBD effectively increased their knowledge of social situations and their self-reported behavior scores. Van Loan et al. concluded that intervention was effective, and the students not only gained knowledge, but they also may have generalized the newly learned behaviors. One limitation was that the behavior data of the subjects in this study was collected through self-reports. It is possible that the intervention group perceived an improvement in their behavior that was greater than the improvement that actually happened. This study highlighted the impact of a program with a group of students that can be resistant to social skills instruction. Social skills instruction using cognitive problem-solving can impact the knowledge and behavior of students with EBD (Van Loan et al. 2019).

Self-Monitoring

Peterson et al. (2006) analyzed the use of self-management with students who were considered to be at-risk. Self-management was used in an attempt to improve the generalization of classroom social skills lessons. Secondary students frequently learn social skills in one setting, but they need to use these skills in several settings with a variety of teachers. Self-

management can promote generalization because the students do not require specific instruction in each setting. Students can claim ownership of their behavior when they use self-management skills. Peterson et al. conducted this study to determine whether students could generalize five specific social skills learned in a small group setting to as many as six other settings.

Five seventh and eighth grade students who displayed some difficulties in school including poor academics, antisocial behavior, and a history of problem behaviors were subjects in this study. The school used a social skills program called Prevention Plus. This curriculum included modeling, role-play, and performance feedback. This program was in place prior to the study, and it was used during the study to teach the target behaviors. The participants attended general education classes and also received Prevention Plus instruction one period per week. Students were trained to complete self-management forms in each class rating themselves on how well they met the teachers' expectations. The teachers also completed the forms, and students earned points for matches and near matches between the two reports. Students could spend these points on Fridays on items like snacks, school supplies, and game time. The six target behaviors were on- and off-task behavior, following instructions, accepting "No" for an answer, accepting teacher feedback, and appropriately getting teacher attention. The behaviors were measured through observations in general education classrooms. Baseline and intervention data was collected on the behaviors in a variety of classes during at least two 40-minute class periods per week.

Baseline data was collected before self-management was in place. There was a change in the social skills and off-task behaviors for all of the five participants once they began using self-management. Graphs for each subject show social skills and off-task behavior in six different classes. There is some variation, but the graphs show a wide range in behaviors during the

baseline, an increase in social skills during the intervention, and a decrease in off-task behaviors during the intervention. Pre- and post-intervention teacher ratings data was included for four out of the five subjects. This data showed teacher perceptions of behavior and social skills within the classroom. For three out of the four students, the mean score on these questionnaires increased. Peterson et al. believe that the use of self-monitoring impacted the generalization of social skills within this study. Prior to the use of self-monitoring, some students showed moderate improvement in certain classes. After students began self-monitoring, all five students showed dramatic improvement in all of their classes. One study limitation was that the students did not all get to use self-monitoring for every class. Self-monitoring began in one class and was extended to other classes one at a time. The end of the school year prevented students from using this in all classes. Another limitation was the lack of maintenance data due to the inability to fade the point system and intervention components. The students in this study showed significant behavioral changes when they were used self-monitoring, so this was an effective intervention (Peterson et al.2006).

Peer Instruction

Prater et al. (1999) examined the use of peers teaching social skills with students diagnosed with a learning disability. The student teachers had recently mastered the social skills they taught. Prater et al. wanted to see how long it would take for each group to acquire the skills and how well students maintained the skills. The targeted skills included giving positive feedback, contributing to discussions, and accepting negative feedback.

The participants were 17 seventh grade students with a diagnosis of a specific learning disability. These students were placed into two classes prior to the study. Class one included 12 students who received teacher-directed instruction. Class two consisted of ten students, five of

whom were also in class one. The five students enrolled in both class one and class two were the peer instructors who taught the other five students in class two. The two classes were gauged by teachers to be about equal for levels of social skills and academic ability prior to the study. The students were instructed in the verbal and nonverbal behaviors involved in each of the three skills. The five students who became instructors were taught an additional skill, teaching Instruction continued until each member of the group achieved 100% accuracy. The students were all assessed on each skill with a two-point scale both during baseline and post-intervention. Teachers were also polled seven weeks following the completion of the intervention to find out if they saw social skills improvements for the students involved in this intervention.

Both groups showed improvement for each of the six skills. Group one required one more day to reach 100% accuracy for both the skills of giving positive feedback and contributing to discussion and required two additional days to master accepting negative feedback. Eighty three percent of teacher responses indicated an improvement in social skills. The students who were taught by the teacher showed a 55% improvement, and the students who were peer-taught demonstrated 66% improvement. Prater et al. concluded, based on these results, that adolescents with a diagnosis of learning disabilities can effectively be trained to teach their peers social skills. Both the students who were teaching and the students who were learning grew during peer instruction, but the students who instructed gained the most. The students in group two learned social skills from their peers, and it took less time for them to master the skills. One limitation to this study was that post instruction data indicated that the students in group two had a declining trend in mastery of the skills. This could indicate the need to reteach or provide additional sessions. Also, the 17 students were not assessed for each of the three skills. A random sample was selected for assessment when gathering post-instruction data. Despite these

limitations, this study that showed peer instruction is an effective approach for teaching social skills to students with learning disabilities (Prater et al. 1999).

CHAPTER III: APPLICATION

Lunch Bunch, a Social Skills Group

Students attend this one day per week, and are assigned days based on individual social needs. Students who have similar needs are grouped together. Lunch Bunch students are in 5th-8th grade. Each year all of the 5th graders are new to Lunch Bunch, and there are always new students to the school or to Lunch Bunch as well. These plans include some of the teaching strategies from the articles reviewed.

2020-2021 School Year

Week #	Social Skills Lesson	Article(s)
1	No Lunch Bunch- Teacher creates homogeneous groups based on observations and knowledge of the students.	
2	No School on Monday No Lunch Bunch- Teacher creates homogeneous groups based on observations and knowledge of the students.	
3	First week of Lunch Bunch. Complete introductions and discuss the purpose of Lunch Bunch.	
4	Discuss and set social goals for the school year. Students will fill out a questionnaire that identifies areas of need. Students reflect and decide how they would like to improve.	Lopata et al., 2006
5	Discuss being part of a group. Talk about ways to put our body and our brains in the group. Practice using role play. Teacher asks students to observe groups and student behaviors.	Lopata et al., 2006
6	Begin discussing expected and unexpected behaviors. Expected behaviors are how students are expected to act in a group. Discuss the classroom and expected behaviors for the classroom. Students will share their observations from the previous week.	Lopata et al., 2006
7	No School on Thursday and Friday Continue discussing expected behaviors. Students will self-monitor expected behaviors for one day by marking on a card for a variety of activities. Students will observe the way their friends behave in non-structured times, like lunch and recess.	Lopata et al., 2006
8	No School Monday Discuss student-peer observations and how interactions. Are there different expected behaviors within groups of friends? What behaviors are expected within your group of friends?	Lopata et al., 2006

9	Discus hidden rules. Define hidden rules, and talk about how they are different in different situations. Students will look for hidden rules in two settings.	Lopata et al., 2006
10	No School Monday and Tuesday Discuss hidden rules that the students noticed. Did others follow the hidden rules?	Lopata et al., 2006
11	We will discuss problem size. Students will rate problems on a scale of 1-10. Lower level problems impact us for a shorter period of time, and larger problems impact us for a longer period of time. Whenever students have a problem, the teacher will ask them to identify the problem size.	Lopata et al., 2006
12	Look at the friend pyramid. This shows a progression that friendships usually take. Discuss friends that students have and where they are on the friend pyramid. Discuss how to move people up their friend pyramid.	Lopata et al., 2006
13	No School Thursday and Friday-Thanksgiving Discuss and practice how we make small talk with family members that we do not see often.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
14	During the month of December, students are put into teams with captains for floor hockey during gym. Discuss how to treat members of a team. Discuss the role of a team captain. Practice taking constructive criticism from teammates and expressing to others when they should do something differently.	Rutherford, Mathur, & Quinn, 1998
15	Check in about floor hockey by asking students how they are feeling about their teams. Discuss giving and accepting both positive and negative feedback. Students will be given a variety of prompts to practice both giving and accepting feedback.	Rutherford, Mathur, & Quinn, 1998
16	Watch and discuss clips from the movie "Elf." Look at the hidden rules and ways that Buddy is breaking these hidden rules.	
17	No School Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday Discuss gratitude and how we show appreciation for things we are given, even if they are not things that we wanted.	Rutherford, Mathur, & Quinn, 1998
18	No School- Winter Break	
19	Review the terms discussed and check in on the social goals identified by students at the beginning of the year. Terms discussed: body and brain in the group, expected/unexpected behaviors, hidden rules, problem size, friend pyramid	

20	Discuss personal hygiene and appearance. Talk about ways that students and staff make other people comfortable by practicing good personal hygiene. Go over a checklist with relevant self care suggestions. *For groups that do not have any struggle with hygiene, students will look at their friend pyramids and discuss if they have made any changes.	Rutherford, Mathur, & Quinn, 1998
21	No School Monday and Tuesday Discuss stress and anxiety and ways that students can manage these things. The teacher will ask students to identify problem size for any problems that they are dealing with.	
22	Begin Social Behavior Mapping. This includes mapping both expected and unexpected behaviors to determine how others will feel, how others will act, and how we will feel as a result. This week the groups will map expected behaviors within the classroom.	Lopata et al., 2006
23	Continue Social Behavior Mapping by mapping unexpected behaviors in the classroom.	Lopata et al., 2006
24	Discuss social fake. This involves sometimes masking our real feelings in order to have an expected reaction in a situation. Discuss what it is, why people do it, and how it is different from lying.	Lopata et al., 2006
25	No School Monday and Tuesday Show video clips of people using and not using social fake effectively. These clips come from popular sitcoms (like “Big Bang Theory) or movies.	Lopata et al., 2006
26	Watch a video clip of someone who does not use social fake. Create a Social Behavior Map of the unexpected and the expected behaviors.	Lopata et al., 2006
27	Give students a range of situations in which social fake would be appropriate. The students will practice using social fake without directly lying. The teacher will ask students to try to notice one time when they use social fake in the next week.	Lopata et al., 2006
28	Students report how they used social fake. Discuss progress with giving and receiving criticism. Discuss when criticism is constructive and when it is unnecessary.	Lopata et al., 2006
29	Talk about internet safety, the rules for online friendships, and how friendships work online. Ask students about their social	Francis, McMullen,

	media accounts and ways they communicate with others using text and/or social media. Read a Social Story about boundaries online.	Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013
30	No School Friday Discuss how to be flexible when things do not go as we expect them to or when people do not respond the way we expect them to respond.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
31	No School- Spring Break	
32	Talk about simple breathing exercises and strategies we can use to calm down if we are feeling stressed. MCA and MTAS testing can be stressful for students. It is important for them to understand that no one knows all the answers, and their feelings are more important than the testing.	
33	Talk about how to tell if someone else is upset. Look at facial expressions and body positioning on pictures. Also discuss ways to show empathy and understanding when someone is upset.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
34	Discuss things that others do to make us feel comfortable and things that we do to make others feel comfortable. Discuss particular things that each group is working on. Some examples include chewing before speaking, working with people we don't like, and expressing frustration in expected ways.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
35	Discuss working with others in a group. What is our role when we are part of a group? How do we handle opinions of others that we disagree with? Do a Social Behavior Map for expected and unexpected behaviors when we are part of a group.	Lopata et al., 2006
36	Talk about how students handle their friends having other friends. What do they do when friends are friends with people they do not know? How do they handle friends having friends that they do not like?	Rutherford, Mathur, & Quinn, 1998
37	Check in and discuss problem size further. Discuss times that we have reacted in a big way to a small problem. Watch clips of people having bigger reactions to small problems. Discuss what makes someone have a big reaction to a small problem.	
38	Review the friend pyramid and where people are on the friend pyramid. Discuss which students have successfully moved up the friend pyramids, and how they were able to do that. Have they been using social fake with friends? Talk about methods that they could use for the remainder of the year and over the summer to	

	continue to grow these friendships.	
39	Students will evaluate their progress with social goals and discuss ways to have contact with school friends over the summer. Students can practice asking friends for contact information and discuss ideas for getting together.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
40	No School Monday and Friday Create a summer bucket list of social activities and events that they would like to participate in.	

2021-2022 School Year

Week #	**Social Skills Lesson**	**Article(s)**
1	No Lunch Bunch- Teacher creates homogeneous groups based on observations and knowledge of the students.	
2	No Lunch Bunch- Teacher creates homogeneous groups based on observations and knowledge of the students.	
3	First week of Lunch Bunch for the new school year. Introductions and discussion of the purpose of Lunch Bunch. Play two truths and a lie about what we did over the summer.	
4	Discuss social goals. Why do we have them? Can we have different social goals in different situations? Students write social goals for the school year.	
5	Returning Lunch Bunch students will explain what expected and unexpected behaviors are to the students who are new to Lunch Bunch. Returning students will make lists of expected and unexpected classroom behaviors on the whiteboard.	Lopata et al., 2006
6	Look at different pictures of groups and discuss which groups are sharing space effectively and which group members have their body in the group. Teacher asks students to notice one group throughout the week. Students will identify how members of that group showed they were part of the group.	Lopata et al., 2006
7	Review hidden rules. Teacher asks returning students to define what hidden rules are and think of some examples of hidden rules. Students look for examples of hidden rules and evaluate whether they followed these rules.	Lopata et al., 2006
8	Follow up on students' observations of hidden rules. Play a game where one person leaves the room, and the rest decide on a new	Lopata et al., 2006

	"hidden rule," like saying "excuse me" after we take a bite. The student who left needs to figure out the new rule based on the behaviors of others in the group.	
9	Discuss friendship. Students list their friends or people they would like to be friends with. Students make friendship goals, like doing something outside of school with a friend or increasing the number of classmates that they are friends with. Students leave with one action item, like sit near a friend in lunch or say something nice to a friend.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
10	Review smart guesses and how we make smart guesses about social situations. Look at some pictures and make smart guesses about what is happening.	Lopata et al., 2006
11	Talk about how other people make smart guesses about us. If we behave in an unexpected way, they may make a smart guess that is incorrect. For example, if we do not respond when someone speaks to us, they make a smart guess that we do not want to interact with them.	Lopata et al., 2006
12	Analyze the use of non-verbals. Discuss the different types of nonverbal communication and look at pictures of facial expression. Students identify the emotion that people in pictures are experiencing.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
13	Discuss table manners. Depending on the group, discuss using utensils, waiting to speak until after we are done chewing, and small talk conversations. No School Thursday and Friday-Thanksgiving	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
14	Discuss communication while working on a team. Talk about accepting feedback from others, giving feedback, and giving encouragement. Practice this using a game called Cirplexed that requires groups to work together. Teacher creates Social Stories for a few students. Students rate themselves during gym class, as they are in teams for floor hockey.	Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013
15	Review the self-ratings and how students did with team work throughout the week. Continue playing Cirplexed and emphasize giving and receiving feedback as we play.	Rutherford, Mathur, & Quinn, 1998
16	Review the concept of social fake. Returning students will explain what social fake is. Discuss how to use social fake if we are given a gift that we do not like.	Lopata et al., 2006
17	No School- Winter break	

18	No School- Winter Break	
19	Review day. Check in on how students are doing with their social goals and review the concepts we've covered throughout the school year.	
20	Discuss the difference between literal and figurative. Discuss the ways and reasons people do not say what they mean.	
21	Discuss Steven Covey's concept of Circle of Influence when considering problems. The idea behind this concept is that we should find the things that we have control over in any problem and focus on those.	
22	Discuss internet safety and connecting with others online. Some groups share more than they should online, and some groups should become more comfortable with emailing.	Rutherford, Mathur, & Quinn, 1998
23	Practice Social Behavior Mapping by analyzing expected behaviors in the classroom, how they impact the feelings of others, how others act, and how we feel as a result.	Lopata et al., 2006
24	Do Social Behavior Mapping with unexpected behaviors in the classroom. Talk through the boomerang effect of both expected and unexpected behaviors.	Lopata et al., 2006
25	Continue Social Behavior Mapping by analyzing expected and unexpected behaviors online.	Lopata et al., 2006
26	Ask students to rate themselves on their behaviors both in the classroom and online based on the discussions of the previous three weeks. Discuss how others have reacted to their behaviors and how that made them feel.	Vidoni and Ward, 2006
27	Discuss the importance of apologizing. Read a Social Story about a character that apologizes.	Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013
28	Review a list of scenarios, and decide if the person should apologize or not. Students role play what should be said in the apologies for the situations that they determined needed an apology.	Rutherford, Mathur, & Quinn, 1998
29	Define and discuss compromise. Practice coming up with a compromise for a variety of topics.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008

30	Discuss group work and compromises that are required when working with groups. Read a Social Story about compromising.	Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013
31	No School- Spring Break	
32	Discuss problem size and practice methods of calming down during stressful situations.	
33	Discuss the initiation of conversations. What are expected situations and topics for the initiation of conversations? Role play ways to initiate a conversation about a topic of interest.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
34	Discuss topics of conversation that are expected and unexpected in a variety of situations. Read a Social Story about selecting an expected topic for a conversation.	Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013
35	Discuss shared experiences and thoughts and feelings about shared experiences. Practice asking questions about shared experiences.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
36	Discuss unshared experiences. Discuss the background information that we share if we are speaking about an unshared experience.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
37	Review terms and concepts discussed throughout the school year.	
38	Reflect on the social goals students set at the beginning of the school year.	
39	Students create social bucket lists for the summer. These will include different activities with friends and family. Students practice asking for contact information from classmates.	
40	Review the rules of gameplay, including taking turns, winning, and losing. Play a game to celebrate the last week of school.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008

2022-2023 School Year

Week #	**Social Skills Lesson**	**Article(s)**
1	No Lunch Bunch- Teacher creates homogeneous groups based on observations and knowledge of the students.	

2	No Lunch Bunch- Teacher creates homogeneous groups based on observations and knowledge of the students.	
3	First week of Lunch Bunch for the new school year. Facilitate introductions and discuss the purpose of Lunch Bunch. Have students act out something they did over the summer in a quick game of charades.	
4	Discuss the social goals that we might have in a variety of situations. Students write social goals for the school year.	
5	Discuss why it is important to ask teachers questions and the different ways students can ask questions. Teacher shares a Social Story about a student who asks a question of the teacher.	Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013
6	Returning students can define expected and unexpected behaviors for their classmates. Reflect on expected and unexpected behaviors by listing the expected behaviors and unexpected behaviors in the classroom and in the hallway.	Lopata et al., 2006
7	Watch a Mr. Bean clip and discuss hidden rules. The students who remember what hidden rules are can define them, and we can use examples from Mr. Bean to discuss this concept.	Lopata et al., 2006
8	No School Monday Discuss hidden rules in online communication. What are the hidden rules when communicating with peers? What are the hidden rules when communicating with teachers?	Lopata et al., 2006
9	Discuss friendships and the progression using the friend pyramid. Students list behaviors that will allow friendships to deepen and friends to move up the levels on the friend pyramid.	Lopata et al., 2006
10	No School Monday and Tuesday Discuss the role of the individual as part of a group. How do we show that we are part of a group?	Lopata et al., 2006
11	Read a Social Story about participating in conversations about topics that are not of interest. Practice participating in a conversation about a topic to show that we are part of a group.	Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013
12	Practice identifying nonverbal forms of communication. Students take turns showing that they are interested and disinterested in a topic being discussed.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008

13	Read a Social Story about good manners during family gatherings. Students take home a self-rating system to fill out about their social skills over the break. No School Thursday and Friday-Thanksgiving	Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines, 2013
14	Discuss working together in teams. Practice using a game where classmates must describe to one student how to draw the image. The student drawing cannot see the image. Students must direct the artist in a helpful, encouraging way. Students take home a self-evaluation form to evaluate their behavior on a team in gym class.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
15	Check in with students about teamwork and how they are doing in gym class.	Vidoni and Ward, 2006
16	Watch clips from the film "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas" and discuss the importance of friendships and relationships.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
17	No School- Winter Break	
18	No School- Winter Break	
19	Review the terms discussed up to this point in the school year. Students share about their winter break.	
20	Review problem size. Returning students can explain problem size to new students.	
21	No School Monday and Tuesday Go over a variety of situations to identify problem size for each. Discuss and model a proportionate reaction to each of the problems.	
22	Discuss Steven Covey's concept of Circle of Influence. Identify problems that fall within the Circle of Influence and how we should focus on things that we can control.	
23	Discuss how people make guesses in social situations. Students practice making smart guesses using scenarios.	Lopata et al., 2006
24	Review how behavior impacts the way others feel. Discuss unexpected and expected behaviors, the way they make others feel, and the way they make us feel.	Lopata et al., 2006
25	Begin Social Behavior Mapping by analyzing the impact of expected behaviors in the hallway.	Lopata et al., 2006

26	Continue Social Behavior Mapping by analyzing unexpected behaviors in the hallway.	Lopata et al., 2006
27	Create a Social Behavior Map for expected and unexpected behaviors with friends.	Lopata et al., 2006
28	Discuss ways that people communicate what they are feeling. Discuss and practice the use of nonverbal communication.	Lopata et al., 2006
29	Practice making smart guesses using nonverbal communication. Role play using nonverbal communication to show different feelings.	Lopata et al., 2006
30	Returning students define social fake. Students role play using social fake.	Lopata et al., 2006
31	No School- Spring Break	
32	Create Social Behavior Maps for a situation where someone does and does not use social fake.	Lopata et al., 2006
33	Review problem size and circle of influence. Practice coping strategies for managing stress.	
34	Discuss shared and unshared experiences and how they impact the discussions we have.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
35	Teacher discusses things that we share and do not share with others. Students categorize examples in with three labels: Share with anyone, share with only close friends/family, keep to myself.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
36	Discuss what things we should share or not share online. Look at examples of things people have shared online, and discuss whether the person was oversharing online.	Angell, Bailey, and Larson, 2008
37	Discuss inside thoughts and things that we should and should not say in response to other people. Students sort thoughts in piles of things they should not say, things they can say to certain people, and things they should say.	Lopata et al., 2006
38	Review the terms and concepts discussed throughout the school year.	
39	Create a summer to do list and discuss ways of connecting with friends over the summer.	
40	No School Monday and Friday	

	Discuss norms for playing games like losing, winning, and taking turns. Play a game to celebrate the last week of school.	

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Social skills instruction is included as an area of need on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for many of the students that I teach. While these students have varying disabilities and needs, all should be taught social skills in the most effective way possible. Since taking on the Lunch Bunch group in the middle school where I teach, I have become the staff member who others consult when helping students learn social skills. I have always been motivated to have the very necessary but sometimes uncomfortable conversations with the students who I teach about their social skills. Teaching social skills can bring about very interesting discussions, as I love hearing how my students see social situations. Researching methods of social skills instruction and creating a plan for the next three years will be beneficial as I continue teaching Lunch Bunch with students.

Some of the articles that I reviewed supported my current method of instruction. Prior to this research, I attended conferences and used materials by Michelle Garcia Winner and Social Thinking. Social Thinking takes a cognitive approach to teaching social skills. I like using this method of social skills instruction because the students are learning the skills to 'think socially'. The studies completed by Lopata et al., Collet-Klingenberg and Chadsey-Rusch, and Van Loan et al. also support the use of the cognitive problem-solving approach to social skills instruction. In my plan for the next three years, I included terms and lessons from the Social Thinking curriculum.

I have been using direct instruction to teach social skills, and I plan to continue. I include explanations, discussions, modeling, and role play. The studies completed by Collet-Klingenberg and Chadsey-Rusch and Lopata et al. show that direct instruction is effective. Direct instruction each week, even if brief, provides some structure for my groups, and allows

me to explain the reasoning behind the skills that the students are learning. I will continue to use direct instruction and incorporate some additional instruction methods that showed positive results in the studies I reviewed. Cooperative learning, which was used by Rutherford, Mathur, and Quinn is also an important part of Lunch Bunch. Students talk about their goals and challenges, and they support each other. They are in groups of mixed grades, but my students have shared experiences that they can reflect upon together. McDaniel and Bruhn found that a curriculum using teaching, modeling, roleplay, and feedback was effective with students with EBD. These steps are helpful when teaching a new skill, and I will continue to use them. Direct instruction with cooperative learning, modeling, roleplay, and feedback is effective, so I have included opportunities to use direct instruction in the plans for the next three years.

Based on this research, I would like to develop more literary-based behavioral interventions. Francis, McMullen, Blue-Banning & Haines effectively used a social narrative to effectively teach a student with ASD the skills needed to participate in recess with her peers. Gratez, Mastropieri, and Scruggs also concluded that the use of Social Stories was effective for students with ASD. This intervention seems to be effective when working with students diagnosed with ASD, but Richter and Test concluded that it was effective with young adults with cognitive disabilities. I have written stories about certain behaviors for groups of students in the past, and I think that using Social Stories with students for specific situations will be effective going forward. Social Stories will help individual students or groups manage situations where they have difficulty. For example, I work with one student who gets upset and complains when he is asked to complete independent work. I could create a social story about how to try the work and ask clarifying questions without doubting his own abilities. I think social stories will be particularly helpful when students are placed in teams for gym class. Multiple students get

frustrated with their teams and misunderstand the intentions of team members. I would like to expand my use of literary-based behavioral interventions to see the impact that this will have on my students.

Schoolwide programs are another effective way to teach social skills. Laugeson et al. studied the use of a schoolwide program, and the subjects in this study showed improvement in social communication, social awareness, and other abilities that I would like to teach. At this point, I am not in the position to design a schoolwide program, but multiple staff members will benefit from understanding the social skills goals of students in Lunch Bunch as they work with them. I led a Lunch Bunch training in the past, and would like to continue teaching the staff the value of social skills instruction. I also use the same terminology when discussing social issues and expectations with fifth grade general education Language Arts classes that I teach.

Group oriented contingency and noncontingent reinforcement are both effective, and I would like to try using these in Lunch Bunch. My students diagnosed with EBD would benefit from giving attention as a form of noncontingent reinforcement both in class and in Lunch Bunch. Often, they engage in attention seeking behaviors. These behaviors may become less frequent if they are given attention on a regular basis, regardless of their behavior. Vidoni and Ward concluded that group oriented contingency was helpful in teaching students in gym class to make supportive statements. I will use group oriented contingency when working with a group on one specific concern. I have one group that needs to work on some table manners like using utensils and waiting to speak after taking a bite. Another group has difficulty acknowledging when someone is speaking. I would like to encourage them to look at each other or verbally respond to the speaker. I think both of these groups would respond well to group oriented contingency.

Peer instruction and self-monitoring are two other methods that can be effective. Peterson et al. found that students responded well to self-monitoring. I included opportunities for self-monitoring throughout the three year plan for this reason. I would like to provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their own behavior and notice their own improvements. Prater et al. studied the use of peer instruction when teaching social skills. They found this to be effective, particularly for the students that had the opportunity to become teachers. I teach students throughout their middle school years, so they will all have the opportunity to be the teachers and share information with their peers. These two methods are effective, and they also build confidence as students learn and see improvements.

There were some limitations to the research based on the ways that I found information and the articles that I chose to include. I found all of the articles included in the literature review through the Bethel library online databases. I was primarily interested in middle school instruction, so I selected studies that focused on middle school students when possible. I did choose to include some studies done with older and slightly younger subjects due to a lack of articles focusing on the middle school age. There were also some differences between the groups in the studies and the social skills group that I teach. These studies were done in the school setting, but there were a variety of instructional models used. Some groups of students were in self-contained classrooms, and would have less exposure to a variety of peers in school. My students all are in level one or two settings, and they develop skills to interact with many different peers and teachers. Most of the studies were completed using students with one specific disability, rather than groups of students with a range of disabilities. The information within these studies is applicable to my teaching despite the limitations in the studies available.

In the area of social skills instruction, there are topics that I would like to explore further. I would like to observe how the mixed ages and experiences within the groups I lead impacts the way the students lead instruction. Some students will be in Lunch Bunch throughout their middle school years. There will be some repetition of terms each year, and the older students will help in instructing the younger students. The study by Preter et al. does support the use of peer instruction when teaching social skills. It would be interesting to observe the way that this works in groups of mixed grade levels. Another area of interest is social skills instruction at home. All of my research focused on the school setting, but it would be interesting to further research how parents can work with their children at home on these skills. As more things are done online, I would like to gain a better understanding of the social competencies necessary for online communication. I also would like to understand the best ways of instructing students in online social skills and safety. Methods and topics for social skills instruction will continue to evolve, and continued research is necessary.

The process of researching and creating a three year program based on my research has been helpful for me, and I think it will be helpful for my students as well. I hope to continue researching this topic throughout my career, as there are continuous changes in the way that people interact with each other. Through my research I was inspired to try new things with the group that I teach. This will allow me to go forward teaching social skills in an intentional, research-based way.

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