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Widely Used Disciplinary Options for Aggressive Kids

Are the Current Approaches Effective?

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Abstract

The question of what to do with aggressive students has plagued schools since mandatory attendance laws were passed. At the present time, many practitioners are using tactics for aggressive students that may not effectively remediate the problem, and research and practice do not seem to be in harmony regarding disciplinary options for aggressive students. While the most widely used options continue to be in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension, the research does not seem to support the efficacy of such measures. However, there are many promising practices within the research that deserve more consideration, and some of these have a stronger research support than suspension.

Widely Used Disciplinary Options for Aggressive Kids: Are the Current Approaches Effective?

Throughout history, schools have struggled with what to do with students who exhibit chronic discipline problems. In fact, school discipline issues stand at the forefront of the national agenda as bullying, violence, and aggressive acts proliferate at many high schools, including many affluent suburban schools that were not historically plagued by these concerns. Historically students who exhibited such behaviors were routinely expelled, but today schools must offer free appropriate education to all students including those with frequent and chronic behavior problems.

The search for disciplinary options other than expulsion becomes even more acute when dealing with students served in special education for behavioral disorders due to the legal cautions associated with disciplinary policy for students with special needs (O'Neil, 2003, Zirkel, 2003, Yell, 2001). Although these students need to be able to experience consequences for their actions, determining appropriate consequences may not be as simple as determining what is or is not legal (Etscheidt, 2002). Clearly, all students have a right to be educated in an environment free from disruption and aggression. Administrators must consider overall school safety issues and the effects students who have chronic discipline problems have on students who do not misbehave, yet, may have their education interrupted by an unruly or violent classmate.

To compound the problem, simple removal of belligerent or hostile students does not accommodate the student's educational needs nor does it remediate the student's behavioral problems (Trojan, 2003). Further, educators, administrators, parents, advocates, and attorneys are often at odds as the views regarding overall school safety and the individual rights of aggressive students seem to conflict.

In evaluating these issues, it is important to look at what non-expulsion discipline options are currently in place for students who demonstrate aggressive behavior or other behavior problems (Telzrow, 2001). A variety of disciplinary options needs to be scrutinized to determine the relative efficacy of these approaches as well as the factors that facilitate success. The following review will address these questions in relation to the discipline options that are most commonly used in the public education system; out of school suspension, in school suspension, and several more recently developed disciplinary options.

In this review, the various disciplinary options are considered in the order in which they were developed historically. We chose specifically to exclude expulsion, and the "boot camp" disciplinary options (i.e. residential placements in a boot camp setting for several weeks or more) from this review, as these options often result from legally binding policies of "zero tolerance" in which the school administrators have little control. In fact, "boot camp" options may result from court orders rather than decisions based with school administrators. Here we decided to emphasize disciplinary options that are frequently used, and over which administrators may exercise some selective judgment.

In the sections below, a number of indices of "success" are considered including, frequency of behavioral infractions after a particular disciplinary option had been used, recidivism in use of the disciplinary option, students' attitude change after receiving a disciplinary penalty, etc. Overall, the extant research is not particularly positive for the common disciplinary options involving suspension, although the research on several more recently developed alternatives seems more promising (Morgan-D'Atrio, Northup, Lafleur & Spera, 1996; Tobin & Sugai, 1996; Imich, 1994, Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002; Rodney, Crafter, Rodney & Mupier, 1999, Costenbader & Markson, 1994; Stage, 1997; Morrison, Gale, Anthony, Suzanne, Stori, Meri, Dillon, Cynthia, 2001, Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Brand, 1993; Saunders & Saunders, 2002, Castleberry & Enger, 1998, King, 1998).

To determine the efficacy of various disciplinary options, a computer review of the literature in the ERIC and psycARTICLES databases using indicators such as out of school suspension, in school suspension, and alternative schools, within the dates 1995 to 2003, was used as the primary method of search. Limiters such as "study" and "journal articles" were also used in order to further refine results. These various computer based inquiries generated some XXX studies which were reviewed. Among the articles found, it soon became apparent that empirical studies that document actual efficacy results of suspensions or alternative school programs are sparse. Many of the results were not empirical studies relevant to the purpose of this review.

In order to supplement this computer search, an additional hand search of the following journals was conducted in order to locate any articles that may have been missed by the computer search: Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, Behavioral Disorders, and Exceptional Children. In summary, XX articles addressed efficacy of one of the major disciplinary options under discussion, and thus were determined to be appropriate for review here.

Out of School Suspension

Out of school suspension (OSS) is one of the most frequently used consequences for rule violations in schools today (Dupper 1994; Skiba, 2002; Sautner, 2001). The beginnings of OSS seem to be clouded in mystery, as there is not a definitive establishment of this consequence cited in the literature. OSS is defined in the literature as a consequence for misbehaving in which the student is excluded from school for a period of time. Of course, OSS does not necessarily mean that the student is excluded from education, as many school districts now provide homebound instruction for some suspended students. However, the student is denied access to their typical educational environment for a set period of time ranging from as little as a day to as long as a permanent expulsion. This consequence is viewed as a form of punishment, since a student is removed from a reinforcing environment in order to decrease maladaptive behavior.

Little research has been done regarding the actual effectiveness of OSS (Skiba, 2002). In fact, while OSS is used quite frequently, not a great deal is known about its effects on student behavior, attitude, and eventual outcome. The research that has been done seems to point to less than desirable outcomes such as further suspension and an increased dropout rate (Skiba, 2002; Bounds 2000). Furthermore, some research suggests that suspension may be assigned arbitrarily and at a disproportionate rate for many African American students (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Imich, 1994, Townsend, 2000). Finally, the research on efficacy of OSS suggests that it may not be effective (Morgan-D'Atrio, Northup, Lafleur & Spera, 1996; Tobin & Sugai, 1996; Imich, 1994, Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002; Rodney, Crafter, Rodney & Mupier, 1999; Bounds, 2000; Ruck & Wortley, 2002). Clearly, serious questions need to be addressed regarding this frequently used intervention.

Does OSS Improve Student Behavior?

Presumably, interventions for inappropriate behavior should lead to a reduction in the behaviors that lead to the intervention and various researchers have investigated the effects of OSS in this regard (Morgan-D'Atrio, Northup, Lafleur & Spera, 1996; Tobin & Sugai, 1996; Imich 1994, Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002). For example, Morgan-D'Atrio and colleagues (1996) studied suspension at a large urban high school. They analyzed data from a random sample of 94 students who had been suspended. The researchers looked at the discipline records of these students by utilizing the school wide data recording program. The researchers found that the most common behaviors resulting in school suspension were cutting class and tardiness. Of course, these particular behaviors are typically considered school avoidance behaviors and this raises certain questions about the applicability of OSS. Specifically, it would seem that OSS, which results in avoidance of school, would be the wrong type of consequence for school avoidance behaviors. Further, the researchers found that suspensions were inconsistently implemented in this school, suggesting that the procedural integrity of school discipline was minimal. According to these data, 58% of the students who were suspended once were subsequently suspended again. Some students were suspended as many five subsequent times. These data suggest that OSS itself did not seem to be successful in improving behavior for over half of the subjects. Thus, these data suggest that OSS may not be effective as a discipline procedure (Morgan-D'Atrio, Northup, Lafleur & Spera, 1996).

Tobin and Sugai (1996) evaluated patterns of behavior in middle school students by analyzing discipline records. In the first phase of this study discipline records over five years from one

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middle school were reviewed in order to determine patterns that would identify students who would be most in need of behavioral remediation after the first term of 6th grade. Using behavioral records the researchers formed two groups of subjects. Group A included 18 students whose discipline records could be analyzed over the course of their entire middle school career, and who had been suspended during almost every term during middle school. Group B consisted of 17 students who had begun middle school, but had not yet completed it, and who were referred during the first term of 6th grade as well as in at least in two subsequent terms. When a student in the school was referred to an administrator for a rule violation that administrator had the latitude to make a judgment, within some established guidelines, regarding what consequences would be appropriate for the infraction. Thus in this study, the researchers were able to tally how many students received suspension as a consequence of inappropriate behavior, and compare that data to data concerning how many students did not receive a suspension. Of specific interest here, the researchers then evaluated the remaining discipline records of these students to determine if the suspension had the desired effect, ultimately the reduction of rule violating behavior.

Of the students 17 who were referred to the office for discipline problems within the first term of 6th grade, 10 received some type of a suspension for their infraction. The students who received the suspension demonstrated an elevated number of discipline referrals in the future when compared to students who had not received suspension as a consequence for their rule infraction during their first term. Specifically, of the 17 students in Group B who were referred for discipline in the first term of 6th grade, 7 received no type of suspension: the average number of referrals over the next four terms, which encompassed the remainder of 6th grade and the majority of 7th grade, was 3.85 referrals for that group. However, for the 10 students who received some type of suspension, an average of 14 subsequent referrals was noted during this same time period. In short, the students who were suspended for a behavioral offense in the fall tended to be suspended more times after the initial infraction than the students who had not received a suspension for their initial infraction in the fall. These researchers argue that if suspension was an effective disciplinary tool, these data would be expected to demonstrate just the opposite.

The second phase of this study analyzed data from 36 students who attended one of three middle schools, including the middle school evaluated in the first phase (Tobin & Sugai, 1996). These students were considered chronic discipline problems having experienced office referrals in both spring of 6th grade and spring of 8th grade. Data was taken from databases regarding the date, grade level, reason for referral, and administrative action taken for each offense. The data revealed an increase in the total number of referrals from grades 6 to 8 among these students. These data document that OSS functioned as a reinforcer, on a variable interval schedule, for this group of students (Tobin & Sugai, 1996).

Imich (1994) researched trends regarding OSS and other exclusions from school. By analyzing discipline data over the course of three years in a large school district of some 225,000 students, this study unlike those previously reviewed, allowed for comparison between different schools on application and frequency of OSS. Specifically data on the frequency of three different types of exclusions were examined over the course of the three years, including data on OSS (suspension for a specified period of time), indefinite exclusions (e.g. suspensions from school for a non-specified length), and expulsions.

The data demonstrated an increase in the frequency of OSS. Specifically, use of OSS nearly doubled within the three-year period rising from just over 900 to nearly 1,700 per

year. Furthermore, the number of indefinite exclusions rose from 70 to 210 over the course of three years. Finally, the number of expulsions rose by 50%. This increase in the number of suspensions over the three year period suggests that the OSS consequence was not effective in reducing rule-violations in these schools. Next, the district was broken down into six administrative areas and the suspensions and exclusions from school assigned by administrators in each area were compared. The results demonstrated that there was significant variation from area to area in the number of exclusions from school, suggesting that students may have a higher chance of being suspended or expelled from school simply based on the area of the county in which they lived.

To continue this effort, Imich (1994) next evaluated one large area of the district more closely; this area included 23 secondary schools. The data revealed that a very small number of schools—only five of the 23 secondary schools--accounted for over two-thirds of the suspensions. This finding further suggests that the consequence of suspension is arbitrarily assigned and may be greatly influenced by the administrative personnel in the school. (Imich, 1994).

Atkins, McKay, Frazier, and Jakobsons (2002) analyzed the disciplinary records of students in grades 3-8 who attended an inner-city public school in order to determine effectiveness of the disciplinary options used. The students who had been referred for disciplinary action were divided into three groups: the “never group” of 117 students had never received a suspension or detention, the “fall group” of 62 students received this consequence in only the fall and not the spring, and the “fall/spring group” of 75 students received such a consequence in both the fall and spring terms. The students were broken into these groups in order for comparisons between the students who were never suspended (the never group), students who seemed to respond to an early suspension (the fall group), and for students who continued to exhibit problematic behavior despite an early suspension (the fall/spring group).

The researchers indicated that for the fall/spring group the consequence was not effective based on the fact that the students were subsequently suspended. However, the “fall group” (i.e. the 62 students who were not referred again in the spring), seemed to suggest that student behavior did improve as a result of OSS. This suggests that there may be certain factors associated with OSS which make it effective for some students and not for others—an idea explored in the next section. Nevertheless, when these results for the two groups are taken together, the data demonstrate that OSS was not an effective deterrent for over half of the students (55%). The researchers, like those reported previously, indicated that for the fall/spring students, the OSS consequence itself may have served as a reinforcer.

In order to explore other differences between the fall only group and the fall/spring group, data on student behavior was analyzed, using teacher and peer ratings of behavior; in this school such behavior rating scales are administered each year, during the middle of the year. The behavior ratings were used to determine if the students who would respond to the initial suspension could be identified at this point in the year. The researchers found that the fall /spring group demonstrated more behavior problems than the students in the fall and never groups, indicating that it may be possible for teachers and peers to predict which students will be responsive to the consequence of OSS and which students will not. Clearly, detentions and suspensions should not be relied upon as an effective way to decrease rates of rule-violations for all students (Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002).

In spite of these negative results regarding the efficacy of OSS, administrators seem to feel that OSS is a viable disciplinary option. Killion (1998) conducted a study in which seventy-four

randomly selected secondary principals answered questions regarding the discipline procedures used in their school. Specifically, the principals were asked which of the disciplinary measures that they currently employed were effective. The data showed that OSS was among the most frequently employed methods of discipline in public school systems and that few other options were more frequently utilized. Moreover, the principals ranked OSS as one of the most effective disciplinary options available. However, in considering the overall design of the questionnaire, one must note that it would have been difficult for principals to rate one of their own frequently used disciplinary measures as ineffective (Killion, 1998).

A number of methodological issues can be identified in these studies. First, these studies suggest a unit of analysis issue, in that many of the studies analyzed data on OSS from a number of student's in only one school, and this presupposes that individual students' disciplinary records are the appropriate unit of analysis. However, with administrators having considerable latitude in the disciplinary options used in the schools, perhaps the unit of analysis needs to be school disciplinary records, and studies should be conducted which compare multiple schools--and thus multiple administrators—as done by Imich (1994) and Killion (1998).

Next, many studies on the efficacy of disciplinary procedures utilize only one outcome measure – the reuse of the same disciplinary intervention. In future research other outcomes should be investigated, such as students' attitudes towards school, and the effects of these interventions on others within the school. For example, principals may select OSS not because it works as a deterrent to future behavior problems by the student who is suspended, but because it makes other students safer or results in less class disruption. Alternatively, the Atkins et al. (2002) study suggested that the behaviors demonstrated by students--behaviors which are evident to teachers and peers--result in differential efficacy of OSS for different students. Researchers should explore both of these possibilities and attempt to tease out the factors that make OSS an effective disciplinary option.

With those concerns noted, the extant data do suggest several things. First, in each study, the majority of the students who were suspended once, continue to be suspended. Clearly, the consequence of OSS was ineffective in changing student behavior overall for this majority of children (Morgan-D'Atrio, Northup, Lafleur & Spera 1996; Tobin & Sugai, 1996; Imich 1994, Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002). In spite of this, administrators continue to believe OSS to be an effective option (Killion, 1998). Next, these data suggest that the assignment of suspension is arbitrary in nature (Imich, 1994). Further, the data show that many students are assigned OSS for school avoidance behavior (Morgan-D'Atrio, 1996), and this may be questionable since, OSS would not seem to be appropriate for school avoidance offences.

What Factors May Be Associated with Suspension?

Much research has focused on what factors may be associated with OSS, and the correlational studies have investigated both academic difficulties and grade retention (Morgan-D'Atrio, 1996; Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002; Rodney, Crafter, Rodney & Mupier, 1999). Although correlational designs do not demonstrate a causal relationship between the variables, the factors that seem to typically be associated with students who are assigned OSS are noteworthy.

Some research has investigated aspects that seem to be related to the assignment of OSS. For example, Morgan-D'Atrio (1996), in the study reviewed previously, also evaluated the extent of academic, social skill, and adjustment deficits among students who had recurrent suspensions. Twenty-four middle and high school students who had been in OSS were assessed to determine their academic achievement and discipline profiles. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews and reviewed the academic and discipline records of the students. Results indicated that the incidence of academic deficits were high among students assigned OSS, for both middle and high school groups; no significant differences were found in conjunction with grade level. The data showed that only 13% of high school students with recurrent suspensions were found to be at or above grade level in word recognition with 26% of these students performing below 3rd grade level in word recognition. Further, 26% of these same students were below 3rd grade level in reading comprehension. The reading achievement results for the middle school group were similar; only 21% of the middle school students who received OSS were reading at or above grade level. Clearly, many of the students who are in OSS on a recurrent basis are the students most in need of academic remediation (Morgan-D'Atrio, Northup, Lafleur & Spera, 1996), and the removal of these students from the academic demands of the class may not be in their best interests.

The middle and high school groups of students in the Morgan-D'Atrio et al. study were also evaluated in other domains. The researchers gathered data on the students' social skills, behavioral problems, social competencies, and self-esteem using a variety of normed teacher and student rating scales and checklists. The data revealed that 52% of high school students and 67% of middle school students in OSS had social skill deficits based on either self or teacher reports. Scores demonstrated that 43% of high school and 38% of middle school students scored within the significant problem behavior range on one or more subscales, indicating that they had problems such as attentional deficits, aggression, or social self-concept deficits. Interestingly, in spite of these self-esteem deficits as perceived by teachers, the students' scores did not demonstrate any significant self-esteem deficits.

This difference between self-perception of and teacher perception of self-esteem raises the question, are the students who receive OSS completely cognizant of their behavioral abnormalities in other areas? Perhaps these students do not have a specific sense that their behaviors are abnormal. Alternatively, these students may recognize that their behavior is considered extreme, but may merely be unconcerned by these behavioral problems. At a minimum these data indicate that the students in OSS often have social skills and/or other behavioral deficits. Clearly, these students are in need of remediation for all of the previously mentioned social problems, and this would suggest that most OSS programs, which typically do not include these remediation options, may be ineffective as a treatment option (Morgan-D'Atrio, Northup, Lafleur & Spera 1996).

Atkins and colleagues (2002) also investigated the academic and behavioral skills of the three groups of students in the study described previously. One group had never been suspended, one group had been suspended in the fall only, and another group had recurring suspensions. The groups were analyzed based on their scores on a normative teacher rating scale to assess academic competence and problems behaviors. The results indicated a significant decline on all measures, including both behavior and academic competence, in each group. In other words, the more frequently students were given OSS, the less competent they were academically and behaviorally than a norm sample (Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002).

Rodney and colleagues (1999) looked at a group of African American males to discern what factors contributed to grade retention. Unlike many of the studies reported previously, the primary variable of interest was not OSS. The study included a group of 243 African American boys who were between 13-17 years old. The participants were recruited for interviews through fliers and community service organizations. The interviews lasted about one hour each and involved questions on alcohol use, discipline in the home, and conduct disorders. The data was analyzed to determine what variables impacted grade retention, and the results indicated that the factor most strongly associated with grade retention was OSS, followed by conduct disorders, and a lack of discipline in the home. Of the African-American adolescents who had been retained, 90% had been in OSS at least once. Although the study does not point to a causal relationship, it demonstrates that many of the students who are suspended, may be among students who are most in need of remediation to prevent retention. Further, the researchers assert that suspensions may create academic problems by further putting the student behind in their curriculum (Rodney, Crafter, Rodney & Mupier, 1999).

Similarly, Bounds (2000) studied the relationship between OSS and the high school drop out rate among students with disabilities. The study participants consisted of 60 students with disabilities in grades 9-12 who had dropped out of school. Participants were recruited through a federally funded project focused on facilitating re-entry into the school system for these students. The participants responded to four separate questions regarding why they dropped out of school, why they have returned, what their school could have done differently to encourage them to stay in school, and what skills they needed to be successful. The second highest reason for drop out, cited by 17.2% of students and second only to academic difficulties, was that the student got into trouble, and particularly, that they were in OSS (Bounds, 2000).

Ruck and Wortley (2002) evaluated student perceptions of school discipline and compared these perceptions across students by race. The sample of students included 1870 students in grades 10-12 from 11 different high schools in Canada. The high schools were ethnically and racially diverse. Students were surveyed and responded anonymously to questions regarding their perception of differential treatment and the school environment. The questions employed both Lickert-type responses as well as open-ended questions. As related to OSS, the results indicated that over half of the African American students felt as if they were more likely to be suspended from school than were their classmates from other ethnic groups (Ruck & Wortley, 2002).

Taken in total, this research demonstrates that the students who are suspended are often the students who are most in need of assistance, both behaviorally and academically, within schools (Morgan-D'Atrio, 1996, Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002). Further, such use of OSS is likely to put them further behind their peers. OSS seems to be associated with increased retention or drop out rate (Rodney, Crafter, Rodney & Mupier, 1999; Bounds, 2000). Moreover, students often feel as though suspension is unfairly assigned, and this belief would seem to hinder the effectiveness of this practice (Ruck & Wortley, 2002). Clearly, students who are behind their

peers in many areas necessary to be successful at school, students who feel like they are more likely to be suspended than their peers, and students who are in need of remediation to prevent retention and drop out, will most likely not benefit from a consequence such as OSS.

Summary

While OSS is one of the most widely used consequences in the public schools, many studies evaluating various results of OSS demonstrate negative effects of this type of suspension (Morgan-D'Atrio, 1996; Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002; Rodney, Crafter, Rodney & Mupier, 1999). Further, these studies demonstrate that students, who already experience numerous difficulties, academically and behaviorally, are suspended recurrently. OSS does not seem to be effective in reducing rule-violating behavior for a majority of students (Tobin & Sugai, 1996; Imich, 1994; Atkins, McKay, Frazier & Jakobsons, 2002; Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Bryant-Edwards & Hetherington, 2002). Moreover, OSS seems to exacerbate the problems of students who are already behind both academically and socially, often resulting in grade retention or dropping out of school (Morgan-D'Atrio, 1996, Rodney, Crafter, Rodney & Mupier, 1999; Bounds, 2000). Similarly, students perceive OSS as unfair and arbitrary and the data seem to support that perception. Data has demonstrated that OSS is assigned arbitrarily (Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Morgan-D'Atrio, 1996; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). In considering this research base, it would be difficult to label OSS as an effective, fair consequence for aggressive or other problem behaviors.

In-School Suspension

The first in school suspension (ISS) models were developed in the 1970's either as a complement or an alternative to OSS (Morris, 2003). In comparison to OSS programs, ISS programs allow for highly aggressive students to remain in school, thus offering the option of continued remediation while also protecting the students in other classes, as well as the overall community (since ISS programs do involve keeping students off of the streets) (Sheets, 1996). Generally, ISS is a consequence which requires students to attend school, but yet be removed from school related events such as attending classes, eating lunch in the cafeteria, or even participating in extra curricular activities for a specified length of time. There are many varieties of ISS programs involving the length of stay, supervision, academic or behavioral components, etc. Most ISS programs allow students to continue in their academic curriculum, but there is considerable debate on whether or not this actually occurs (Trojan, 2003). Furthermore, unlike most OSS programs, ISS programs sometimes have a behavioral intervention component that serves to combat the reason behind the student's rule violation.

Most ISS programs are designed to serve two main functions: students are to be separated from the general population as a deterrent for further rule breaking behavior, and students are separated from the general population so other students may be afforded the opportunity to learn without significant disruption. The latter of these two functions is not widely debated; when disruptive students are removed it can improve the learning environment for others in the classroom (Trojan, 2003). However, whether or not ISS serves the former function of acting as a deterrent is a matter that should be demonstrated through research.

When ISS options were created, this intervention was deemed a positive alternative to OSS, and consequently ISS soon became widely used. However, in spite of the popularity of this option, the effectiveness of ISS in reduction of subsequent student rule violations is not documented in the literature (Skiba & Peterson, 1997; Morrison, Gale, Anthony, Suzanne, Stori, Meri, Dillon, Cynthia, 2001). Furthermore, studies that do investigate repercussions associated with the use of

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ISS do not demonstrate positive benefits (Costenbader & Markson, 1994; Stage, 1997; Morrison, Gale, Anthony, Suzanne, Stori, Meri, Dillon, Cynthia, 2001).

For example, Costenbader and Markson (1994) compared the responses of students who had experienced OSS and/or ISS to the responses of students who had never been suspended. These groups were compared on measures regarding school attitude, behavior, and attitude toward the application of the ISS option. Researchers surveyed 620 middle and high school students across two school districts. The students first completed a self-rating of behavior problems which provided information on four factors including rule compliance/acting out, anxiety, peer skills, and school interest. Students were also asked to respond to several demographic questions including whether or not they had ever been to ISS. If the students indicated they had previously been suspended, they were then asked to answer questions regarding their perceptions of various factors relating to the suspension. The findings generated interesting responses that question the efficacy of suspension overall, including ISS. Results from the rating scale indicated a trend where students who had never been suspended demonstrated more positive and healthier scores than students who had been assigned ISS. Further, students who had been assigned ISS fared better than those who had been assigned OSS. These results suggest a continuum of effects associated with the degree of removal from school, with less positive outcomes being associated with increased removal. Also, the students who had been assigned either ISS or OSS self reported that they were less interested in their school achievement. When responding to questions regarding their feelings about the suspension, no differences were noted between the students who received ISS versus students who received OSS, both were generally not positive. Moreover, when asked the extent to which the suspension helped them to solve problems and to avoid being suspended again, the majority of students indicated that the suspension did not help or helped only a little. Again no real differences were noted between students receiving ISS versus OSS (Costenbader & Markson, 1994).

Stage (1997) used an observational research design to study the effects of three different types of ISS over four phases on the disruptive classroom behavior of students. The participants were 36 students, 25 males and 11 females, ranging in age of 12 to 17 years, who were being served in special education under emotional or behavioral disorders. The study was conducted at one residential facility. Throughout one full school year researchers implemented three different types of in-school suspension across four phases with varying components such as a 15 minutes timeout, a 15-minute timeout plus an academic component, and a 15-minute timeout plus a problem-solving intervention. The ISS model used across all phases was consistent in that teachers could remove disruptive students immediately from their classroom and assign them to ISS. After the student had successfully complied with the necessary components of the ISS program, they were allowed to return to class. Disruptive classroom behavior data was gathered by a trained observer. Results indicated that assignment to ISS had no effect on the disruptive classroom behavior of students across all phases of implementation. Thus the ISS, regardless of the additional components present, did little to reduce disruptive classroom behavior. Also note-worthy, the researchers found that teachers primarily relied upon disapproval of inappropriate behavior to regulate student behavior in class. Researchers theorized that in order for ISS to have the desired effect on students, they must experience removal from a positive classroom environment, and in this study the students did not experience the classroom as a positive environment. In other words, this study suggests that ISS may only work if the student would rather be in his or her usual class than in ISS (Stage, 1997).

Morrison and colleagues (2001) approached the efficacy question by looking at the type of student who would benefit from an innovative ISS program. The authors analyzed data regarding students who had been suspended including discipline histories, grades, principals' assessment of behavior changes, and student self-report surveys. These data were used to generate conclusions regarding what type of student may experience the most benefit from a day long "in-school suspension" where students participated in a teaching/counseling curriculum at a local community college. The participants were 128 middle school students who were specifically chosen by their principals as possible candidates who would benefit from this program. These participants included 50% of the total number of students who were suspended during that year. Data was gathered from the assistant principal's ratings of student improvement, and student self-report surveys. Some students were perceived to have benefited from the program, although empirical analysis of this benefit was not demonstrated statistically nor was the type of benefit analyzed. The students who were rated by their assistant principals as having benefited were students who were also "less susceptible to peer pressure, more optimistic, and more socially responsible." Furthermore, 27.4% of the students referred to this program had been previously suspended, which does suggest that the previous suspension(s) were not successful in curbing their rule violating behavior. In considering the results of this study, we must note that the ISS program here differs greatly from what traditional in-school suspension looks like in most schools. It should be viewed not as an in-school suspension program as defined in this review, but as a specifically designed program to remediate behavior. Lastly, the results of this study seems to suggest that students who already demonstrate optimism and social responsibility will benefit from such an elaborate program, furthering the concept that the disillusioned students who are often referred to more commonplace ISS programs may not experience any real benefit from the consequence in relation to their future behavior (.Morrison, Gale, Anthony, Suzanne, Stori, Meri, Dillon & Cynthia, 2001)

Clearly, the extant research does not seem to demonstrate efficacy of ISS programs (Costenbader & Markson, 1994; Stage, 1997; Morrison, Gale, Anthony, Suzanne, Stori, Meri, Dillon & Cynthia, 2001). However, the fact that so few studies exist that evaluate whether or not a traditional ISS program actually improves the behavior of students, thereby reducing their rule violating behavior, makes efficacy questions difficult to address. Still, a variety of study designs, including both observations and student perceptions, have failed to provide hard data demonstrating the efficacy of ISS.

Recently Developed Promising Practices

Although the research does not document the efficacy of OSS and ISS in decreasing in rule-violating or aggressive behavior, there do seem to be a variety of promising practices presented in the research. First, alternative schools seem to demonstrate a measure of success, especially when the students feel as though they are part of a caring environment (Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Brand, 1993; Saunders & Saunders, 2002, Castleberry & Enger, 1998, King, 1998, Epstein, 1992, Bauman, 1998, Sekayi, 2001). Next, there also seems to be some promise in conflict resolution programs used in conjunction with more traditional discipline approaches (Woody, 2001; Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Bryant-Edwards & Hetherington, 2002). Further, functional behavioral assessment has demonstrated effectiveness in the reduction of certain specific problem behaviors, including aggressive behaviors (March & Horner, 2002; Doggett, Edwards, Tingstrom & Wilczynski, 2002; Moore, Doggett, Edwards & Olmi, 1999). Also, strength based assessment of students with behavioral difficulties promises to yield intervention results that are more positive than several interventions currently used. By focusing on the strengths of the student within his or her environment, this recently developed procedure may prove to be effective with aggressive students (Epstein, 1998; Epstein, 1999; Rudolf, S.M., Epstein, M.H., 2000). Finally, Bender's model

(1998) of effective discipline as founded in positive relationships may serve as a conceptual vehicle for discussion of the relative strengths of many of these alternative programs, and that model is described below.

Relational Discipline: An Emerging Perspective

In 2003, Bender suggested that effective discipline must be understood as founded in relationships. Pointedly, he redefined discipline as follows: Discipline is a positive relationship with a significant authority figure that results in a student wishing to change his or her behavior to a set of more socially appropriate behaviors. Bender utilized the growing literature on risk and resilience as his basis to suggest that students who formulated strong positive bonds with “significant adults” could and often did, seemingly overcome many risk factors in their environment. Bender further suggested that this disciplinary model represents a “higher aim” for effective discipline than merely overt behavioral compliance. Indeed he discussed this disciplinary approach as an approach which could incorporate behavioral tactics, but would also allow the field to move beyond behavioral approaches that have dominated the disciplinary literature for the last 20 years.

This relation discipline model suggests that when a student feels that the disciplinary authority—typically the teacher—had his or her best interest at heart, and truly cared about he or she as a person, that many disciplinary efforts would be effective. Conversely, if the student senses a lack of personal involvement, or indeed a personal disdain on the part of the teacher or administrator, few positive disciplinary options are likely to result. It becomes apparent, why this perspective was referred to as “relational “discipline;” indeed according to this perspective, all effective disciplinary options will be founded on positive relationships.

With this emerging model of discipline in mind, one may readily understand the critical nature of the factors which students seem to value within the programs below, and this “relational discipline” perspective may shed light on what types of disciplinary options should be further explored. Thus, the impact of the efficacy research on the following alternative approaches will be discussed from this perspective.

The Alternative School Option

Alternatives to traditional education in the form of alternative schools are often used as a disciplinary consequence of rule violating behavior within the public school system. However, the concept of an alternative educational environment is not limited to only to aggressive students or to students who have been removed from their traditional school. Alternative schools (AS) were designed as an option for a broader group of students than merely students with behavioral problems; AS interventions were developed to serve many types of students who were not optimally served by the regular school program (Raywid, 1994). Raywid cites three categorical types of AS including (1) schools that focus on popular innovations within the curriculum, (2) “last chance” schools that can be used as a consequence for inappropriate behavior, and (3) remedial schools in which specific skill remediation is offered. To further complicate matters, any specific AS can fit into more than one category (Raywid, 1994).

As communities continue to have difficulty providing an alternative placement such as ISS within the school, and as student bullying, violence, and aggression prevail as one of the top issues facing public education, the development and implementation of alternative schools for students with behavioral problems has increased (Harrington-Lueker, 1994). Students who are chronically

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disruptive or who have committed a major aggressive or legal offense (i.e. drug violations or weapons possession/transmission) may not be allowed to attend their general high school any longer. At some point, either by assignment via the school system or by their own choice, many aggressive students attend some type of alternative program.

Much of the literature available on AS are reviews of particular programs (King, 1998, Brand, 1993), and due to a notable lack of empirical evidence on overall efficacy, it is important to evaluate such school specific literature here. The following discussion attempts to synthesize information regarding both the effectiveness of these schools and how such effectiveness may be measured.

With that caution stated, the extant research does support the overall efficacy of AS (Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Brand, 1993; Saunders & Saunders, 2002, Castleberry & Enger, 1998, King, 1998, Epstein, 1992, Bauman, 1998, Sekayi, 2001). Positive outcomes such as increased self-esteem, school attendance, and a more positive student perception of school have been documented for students attending AS. These positive outcomes seem to be more apt to occur within an alternative environment that has certain components such as a caring staff, challenging curriculum, one-on-one instruction, communication, and small class size (Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Brand, 1993; Saunders & Saunders, 2002, Castleberry & Enger, 1998, King, 1998, Epstein, 1992, Bauman, 1998, Sekayi, 2001).

In one of the few studies that compared overall efficacy of AS and traditional programs for more than one AS, Castleberry and Enger (1998) evaluated student responses to AS. The authors interviewed 173 students who attended 21 different AS programs. The participants had been assigned to the various schools for a host of differing reasons including disruptive behavior, academic problems manifested through low achievement scores, retention, or family problems. Interviews consisted mainly of questions designed to elicit responses in reference to whether or not the students preferred the alternative school to the traditional school they came from. The students who preferred the AS program were asked questions regarding what they liked about the alternative program as opposed to their previous experiences. Results of the interviews demonstrated that the students felt that their AS helped them achieve at high levels for the following reasons: teachers, size, student-teacher relationships, expectations, atmosphere, courses, building, schedule, and student-student relationships. The students indicated that they felt that the teachers were more caring and willing to help, an outcome that would certainly be suggested by the relational discipline perspective described above. Students found greater flexibility among the faculty in AS, than in their traditional schools. The students also felt that the faculty in the AS programs believed in them, listened to them, and treated them like family, much more so than in the traditional programs. Students particularly liked the benefits of more one-on-one instruction.

When asked whether or not the AS program has had a positive effect on their lives, 83% of students said yes. These students indicated that their attitudes had improved overall, that they intended to stay in school and graduate, and that their grades and behavior had also improved. Clearly, these findings overwhelmingly document the positive changes associated with AS for these students (Castleberry & Enger, 1998). Further, these interview results would seem to support the suggestion that effective disciplinary programming for students with overt behavioral problems is heavily dependent upon the quality of the relationships between those students and their teachers.

Various other studies have documented these types of positive outcomes for specific AS programs (Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Sanders & Saunders, 2002). For example, Dugger and Dugger (1998) researched the effectiveness of an AS program in relation to student achievement and self-esteem. They used achievement scores and a norm referenced self-esteem index to gather data regarding the effect attendance at an AS had on 71 students who elected such an environment. The control group consisted of 44 students who were on the waiting list to attend the AS but were not accepted during a particular semester. The achievement scores were inconsistent, not demonstrating any significant difference in the achievement between the two groups of students. However, the results of the self-esteem comparison were significant. These data showed that students who attended the AS increased their level of self-esteem particularly in relation to their perception of their own academic competence and their perception of their peer popularity (Dugger & Dugger, 1998). These authors stated that this AS had several characteristics that were believed to be important for success of the program including: high expectations of the students, a location away from other schools, individualized curriculum and hands-on learning, small class size, goal setting as part of the curriculum, working with community agencies to overcome barriers to school attendance, daily contact if a student was absent or tardy, and flexibility in school structure (i.e. the school was both highly-structured and extremely flexible). Thus this study supports many of the factors mentioned by Castleberry and Enger (1998) as important components of effective AS programs.

Sanders and Saunders (2002) evaluated student perceptions of their previous traditional schools and compared these perceptions to perceptions of the AS in which they subsequently enrolled. This particular AS sought to create a supportive and “pastoral” atmosphere of academic and social support for their students. For example, each student was assigned a caseworker that was a Master’s level social worker. These caseworkers individually helped the students beyond the classroom and these caseworkers were not only responsible for academic learning, but anything that may affect school performance. This is the type of intervention suggested by the relational disciplinary model as described above. Each of the participating students completed two surveys, one in the fall regarding their previous school and another in the spring regarding their AS experience. Comparative results indicated more positive interactions with school personnel such as administrators, teachers, and caseworkers, at the AS. Furthermore, the students rated the overall environment at the AS higher than they did their previous traditional school. Results illustrate that an alternative school focused on creating a caring environment can have a positive effect on the way students view school personnel and the school itself (Saunders & Saunders, 2002). This level of personal, individual, support translated into a more caring, accommodating, and personal environment for students, as suggested by the relational discipline model (Bender 2003).

A 1998 study by King and colleagues evaluated the effectiveness of one AS on several elements including student achievement, attendance, and student perception of school. The study describes Lakeside High School, and the implementation of policies that created positive changes within their students as assessed by their authentic school records such as grades, attendance, and student reports. The high school began by instituting a four-day instructional week. Students can take three classes per semester, and still meet all of their requirements. Fridays were spent with faculty meeting in order to plan for individual students so that the staff could effectively provide assistance and design strategies directed toward eliciting positive changes in the students. The school enforced a strict discipline contract that was used in conjunction with a prevailing theme that Lakeside was now a school of choice. The previous assignment of students to Lakeside was changed within the district to an arrangement where students experiencing problems could choose to attend Lakeside. Higher achievement after these changes was documented by several factors. During the succeeding year, one third of the students at Lakeside made the district wide

honor roll which represented a dramatic improvement over previous years. The state wide examinations also showed impressive increases. Next, the number of non-promotions declined from 70% to 31%. Also, students improved attendance from an average of 62%-65% in previous years to 82%.

In addition to these data, student perceptions of the new program innovations at Lakeside Alternative School were gathered via interviews, observations, and surveys. The students reported that they felt the majority of changes at lakeside were positive. The researcher even observed the students with T-shirts touting the slogan, "Lakeside, A School of Choice, Our Choice." Finally, both teachers and students reported that the theme of respect, both from students and teachers, was a major factor in the school improvement (King, 1998). Again, this relational element would seem to support Bender's (2003) suggestion that effective disciplinary policies need to be based in relationships.

Clearly, AS can lead to many positive outcomes for students. AS programs tend to be more able than traditional schools, to set the curriculum, specific behavioral guidelines, and goals for their students. While experiencing this autonomy each AS must define for itself what is considered effective for their students and justify this effectiveness to stakeholders (Katsiyannis, 1998; Lange, 1998; Lehr, 2003). A review of the literature illustrates that these schools can increase achievement, as well as raise self-esteem and school attendance (Brand, 1993; Dugger & Dugger, 1998; King, 1998; Lange, 1998; Saunders & Saunders, 2002). Furthermore, AS can create a positive outlook toward school and learning (Dugger, 1998; Brand, 1993; Saunders, 2002). Schools that are responsible for demonstrating such positive changes tend to be schools where the students perceive their teachers care about them, and schools that offer a structured program with some flexibility within the program (Epstein, 1992; Castleberry, 1998). Further, research does seem to show that in order for students to embrace their curriculum without resistance, a strong focus in the basic academics is needed (Sekayi, 2001). The aspects of communication, one-on-one instruction, smaller class size, strict discipline, and a student's choice to attend the school are all characterized as important to the success of an alternative school (Epstein, 1992; King, 1998; Bauman, 1998; Castleberry, 1998). This theme of "student choice" is also said to have an impact of the goals and approaches of all alternative schools (Lehr, 2003).

These programs all seemed to demonstrate the importance of caring teachers in the disciplinary program. Further, AS placements can provide a curriculum rich in basic academics as well as a curricular component designed to combat social skill deficits. Finally, flexibility of programming, smaller class size, one-on-one attention, strong parent communication, seem to be critical components of AS placements, and would apparently result in the demonstrated efficacy of AS placements as one disciplinary option. All of these factors come together to seemingly make an alternative placement a successful and viable option for students experiencing difficulty at their traditional school. Of course, with only one study documenting this efficacy across AS placements, much more research should be undertaken.

Conflict Resolution Programs

Whether a disciplinary option involves the use of punitive consequences or not, the institution of conflict resolution programs in schools has been shown to have a positive effect in reducing aggressive student behavior (Woody, 2001; Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Bryant-Edwards & Hetherington, 2002). Conflict resolution programs offer some hope for school administrators who may feel as though there is no systematic preemptive strike which will reduce aggression or that there is little alternative to ISS or OSS as a disciplinary response to aggression in their schools.

For example, Woody (2001) detailed the implementation of a school wide conflict-resolution program within one AS High School. The high school was small, with an average enrollment of 350 students, and attendance at this particular high school resulted from some behavioral difficulty in a more traditional school program. Two social workers instituted a conflict resolution program that involved all students and school personnel. All students participated in a four hour training session and all school personnel participated in a two hour training session. The program focused on communication, role-plays, and self-exploration. Further, to reinforce the training the students also participated in conflict resolution training in their homeroom classes. The effectiveness of the program was measured by anecdotal reports, a non-standardized test based on knowledge of conflict resolution principles, and a standardized measure encompassing how students would deal with specific conflict situations. When comparing pre- and post-test data, statistically significant results indicated that students had not only gained the knowledge inherent in the conflict resolution program, but also that when faced with situations involving conflict more students chose to respond assertively or submissively as opposed to aggressively. Further, anecdotal reports indicated the efficacy of the program in reducing conflict, no fights occurred at the school after the conflict resolution program was instituted (Woody, 2001). Of course, this emphasis on relationships is, again, the type of emphasis suggested by relational discipline (Bender, 2003). Specifically, when students discover that they have—and may exercise—social power via effective relationships, there is less need for student to impact their social environment through aggressiveness.

Breunlin and colleagues (2002) studied high school students who participated in a conflict resolution program as an alternative to suspension. The students attended a large public high school with a population of over 3,000. The goal of the program was to reduce the amount of re-suspensions for students who participated in the conflict resolution program. The researchers used a repeated measures design with non-equivalent comparison group. Six groups of students were formed, based on the offense for which the student was referred, and based on whether or not the student participated in the conflict resolution program. Students were given a choice between OSS only or the reduction of the time of OSS, contingent upon their participation in a conflict resolution program. Thus the students who participated in the program did so by choice, and as an incentive for them attending the program those students had their suspension reduced; such reductions were either from 10 days to 5 days, from 5 days to 2 days, or from 3 days to 1 day. The results indicated that the students who participated in the conflict resolution program were less likely to be re-suspended for both physical and non-physical rule violations. Among students who were referred for physical acts of aggression, those who participated in the program were two times less likely to be re-suspended. These students were also five times less likely to be re-suspended than those who were suspended for other acts of violence (i.e. verbal aggression, etc.). Further, none of the students who participated in the program were subsequently expelled, whereas seven of the students who were suspended without participating in conflict resolution were expelled subsequent to the initial suspension. The results clearly demonstrated that a voluntary program of conflict resolution linked to OSS is more likely to have a positive effect on

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behavior than OSS alone. Also, while these data—like those reported previously--demonstrated OSS alone was not effective overall in the reduction of rule-violating behaviors, these results did suggested that OSS may have a place within a school's disciplinary options if coupled with a conflict resolution program (Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Bryant-Edwards & Hetherington, 2002).

Clearly, the use of programs such as conflict resolution can have a positive effect on student behavior. Whether these programs are used as an alternative to punitive consequences or as a proactive measure to prevent problem behavior there seems to be a marked measure of efficacy for such programs (Woody, 2001; Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Bryant-Edwards & Hetherington, 2002).

Functional Behavioral Assessment

What Is Functional Behavioral Assessment? Functional behavioral assessment is generally defined as an approach toward student behavior that involves gathering information about the behavior itself in relation to the environmental events that sound it, as well as the development and testing of hypotheses that explain the consequences that maintain the behavior (Ryan, Halsey & Mathews, 2003; Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Hagan-Burke, 2000). A large number of research studies on this disciplinary approach have demonstrated positive results such as decreases in problematic behavior as well as the increases of positive behavior (March & Horner, 2002; Doggett, Edwards, Tingstrom & Wilczynski, 2002; Moore, Doggett, Edwards & Olmi, 1999), though, in the interest of time, only several of the recent studies are reviewed below.

For example, a 2002 study by March and Horner evaluated whether or not interventions that addressed the function of the behavior would be more likely to improve student behavior than a school wide intervention that did not address the function of the problem behavior. In the first phase of the study, 24 middle school students were evaluated on the frequency of discipline contacts per week as they participated in a school wide behavior intervention program. Each of the 24 participating students had been assigned to participate in the behavior education plan. These plans necessitated that each participating student check-in at the office each morning where they received a form designed to track behavior and provide an opportunity for behavioral feedback. The student was to take the form to their teachers throughout the day and subsequently returned it to the office each afternoon. This plan did not have any functional analysis component to determine the functionality of the student's misbehavior, and all students received this same intervention regardless of the function of their behavior. The results regarding effectiveness were determined by comparing the number of lunch detentions or office referrals for each student both before and after involvement in the plan. Further, the results regarding effectiveness were analyzed based on teacher responses to a checklist administered to the school personal who knew each student best after the implementation of the behavior education plan (March et al., 2000). This checklist generated a hypothesis regarding why the problem behavior was maintained (i.e. peer or adult attention, escape, etc.). Results indicated that the plan was successful mainly for students who were perceived to engage in problematic behavior in order to gain adult or peer attention. Among those students, many improved their behavior; 80% and 62.5% improved respectively. The results illustrated that the plan was less effective for students who engaged in problematic behavior in order to escape or avoid work; only 27% of those students improved. Further, 40% of the students who participated in the plan demonstrated a 50% or greater increase of problematic behavior suggesting that these students needed a more involved intervention than this plan which did not address the function of their behavior. These students became the participants in the next phases of the study which sought to define and tailor an intervention that addressed the function of the problem behaviors.

During the second phase of the study, three students who had not demonstrated behavioral improvements with the previous plan alone were assessed and individualized interventions were implemented. A multiple baseline across students was used. The functions of the students' behavior were determined using teacher and student interviews and direct observations. Interventions were implemented tailored to each student based on the hypotheses generated. For example, if the analysis suggested that a student's problem behavior was maintained by attention from the teacher or peers, the interventions offered increased attention, contingent upon appropriate behavior. It should be noted here that these students were not demonstrating overtly aggressive or violent behaviors; rather they were typically demonstrating rather mild behaviors such as attention seeking behaviors. Other interventions included manipulation of setting events, and rewards withheld contingent on problematic behavior. Each of these students demonstrated a decrease of problematic. Across all three students the problematic behavior decreased and the academic engagement increased to levels comparable to that of other members within the class. Clearly, when taken together, the results of both phases indicate that although a school wide behavioral support system may be effective for decreasing certain problem behaviors, analysis of the functions of a student's behavior may be more likely to result in improvements in behavior for certain students (March & Horner, 2002).

Doggett, Edwards, Moore, Tingstrom, and Wilczynski (2001) also looked at the effectiveness of functional analysis of behavior for reducing problem behaviors. Again, the problem behaviors under study here were rather mild problem behaviors rather than overt hostility or aggression. Participants were two boys in two general education elementary classrooms whose problem behaviors included out of seat and inappropriate teacher and peer engagement. The researchers used both interviews with the teachers and direct observation to assess behaviors. Once hypotheses were generated, they were verified by teacher implemented manipulation of peer and teacher attention. A single subject, ABAB design was implemented for each student. Both students demonstrated a reduction in problematic behavior contingent upon the manipulation of teacher and peer attention (Doggett, Edwards, Tingstrom & Wilczynski, 2002).

These studies, and many others, demonstrate convincingly that functional analysis of behavior can be an effective classroom intervention to reduce certain types of problematic behavior. Further, March and Horner (2002) demonstrated that a functional analysis of behavior was more likely to result in positive behavioral change than other interventions. However, the research has not yet addressed many questions on the use of functional analysis as a disciplinary approach.

Second Generation Questions

Although there is a plethora research on the effectiveness of functional analysis of behavior for students who have mild or severe behavior disorders, there is less data on use of this intervention for highly aggressive students. Further, there is generally a lack of such a wealth of research on students without disabilities or even students with high incidence disabilities (Reid & Nelson, 2002). Consequently, there are a few questions that remain unanswered regarding FBA implementation in such populations that center on the core premise behind FBA, usability of FBA in a large classroom, and teacher use.

First, it is important to address the use of functional analysis of behavior for students who exhibit aggression or other serious behavioral offences. The use of this approach generally requires that the target behavior be observed on a recurrent basis in order to establish meaningful hypotheses before introduction of an intervention. This becomes difficult when the behavior itself may result in removal from school, or at the very least placement in an OSS program.

Also, there is an issue of time and resources regarding the use of functional analysis of behavior in general education classrooms. In most studies where efficacy of this approach is demonstrated in general education classes, there was a highly trained researcher/observer in the classroom. Would application of functional behavior assessment be feasible with only one teacher in a general education classroom? Although teacher feedback in these studies has been positive, it is noteworthy that this feedback did not center on a question of whether or not the practices could be implemented without the assistance of a highly trained observer/researcher.

With these second generation questions in mind, certainly more research on applications of functional behavioral analysis will be needed. While this disciplinary approach is very useful for many types of behavior problems, more research is needed with the use of this procedure with the more highly aggressive students in the schools.

Strength Based Assessment

Another recently developed alternative is strength based assessment (Epstein, 1998; 1999). Traditionally, students with the most severe behavioral difficulties may have been referred for some type of assessment to pin-point these areas of weakness. These assessments often yield a litany of academic and behavioral weaknesses that can be very exact regarding what is, in essence, wrong with the student. However, professionals are often unsure what to do with such data, and this list of problems does not seem to lend itself to development of effective behavioral interventions. Moreover, because the problems demonstrated by many highly aggressive students are often very similar, it seems to some practitioners that these descriptions of behavior problems are almost interchangeable from one student to another.

Strength based assessment offers a different approach to assessment of students who demonstrate aggressive and other problem behaviors (Epstein, 1998; 1999). This innovation approach involves analysis of areas of strength that the student demonstrates. These strengths center on their accomplishments, relationships with others, and varying abilities. In strength based assessment, these results can then be used to develop interventions for the students that truly build upon these areas.

This type of assessment also invites participation from family members and others close to the student as there seem to be positive ways in which all can help the student build upon strengths while conversely increasing areas that may not be as strong. Epstein and Sharma (1998) have developed the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale a standardized norm referenced measure for use in strength based assessment. It is intended for use with students who have either emotional or behavioral disorders (Epstein & Sharma, 1998). This assessment allows for professionals to have strength based assessment that is easy to use while being both valid and reliable.

Rudolph and Epstein (2000) describe such an approach and intervention with a 9th grade student—Jake-- who has a history of highly aggressive behavior and who had been referred for treatment at a local mental health facility. By using strength based assessment an analysis of Jake's strengths and areas of interest were developed, as well as areas where he needed more support. From this list of his strengths a team was able to improve upon and maintain his areas of strength by planning for him to become a math tutor, to join the school basketball team, to volunteer within his community, and to spend more quality time with his grandparents. Further Jake would participate in anger management, meet with a school counselor, and eat dinner with his family at least three times per week. This type of assessment allowed for a plan to be developed for Jake where many different parties were involved and where his strengths were built upon in order to foster improvement in the subsequent areas of weakness (Rudolf & Epstein, 2000).

This approach to assessing the strengths of students who exhibit problematic behavior seems to demonstrate results that would be viable for use in real behavioral change among aggressive students (Epstein, 1998; 1999; Rudolf & Epstein, 2000). Clearly more research is needed prior to suggesting this approach as a practical alternative to either OSS or ISS within the field. However, innovative approaches such as this may hold to key to development of effective alternatives for discipline of highly aggressive students.

Summary

Educators have historically utilized an array of disciplinary options for highly aggressive students that have been developed over the entire history of public schools. However, today educators must base decisions regarding discipline on the effectiveness of the practices used, and at this time the research reviewed here does not support the continued use of traditional approaches such as OSS and ISS. Given the legal attention which has always followed disciplinary policy (Telzrow, 2001; Troyan, 2003; Ziekel, 2003), administrators who continue to use unsupported interventions such as these may find themselves subject to legal action.

In contrast, the research on a variety of promising practices seems to suggest that there are appropriate alternatives to OSS and ISS. These may include strength based assessment and/or functional behavioral analysis and interventions, or alternative programs focused on development of positive relationships between teachers and students. Further, the most troubled students seem to do better in alternative schools where there is a caring staff, offering a highly flexible program. There needs to be further research on all of these promising practices, in order for system administrators to have solid research on which to base their disciplinary decisions.

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The Effects of Functional Communication Training on the Appropriate Behavior of a Student with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

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Abstract

Functional analysis is used to generate and test hypotheses, specific to an individual's appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, by directly manipulating antecedent and consequent events within natural or analog environments. In the case that a function(s) was not determined or the behavior has multiple motivations during the functional analysis, interventions that can address multiple functions may be implemented. One intervention which is flexible to address multiple functions maintaining target behaviors is functional communication training (FCT). The purpose of this study was to assess whether FCT, when implemented to address the traditional functional communicative responses of attention, escape, and tangible, would affect the appropriate behavior of a student with emotional and behavioral disorders during regularly scheduled independent academic activities. During assessment, the functional analysis results suggested that attention was the primary functional variable; however, both tangible and escape functional variables also were effecting the target behavior. The results of the FCT intervention suggest that FCT positively affected his appropriate behavior and influenced the rate of unprompted appropriate communications.

The Effects of Functional Communication Training on the Appropriate Behavior of a Student with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Functional analysis methods have been shown to be an effective means of identifying functional relationships between behavior(s) and environment(s). These methods have been applied to the complex behaviors of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) (e.g., Clarke et al., 1995; Dunlap et al., 1993; Kamps, Ellis, Mancina, Wyble, & Greene, 1995; Kern, Childs, Dunlap, Clarke, & Falk, 1994; Lawry, Storey, & Danko, 1993). Functional analysis methodology can include both social and academic behaviors and typically consists of the repeated and direct measurement of behaviors under various environmental conditions (Sasso & Reimers, 1988). The resulting information is used to develop interventions designed to address such behaviors (Dolstra
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et al., 2004; Iwata et al., 1990; Lawry, Storey, & Danko, 1993; Marcus, Ringdahl, Roane, & Vollmer, 1999; Rutherford & Nelson, 1995).

Although the research literature is replete with studies which have utilized functional analysis, the approach does have its limitations. Carr, Yarbrough, and Langdon (1997) suggest that many behavioral problems are motivated and maintained by multiple stimuli which may or may not be identified in the functional analysis process. If the function(s) maintaining an inappropriate behavior is not identified, intervention may be based on the clinical judgment of a practitioner rather than on empirical evidence. However, in cases where a clear function is not identified during a functional analysis, one alternative might be the development and implementation of interventions that may simultaneously address multiple functions.

One intervention which may address both the identified and unidentified function (or functions) maintaining inappropriate student behavior and that provides functionally equivalent behaviors is functional communication training (FCT). FCT is an intervention that teaches individuals to use appropriate communicative behaviors (either verbal or physical) as alternatives to inappropriate behavior (Carr & Durand, 1985; Durand & Carr, 1992; Wacker et al., 1990). The behavioral premise that most behavior communicates a message is the foundation of FCT (Carr & Durand, 1987). For example, inappropriate behaviors may act as a form of nonverbal communication to request specific preferred outcomes (e.g., attention from someone, access to a tangible object, escape from an activity or situation) (Kelley, Lerman, & Van Camp, 2002; Marcus et al., 1999; Sigafos & Meikle, 1996).

Few studies have investigated the utility of FCT to reduce inappropriate behavior controlled by more than a single function. Day, Horner, and O'Neill (1994) studied the effect that FCT had on the target behaviors (i.e., aggression and self-injury) of 2 females aged 9 and 34 years with autism and severe intellectual disabilities, respectively, and 1 male aged 18 years with severe intellectual disabilities. The results of the functional analyses for all three participants suggested that the target behaviors served multiple functions, to escape from difficult tasks and to gain preferred tangible objects. All participants were then taught an appropriate communicative response to escape difficult tasks and a communicative response to gain preferred tangible items. The results of the FCT intervention showed decreases in the target behaviors and increases in the communicative responses. Sigafos and Meikle (1996) studied the effect that FCT had on the challenging behaviors of two 8-year-old males with autism using errorless learning strategies within their classroom. The results of the functional analyses suggested that both participants' inappropriate behaviors were being maintained in order to gain attention and request preferred tangible objects. Both students were taught alternative communicative responses to appropriately request attention and preferred tangible objects from an adult. The results of the FCT intervention showed that both students' challenging behaviors decreased and remained at low levels even when the adult prompts to use the appropriate communicative responses were faded. Kelley et al. (2002) studied the effect of FCT on three students aged 9 and 10 years old with mental retardation who engaged in a variety of inappropriate behaviors (i.e., aggression, disruption). The results of the functional analysis for all three participants suggested that the target behaviors served multiple functions. Each student was taught alternative communicative responses which matched their specific combination of maintaining functions. The results of the FCT intervention showed decreases in inappropriate behaviors for two of three students. These three studies suggest that the teaching of multiple appropriate, alternative communicative responses can be an effective intervention to manage inappropriate behaviors when the functional analysis data reflect multiple maintaining functions.

The inappropriate behaviors exhibited by students with EBD are complex and may affect the functional analysis results when conducted in applied settings (e.g., special education classroom). For example, the functional analysis data may demonstrate that the inappropriate behaviors are maintained by more than one function, or the data are unclear as to which functions are affecting the behavior (e.g., mixed results). To date, decreases in inappropriate behaviors have resulted when FCT interventions have been implemented to teach alternative communicative responses for both the primary motivating function and to simultaneously address two motivating functions as identified from the functional analysis data. However, FCT may also be effective for decreasing inappropriate behaviors when implemented for more than two motivating functions that may or may not have been identified through functional analysis data. The primary purpose of this study was to assess whether FCT, when implemented to address multiple motivations of student's behaviors, would lead to decreases in the behaviors of a student with EBD during regularly scheduled independent academic activities. The FCT intervention was conducted in a manner that provided the student with communication prompts for appropriate communicative responses that matched not only the primary functions of the student's behavior, but also two additional functions which surfaced during the functional analysis.

Method

Student and Setting

Steve was a 9-year-old third grader with EBD and a speech and language disorder. Teacher reports indicated that Steve's behavior was unpredictable (e.g., frequent elopement, mood swings), explosive (e.g., aggression towards peers, destruction of property) in the classroom, and that he demanded constant adult attention (e.g., constantly talking to adults). Teacher reports also stated that Steve lacked basic social skills (e.g., initiating, sharing), especially when interacting with peers as well as pragmatic language deficits in multiple environments. Teacher ratings using behavioral checklists indicated that Steve was rated high in the areas of aggression and low concentration, and low in the area of social skills. Psychological and academic testing concluded that Steve functioned academically at grade level. Steve performed at the 7th percentile with an overall IQ of 78 on the WISC-III. His verbal IQ was 89 (23rd percentile) and performance IQ was 71 (3rd percentile).

Steve attended a seven week summer program for students with EBD at an alternative public elementary school during this study. Six students (five males and one female) aged 9 to 12 years and three adults (one teacher, two teacher associates) were in Steve's class. During both baseline and the intervention phases, Steve's peers and teachers were present. Steve sat at his regularly assigned desk among his peers for all sessions of both the functional analysis and intervention. Approximately 30 students aged 9 to 14 years of age attended this summer program.

Materials

The materials used for both the assessment and intervention conditions were found in Steve's summer academic curriculum. This curriculum was primarily grade level small group and independent activities in the areas of math and writing. The math and writing activities consisted of photocopied worksheets from a third grade math workbook which Steve had not used during the school year. All the math and writing activities were estimated to require 15 to 20 minutes to complete. These activities were reported by the teacher to be Steve's preferred academic areas. These materials were not adapted for purposes of this study.

Data Collection

Both the functional analysis and FCT intervention sessions were videotaped. Prior to the initiation of the investigation, the first author spent one week in Steve's classroom with the video recorder in order to decrease the likelihood of researcher and video equipment influence. The tripod and video recorder were positioned at a right angle approximately 5 feet from Steve's desk on the side of the classroom. Data for both the student dependent variables and teacher independent variables were scored from the videotaped sessions. Data were coded from a total of twelve 5 min sessions for the functional analysis and from a total of sixteen 15 min sessions for the FCT intervention.

Assessment

Functional analysis. A functional analysis was conducted with Steve prior to the implementation of the FCT intervention. The purpose of the functional analysis was to determine the variables maintaining Steve's inappropriate behavior when presented with independent curricular activities. The functional analysis was conducted during flexible instructional time (e.g., when Steve finished his work early) across three days in Steve's classroom. The effects of the functional analysis were measured using an initial analysis phase with the introduction of free play, attention, escape, and tangible conditions followed by subsequent verification phases alternating between the above conditions until a clear pattern emerged. The first author conducted the functional analysis sessions.

Procedures

During the functional analysis, Steve was presented with an academic activity for the initial conditions of attention, escape, and tangible as well as the subsequent verification conditions (e.g., highest percentage of appropriate behavior and lowest percentage of appropriate behavior). No academic activity was present in the free play condition. Each condition was conducted one at a time. Steve was presented with the academic activity and based upon his behavior (e.g., inappropriate), he was allowed to either access adult attention, discontinue his engagement in the activity, or access a game for a brief period of time. During the free play condition, Steve and the researcher sat at Steve's desk with markers and colored paper. No academic demands were presented to Steve and he received continual social praise (e.g., "You drew a cool picture") while he colored pictures and played games (i.e., tic-tac-toe). During the attention condition, Steve was presented with an academic activity (e.g., worksheet) to complete independently as the researcher sat next to his desk reading a teachers spelling manual. When Steve displayed inappropriate behavior, he was provided with attention with statements disapproving of his inappropriate behavior (e.g., "I wish you would stop looking around the room", "I wish you wouldn't leave your desk"), however, when Steve displayed appropriate behavior (e.g., working on the academic activity) he was ignored.

During the tangible conditions, Steve was again presented with an academic activity while the researcher sat next to him reading. In addition to the academic activity, a preferred game was placed on the corner of Steve's desk. When Steve displayed inappropriate behavior, the researcher told Steve he could play with the game. Steve was permitted to play with the game for 10 s for each occurrence of inappropriate behavior. After the 10 s, Steve was prompted to work on his academic activity. Steve's appropriate behaviors were ignored. During the escape condition, Steve was prompted to work on an academic activity that his teacher deemed difficult. The researcher sat next to Steve and read once the activity was presented. When Steve displayed inappropriate behavior, the academic activity was removed for 10 s without approval or disapproval statements from the researcher. After the 10 s, the academic activity was again presented to Steve. Steve's appropriate behaviors were ignored.

Measures

The dependent variables for the functional analysis were determined based on informal observations of Steve during independent academic assignments with assistance from his teacher. The student dependent variables for the functional analysis were appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Appropriate behavior was defined as working on an activity requested by an adult within 10 s of a prompt to begin the independent curricular activity, eyes and hands on materials specific to the activity, compliance with adult directions, and body either in assigned chair or standing next to assigned chair. Inappropriate behavior was defined as aggression, throwing objects on the floor or at another person, refusal to perform an activity within 10 s of the adult prompt to begin the independent curricular activity, or a period of 5 consecutive seconds in which the student was not engaged in the activity (e.g., looking around the room, staring into space, talking with peers about unrelated topics, placing head on desk), destroying property (e.g., ripping worksheets, breaking pencils), and elopement from the assigned area without adult permission (e.g., leaving the classroom, walking around the classroom). These behaviors were recorded using a 10 s partial interval recording procedure. If Steve displayed inappropriate behavior during any portion of a 10 s interval, that interval was coded as inappropriate.

Results of the functional analysis

The conditions with the highest percentages of inappropriate behavior were considered to be the primary function motivating Steve's behavior. During the initial functional analysis phase, Steve displayed the highest percentage of inappropriate behavior during the attention condition and the lowest percentage of inappropriate behavior during the free play condition (47% and 0%, respectively). Steve displayed similar percentages of inappropriate behavior for both the escape and tangible conditions (30% and 33%, respectively). The conditions with the highest and lowest percentages of inappropriate behaviors were then reintroduced to verify the initial functional analysis results in a verification analysis. During the verification functional analysis phase, the conditions were conducted three more times each. Since Steve had a history of unpredictable behavior which varied from day to day, it was decided that multiple verifications of the highest and lowest percentages of inappropriate behavior conditions conducted over several school days were more representative than a single verification. Again, Steve consistently displayed higher percentages of inappropriate behavior during the attention conditions as compared to the free play conditions. In the first, second, and third verification phases for attention, Steve displayed inappropriate behavior in 33%, 40%, and 43% of the intervals. Steve did not display any inappropriate behavior (0%) during the free play verification phases. Since the verification of the attention condition produced percentages of inappropriate behaviors similar to the initial tangible condition, the tangible condition and free play condition were reintroduced during the verification

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phases. In this final verification, Steve displayed higher percentages of inappropriate behavior during the tangible condition than the free play condition (27% and 0%, respectively).

Steve's inappropriate behavior occurred at its highest level during the attention phase of the functional analysis. However, this analysis also showed that the target behavior occurred under conditions of escape and tangible contingencies. From our interpretation, these data show that the inappropriate behavior displayed by Steve was influenced by multiple variables. Thus, an intervention based solely on an attention variable might not adequately reduce the target behavior.

FCT Intervention

The FCT intervention was designed to teach Steve alternative communication phrases related to the multiple factors associated with his inappropriate behaviors. The intervention sessions were conducted during regularly scheduled independent work activities. Each intervention session was 15 min in length. One to two intervention sessions were conducted daily. The first author conducted the intervention sessions. A withdrawal design (Kazdin, 1982) was used to assess the effectiveness of the FCT intervention on Steve's inappropriate behavior in the classroom to demonstrate experimental control of the intervention.

Baseline

In the baseline condition, no alterations in instruction, directions, or reinforcement occurred. During baseline sessions, the class was instructed by their teacher that it was time to work on their independent assignments and to sit at their desks. Once Steve was situated at his desk, the first author gave Steve either a math or writing activity to complete. After Steve received his independent activity, the researcher walked away and sat at a desk approximately 8 feet away. During the baseline sessions, if Steve appropriately requested assistance with the activity, materials (e.g., more paper) to complete the activity, or time to take a break from the activity, his request was granted. Appropriately requesting assistance, materials, or a break in this classroom occurred when the students raised their hands and waited for a teacher to attend to them. If Steve requested assistance with the activity, the researcher answered his questions and then returned to her desk. If Steve requested additional materials, the researcher brought him the materials and then returned to her desk. If Steve requested a break from the activity, the researcher granted him a break of 15 s during which he sat at his desk quietly. After the 15 s, the researcher verbally prompted Steve from her desk to begin his activity again. During baseline, Steve's inappropriate behaviors (e.g., elopement) were not attended to by either the researcher or his teacher.

Functional communication training

The beginning of the FCT sessions were identical to the baseline sessions. After Steve received his independent activity, the researcher read from a script which prompted Steve to use his appropriate communication skills to gain favorable outcomes during each FCT session. The researcher said: "Steve, if you need help with this (referring to the current academic activity), raise your hand and say 'I need help'. If you want to take break from this, raise your hand and say 'I need a break'. If you need some materials to do this, raise your hand and say 'I need some materials'." After reading the script, the researcher walked away and sat at a desk approximately 8 feet away from his. Given the high frequency of inappropriate behavior displayed by Steve during the baseline conditions, it was decided that frequent noncontingent reading of the script to Steve to use his appropriate communicative responses was necessary. This script was read between 9 and 12 times per FCT intervention session regardless of whether Steve was displaying appropriate or

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inappropriate behavior. Given the limited summer school days in which to work with Steve, we were unable to fade or decrease the number of times the script was read. The purpose of the script was to standardize the appropriate communication prompt given by the researcher for Steve to use any one of the three functions (i.e., attention, escape, tangible) which may be maintaining his inappropriate behaviors. The order of the three communicative prompts were randomly read. Again, if Steve requested assistance with the activity, the researcher answered his questions and then returned to her desk, if he requested additional materials, the researcher brought him the materials and then returned to her desk, and if he requested a break from the activity, the researcher granted him a break of 15 s during which he sat his desk quietly. After the 15 s, the researcher verbally prompted Steve from her desk to begin his activity again. Steve's inappropriate behaviors during the FCT sessions were not attended to.

Measures

Data were collected on multiple student behaviors: (a) appropriate behavior, (b) inappropriate behavior, (c) prompted appropriate communication, and (d) unprompted appropriate communication. Data also were collected on the adult behavior of communication prompts. The level of adult prompting were collected to insure fidelity of the intervention. Behaviors were recorded using a continuous 6 s interval recording procedure.

The student dependent variables for the FCT intervention were operationally defined as follows: appropriate behavior and inappropriate behavior were defined the same as used in the assessment phase; prompted appropriate communication, an utterance from the student toward the adult within 6 s of an adult prompt that indicated a specific meaning, such as asking for help, requesting materials related to completing the activity, or requesting a break from the activity; and unprompted appropriate communication, an utterance from the student directed toward the adult, that was not within 6 s from the most recent adult prompt, indicating a specific meaning. Both the prompted and unprompted appropriate communication variables were coded as either attention, tangible, or escape. For example, if the student raised his hand and said, "I need help with this", attention was scored; if the student raised his hand and said, "I need another piece of paper", tangible was scored; and if the student raised his hand and said, "I want to take a break", escape was scored. Such student responses were then scored as either prompted or unprompted depending on how many seconds had passed since the last adult communication prompt was delivered.

The independent variable for the adult was operationally defined as follows: communication prompt, a specific prompt verbalized by the adult for the student to use appropriate communication to indicate the students needs, such as asking for help, requesting materials, or requesting a break from the activity. The adult communication prompt included all three functional communicative responses each time the prompt was delivered to the student.

Interobserver agreement

Interobserver agreement on the occurrence and nonoccurrence of the dependent and independent variables were assessed for 23% of the sessions (across all conditions). Interobserver reliability was calculated on an interval-by-interval basis by dividing the number of agreements by the total number of agreements plus disagreements and multiplying by 100. Interobserver agreement for student appropriate behavior ranged from 90% to 100% with a mean of 97% and inappropriate behavior ranged from 83% to 100% with a mean of 98%. Interobserver agreement for student prompted and unprompted appropriate communication by function type (attention, escape, and tangible) were 100%. Interobserver agreement for teacher communication prompt behavior was

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100%. Interobserver agreement was conducted by a researcher who was trained extensively in behavioral observation.

Results

Figure 1 illustrates the percentages of Steve's appropriate and inappropriate behaviors during baseline and the FCT intervention. During baseline, Steve displayed moderate and variable percentages of appropriate behavior, ranging from 17% to 69% (mean = 42.40). When the FCT intervention was implemented, Steve's appropriate behavior increased to a more steady percentage of appropriate behavior, ranging from 87% to 96% (mean = 90.86). However, when the FCT intervention was withdrawn, Steve's appropriate behavior decreased to 40%. With the reintroduction of the FCT intervention, Steve's appropriate behavior again increased, ranging from 85% to 95% (mean = 90.00).

Table 1 illustrates the number of times Steve used both his prompted and unprompted communication during baseline and the FCT intervention. During the five baseline conditions, Steve had a higher rate of unprompted attention responses ranging from 3 to 12 (mean = 3.20) as compared with both unprompted tangible or escape responses ranging from 0 to 1 (mean = 0.40) and remaining constant at 0, respectively. When the FCT intervention was introduced over a period of seven sessions, Steve's unprompted attention responses ranged from 3 to 9 (mean = 6.14), remained higher than either the unprompted tangible or escape responses, both ranged from 0 to 1 (means were 0.43 and 0.14, respectively). Steve's unprompted attention responses were also higher than his prompted attention, ranging from 0 to 3 (mean = 1.71), prompted tangible responses ranged from 0 to 1 (mean = 0.14), and prompted escape responses remained at 0. An accelerating trend of Steve's unprompted attention communication was evident when the FCT intervention was first introduced. With the return to baseline, Steve's unprompted attention responses, 3, remained higher than that of his unprompted tangible and escape responses, 1 and 0 respectively. When the FCT intervention was reintroduced, Steve's unprompted attention responses, ranged from 10 to 12 (mean = 11.00), were higher than that of his unprompted tangible and escape responses, both were at 0, and his prompted attention responses, ranged from 1 to 2 (mean = 1.33), tangible and escape responses, both were at 0.

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Figure 1

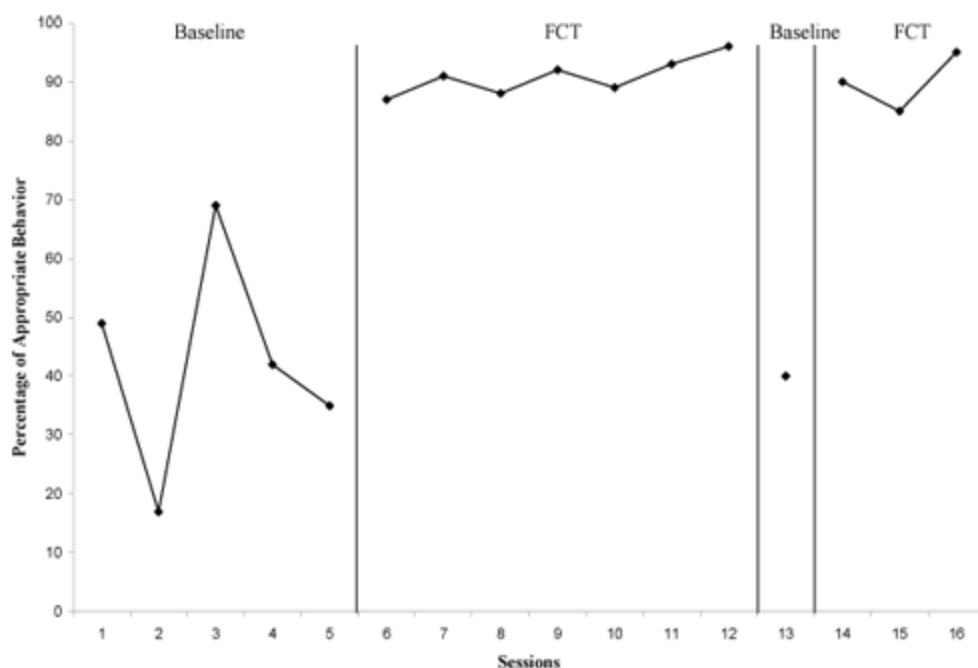


Table 1

Table 2.
Mean Number of student Unprompted and Prompted Communication Responses by
Function and Phase

Function Intervention		Phase			
		Baseline	FCT Intervention	Baseline	FCT
Attention					
	Unprompted	3.20	6.14	3.00	11.00
	Prompted	NA	1.71	NA	1.33
Tangible					
	Unprompted	0.00	0.43	0.00	0.00
	Prompted	NA	0.14	NA	0.00
Escape					
	Unprompted	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.00
	Prompted	NA	0.00	NA	0.00

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess whether FCT, when implemented to address the traditional functional communicative responses of the functional motivations of attention, escape, and tangible, would effect the appropriate and inappropriate behaviors of a student with EBD during regularly scheduled independent academic activities. The results of this study showed that the

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implementation of the FCT, noncontingent prompting, as a multiple function intervention (e.g., attention, tangible, escape) did positively affect Steve's appropriate and inappropriate behaviors even though the intervention was not developed to specifically address his inappropriate behaviors. The decreases associated with the implementation of the FCT intervention were achieved without having to provide additional behavioral management strategies (Sigafoos & Meikle, 1996).

Although other students have used multiple functional forms of appropriate communication (Day et al., 1994; Kelley et al., 2002; Sigafoos & Meikle, 1996), these studies included students with more clearly interpreted functional analysis results. The results of our functional analysis suggested that Steve's inappropriate behaviors were being maintained by up to three variables. That is, the functional analysis showed that some of Steve's inappropriate behaviors were being maintained by attention, escape, and tangible functions. These results highlight the feasibility of using FCT as a possible means to address unclear or multiply motivated behaviors.

There were several interesting observations made during the course of this study. First, it should be noted that Steve almost exclusively invoked the attention communicative response (i.e., raise his hand and say 'I need help'). Steve's choice of a communicative response corresponded with the functional analysis condition with the highest level of inappropriate behavior. There are multiple interpretations of this observation. First, Steve's inappropriate behavior could have been truly motivated by the attention function in that he used his inappropriate behaviors during independent academic activities to gain adult attention. If the academic activities presented to Steve were too difficult, they may have influenced his behavior; however, this was unlikely because the activities were appropriate for Steve's ability and grade level. Second, the FCT intervention provided Steve with functionally equivalent forms of communication from which he could choose and use when he wanted, with or without adult prompts, in order to gain more predictable access to adult attention. It remains unclear as to whether Steve understood that he had a choice between the three functional variables even though all three functional variables were provided in a random order in each adult prompt. Did he know that he could have also accessed the escape or tangible responses? If Steve did understand that he had a choice, then the results of this study may suggest that Steve was specifically choosing the attention communicative response in order to better control his environment or to meet his own needs when presented with independent academic activities.

Future studies are needed to determine if the FCT intervention targeting three functional variables is necessary to affect student behaviors. Perhaps a combination of two functional variables, or just the primary functional variable would lead to improved student behavior when the functional analysis data suggest that more than one variable is maintaining the student's behavior. For example, after the baseline and FCT intervention (as a package) phases are implemented then each separate functional variable and combination of functional variables can be introduced to determine the most effective FCT intervention for the student.

Several experimental limitations occurred in this study. First, the effects of this FCT intervention was assessed with only one student. Replications of this study with other students with EBD are warranted to determine whether or not using FCT in this manner will also positively affect student behavior when assessment data are unclear. Another limitation of this study was that no control for the increased attention provided to Steve occurred. That is, by providing frequent adult prompts to Steve, we may have inadvertently provided Steve with adult attention each time an adult prompt was given. One method of addressing this limitation would be to provide Steve with only a single

adult prompt and compare that frequency of adult prompts to the number he received as part of this study to determine if the attention provided during the adult prompting was influencing the decrease in his inappropriate behavior. A third limitation was that only a single session was conducted during the second baseline. After the FCT intervention was withdrawn, Steve's appropriate behavior decreased by approximately 50% as compared to his mean levels of appropriate behavior during the FCT intervention. After this session was conducted, Steve's low level of appropriate behavior continued to worsen as the school day progressed. Steve's teacher and other school staff expressed concern that Steve's high levels of inappropriate behavior would continue and he would end the summer school session in a negative behavioral cycle. Given that there were only 3 remaining school days of the summer session and for ethical reasons, the FCT intervention was re-implemented. Future studies will need to demonstrate a stable data pattern prior to the return to intervention.

A practical limitation of this study was that the classroom teacher herself did not implement either the functional analysis or FCT intervention. Prior to this study, Steve's teacher had had no prior experience or training on how to conduct functional analyses in her classroom. By having the investigator conduct the functional analysis and implement the FCT intervention, Steve's teacher was provided with a model and training of how both procedures can be performed in classroom environments without disrupting the classroom routine. It is important that future studies investigate the effectiveness of teachers trained in these procedures using similar student dependent variables. Both functional analyses and FCT interventions show promising results and are both feasible and appropriate for teachers to implement with students with EBD in classroom settings. Future research may also want to fade the adult communicative prompts and delay the reinforcement so as to better mirror the natural classroom environment. For example, the adult communicative prompts could be delivered on different schedules during the various phases and the teacher's response to a functional request by the student could be acted on using longer time delays between the request and response. This study provided a steady rate of adult communication prompts for the intervention phases and immediate teacher responses to the student requests. Some students with EBD may require fewer communication prompts by an immediate teacher response, or vice versa to influence the target behavior(s). Future research should continue to investigate the use of functional analysis methods with students with EBD in order to better match the student's individual needs to appropriate intervention. Especially as more and more classroom teachers are conducting these analyses on their own.

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School-Age Homeless Children

Crucial Transporters of Literacy Activities in the Shelter

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Abstract

While research on emergent literacy development provides a comprehensive picture of the factors that are conducive to children's early literacy development, environments of young preschool children living in overnight and residential shelters have not been investigated from an emergent literacy perspective. Results of my comprehensive study on the emergent literacy development of children living at a homeless shelter, uncovered the role of older school-age children (among other factors) in providing unique opportunities for younger children's literacy interactions. This article aims to describe these children's activities in detail in an attempt to promote further research and discussion in the area of homeless children's educational and literacy development.

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Research on literacy development of children has provided educators and policymakers with evidence on the importance of facilitating literacy during early years of child development. By investigating the life circumstances of successful young readers in environments of affluence and poverty, researchers have identified factors that are conducive to children's early literacy development. However, a void exists in this extensive research. Environments of young preschool children living in overnight and residential shelters have not been investigated from an emergent literacy perspective and thus the broad question of how these environments influence these children's literacy remains unanswered.

Since education is considered to be the key to breaking the cycle of homelessness (Bassuk, 1990; Nunez, 1994; Vissing, 1996), and early literacy development is closely linked to later academic success (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988), it is imperative that we closely examine literacy development of young homeless children.

The purpose of my study was to understand the ways in which shelter life influenced the literacy development of young children. My study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What was the nature of shelter living for children and mothers at the shelter?
2. How did the families' activities influence the literacy development of their children?
3. What were the characteristics of the shelter environment that influenced the literacy development of children?

In this paper however, I will primarily focus on the results related to one of the characteristics of the shelter environment that influenced the literacy development of children. This was the role of school-age children in the lives of the younger children. This was a very significant finding because of its implications for providing the much needed services to all children at the shelter.

The research on emergent literacy has provided us with insight into the social nature of literacy development. Regarding the emergent literacy development, research shows that literacy development involves "both learning (on the part of the child) and teaching (on the part of the parents or other significant literate persons in the child's environment)" (Teale, 1982, p. 317). Implicit in this research is notion that social interaction is crucial for the emergent literacy development of young children (Slaughter-Defoe, 1992). One way in which parents in past studies were able to engage their children in meaningful literacy interactions was through shared book reading. Shared book reading is "undoubtedly one of the most powerful catalysts for young children's language and literacy development" (Strickland & Morrow, 1989, p. 29). Research on the importance of shared book reading indicates that parents and older siblings who regularly read to the young children assisted in the children's early literacy development (Mason & Kerr, 1992; Morrow, 1989; Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Taylor, 1983; Sulzby, 1985; Teale, 1995). The results of the Norman-Jackson (1982) study showed that low-income African-American children who were successful readers were different from low-income African-American children who were unsuccessful readers not because of the verbal interactions with their parents, but because of the amount of interactions with the older siblings.

The interaction involved in shared book reading also improves the educational outcomes for young children (Heath, 1983; IRA & NAEYC, 1998; Taylor, 1983; Strickland, 1989) and it provides attachment security in becoming literate (Bus & Ijzendoorn, 1995). In fact "no other single activity is regarded as important as the shared experience between caregivers and children" (Neuman, 1999, p. 286).

My study provided an initial framework for studying the shelter environments with respect to literacy.

Method

Research Context

In this study I utilized the qualitative case study methodology to understand the emergent literacy development of children at a residential homeless shelter. Case study research is one type of qualitative research, and it shares basic assumptions about the construction of knowledge with other types of qualitative research. Qualitative research is an umbrella concept which covers several forms of "inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). The key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research is based is the "view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Thus, the qualitative researcher is interested in gaining insight into the meanings that "people have constructed" (p. 6). It "implies a direct concern with experiences as they are 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'" (Sherman and Webb, 1988, p. 7).

Another attractive feature of qualitative research is that it can be used to describe a process. That is, it can show "how all the parts work together to form a whole" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Finally, in

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the search for knowledge and understanding of the human condition, qualitative researchers "perceive what is happening in key episodes or testimonies, represent happenings with their own direct interpretation and stories (i.e. narratives)" (Stake, 1995, p. 40). The qualitative researcher utilizes these narratives to "optimize the opportunity of the reader to gain an experiential understanding of the case" (Stake, 1995, p. 40).

For my study, the case was a group of residents in a homeless shelter. Within that context I studied the children's emergent literacy development.

My research was conducted at a residential shelter for women and children in a large city in the Midwest. Joseph's (fictional name) residential shelter houses thirty families. Currently the community's unemployment rate is higher than the city-wide average. The median income of a family in this community is among the lowest in the city, and a third of the population lives in poverty. The community is also ranked high in gang murders, rapes, drug and alcohol addiction, and teen pregnancies.

The shelter was ten years old at the time of the study. It was established because the sponsoring agency that consulted in prisons around the country, realized that women had no place to go when they left prison, and they had nowhere to take their children. The shelter was one of the very few places that accepted the women directly from prison. Initially, there were only single women, but by 1991 there were more women with children arriving.

Eight families were participants in this study. They were selected on the basis of their willingness to be in the study and if they had young children. I also included families with older children if they were interacting with the younger children in the study. Since the duration of their stay was uncertain, I started interviewing as soon I met a family who had young children. These families stayed at the shelter between one to twenty-four weeks. For some, this was the first shelter in which they had resided; for others it was their second or third. I explained to all of participants, their rights regarding the study and they gave verbal or written consent if they chose to participate. Some of the families did not want to sign the consent form because they were uncomfortable signing documents. However, they willingly consented on the tape during the interviews. The children whom I focused on were of ages 3 to 12.

Families in my study were housed in whichever dorms had space. Some dorms had a number of young children and a few older school-age children, and others had no children at all. There was a small playground outside the shelter with a slide set and a playhouse.

In describing the families, I have changed the names of the mothers and their children, and information pertaining to the exact dates of their stay, so that their anonymity is maintained. The shelter administration kept dates of entry and exit, and this information could be used to identify the families described in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures for my study included direct observations, structured and open-ended interviews techniques as well as collection of literacy-related documents at the shelter and at the Head Start program. The duration of data collection was six months. I decided on the six-month time frame because the shelter traditionally limited families' stay to four months, but in some circumstances extended it for a longer period.

In this study, it was not possible to collect equal amounts of data due to families' differing lengths of stay at the shelter. During the course of six months, I observed the young children, the older school-age children, the parents, the teachers, shelter and classroom dynamics, and the young children's interaction with all these different individuals in different settings over the course of six-months.

During the first few days of data collection, I observed a variety of activities to gain an understanding of daily shelter routines of the children and the other residents. I noted that there was a set of schedules of activities as well as a relatively predictable set of activities on the part of the mothers and their children. At the start of the study there were only two families with preschool-aged children. I shadowed two children for two days from breakfast to dinner to get a sense of their daily routines. Since Ellen (five-years old) and Grace (five-years old) were in two separate dorms, I followed Ellen one day and Grace the other. I noted down the names of people they interacted with and the type and duration of each activity. Also, for one week I observed the shelter routines in general to understand what structured activities were designed for the residents to participate in. The first week of observation revealed that there were two or less structured programs that the residents attended daily, aside from breakfast, lunch and dinner. While Ellen stayed at the shelter for sixteen weeks, Grace only stayed for three weeks.

The day started off with the older school-age children and a few mothers getting ready for school or work. Some of the mothers accompanied their children to their schools since school buses did not arrive at the shelter. While these children and their mothers were gone, the preschool children (who did not attend the Head Start) were babysat by other residents and they occupied themselves by playing with their toys or by staying in their beds until lunch. Those preschool children who attended the shelter Head Start began getting ready by 10:00 a.m. Both the preschoolers and the older school-age children arrived back at the shelter by 3:00 p.m. The shelter then bustled with activity.

As new families with preschooler arrived at the shelter, I observed them during the day. Some families did not enroll their preschoolers at the Head Start and spent the day away from the shelter.

Thus, I developed an understanding of the routines at the shelter. I planned my observations such as to optimize my time at the shelter. I visited from 11:00 a.m. to sometimes 8:00 p.m. I observed the preschoolers (Ellen and Grace) as they prepared to go to the Head Start and followed them to the Head Start. These interactions took place between 3:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

After each observation, I typed my notes in the form of chronological narratives. Each transcript was analyzed and compared to the previous ones to clarify or complement the findings in addition to identifying foci for subsequent observations.

For the purposes of my study, formal, open-ended interviews were initially conducted in two areas: (1) Family background and experiences with homelessness and (2) Children's literacy development prior to coming to the shelter. The family background interviews were structured to put the mother at ease and to provide similar data from all families.

The goal of the interviews on family background and experiences with homelessness was to get a picture of the family background, schooling, employment experiences, support services, shelter living, and future goals. After I had been at the shelter for one month, I began interviewing. The goal of the questions pertaining to the children's literacy development prior to coming to the shelter, was to obtain information regarding past literacy practices of the mothers and their children, particularly in their daily routines.

I made every attempt to understand the ways in which the children at the shelter used print. Thus, I kept an inventory of printed material in each dorm throughout the study. Furthermore, I collected samples of printed materials from the children and the families. On a few occasions, the children offered their writings to me as a gift. I also obtained copies of the shelter rules and materials from the shelter programs.

The most challenging part of this study was constantly balancing my level of involvement with the women and children at the shelter with my role as a researcher. From the time I entered the shelter, I felt attached to the children.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began on the first day of the study and continued throughout the study. Throughout the period of my data collection, I read and reread the gathered data to locate concepts that would provide direction for further data collection. In addition to this, I compiled reflective notes in the margins of my field notes. As this data collection and analysis continued, I searched for connections between concepts and the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss 1967) of data analysis. "The constant comparative method of data analysis was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the means of developing grounded theory. A grounded theory consists of categories, properties, and hypotheses that are the conceptual links between and among the categories and properties. Because the basic strategy of the constant comparative method is compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research, the constant comparative method of data analysis has been adopted by many researchers who are not seeking to build substantive theory" (Merriam, 1998, p. 159).

Using this method, I was able to "move through multiple levels of data, seeking recurring themes that [could] be explored in greater depth" (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p. 228). This process involved identifying the units (initial words or phrases) that emerged from the field notes, comparing the units to each other, and placing them into themes. I indexed field notes, developing categories from field notes of observations, and also from interview data. Then I rechecked those categories to see if they held up, and as I developed new categories, going back to the earlier field notes. This process ended when I exhausted the categories.

Results

The presence of older school-age children in the shelter dorms provided a unique opportunity for younger children's literacy interactions. Joseph's shelter did offer a variety of programs for shelter residents, but these programs were limited in the way they addressed the educational and emotional needs of both school-age and younger children. These programs included counseling, job training, computer training, health training, community meeting, parenting classes, and the playgroup for children. In addition to these meetings, the residents were also encouraged to schedule time during the day for attending the computer room and making appointments with the social worker.

The Head Start at the shelter was considered by all the families to be an important component of the shelter. It had four classrooms. Two classrooms were for children ages three and four, and two classrooms for children ages five and six. It offered a morning program (9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.) and an afternoon program (12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.). Although this program was part of the shelter, it also serviced children from the neighborhood and thus provided the children at the shelter some exposure to the surrounding community. It was an important part of this community since it provided the neighborhood children with a safe learning environment. Families at the shelter noted that they did not need to spend money on transportation to send their children elsewhere. It also provided them with the opportunity to work during the day and not spend extra money on babysitting.

Although the families expressed a sense of relief about this facility and started registration paper work upon their arrival into the shelter, during the course of my study only two children from the shelter attended the program. Incomplete or missing immunization records were the primary reason many young children at the shelter could not attend the program. Also, the rate of high transience prevented some of the children from utilizing this program. Furthermore, the two children who attended the program were only there till 3:00 p.m. and spent the rest of the evening and weekends without any structured activities.

It was during these long stretches of unstructured time, the older school-age children stepped in to provide rare learning and play opportunities. These activities were not frequent since there was an unequal ratio of older and younger children in each dorm, and the high transient rates of families in general.

Furthermore, these older children could only initiate these activities if their mothers were getting along with the mothers of the younger children. Children changed from one activity to another sporadically. Isolated literacy actions like young children's individual writing attempts and playing with alphabet flash-cards with each other were not as frequently observed as literacy actions within play activities such as playing house and playing school. In addition, many of the activities were intertwined. For example, children sometimes combined playing school and house. Also, some of the activities were cut short as a result of lunch and dinner schedules.

Most of these school-aged children resided in Dorm 1 and Dorm 4. Thus, most of the interactions around literacy were observed in these two dorms and they were in the context of "playing school."

Although there is nothing unique about children playing school together, what is unique is that this play occurred in a stressful shelter context. Findings from my study mirror past research results in that life for older children at the shelter was overwhelming. It is thus important to understand the overall context of shelter living in order to appreciate the activities that resulted from these interactions. At the shelter the older children took on the sibling role and involved young children who were not related to them.

Boxill's and Beaty's research (1990) revealed that unstructured time for children at the shelter forced "random play among children of widely divergent ages" (p. 55). Also, it is crucial to understand why these older children gave so much attention to the younger children. Vissing (1996) refers to this adult role taken on by the older children as "overcompensation" (p. 81). In her study of homeless children in a rural setting, she discovered that older children nurtured "others whom they perceived as being at risk" (p. 18). This nurturing developed because the children's own parents were busy taking care of their basic survival needs and were emotionally overwhelmed by their condition. Similarly the older children in my study were isolated from their friends and relatives and were placed in situations where they had little control over what happened in their environment.

Results from my study related to the impact of shelter living on the lives of children and their families mirrored the findings of similar research on homelessness. Depression, inability to make friends, and feelings of insecurity were found to be common among children who were homeless (Nunez, 1994). The inability to control their lives led to extreme frustration (Molnar, 1990). Their inability to maintain friendships stemmed from a lack of "security, orderliness, and belonging" (Vissing, 1997, p. 77). Children in these studies (Kozol, 1988; Nunez, 1994; Riblin, 1985; Roseman, 1990; Seltser, 1993; Vissing, 1996; Quint, 1998) were also able to articulate their feelings pertaining to the loss of their homes and loss of stability. In my study, children expressed similar sentiments of loss in terms of loss of possessions, loss of freedom, loss of companionship, feelings of insecurity about being homeless, and lack of privacy. Nine-year-old Hannah described what it was like to be homeless. Hannah wanted to talk and to be heard.

It's okay [to be homeless] as long as you have a roof over your head, and you have clothes to put on your back ... shoes on your feet. It's just like the other people; you just don't have a home. Living here be really hard 'cause we got no home. Some people don't understand because you in here. They get to watch T.V. They got cable and all that. They got caller ID and everything. I like to go outside. But I can't do everything I want to do, like run. I have to be on my best behavior. It seem other kids get to stay up all night, and we, everyday, even on the weekends, we have to go to bed at 8:00 p.m. But some kids stay up all night. Sometimes you want to take a private shower, and people bust in the door because it's not a private bathroom, like you were at home. I need someone to talk to, but you know my mother with the baby. She's trying to help the baby, and she is trying to help me. I try to help my mama. I stick around her. I want to play and stuff.

Although Hannah tried to make sense of her living situation, she was clearly frustrated about staying at the shelter because of the lack of privacy at the shelter, because of her inability to play and be a typical child, because of the loss of material items, and because of her mother's inability to attend to her emotional needs. She concluded by providing the most obvious and the best solution to making life at the shelter easier for her and other people: "Because everybody wants to have their own place. Because people get tired of other people. Can't nothing make nothing better in here." In essence what Hannah meant was that people need a home, not a better shelter because "Homes embody the history, memories, and experiences that shape who we are" (Vissing, 1996, p. 79).

While Hannah expressed her frustrations about being homeless by talking to me, Laura (ten-year-old) expressed her frustrations by arguing with Ellen (five-year-old). Ellen was at the shelter for eighteen weeks while Laura stayed for four weeks. Laura and Ellen played together and they also argued constantly. On one occasion Ellen and Laura approached me and started complaining about each other. Daneesha (Ellen's mother) had told me earlier that the two of them had been fighting all week, and earlier during the day Laura had apparently told Ellen that Ellen was too "hot" and she would get raped. Ellen told Daneesha, and Daneesha had forbidden Ellen to play with Laura. They went to their dorm and continued fighting. Laura was screaming at Ellen.

Laura: *I am sick of you Ellen. You small but you mighty strong enough to make a person wanna cry.*

Ellen: [Turning to me] *She pushed me on the floor.*

Laura: [Screaming louder] *I don't care. I'll do it again if you keep messing with me.*

Ellen: *Do it then! Do it then! Do it then since you is so bad.*

Laura: *Why don't you come up here and mess with me then. Ellen, Hannah didn't even like you. She said, "I don't like Ellen." Everybody tell me that. She tell me that.*

Ellen: *Who?*

Laura: *Everybody telling me that. Grownups don't like you either because you're just a bad little girl. You make them so mad that they gonna take you head and shove it up your butt.*

Laura: *That's all you could say. I heard you.*

Ellen: *And I'm glad you heard me too.*

Laura: *I heard you say the "F" word and the whole word.*

Ellen: *You bad.*

Laura: *I don't care. You can call me that all you want, it don't bother me none.*

Ellen: *But you is one!*

Ellen: *I gonna say nothing.*

Laura: *When you mama here, you don't be saying that 'cause you know she'll smack that teeth out your mouth and that hair off your head and the clothes off your back and the shoes off your feet and the barrettes off your hair.*

[Ellen murmured something and Laura came closer.]

Laura: *Look Ellen, I am sorry. It's just that you get on my nerves sometimes, and there's nothing I can do about that. I can't hit you. I can't beat you up. I can't take off my belt and whip you. I can't do nothing. I'm just defenseless here. And I'm in some dorm that I don't even know about, and you've just been a pest to me. I can't live my life.*

When Laura was not fighting, she tried to create activities (playing with dolls, playing house and playing school) for Ellen in her dorm after she came back from school or during the school breaks. Laura like some other older children provided younger children with meaningful literacy opportunities by taking on the adult role.

One evening after school, Laura and Ellen sat together for almost forty-five minutes playing school. During these forty minutes, Ellen was engaged in reading, writing, and oral recitation. She used Laura's writing instruments and Laura's worksheets from school and received her undivided attention. Laura taught Ellen concepts that were challenging, and praised her several times during this teaching episode. Ellen was an active participant, even though Laura employed a direct instruction approach of teaching isolated facts and specific tasks.

This play session occurred while the girls' mothers on talking terms with each other. Ellen was kneeling at Laura's bed as Laura spread out her worksheets in front of Ellen. The photocopied worksheets from school were from Exploring Mathematics (Scott, Foreman & Company). Laura showed Ellen the worksheet and read the instructions from the page. Laura asked, "Is the broken line a line of symmetry? Write yes or no." She pointed at the different geometrical shapes with a straight line going through the shape. Laura pointed to the first shape and said, "Is this a line of symmetry?" Ellen guessed yes and she was praised. Laura then told her to write "yes" in the shape. Laura wrote "yes" and then asked Ellen to copy it. Laura continued pointing to the rest of the shapes and asked Ellen said "yes" or "no". Sometimes she got the correct answer, and sometimes she gave an incorrect answer. Laura corrected her and told her to put a "y" for yes and an "n" for no.

After they finished the first sheet, they proceeded to the next one. Laura again read out the instructions on the top of the page. "How many lines of symmetry can you find in each figure?" After reading the instructions Laura pointed to the vertexes on the shapes and asked Ellen to count while she pointed her pencil at each vertex on the shape. Ellen counted with 100% accuracy. Laura complimented Ellen and handed her the crayons. The session ended with Ellen summarizing the day's events at the Head Start by telling Laura that she had colored and recited her ABCs. She also told Laura about the lunch menu at the Head Start. The girls continued to play together with their dolls.

During the course of four months, Ellen had the benefit of such interaction only on three occasions (one occasion that I observed and two occasions that Laura told me about). In Ellen's case, the literate person's influence was short-lived because Ellen's parent did not want Ellen to play with Laura. Also, Laura was sent to live with her father out of state.

On a separate occasion I observed for forty minutes, another group of children playing school in the hallway on the second floor of the shelter: Dorian (11), Luanna (10), Sandy (7) and Opal (4). Except for Opal, all of the children were from Dorm 4. Ms. Drake (Dorian and Luanna's mom) and Rina (Sandy's mom) were also watching them. The children were gathered in the center of the hallway. Opal and Sandy were sitting at their chairs. Luanna had gone to find another chair. Dorian was the teacher. School began with morning ceremonies. Sandy recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The other students, Luanna and Opal, joined her for the Black National Anthem. Sandy was leading. She had the tune correct, but she was making up the words. Luanna then recited the Pledge of Allegiance with Dorian. They recited it correctly. Luanna continued with a poem as Sandy and Opal listened.

During this school session, Dorian (the teacher) wanted the children to be quiet and to pay attention to her. There was a lot of screaming and very little encouragement. The focus of the session was spelling.

Dorian: *Yeah. Okay everybody can you pay attention. You all have free time. No talking though.*

Opal: *She's talking.* [Pointing at Sandy.]

Dorian: *No talking please.*

Dorian: *Raise your hand and tell me how you spell "three." Somebody raise their hand.*

[Dorian waited and then asked Sandy and Opal to give her their piece of paper.]

Dorian: *Luanna how you spell "GOOD LOOK"?*

Luanna: *G.* [Pause.]

Dorian: *I can't hear you. That's how you gonna get an F.*

Dorian asked the class to spell more words, but none of the children were able to spell, and thus she switched to counting for a short time. She asked the children to count to ten and they did. The younger children wanted to count the numbers instead of spelling them.

Dorian ended the academic part of the session and informed the class that she had a surprise for them later. Before the surprise they had to take a nap and think about what they were going to have for their class party. After the their second pretend nap, Dorian asked the class what they thought was going to be at the party. All the students rejoiced and screamed "icecream." Dorian dismissed the students for a bathroom and water break. After the break, they decided to play house. They pretended to get dressed, go shopping, and visit some restaurants. Sandy was Luanna's daughter and Opal was Dorian's daughter. When they returned home from the outing, Dorian picked a piece of paper and told Sandy that she was going to put her in school. She started filling out the necessary forms. She filled the pretend registration forms and placed small X's in the small boxes she drew. I asked her what she was filling out. She told me she was filling out her age and address. This registration process lasted for almost five minutes and ended when more children came upstairs.

I approached this group once their play session was over to ask them why they played school. My interview with this group revealed that they not only played school together, but they also played house, fashion show, and shelter. They told me that they were bored most of the time, and, because they had to go to bed too early, they played school even in bed. They gathered their school books to play school in the hallway.

Since I did not get the opportunity to observe Dorian and Luanna playing shelter, I interviewed them about it. Luanna explained that they carried their book bags around the shelter pretending to find a shelter after their friends "kicked them out." They walked around their dorm ten times and asked Sandy's mom if there was any room at the shelter. Sandy's mom told them that they had come to the wrong place and that there were no rooms available. Finally they found a shelter and slept in their beds.

Discussion

If being literate improves the chances of a child's social and economical success in society, and that it can facilitate a child's transition out of poverty, then it becomes society's obligation to provide opportunities to children in homeless shelter.

By witnessing the literacy interactions between the older school-age children and the younger children, it is quite evident that these interactions were valuable and needed to be enhanced and encouraged by the shelter staff. Furthermore, these interactions (as limited as they were) embody what literacy researchers espouse to be some of the key qualities needed to promote literacy in young children. Viewing the play episode between Laura and Ellen provide a small glimpse of the requisite characteristics of literacy development. As described in the results, Laura (ten years old) and Ellen (five years old) engaged in literacy playing school when they were not fighting with each other. Laura used her school resources, like worksheets and textbooks to teach concepts that were challenging for Ellen. Ellen was also given positive reinforcement several times during this teaching episode.

There were components of reading, writing, and oral language in both the play sessions observed. Also, to some degree there was "both learning (on the part of the child) and teaching (on the part of the parents or other significant literate persons in the child's environment)" (Teale, Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals (JAASEP) 48 of 87

1982, p. 317). Furthermore, Ellen at least was "inducted into the model of literacy implicitly held by the more expert performer" (Wells, 1992, p. 147). This joint activity involved talk related to the literary task. (Teale, 1984; Wells, 1992). However, "a predictable and secure atmosphere" (Snow et al., 1991, p. 162) is also an important component of children's literacy development. The shelter environment was neither "predictable" nor "secure" and most importantly, during the course of four months, I observed Ellen to have had the benefit of such interaction only once. The young literate person's influence was short-lived, because Laura was sent to live with her father out of state. Thus, Ellen was briefly exposed to a positive learning opportunity.

Although a four-month residential shelter is designed as an emergency operation, what shelter directors, policy-makers and researchers need to realize is that for many homeless families, four months is as much stability as they will get if they do not get opportunities to break the cycle of homelessness. There has to be accountability about the shelter resources. Since the shelter is responsible for funding programs like parenting, playgroup, and computer training, it is imperative that these programs be restructured to meet the needs of the all the children. Homeless families use the shelter as the last resort when all other resources are exhausted. The shelter as an institution is the only stable entity in the lives of many homeless families. It needs to use every opportunity to equip the families with meaningful tools that they can use to lift themselves and their children out of poverty. The resources that are in place need to alleviate the stress of homeless families, and they need to focus on the needs of all the children. The directors should ensure that the caregivers at shelter find meaningful ways to support children's literacy growth utilizing their daily routines and incorporate events such as storybook reading, pretend play, writing, speaking, and listening (Pellegrini & Galda, 1992). Also, the family as a whole should be involved in designing and implementing programs for their children.

In addition to providing resources and personnel to develop these shared reading sessions, shelter should incorporate the help of literate school-age children and their mothers. While the responsibility of providing literacy opportunities should not solely fall on these older children, the staff needs to understand that they are a very valuable resource. Book incentives, field trips and other leisure opportunities should be provided to these children to encourage them to provide the one-on-one reading instruction to their younger peers.

Other concerns related to homeless school-age children as highlighted by past research and my research include the need to have the space with peace and quiet at the shelter for homework. At Joseph's shelter there were services such as the playgroup. However, the play facilitator focused mainly on the younger children during school hours. Thus, after-school hours were not conducive to homework needs of the older school-age children. There needs to be more than one facilitator and they should be present during the evenings and on weekends to help the children.

In addressing the emotional and socialization problems of older children that are common consequences of homelessness, shelter appointed social workers and counselors, need to help with everything from academic to social counseling. They further need in-service training programs to help raise the awareness and sensitivity to the problems and daily concerns of these children. These children want to "talk" to someone. They need to be heard and consoled in meaningful ways. These older children need attention and support while they are at the shelter. They need individualized attention from volunteers and shelter staff in terms of their emotional needs because they are unable to cope with shelter living successfully.

While keeping in mind that shelter living is not the desirable outcome for families and specially children, we must further explore and research ways the role of the older school age children in providing literacy opportunities to their own families and to other families and children at the shelter.

We as researcher, educators, shelter directors and policy-makers must understand that “Shelter, if it's warm and safe, may keep a family from dying. Only a home allows a family to flourish and to breathe. When breath comes hard, when privacy is scarce, when chaos and crisis are on every side, it is difficult to live at peace, even with someone whom we love” (Kozol, 1982, p. 50). Let's get to work.

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Transition Planning: Improved Methods to Promote Student Success from High School to the Workforce

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Abstract

Successful transition planning for students with disabilities from school into adulthood seems to be a complex and difficult process. The 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) promote the development of successful transition planning; however, research has shown that special educators are not likely to engage in behaviors during transition planning meetings to facilitate appropriate transition planning principles and guidelines (Thoma, Rogan, & Baker, 2001). In this paper, we will provide an overview of the assessment process, integration approach, and the multicultural aspects as they relate to transition planning to assist the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process in making secondary school decisions.

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Many students dream about the day when they will be able to leave their childhood behind, enter the workforce, begin to enter adulthood, and make some decisions for themselves. Often they measure what they are learning by how often they will use the information later in life. Although some argue that students should learn for learning's sake, others say that for many students with disabilities who have found learning to be difficult, learning for learning's sake is not helpful in terms of post-high school outcomes (Thoma, Held, & Saddler, 2002). This is one reason why a focus on transition from school to adult lifestyle is so important, and particularly why students with disabilities need to be actively involved in gathering important information that they will use to shape their adults lifestyles. Often times, the future for this population of students is shaped with the assistance and support of their teachers, parents, and other supporters on their transition planning committees.

More recent literature recommends that students' self-determination be an integral part of the transition planning process (Field, Hoffman, & Spezia, 1998; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). However, the realism is that many special educators do not know how to teach the skills that are necessary for the component of self-determination (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2000). Furthermore, additional research has shown that special educators are not likely to engage in behaviors during transition planning meetings to facilitate student self-determination in the process (Thoma, Rogan, & Baker, 2001). Another cause for concern is the impact of ethnic diversity as it

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relates to the transition planning process and the lack of cultural knowledge that may be present when making post-secondary decisions. Research has stated how the field of transition has evolved to focus on issues considered most important to post-secondary outcomes (e.g., career development, life skills instruction) while issues such as cultural diversity and cultural aspects go unrecognized (Meier-Kronick, 1993). It is important that special educators, administrators, parents, and other individuals involved in the transition process become familiar with strategies and best practices that facilitate proper assessment, planning, integration, and multicultural aspects rather than making general assumptions and decisions during the transition process. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the assessment process, integration approach, and the multicultural aspects as they relate to transition planning to assist the IEP process in making secondary school decisions.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Assisting students with disabilities and helping them prepare for their lives after school is an extremely important aspect in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) development. With the passage of IDEA in 1990, schools were required to include transition goals and plans in the IEPs for students age 16 or older (Cronin, Patton, & Lock, 1997). The 1997 Amendments to the act mandate that transition planning begin when students reach the age of 14. Plans must include information regarding the relationship between the student's plan of study and the student's goals and aspirations beyond the secondary level. Furthermore, the IEP must clearly state the transition services required by the student and the responsibilities of adult agencies to assist in providing such services (Tucker, 1997). Consistent with IDEA mandated priorities, Bates, Bronkema, Ames, and Hess (1992) described transition planning as a threefold process: (1) development of a vision of adult transition outcomes that focuses on employment, post-secondary education, residential settings, and community participation; (2) identification of specific services and service providers that are needed to attain and maintain transition-related outcomes; and (3) interagency planning.

Transition planning does not guarantee that a student will have post-secondary success with all of the goals; however, McDonnell, Ferguson, and Mathot-Buckner (1992) mentioned how the planning process can decrease or eliminate many of the barriers that limit a student's success after leaving high school. Unfortunately, some of the recent research addressing the quality of transition planning suggests that the process is often an insignificant part of the IEP (Inge, Wehman, Clees, & Dymond, 1996). Many times the lack of emphasis placed on transition planning leads to misguided and inadequately conducted meetings, which may partly explain why students with disabilities experience poor post-secondary outcomes (Grigal, Test, Beattie, & Wood, 1997). Grigal et. al. (1997) encountered many vague statements of student's outcomes and activities, responsible personnel, and timelines while reviewing IEP's in 1994 following the transition mandate. Also, they found little indication of long-range planning or of annual revisions of the goals or plans. Other research on the IEP indicates that assessment information, which reveals the student's interest, preferences, strengths and needs, is often not used as a basis for writing goals and objectives and making educational decisions (Smith & Simpson, 1989).

Assessment in Transition Planning

Research has indicated that assessment within transition-planning allows the IEP committee to make more accurate decisions as it relates to the student's present level of performance (e.g., social skills, vocational skills, life skills, employability) to assist with deciding planning and service delivery (Thoma, Rogan, & Baker, 2001; Storms, O'Leary, & Williams, 2000). Also, the research mentions how transition planning should incorporate various assessments (e.g., formal, informal, alternative) as it relates to determining a student's strengths, needs, preferences, and interest for current and future planning (Thoma, Held, & Saddler, 2002). Storms, O'Leary, and Williams (2000) listed three components that are important in designing and implementing transition plans:

1. Coach every student along with his or her family, to think about goals for life after high school and to develop a long-range plan to get there.
2. Design the high school experience to ensure that the student gains the skills and competencies needed to achieve his/her desired post-school goals.
3. Identify, and link students and families to, any needed post-school service, supports, or programs before the student exists the school system. (pp.6-7)

These activities flow from information gathered with each student by the important people involved in their daily lives. The basis for any transition plan within the IEP that is developed must be the information gathered through the assessment process, to include the student's needs, interests, and preferences (Thoma, Held, & Saddler, 2002).

Sitlington, Neubert, and Leconte (1997) stated, "transition assessment is the ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's strengths, needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments." It is important that special educators understand and be knowledgeable enough to use a variety of different assessments, strategies, and instruments when working with students to assist in developing a transition plan. As stated by Herman (1992), good assessment is built on current theories of learning and cognition and is grounded in views of what skills and capacities students will need for future success. Being knowledgeable about planning and skilled at deciphering various forms of information can make a tremendous difference in the process and outcomes of transition planning (Thoma, Held, & Saddler, 2002). These details about various forms of information gathering and assessment are described in more detail below analyzing the three main types of assessment (e.g., formal, informal, alternative).

Formal assessments are standardized instruments from commercial publishers that yield targeted information (Thurlow, Elliot, & Ysseldyke, 1998). Typically, they are used for screening and placement decisions for students for disability services. Standardized assessments have been tested and have reliability and validity measures to support their use for a specific purpose or population. Some formal assessments are developed to gather information about a student's current performance level, aptitudes, and interest so that educational strategies can be applied that will benefit the student receiving special education services. However, formal assessments have limitations and are not able to provide a complete picture of a student's understanding or that student's abilities. This is true for students that are not motivated to perform well on standardized assessments (Wiggins, 1993). Some students may have an adverse attitude to standardized assessments for fear of the assessments pointing out their weaknesses and performance level.

Informal assessments are assessments that are typically not standardized and are frequently developed by teachers or a local agency. Often, informal assessments are open-ended procedures that can be used as is, or adapted for particular uses and situations. They can be used in the classroom, at home, work, or somewhere in the community. Sometimes they are given to parents, family members, and friends to try to get a complete picture of the student or environment associated with the student. These assessments are particularly useful in gathering information about a student's functional skills and interests and are necessary for the transition into the adult world (Thoma, Held, & Saddler, 2002). Informal assessments are mostly subjective assessments and more than one person should give them. Some examples of informal assessments include observations, curriculum-based assessment, interviews, surveys, and task analyses.

Alternative assessments are typically performance-based assessment procedures that require students to demonstrate what they know by doing or performing tasks. Performance assessments require students to generate rather than choose a response and they require students to actively accomplish complex and significant tasks while bringing to bear prior knowledge, recent learning, and relevant skills to solve problems (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992). Alternative assessments provide a broad view of a student across time, rather than at a point in time, and use self-evaluation and continuous feedback as components of the assessment process. Through the alternative process, students can learn to evaluate their own abilities and learn to measure progress by participating in this process (Thoma, Held, & Saddler, 2002). Performance-based assessments measure students' abilities and progress by requiring them to perform tasks that are real-world related. For example, students can demonstrate math skills by paying their bills and maintaining a budget and managing money as it relates to real-world situations. Other examples include short-term work that provides an opportunity to apply what was learned, demonstrations of mastery, oral exams of knowledge, portfolios, and person-centered planning.

Person-centered planning involves sitting down and conferencing with the student and getting to know him/her. Person-centered procedures involve becoming aware of the student's goals, aspirations, and outlook on the future and using that information to develop long and short-term goals and objectives.

Getzel and Defur (1997) conducted a study that discussed the implications for person-centered planning for students with significant disabilities. The study consisted of examining the participation in the IEP planning process by family members, students, school personnel, and adult agency representatives. Also, post-school employment, independent living, recreational environments, support needs, and types of vocational training and support provided at the secondary level were examined. The study consisted of 10 school districts and eighty-four public school children that participated in a Virginia Transition Planning Information System grant, which was a longitudinal database that was designed to track trends in the design and delivery of transition services across school districts. The students were both from rural and metropolitan school districts. Data collection was achieved through the use of an IEP transition planning information form that was part of the Transition Planning Information System. The form collects a wide variety of transition-related information and was based on similar forms developed by Bates (1990). The information collected on each individual included basic student demographics, employment, living arrangements, recreation, participants in the transition process, anticipated settings students were planning to enter in education, and whether or not special supports would be needed. The form was designed to be completed at each IEP meeting to ensure that information obtained on each student reflected the results of the meeting. Also, the school personnel completed a form describing the student and his or her long-term goals as well as the transition services it was

anticipated the student would need. Next, the information was routed to a central database for review and analysis before being entered and generating a report.

The results of the students' characteristics indicated that most of the students involved in the study had 3 or more years remaining in public school. Most of the students were Caucasian, 26% were African American, and 1% were Hispanic. The racial demographics were believed to be parallel to the demographics in public education in Virginia. The results of the participants of the IEP meeting were 89% for parents and guardians across all grade levels. Most of the representatives attending the meeting were school representatives with the special education teachers and speech therapists being the most frequently cited. A little more than 36% of other participants were physical therapists, vision teachers, and other specialized staff. About 10% were guidance counselors and regular vocational teachers along with 14% of the transition team members being occupational therapists. In anticipated post-school settings, employment was mostly identified as a student's primary post-school goal as opposed to post-secondary education. A little more than 38% of the plans identified competitive employment options as transition goals. Full-time employment represented 12%, part-time 5%, and supported employment was 21%. Next, sixty percent of the plans identified living arrangements with family members after high school, and 19% identified supervised living. Fifty-six percent identified specialized recreation activities, while 13% identified self-directed activities as a goal. Most transition plans identified special transportation (57%) or transportation by family members (63%), while only 16% planned to utilize public transportation. Finally, recommended in school services were reported to include 66% needing learning materials modified, 62% with curriculum modification, 62% with support services such as team-teaching or vocational research teachers, and 67% with adaptive physical education. Forty-four percent of the plans included assistive technology. The most frequently identified supports on the IEP's included guidance and counseling (33%), daily living skills (84%), and social skills training (75%). Eighteen percent of the students had supports focusing on self-advocacy skills specified on their plans.

Thoma, Held, and Saddler (2002) conducted a study that took a survey on transition assessment, the level and the type of transition involvement in the transition process, and the use of alternative assessment procedures in the transition assessment and planning processes. The study consisted of a survey that was mailed to 84 special educators in Arizona and Nevada. The special educators provided instruction for students between the ages of 14 and 21. Thirty-three percent of the educators were from a middle school setting, forty-four percent were from high school, and a little less than 5% were from a school providing education to students in grades K through 12. A four page survey was developed using information about assessments. The first page consisted of demographic information (e.g., positions, grade level taught, etc.). The second page consisted of questions relating to the specific types of assessments used such as the use of curriculum-based assessments, standardized assessments, parent surveys, portfolios, person-centered planning, etc. The third page gave the respondents an opportunity to explain how the assessments were used in making decisions during the transition planning process. The fourth page of the survey consisted of questions relating to the domains for the transition assessment such as employment, daily living skills, social skills, community living, etc. The results indicated that the decisions about which assessments to use were made as a group. The special education administrator and school psychologist were most commonly identified as the individuals that administered the assessments. The most commonly used was an interview with a student followed by student survey. The least frequently used were student self-determination assessments and ecological inventories. The most commonly used standardized assessments were the Kauffman Test of Education Achievement (KTEA), Wechsler Intelligence Scale (WISC), and the Wide-Range Achievement Test (WRAT). Sixty-four percent of the respondents mentioned that transition-related assessments were

administered as needed, and fifty-two percent stated assessments being given annually. Also, the majority of the respondents mentioned that the assessment data were used to develop IEP goals, to help students determine vocational interests, and the help students to determine life goals and preferences. Finally, most of the respondents mentioned that they were self-taught about transition assessment strategies, procedures, and instruments from a variety of sources.

Integration Approach

Collaborations across multiple agencies that organize delivery of services into a unified coordinated system have been termed service integration (Gerry & Certo, 1992). It is often stated that the transition process clearly requires interagency collaboration (Nisbet, Covert, & Shuh, 1992). Integration of services assumes that focusing on several needs produces more positive results than focusing on each need in isolation. Furthermore, these models are designed to share resources in order to maximize the outcomes of expertise and available funds (Certo & Pumpian, 1997).

Participating systems must change how business is conducted for true integration to occur. Modifications of new service roles such as a reduction of paperwork, provision of new services, as well as a network of potential service providers must be implemented to create an effective process. In order for service integration to be effective, each system must assume full responsibility for the total service outcome, and jointly assist others to achieve that outcome (Certo & Pumpian, 1997). For example, continuous collaborations have existed within a service integration model between some public health and education districts. The educators often observe physical and mental health issues that affect a student's performance in the classroom and schools. The integration of educational and health services through the operation of a school-based health clinic can increase access to primary health and mental health care, health education, and related services for students (Certo, Karasoff & Wilson, 1993; Levy & Shepardson, 1992). The application of a service integration approach to a simpler and more focused variation of this concept is responsible for the same employment and community living format, however, each system tends to operate separately. It is the similarity in outcome responsibilities which suggests that integrating service delivery across at least three systems (e.g., public education, rehabilitation, and developmental disabilities) at the point of transition has strong potential for solving long standing problems of unemployment for individuals with disabilities (Certo & Pumpian, 1997).

Public schools, rehabilitation agencies, and developmental disabilities agencies need to enter into agreements to integrate services and jointly share the cost of those services when implementing an effective service integration model. These agreements, if fully operationalized during the student's final year in school, should; (a) plan the transition of students with disabilities into community jobs, and (b) develop and implement individualized, recreational, personal, leisure and community living plans. The public schools would maintain traditional services and responsibilities coordinated prior to the final year, and rehabilitation or developmental disabilities systems would continue to assume service responsibilities after the individual leaves the public school system. The major overhaul of the service integration model would entail changes in service and support responsibilities during the student's last year of school (Certo & Pumpian, 1997). It can be anticipated that a service integration model would accomplish the following outcomes; (a) it collectively leverages additional funds and resources at the point of transition, (b) it is an essentially cost effective option for each agency participating, and (c) it's organizational structure results in the elimination of discrepancies between community settings, activities, and personnel providing professional support during school (Certo & Pumpian, 1997).

Simply improving the adequacy of services at the point of transition can be ineffective if adult receiving agencies are not available to continue to support the individuals' work needs after the proposed year of transition under a service integration model. It would seem commonplace that agencies would be responsible for maintenance and expansion after the point of transition with providing the direct services from the final school year into adult services. One such requirement would eliminate the need for additional service vendors to provide ongoing services after school, and provide assistance for the individual served that might be associated with changing providers (Certo & Pumpian, 1997).

Certo and Pumpian (1997) stated that it is anticipated that implementation of this transition service integration model should accomplish four important objectives. Each of these objectives is based on the assumption that a job and supports are in place prior to finishing school and they are:

1. To provide adequate staffing to accomplish job placement and implementation of other community living supports for graduating individuals during the last year in school.
2. To reduce the cost of transition for each participating agency while improving the outcomes, freeing up funds to expand services for other individuals, thereby maximizing dollars spent.
3. To provide continuation of service after graduation by shifting the direct service responsibility for placement and individualized personal plans from public schools to receiving adult agencies.
4. To proactively establish local models of service integration in response to, and in anticipation of, new federal and state mandates and resources (e.g., School to Work Opportunities Act). (p.6)

Timmons, Whitney-Thomas, McIntyre, Butterworth, & Allen (2004) conducted a study that investigated the transition-related experiences of 30 parents of young adults with disabilities who had been identified as needing support from health care and adult service agencies (e.g., department of mental retardation and vocational rehabilitation) after exiting high school. The parents were selected from various ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Caucasian, African-American, and Latino) from urban, suburban, and rural areas. The participants' children had a range of disabilities that included cerebral palsy, spinal bifida, learning disabilities, and Down's syndrome. The methods of data collection were focus groups and case studies. The focus groups were chosen to understand parental roles through discussions between parents who share common experiences. Questions were asked pertaining to supports utilized and barriers encountered during the transition planning process and parents' hopes and dreams for their children. The case studies were conducted to gain more personal information and take an in-depth look at the various stages during the transition process in order to understand the unique experiences. The parents were asked questions pertaining to their (a) family and young adult with a disability, (b) hopes and concerns regarding their children's futures, (c) experiences in planning for the future, (d) planning resources, (e) whether or not the resources were helpful, and (f) the role of the young person in the planning process.

The results revealed significant challenges in (a) negotiating service delivery systems, (b) coping with day-to-day needs, (c) dealing with the idiosyncrasies of urban or rural locales, and (d) feeling uncertainty about the future. One challenge faced by parents were the difficulties of trying to plan their child's transition from school to adult life with finding, accessing, and relying on service delivery systems designed to support them. Often times, the parents perceived the service delivery systems as inconsistent, complex, and unresponsive. Another challenge was that parents depicted service delivery systems that were generally unpredictable. They explained that effective service

delivery systems were often dependent upon a particularly good teacher, a special education director, or classroom aide. Also, the parents noted that good medical care was often dependent on a good relationship with a particular doctor, personal care assistant, or therapist. The parents' comments revolved around the notion that good service delivery was circumstantial and erratic; leaving parents with the expectations that crucial service could be lost at any time. Next, parents described an additional burden of having to maneuver through and between what they perceived as a complex service delivery system. Parents complained about not being aware or properly notified of most resources. Furthermore, parents perceived complexities in service delivery systems due to lack of coordination between agencies and schools. The parents expressed a need to have increased and automatic agency involvement in the school transition planning process. Also, they expressed that systems were overburdened, and they perceived the unwillingness on the part of the professionals to even try to accommodate their children's needs. Many parents perceived themselves as the primary person bearing the burden of holding together all the elements of many complex systems surrounding their families and their children's transition planning processes.

Multicultural Aspects in Transition

While some culturally diverse families may encounter some discrimination or insensitivity by an educational system at any grade level, it may become particularly important during the transition period. The end goal of transition planning can be determined by cultural-specific values and expectations about many important issues, such as work, community integration, roles expectations, and social functioning (Geenen, Powers, Lopez-Vasquez, & Bersani, 1999; Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001). For example, Meier-Kronick (1993) mentions how the field of transition has evolved to focus on issues considered most seminal to post-secondary outcomes (e.g., School to Work programs, career development, life skills instruction, transition assessment and planning, student participation) and issues related to cultural diversity have typically not been emphasized. The lack of focused attention on the cultural aspects of transition is troubling as culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities often experience poor transition outcomes more than others (Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001).

Blackorby and Wagner (1996) conducted a longitudinal study on the multicultural aspects in transition. Their study revealed that African-American and Hispanic youth with disabilities have greater difficulty than European-American youth with disabilities in finding employment, and earning significantly less money than the European-American workers. Yelin and Trupin (1997) discovered that unemployed European-American adults with disabilities were 40% more likely to find employment than adults with disabilities from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Also, it has been discovered that minority persons do not appear to have equal access to vocational rehabilitation services. Historically, studies have shown that European-American individuals with disabilities are more likely to use VR services, experience greater placement rates, and receive higher wages than culturally and linguistically diverse individuals (Atkins & Wright, 1980).

Geenen, Powers, and Lopez-Vasquez (2001) conducted a study to examine the multicultural aspects of parent involvement in transition planning. Their study asked the specific questions of what activities are parents currently involved in during their children's transition plan, the type of participation that is most important to parents, how parents and educators differ in level of importance they assign to participation across different transition activities, and how parents and educators differ in level of parental involvement their report for different plans. The subjects were from large urban school districts in the western United States and included 474 African-Americans, 106 Hispanics, 250 European-American, and 88 Native American parents whose children fell between the ages of 13 and 21 and were classified as having physical, developmental,

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or health related disabilities. Also, 130 individuals classified as school staff participated in the study including some middle school personnel involved in setting up the transition plans at the students' age of 14. A survey instrument was developed to examine the perceived level and importance of parent involvement in specific transition activities. The items were devised from a review of literature on transition planning and parent involvement from a study of transition experiences of culturally diverse youth with disabilities and their families (Geenen, Powers, Lopez-Vasquez, & Bersani, 1999). A second survey was administered to school professionals that asked about their perceptions of the level of parental involvement in various activities.

The results indicated that African-American parents placed significantly more importance on talking to their children about life after high school and teaching their children to use transportation than European-Americans. Hispanic and Native American parents assigned significantly more importance to teaching their children about the family's cultural values and beliefs as compared to the ratings of European American families. Next, European American parents reported significantly more involvement in school meetings to talk about transition than did African-American, Hispanic, or Native American parents. Furthermore, African-American parents reported more involvement than the other groups in talking with their children about life after high school and the use of transportation independently.

Conclusions

There is a need for a workable transition assessment, integration approach, and cultural awareness as it relates to the transition planning process. First, various studies have determined that assessment within transition-planning can provide assistance for the IEP committee to make more accurate decisions as it relates to the student's present level of performance and service delivery decisions (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992; Thoma, Held, & Saddler, 2002). There is a definite need to look at assessments in the transition planning process and how the assessments can impact the planning, programming, and delivery model to coincide with the federal mandates in creating an effective decision-making process for the IEP process. A challenge will be to accomplish quality transition-referenced assessment in the context of many other demands that are placed on special educators to provide better circumstances for students with disabilities.

Next, simply applying the concept of transition service integration has the potential to provide some solutions to long standing problems in the field of special education and individuals with disabilities. This approach can be a positive solution with anticipated benefits to all individuals and groups that are involved. The benefits to individuals with disabilities who want to actively participate in their communities are obvious. It provides a self-determined mechanism for an individual to ensure access to the support services needed to secure and maintain a job and participate in their community. Another possible solution could be the dilemma of inadequate staffing for transition placements and individualized personal schedules for school districts.

Finally, the research indicates that culturally and linguistically diverse parents are actively involved in transition activities, which many may fall outside of the realm of school-based planning (Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001). However, a challenge for school personnel and other individuals in the transition process is to increase their knowledge and sensitivity to other cultural values and cultural influences as they relate to the transition planning process. Furthermore, educators and service providers have to be aware that placing a culturally and linguistically diverse young adult into adulthood stems from family and community rather than on experiences provided by educational or other formal institutions. The demand is placed on

individuals in school-based planning transition process to be more responsive and sensitive to culturally and linguistically diverse parents and students.

Issues of institutionalization, personnel preparation, interagency collaboration, and the agendas of school resources continue to limit some success in transition planning. However, other important models (e.g., integration approach, transition assessment) exist for understanding the students' needs and addressing many of those needs through available community services. It is the models that are deemed effective that require careful consideration by school district personnel and staff as well as other service providers. Increasing the effectiveness of student success will come at the expense of school personnel and service providers altering some of their comfortable roles, group interactions, research practices, and rituals of experimenting with new partners to ensure improved quality of life for students with disabilities.

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A Comparison of Inclusive versus Resource Classroom Placement for Black Students with Mild Disabilities at the Secondary Level

Is There a Need for Separation?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Black students with mild disabilities receiving their education in general education settings perform better academically than Black students with mild disabilities receiving their education in resource classroom settings. Sixty-four Black high school students with mild disabilities receiving special education services were assessed using the Grade Level Short Form (Reading sub-test) of the Multilevel Academic Survey Test (MAST). Their reading scores were examined relative to each participant's placement in either included or non-included classrooms. Results revealed statistically significant evidence of difference in reading abilities to indicate that one group outperformed the other group in the inclusive or resource classroom settings. Limitations of the study, implications for both general and special educators, and considerations for future research are discussed.

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The overall academic achievement of Black students in the public school systems of the United States has long been a major source of concern for educators, government officials, legislators and parents (Marcus-Newhall & Heindl, 1998). The history of educational opportunities for Blacks has many negative and unequal components. It was believed that the 1954 landmark decision by the Supreme Court of the United States, which banned segregated schools, would improve Black students' academic achievement and soon equal that of their White peers (Marcus-Newhall & Heindl). The direct purpose of the decision was to provide equal educational opportunities regardless of race, and indirectly to improve race relations and Black students' academic achievements through inter-group contact at young ages (Marcus-Newhall & Heindl). However, fifty years since the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) ruling, Black students continue to academically lag behind other ethnic groups. Reasons, such as the fluctuation of parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995) and the negative effects of school mobility

(Rumbarger & Larson, 1998), for this societal dilemma have been studied and reforms, which were originally intended to help solve the problem, have become a source of the problem (Grant, 1992).

The landmark decision previously mentioned was the catalyst for many dramatic changes in America's educational system. There was also a profound effect on where and how children are educated in America. The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision was not only a pivotal case against racial discrimination, but it also served as the vehicle for improving access to education for children with disabilities (Marcus-Newhall & Heindl, 1998). For example, laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were enacted to protect the right of children with disabilities to a free and appropriate education (Gardner & Miranda, 2001).

Another vehicle was the development of the field of special education. The initial revolutionary idea of special education was to educate students in separate facilities who could not be educated in public schools. These were students with severe mental and/or physical handicaps. However, as the field progressed, other categories which targeted students with less severe disabilities were added. From separate facilities to inclusion in the schools, to inclusion in the classrooms with their non-disabled peers has been the progression of special education. One source of controversy has been the results of these added fields and its effect on the academic achievements of Black students (Gardner & Miranda, 2001).

Inclusion and Black Students with Disabilities

Several studies have been conducted on the effects of inclusion on various aspects of students with disabilities (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994; Elbaum & Vaughn 2001; McLeskey, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999;). For example, in the Elbaum and Vaughn (2001) study, which completed a meta-analytic review of the literature and examined self-concept outcomes of school-based interventions for students with learning disabilities (LD) placed in inclusive classroom settings. The results indicated that overall, middle school students benefited more from interventions than did elementary or high school students. Of the many issues related to the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular education classes, according to Baker et al. (1994), none is more important than the effects on students' learning and social relations with regular classmates. For example, McLeskey et al. (1999) examined national data on placement practices for school-age students from six to seventeen years old identified as LD over a six year time period (1989 – 1995) examined data from the 50 states and the District of Columbia to determine if differences existed in placement practices for students with LD across the United States. The method used was to examine data from Reports to Congress regarding placement practices for students with LD over the last six years. Participants included students with disabilities from the fifty states and the District of Columbia who had been placed in inclusive classroom settings over the period studied. Independent variables were placement settings and type of disability, while the dependent variable was the Cumulative Placement Rate (CPR). The results indicated that there had been a major increase in the CPR for students with disabilities in the past six years educated in general education classrooms. The CPR for students with LD educated in general education classrooms for 80% or more of the school day increased by 151% in years investigated, reflecting a gain of approximately 614,000 students. In contrast the CPR for students with LD educated in resource rooms for 21% to 60% of the school day decreased by 18%. Two trends in the national data were illustrated by the results. First, there was an increase of students with disabilities identified over the period studied. Second, there had been a considerable reduction in the proportion of students with LD who were educated in separate classrooms.

Wood (1998) investigated teachers' perceptions of their educational roles and collaborative teaching efforts in the inclusion of children with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. Participants included a sample of general and special education teachers comprising the collaborative teaching teams of children with severe disabilities. The method used was to conduct semi-structured interviews to seek information about teachers' perceptions regarding collaboration, communication and team-building. The teams consisted of a general education teacher and special education teacher of a student with a disability who was included in a regular education classroom. The independent variable was a general or special education teacher, while the dependent variable was the teacher's attitudes towards inclusion. Results indicated that in the initial stages of inclusion, teachers maintained discrete role boundaries through a clear, albeit informal division of labor. However, as the school year progressed, role perceptions became less rigid as the teaming became more positive.

Cook (2001) examined whether teachers' attitudes toward their students with disabilities who were included in regular education classrooms differed as a function of the disabilities' severity. The method used was to analyze data collected from part of a larger investigation regarding teachers' attitudes toward their students with disabilities who were included in regular education classrooms. Participants included seventy inclusive classroom teachers who nominated three students to prompts corresponding with the attitudes of attachment, concern, indifference, and rejection. Chi-square analyses supported predictions, based on a theory on instructional tolerance and a model of differential expectations, that students with severe or obvious disabilities are significantly overrepresented among teachers' nominations in the rejection category. Results were interpreted to indicate that teachers tend to form different attitudes and expectations of their students with disabilities who were included in regular education classrooms depending on the severity or obviousness of students' disabilities. It was suggested that students with disabilities who were included in regular education classrooms with both obvious and hidden disabilities are at risk for receiving inappropriate educational interactions, but for different reasons. Distinct recommendations for improving teachers' attitudes toward included students with disabilities with hidden and obvious disabilities were offered.

Bender, Vail, and Scott (1995) examined the types of instructional strategies offered in mainstream classes. Participants included 127 general education teachers in grades one through eight from eleven school districts in three different school districts in the state of Georgia. There were 117 women which 115 were white. The method used was to ask each teacher to complete a self-evaluation concerning instructional strategies used in their general education classes. Each teacher was asked also to complete questionnaires concerning their own efficacy toward mainstreaming. An analysis of variance comparing teachers with positive attitudes indicated that the teachers with less positive attitudes used effective mainstream instructional strategies less frequently. The results indicated that teachers with more students with disabilities in their classes had more positive attitudes toward mainstreaming.

Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) examined principals' attitudes toward and knowledge of inclusion. Participants included principals from 59 elementary, 27 middle and 29 high schools in the state of Illinois. The method used was to survey principals selected at random. A survey instrument was devised to elicit information from the principals regarding definitions, leadership styles, and effectiveness and implementation of educational practices associated with successful inclusive education. The results indicated that while no clear definition emerged of inclusion principals generally viewed inclusion as most appropriate for students with mild disabilities. Additionally, results indicated that teachers were not adequately prepared to implement inclusive practices. Significant differences between extent of use and perceived effectiveness of 13

educational practices were found. The researchers concluded that the findings raise issues related to administrators' awareness of practice that facilitate inclusion and how prepared they are to implement and support inclusive education.

Praisner (2003) completed another study of 408 elementary school principals' attitudes toward inclusion. The sample consisted of elementary school principals randomly selected from the state of Pennsylvania. The schools were of varying sizes ranging from 250 to over 1,000 students. The Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS) was designed to determine the extent to which variables such as training, experience, and program factors were related to principals' attitudes toward inclusion. The results indicated that 1 in 5 principals' attitudes toward inclusion are positive while most are uncertain. Positive experience with students with disabilities and exposure to special education concepts are associated with a more positive attitude toward inclusion. Further, principals with more positive attitudes and/or experiences are more likely to place students in less restrictive settings. Differences in placement and experiences were found between disability categories. Results emphasized the importance of inclusive practices that give principals positive experiences with students of all types of disabilities as well as provide principals with more specific training.

Klinger and Vaughn (1999) conducted a study that investigated the perceptions of 4,659 students in kindergarten through 12th grade (760 with high-incidence). As important as it is for teachers and principals to have positive attitudes toward inclusion, perhaps it is even more important that students with disabilities have positive perceptions of inclusion. Twenty studies were synthesized that investigated and the following results were concluded. Findings revealed that students with high-incidence disabilities want the same activities, books, homework, grading criteria, and grouping activities as their classmates. Their peers without disabilities agreed, believing this most fair. Students with and without disabilities value teachers who slow down instruction when needed, explain concepts and assignments clearly, recognize and teach based on different learning strategies, and teach the same material in different ways so that everyone can learn.

If the goal of inclusion is to educate students with disabilities in general education settings, then it is important to study the effects this practice will have on students with disabilities placed in inclusive settings. The effects of placement versus non-placement in an inclusive classroom were determined in a study completed by Daniel and King (1997). Four sets of dependent variables were examined in this study: 1) students' academic performance, 2) students' problem behaviors as reported by teachers and parents, 3) student's self-esteem, and 4) parental attitudes of students with disabilities. A secondary purpose was to determine whether student placement in different types of inclusion programs would result in differences in the variables. Analysis of the results indicated: (1) parents of students in the inclusion classes expressed a higher degree of concern with their children's school programs; (2) teachers and parents of the students in the inclusion classes reported more instances of behavior problems; (3) students in inclusion classes were more likely to experience gains in reading scores with no noteworthy differences for mathematics, language, and spelling; and (4) students in inclusion classes reported higher levels of self-esteem. The conclusion reached by the researchers is that the effects of inclusion programs are mixed and difficult to interpret. There seems to be no consistent pattern in achievement differences. Behavior problems have a higher degree of occurrence in inclusive settings, implying that teachers must spend more time on correcting behavior than providing instruction. The behavior problems of the students with disabilities may potentially have negative effects on other students in the classroom.

Waldron and McLeskey (1997) investigated the effects of an inclusive school program (ISP) on students with mild and severe learning disabilities. The participants included students with LD in grades 2-6 from three elementary schools which had developed ISPs consisting of 71 students. The non-inclusion group of 73 students was from resource settings. Seventy-two percent of the students were male and only one student was Black. The method used was to administer both the experimental and comparison groups the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement Brief Form (K-TEA) in September, at the beginning of the ISP. Academic progress of both groups was evaluated using a curriculum-based measure. The results indicated that students with LD in the ISP made significantly more progress in reading and compatible more progress in mathematics when compared to the students who were provided services in resource classes. Furthermore, significantly more students with mild LD who were educated in the ISP made progress in reading that was comparable to their general education peers than did students with mild LD who were educated in non-inclusive settings. Students with severe LD made comparable progress in reading and mathematics, regardless of the instructional setting. The researchers concluded that effective ISPs, resulting in full-time placement in a general education classroom setting and student academic progress that is as good as or better than students placed in separate settings can be achieved for students with LD who are in elementary schools.

After examining teachers' perceptions and use of instructional adaptations in general education classes, Scott, Vitale, and Masten (1998) concluded, that general educators were found to be positive about the desirability/effectiveness and reasonability/feasibility of making instructional adaptations for students with disabilities. The primary purpose of the article was to provide a comprehensive literature review and synthesis to further an overall understanding of the key questions and issues regarding instructional adaptations for students with disabilities. The research reviewed for this study revealed that classroom teachers are very positive about the desirability and effectiveness of making adaptations for students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Teachers were also found to be less positive regarding the reasonability and feasibility of implementing adaptations in their classrooms. Research revealed also that teachers cited lack of teacher training and limited school support as the major barriers to accommodating the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classroom settings. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the academic achievement potential of Black students with mild disabilities in high school, in two instructional classroom placements, inclusive classroom setting compared to a self-contained/resource classroom model using pre and post test measures.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 64 Black students with mild disabilities (32 in an inclusive classroom setting and 32 in a self-contained/resource classroom) from a large high school located in a lower middle class suburban region of northeast Georgia. The population of the school was approximately 3,000 students with a demographical breakdown of Black (38.5%); Hispanic (31.4%); White (16.6%); Asian (10%); and Others (2.8%). Of the entire student population, 85% of the students participated in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program (took this sentence from down at bottom to place it here where it seems to fit better). The students participating in the study ranged in grade level from nine though twelve and had been classified as either: Emotionally/Behaviorally Disordered, Learning Disabled, Other Health Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired or Speech Language Impaired based on federal and state definitions of the exceptionalities. Of the 64 participants, 13 were females and 51 were males. The 32 students

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included in the regular classroom were all seeking technical level diplomas and the 32 students in self-contained/resource classrooms were seeking the special education certificate of attendance. The mean Full Scale IQ score of the students included in the regular education classroom was 89 with a range of 71-105, while the mean Full Scale IQ score of the students in self-contained/resource classrooms was 84 with a range of 48-98. The included students spend more than half the day in regular education classes, while the non-included students spend more than half the day in self-contained special education classes.

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Table 1

Table 1
Students Demographic Data

		Group	
	<i>N</i>	Non-Included	Included
Gender			
Male	51	28	23
Female	13	4	9
Grade Level			
9 th	24	8	16
10 th	23	13	10
11 th	10	9	1
12 th	7	2	5

Settings

The students received instruction in either inclusive or non-inclusive classrooms. The inclusive classrooms were offered to special education students seeking the technical diploma and have a general education teacher and special education teacher working together collaboratively. The average size of the inclusive classes at the participating school was approximately thirty-five students. The non-inclusive classes were offered to special education students seeking the certificate of attendance diploma and were taught by one special education teacher. The average size of the non-inclusive class at the participating school was eight students.

Instruments

The instrument used to test the participants was the Multilevel Academic Achievement Test (MAST), (Howell, Zucker, & Morehead, 1985). The MAST is intended for use by school personnel who make decisions about students' performance in reading and mathematics. These professionals include school psychologists, educational diagnosticians, special education teachers, and teachers in special programs such as Chapter 1. While teachers in regular classrooms may also administer the MAST to students without learning problems, the test is primarily intended for those educators who assess or instruct students exhibiting academic difficulties. Two basic instruments are included, the Grade level Test and the Curriculum Level Test. The Grade level Test is a standardized measure of overall standing in mathematics and reading, which provides

normed scores that estimate a student's present level of performance. The Short Form of the Grade Level Test measures reading, decoding and comprehension, and mathematics computation.

The criterion-related validity of the MAST was tested with 300 students in grades 3 through 8. The relationship between MAST Grade Level Test scores and related scores on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) showed high criterion validity. All students were administered the MAST Short and Extended forms one week and the multilevel form of the ITBS the following week. The ranking of students by the two measures (normal curve equivalents) were correlated. The coefficients in mathematics range from a low of .54 to a high of .85. The coefficients in reading ranged from a low of .59 to a high of .81. Inspections of the patterns of coefficients for the various measures indicate a high degree of agreement between the MAST and the ITBS in specific content sub-domains.

The predictive validity of the MAST was studied when 39 students in grades 4 through 12 of the standardization sample for the MAST Grade Level Test that had been previously labeled as learning disabled. The results showed that 74% of the students classified as LD by the Short Form, while 72% of the students classified as non-LD by the school systems were also classified as non-LD by the short Form.

The reliability of the MAST Grade Level Test scores was studied in a test-retest study involving 366 students in grades three through eight. The same teachers administered the test on both occasions within a two-week period. Raw test scores from the two administrations were correlated and the data suggest that the MAST has good reliability over a period of time. The correlation coefficients were moderately high to high in nearly all cases (only 2 of the coefficients were below .60 and only 6 of 24 coefficients were below .70). The median coefficients across grade level were .68 in short Form Reading and .71 in short Form Mathematics.

Procedures

The pre-test was administered to both groups of students at the beginning of the school year in September and the post-test was administered to both groups of students towards the end of the school year in March. The tests were administered to the non-included participants by the special education teachers of social studies and affective skills in their respective classrooms, while the tests were administered to the included students by the special education and general education teachers in the social studies (Geography, World History, U.S. History, and Economics/Political Systems) collaborative classes for a period of nine weeks. The students were administered two short form reading subtests of the MAST. All teachers received a training session on how to administer the MAST. In order to conceal the identity of the targeted students, all students in each class were administered the test and students were asked to write their name on the answer sheets to identify targeted and non-targeted students. The data from the results of both groups, included and non-included Black students with mild disabilities, were analyzed to determine if significant differences existed between the two groups.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for MAST Reading

Group (before Setting)	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
First Administration			
Non-Included	32	28.0	5.98
Included	32	34.2	5.39
Second Administration			
Non-Included	32	29.0	6.61
Included	32	35.2	4.97

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Black students with mild disabilities receiving their education in general education settings perform better than Black students with mild disabilities receiving their education in resource settings. Comparisons were made between the two groups on the MAST Reading Sub-test using pre and post tests to answer the following research question:

1. Is there a difference by placement (non-included vs. included) based on the academic abilities of Black students with mild disabilities?

Two separate measures (Fall and Spring) were administered to the participants. The mean score of the non-included participants on the first administration was 28.0 (SD = 5.98), while the mean score of the included participants on the first administration was 34.2 (SD = 5.39). A one-way ANOVA was performed on the data and the results indicated no significant differences between the non-included and included students with mild disabilities. $F(1, 62) = 18.75, p = .990$.

Table 3

Table 3
ANOVA for the first administration of Mast Reading

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Mast	606.391	1	606.391	18.75	.990
Error	2007.844	62	32.385		
Total	2614.234	63			

Note. * $p < .05$.

The mean score of the non-included students on the second administration was 29.0 (SD = 6.98), while the mean score of the included students on the second administration was 35.2 (SD = 4.97). Each group's mean score increased one point on the second administration. A one-way ANOVA was also performed on the data from the second testing administration. The results indicated significant differences in potential academic achievement between the two groups $F(1,62) = 17.91, p = .05$

Table 4

Table 4
ANOVA for the second administration of Mast Reading

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Mast	612.593	1	612.593	17.91*	.000
Error	2120.438	62	34.201		
Total	2733.000	63			

*Note.** $p < .05$.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Considering the maximum academic achievement potential of Black students with mild disabilities, the results of this study do provide statistical support that included Black students with mild disabilities may potentially perform better academically than non-included Black students with mild disabilities. Prior to greater depth of that discussion, several limitations of this study must be addressed. First, this study yielded the scores of only 64 participants. This small sample size increased the standard error of measure which increases the difficulty of making generalizations to a larger population. The study was also limited in that only one geographical region, state, school system and school was utilized. An argument could be made that a greater number of students from various geographical locations, states, systems and schools would have provided different results. Results revealed significant differences of reading ability between the two groups. Future research should examine this question more thoroughly by including a larger population from different geographical regions, states, and school systems.

The post-test administration of the MAST demonstrated significant differences between the two groups of students. This study's findings suggests that Black students with mild disabilities receiving their education in general education settings perform better than Black students with mild disabilities receiving their education in resource settings. These results lend support to the findings of Waldron and McLeskey (1997). The results also indicate that inclusive practices should continue for Black students with mild disabilities and suggest that future study needs to be performed for students having more serious disabilities to investigate if their performances increase due to inclusive practices.

Implications for Practice

The overrepresentation of Black students in special education has negative psychological, social and economical impacts which may last a lifetime (Patton, 1998). The fact that disproportionately large numbers of Black students are persistently diagnosed, labeled, and placed in special education programs constitutes a problem, as many of these students are inappropriately misplaced (Hilliard, 1991). Additionally, limited exposure to the core academic curriculum results in the spiral of "lower levels of achievement, decreased likelihood of post secondary education, and more limited employment" (Markowitz, Garcia, & Eichelberger, 1997). The implications from this study for educators, school administrators, parents and Black students with mild disabilities are varied. First, consideration should be given to the placement process which determines which student is included and which is non-included. There does not appear to be a distinct line between those

selected for inclusion and those placed in non-inclusive classrooms. While standardized tests and achievement scores are regarded as important tools in the placement process, perhaps more consideration should be given to the consequences of the placement of Black students with mild disabilities in non-inclusive classrooms.

Second, there are implications for the manner in which Black students with disabilities are educated in non-inclusive classrooms. Educational practices should be implemented to insure that all students with mild disabilities, particularly Black students, are academically successful when placed in inclusive classrooms.

Third, the implications suggest that Black students with disabilities do benefit from being included in the general education setting and that more effort should be put forth to make this end a realization for this population.

Conclusion

The results of this study did suggest included Black students with mild disabilities as a group; perform better academically than non-included Black students with mild disabilities, as a group. It also suggests that these two groups should not receive their education in separate settings but should continue or begin being provided with equal access to inclusive settings. These findings suggest that this practice would benefit Black students with mild disabilities and should lead to future research to include students with more serious disabilities in the general education classroom.

There are possibly many factors which play a role in the placement process of Black students with mild disabilities. The ability to achieve can be either beneficial or hampered by placement in either an included or non-included classroom. Given the lack of research on this subject and the seriousness of the implications, it is imperative that this question be examined more thoroughly. This study answered the question if there was a difference by placement (inclusive v. non-inclusive) based on the academic abilities of Black students with mild disabilities and the results suggest that there is a positive difference for Black students with mild disabilities in inclusive settings.

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Adventure Based Learning Experience (ABLE)

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Abstract

For the purpose of this research project an outdoor education program was developed for students (aged between 10-14) displaying signs of emotional difficulties in engaging with school and family life. The project investigated the effective use of an Integrated Adventure Based Educational program delivered in a complimentary milieu of classroom, outdoor and 'wilderness' venues. Participants of the Adventure Based Learning Experience (ABLE) program reported positive change. In interview, 86% of the students reported that their self-confidence had improved, 95% reported feeling more comfortable at school, and 64% believed that they had become more aware of the needs of others. Furthermore, 88% say that they have an increased ability to regulate their emotions, and 75% say they have experienced more positive interactions with their family since participating in the program. Outdoor education proponents have argued that a systematic approach to experiential learning through challenge can develop participants trust, social competence and group cohesion. This study demonstrates significant gains in social competence for 22 Year 8 students participating in the ABLE program as compared to the control groups.

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For the purpose of this research project an outdoor education program was developed for students (aged between 10-14) experiencing marginalization and displaying signs of emotional difficulties in engaging fully with school and family life. Therefore, the project encompasses an evaluative assessment of the effective use of an Integrated Outdoor/Adventure Based Educational program delivered in a complimentary milieu of classroom, outdoor and 'wilderness' venues. The primary consideration is the enhancement of trust and social competence and the transference of that development from an outdoor based educational setting to the social interactions and academic engagement within the secondary school environment. There is considerable research that supports the knowledge that increased trust and social competence boosts social emotional learning and increases school engagement and academic achievement. However, little empirical evidence generated in England concerning the role that an integrated outdoor/adventure based educational program has on marginalized pupils, is available. Therefore, this project collected and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative corpuses of data to produce the evidence necessary to ascertain the value of outdoor/adventure based educational programming in relationship to personal development and school based achievement.

The delivered strategy consists of a school based delivery of trust building activities, outdoor education based delivery of group dynamics and effective communication activities along with a confidence building wilderness trip. The pupils were assessed using standardized assessment tools before, during and after the program. Furthermore, teachers, parents and school administrators had the opportunity to participate in open interviews, thus providing valuable qualitative and quantitative information to be used in the findings.

All participants of the Adventure Based Learning Experience (ABLE) program reported positive change. One week after the end of the program semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants who completed the ABLE program. 100% of the participants indicated that the experience was "highly successful." 86% of the students reported that their self-confidence had improved, 95% reported feeling more comfortable at school, 78% felt that they had increased in general maturity, and 64% believed that they had become more aware of the needs of others. 89% thought that these changes would last for their lifetimes. Furthermore, 88% say that they have an increased ability to regulate their emotions, and 75% say they have experienced more positive interactions with their family since participating in the program. Most interestingly, group cohesion and trust was positively related to the development of social competence during the ABLE program. More specifically, the evidenced social engagement from the least socially competent participant was an effective indicator of growth in trust and social competence. The observed acceptance of this participant into the group as a trustworthy member allowed the entire group to build their understanding of differences and their acceptance of those differences in the construction and development of group cohesion. This highlights the importance of relationship building and the effect group processes have on individual growth and development as related to trust and social competence. Furthermore, as learning occurs in the social environment (Vygotsky, 1978), perhaps all educators should be more aware of the importance of group cohesion, trust and social competence within educational settings.

Therefore, by providing children with the opportunities to participate in an outdoor education program designed specifically to build trust, group cohesion and social competence, as defined by Rathjen & Foreyt (1980), within a learning environment that is both challenging and supportive, adventure programs can be recognized as a powerful tool to meet more recent government legislation focused toward the holistic needs of children.

Defining Social Competence

It generally is agreed that social competence is domain specific and developmental. Yet defining social competence is not an easy task; no consensual definition exists. Definitions vary according to their usefulness to differing theories and approaches. Typically, definitions fall into two main categories: global, generalized definitions; and definitions which consider specific components and skills (competencies) which serve as indicators of social competence (Peterson & Leigh, 1990). Definitions also differ according to a focus on either internal processes and behaviors or external outcomes (Dodge & Murphy, 1984). Since the effectiveness of social behavior can only be determined within the context of a particular social environment including communities, peer groups, families and cultures (Oppenheimer, 1988), it appears that both individual behaviors and social outcomes are important considerations in defining socially competent behavior.

The following indicators can be considered components of social competence (Rathjen & Foreyt, 1980)

- Effective communication in various social relationships
- Social problem solving and decision making ability
- Constructive resolution of conflicts
- Effective use of basic social skills
- Self control and self-monitoring of one's behavior
- Respect for individual differences
- Ability to solicit and utilize social support
- Sincere interest in the well-being of others
- Empathy and perspective-taking ability
- Maintaining an attachment to school
- Ability to distinguish between positive and negative peer pressure

Socially competent adolescents have a sense of belonging, are valued, and are given opportunities to contribute to society (Gullotta, 1990), which to a large extent is made possible within the various social environments where adolescents live such as family, school, and community. The development of social competence is facilitated by strong social support, through supportive relationships and a supportive socio-cultural and physical environment; inhibitors of social competence include cultural and social barriers based upon factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status (Bloom, 1990).

Social competence must first be operationally defined as a collection of specific behaviors and abilities before social competence promotion programs can be designed and implemented (Rathjen & Foreyt, 1980). Interventions intended to enhance social competence are often a combination of health promotion and problem prevention programs such as life skills training programs (e.g. Botvin, 1996; Danish, 1996) which attempt to reduce risk behaviors as well as promote healthy adjustment and development. It has been found that the most effective programs are multi-dimensional and multi-level such as the combination of skills-based approaches with environmentally-oriented approaches (Schinke, McAlister, Orlandi, & Botvin, 1990). The importance of addressing affective (e.g., stress management), cognitive (e.g., problem solving), and behavioral (e.g., social skills training) components of social competence in enhancement efforts has been suggested by many researchers (e.g., Caplan & Weissberg, 1988).

Weissberg, Barton, & Shriver (1997) cite outcome research for social competence promotion programs which show positive effects on adolescents' problem solving skills, social relations with peers, school adjustment, and reductions in high risk behaviors. They view social competence promotion in the school setting as a "highly promising and appropriate educational strategy for preventing high risk behavior" (p. 287). It has been found that the most enduring outcomes are a result of real world application to promote the generalization of skills, and consistency of intervention throughout the school years so children are allowed to build on previous learning. As with most intervention programs, the generalization of what is learned is the greatest challenge. Learned skills and desired outcomes do not always match. The more comprehensive the intervention effort, the more likely that learned skills will be applied in various contexts and behavioral changes will be sustained over time.

Adventure Learning

Constructing Trust, Group Cohesion and Social Competence

The ABLE program was designed to focus on breaking down barriers, both physical and emotional, and overcoming school based marginalization. In other words, to address the inhibitors to the development of social competence as previously cited. Thereby, allowing the participants to develop social competence within a trusting and supportive environment. The activities delivered are designed first to assess the level of social competence within the group and individuals and then to build from that baseline. This was then followed by activities focused specifically on overcoming barriers to peer collaboration and social interaction. Once trust was developed and barriers overcome the group was able to experience positive results through challenge.

Rationale

In response to growing concerns about children's social-emotional intelligence and behavior in and out of the classroom, recent years have seen a growing interest in providing a structured program for Personal Social Health Education (PSHE), Citizenship and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL).

It was considered that investigating group development and social competence could provide valuable understanding of the learning processes associated with the Adventure Based Learning Experience (ABLE) Program. Therefore, in this study it was hypothesized that; (1) an adventure based learning experience program within a social constructivist approach would enhance participants social competence; (2) that growth in trust, group cohesion and social competence would be positively related to the outdoor educational learning environment, (3) that this learning through reflective dialogue would be generalizable to the home and school environment; and (4) social competence would enhance engagement at school and in the family.

Method

Participants

The control group consisted of 723 students in Key Stage 3 (Years 7 - 9) enrolled at an Essex, England state comprehensive secondary school. Of this control group 435 returned complete data. The group was comprised of 248 males and 187 females; with a mean age of 13 +/- 7 months. The entire Key Stage group was selected as the control group for the purpose of gaining an overall view of children's self concept and inferring that all children could benefit from a social constructivist approach within adventure programming to develop and promote social competence, trust, group cohesion and confidence.

In the experimental group, there were 24 Year 8 participants who participated in the adventure based learning experience program, 22 of whom returned complete data. This group consisted of 16 males and 6 females with a mean age of 13 +/- 5 months. The students who undertook the ABLE program were selected by the Head of year and Home Tutor Teachers. These professional were asked to select students who they considered were not meeting their full potential within their academic life. The students nominated went through an interview process with the researcher for

the purpose to inform the students of the nature of the project and to obtain the students full consent. Once the student consent was obtained a parent evening was conducted. This informed the parents of the program and addressed any questions of concern. Once parental consent was obtained the students were inducted onto the program.

Materials

To measure social competence within self-concept, this study used the 150 item self report Multi-dimensional Self-Concept Scale (Braken, 1992). The scale assesses global self-concept and six context-dependent self-concept domains. The six domains assessed by the MSCS include: Social, Competence, Affect, Academic, Family, and Physical.

Self Concept was measured one week before the start of the Adventure Based Learning Experience program and one week after the end of the program. Furthermore, a qualitative corpus of data was collected and coded to develop an understanding of Trust and group cohesion. This was facilitated by recording and video taping all discussions and interviews. These were then coded and analyzed using the ATLAS.ti 5.0(2005) within the grounded theory approaches of Strauss and Corbin (1990). Once this analysis was completed a questionnaire was developed and administered. The data collected from these questionnaires was then collated into numerical datasets.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the start, and throughout the program, including one parent and child interview one month after the completion of the ABLE program. These interviews were recorded and coded. Observations were conducted throughout all aspects of the project; all notes and video tapes were coded for analysis as above.

ABLE Program Procedure & Design

The three month multi-component Adventure Based Learning Experience (ABLE) program was conducted in Essex, England. The ABLE program is based on the social constructivist theories of Lev Vygotsky(1978) and the dialogue facilitation aspects of Bakhtin (1981) within a Dewey(1933) conceptualization of reflective learning couched in an understandings of the relationship between personal growth and development experienced in the physical, emotional and social intensity of adventurous undertakings.

The program is designed into three developmental stages. The first stage consisting of four 2 hour weekly sessions facilitated at the participating secondary school. Within these sessions a social constructivist approach was taken to develop trust and build effective communication. Typical activities included trust games, group challenges and group initiatives followed by debriefings. The second stage involved a 5 day residential component at the Outdoor Education Centre. Activities in this stage entailed initiative tasks, cultural studies, obstacle course, cross-country hike, canoeing, high ropes course, wall climbing, all followed by feedback sessions and debriefings. The third stage consisted of a 3 ½ day wilderness trip to the Brecon Beacons of Wales. The wilderness phase incorporated a backpacking trip over rugged terrain where the participants were responsible for all meal preparation, pitching camp and meeting all other group needs. The trip concluded with a group discussion and debriefing.

Results

Table 1; Multi Dimensional Self Concept Scale

Pre-program delivery of MSCS	Control Group n=435			Experimental Group n=22			
		Raw Scores *	Standard Scores		Raw Scores*	Standard Scores	Deviation (Standard Score)
Social		82.91	110		72.52	95	15
Competence		79.14	107		69.3	90	17
Affect		71.73	107		69.34	93	14
Academic		81.81	110		70.90	96	14
Family		91.12	111		86.1	99	12
Physical		71.17	108		70.13	95	13
Total		494.18	111		438.83	94	17

*Raw scores rounded to the nearest whole number for Standard Score calculations

Table 2
Pre & Post Program Results

<i>ABLE</i>	<i>Pre-Intervention MSCS Scores</i>			<i>Post-Intervention MSCS Scores</i>			<i>Alpha = 0.05</i>
	Mean	Std Dev.	Std. Err	Mean	Std Dev.	Std. Err	Cohen's d = 2.63
Experimental Group n=22	438.83	27.64	5.89	501.12	18.78	4.00	Effect Size r = 0.796
Control Group n=435	494.18	58.09	2.79	491.93	57.62	2.76	

Table 3

Post Program Variance

<i>Variance</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Std. Err</i>	<i>Alpha = 0.05</i>
Experimental Group n=22	501.12	18.78	4.00	Cohen's d = 0.214
Control Group n=435	491.93	57.62	2.76	Effect Size r = 0.1066

These findings indicate that the null hypothesis can be rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the experimental group's self concept was improved as a direct result of the ABLE program.

Table 4
Comparison of pre-program and post-program MSCS outcomes for experimental group
(n=22)

Pre-Program delivery of MSCS				Post-program delivery of MSCS			
		Raw Scores*	Standard Scores		Raw Scores*	Standard Scores	Deviation (Standard Score)
Social		72.52	95		84.53	111	16
Competence		69.31	90		82.95	111	21
Affect		69.34	93		79.84	106	13
Academic		70.90	96		77.25	105	9
Family		86.16	99		98.73	116	7
Physical		70.13	95		77.62	105	10
Total		438.83	94		501.12	110	16

*Raw scores rounded to the nearest whole number for Standard Score calculations

Comparison of pre-program and post-program MSCS outcomes for experimental group (n=22)

As can be seen in Table 4 above there was a statistically significant increase in overall Self Concept. The most significant increases being in the Social, Competence and Affect Sub-scales.

Qualitative findings

All participants reported positive results in relationship to building trust, group cohesion, and emotional regulation. One week after the end of the program semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants who completed the ABE program. 100% of the participants indicated that the experience was "highly successful." 86% of the students reported that their self-confidence had improved, 78% felt that they had increased their ability to persevere through frustration, and 64% believed that they had become more aware of the needs of others. 89% thought that these changes would last for their lifetimes. Furthermore, 88 % reported that they have an increased ability to regulate their emotions, 75% indicate that they have experienced positive gains in their family since participating in the program. Finally, 100% of the participants report that they have developed a deeper level of trust for the other group members.

Furthermore, positive change was reported by the Secondary School Staff and by Parents as related to school and home behavior and engagement. As the qualitative evidence confirms the participants have developed a strong trust for one another and this trust has developed into a tight knit group who are committed to staying together as friends. This is strongly evidenced by a visit to the school one month after the end of the ABE program. The group has started their own 'Outers Club', whereby, they are organizing their own out of school adventurous activities.

Family / Group Cohesion

Parents have been overwhelmingly positive about the change brought about in their children in such a short space of time. One mother reports, that her son has become so helpful around the house and in the family that she "...just can not believe the change in him." During Interviews and completion of questionnaires, 100% of the parents reported positive behavioral and motivational change in their children, 92% state that their child has become more cooperative in family responsibilities and 100% confirm that they feel that the ABLE program is responsible for their child's new sense of confidence.

Educational (re)Engagement

In addition, reports from teachers have been positive and evidence encouraging results from the ABLE program. A senior teacher stated, "I have been teaching for nearly 30 years and I have never seen such positive results from any one program over such a diverse group of students". Another, adds, "I have known the one student now for two years and I have never seen him smile once, now he is constantly smiling since the program started." Moreover, 75% of teachers involved with the ABLE participants say that they have seen an increase in cooperative behavior in the classroom, 98% feel that the participants have gained a new sense of social competence and 100% believe that the ABLE program is directly responsible for the participants reengagement with school.

Trust & Social Competence

One participant stated "I never knew I could trust so many people, and people would trust me, I just can't say how great I feel". Another goes on to add "I have realized that I can be who I am, not what everyone else wants me to be. I have learnt that I can really trust people who support me for who I am".

On the wilderness trip, the weather became very harsh and the wind was literally knocking the participants to the ground. What was of interest to note is how everyone pulled together and began to help each other down the mountain. No laughing, no 'winding each other up', just working together. When the trip was completed they were asked about this; one boy stated that "...if something like that happened at school the weak kids would really be bullied and made fun of, but out there we knew we were in it together, we have learned through you that if we work together we can overcome anything".

General Discussion

Limitations

It is important to highlight the constraints of this research project. Therefore, it must be stated that the project occurred at only one secondary school in Essex, England and was facilitated by one Outdoor Education Centre. In addition, the ABLE program was only delivered to 24 Year 8 Students. Thus, a broader project consisting of a larger number of schools, outdoor centres and program participants would be necessary for the findings to be fully contributed to the ABLE program. In addition, this project delivered a very specific Adventure Based Learning Experience designed specifically to meet the needs of the participants as ascertained by collecting base line data. Therefore, it may be erroneous to claim that all adventurous activities in and of themselves would evidence the same positive results or that all outdoor centers deliver the same level of programming.

Overview

In response to growing concerns about children's social emotional intelligence and behavior in and out of the classroom, recent years have seen a growing interest in providing a structured program for Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), citizenship and social emotional intelligence. As research shows powerful feelings and emotions can impair cognitive function, distort perceptions and subsequently affect behaviors. Children may be unable to deal with, or understand, the mix of complex feelings and emotions in the social world of school, family and the broader community at large. They may also experience difficulty in linking their actions with consequences (Thomasgard & Metz, 2004).

Therefore, anxiety within social settings may result in children being impulsive in their reaction to situations, which for some can lead to aggressive and disruptive anti-social behavior. Thereby, resulting in the possibilities of increased delinquency, depression and disengagement with education and family (Salvador, 2003). Furthermore, children may use coping behaviors that are counter-productive to learning such as bullying, clowning and cheating (Brooks, 1994). These factors may lead to marginalization and increased difficulties with integrating fully into school and family life. Thus, impacting negatively on the attainment of personal satisfaction and self-actualization. Therefore, this project was undertaken to ascertain to what effect, if any, does a structured outdoor educational program, focused on social emotional learning, have on participants. The project used both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and code data in the desire to answer the research question. As highlighted by Winter's (1989) depiction of action research; 'Risking Disturbance', meaning that what comes to light may be contrary to entrenched beliefs, is one of the key tenets to understanding. Therefore, all participants in this project were informed that the answer was as open as the question. Furthermore, all participants were fully involved and consented to every aspect of the project.

It was evidenced that the ABLE program was well received by the participants, their parents, teachers and school administrators. Over the course of the program participants engaged fully with the outdoor education teachers, developed their ability to engage more cooperative in pro-social behavior, became progressively calmer and barriers to learning were overcome. Participants showed an increase in trust, effective communication and consideration for all members of the group. These observed and reported changes in the participants are important and may support future positive interactions in their families and school.

Hattie et al.'s (1997) meta-analysis of Outdoor Educational Research led to their statement, "It seems adventure programs have a major impact on the lives of participants, and this impact is lasting". Furthermore, according to Fox & Auramidis (2003) within outdoor education "Learning objectives are achieved alongside enjoyable and challenging activities which cannot be performed in conventional classroom settings". Moreover, Hattie et al. (1997) concluded that in their meta-analysis it certainly appears that adventure programs affect the social skills of participants in desirable ways.

This U.K. study confirms the findings of previous American and Australian research into the learning processes inherent in outdoor educational programs constructed specifically for the development of pro-social skills and the development of social competence. Therefore, as posited by Elias et al. (1997) schools will be most successful when they promote children's academic, social and emotional learning in an integrated and systematic effort. Thus, as evidenced in this study and others, an integrated outdoor educational program can fill a critical role in improving children's academic performance, family relations, and social well-being.

Researchers have concluded that pro-social behavior is linked with positive intellectual outcomes (Diperna & Elliot, 1999; Pasi, 2001 and Ben-Avie & Esign, 2003). Conversely, antisocial behavior co-occurs with poor academic performance (Cobb, 1972; Wentzel, 1993 and Malecki & Elliot, 2002). This study has shown that a structured approach to building trust, effective communication, problem-solving skills, emotional regulation and social competence can have a powerful impact on participants. Along with the observed empowerment of participants, experiential outdoor education can promote accountability, which is a key component for maintaining lasting positive change in adolescents (Perkins & Zimmermann, 1995).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides empirical support for the construction of trust, group cohesion and social competence through the implementation and delivery of outdoor education based adventure programming. As evidenced in the study social competence as defined by Rathjen & Foreyt (1980) can be enhanced through challenge. Furthermore, challenges delivered in a controlled, systematic social constructivist approach can help children engage more fully in school and family. Thus, children given the opportunities to partake in an outdoor education program designed specifically to build trust, group cohesion and social competence within a learning environment that is both challenging and supportive can be recognized as a powerful tool to meet the Every Child Matters (2003) mandate.

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