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COMPARISON OF DIRECT INSTRUCTION AND PARENT CONSULTATION FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE IN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

BY

Michael Stinson

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

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YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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Abstract

Direct instruction and parent consultation interventions for promoting social-emotional competence of preschool and kindergarten children were compared. Thirty-six Parent/child dyads were randomly assigned to a direct instruction (children receive intervention from the researcher), parent consultation (coaching from the researcher), or control group. Teachers and Parents were both asked to complete the Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales – Second Edition (PKBS-2) before and after the seven week intervention to measure changes in social-skills and problem behaviors. Two-way mixed-factorial ANOVA was conducted to compare changes in social skills from before to after the intervention across conditions. A significant interaction of time of evaluation and condition on overall social skills as measured by the teacher-rated PKBS-2 was not found. An analysis of parent responses on the PKBS-2 and Parent Questionnaire could not be conducted because of limited parent data.

Keywords: social-emotional competence, social skills, parent-training

Comparison of Direct Instruction and Parent Consultation for Promoting Social-

Emotional Competence in Preschool and Kindergarten Children

The purpose of this study was to investigate if parent consultation improved the

social-emotional skills of preschool and kindergarten children when compared to direct

instruction. Social-emotional skills are important in promoting social, behavioral, and

academic competencies (Landry & Smith, 2010; McCabe & Altamura, 2011). Children

with social-emotional competence, such as social-awareness and self-regulation, in

preschool and kindergarten are likely to have social and academic success in the future

(Landry & Smith, 2010). According to Aviles, Anderson, and Davila (2006), these skills

are influenced by environmental experiences. For example, parenting and the learning

environment play important roles in shaping the development of early social-emotional

skills (Aviles, et al., 2006; Graves & Howes, 2011; Ştefan & Miclea, 2010; Rimm-

Kaufman, Curby, Grimm, Nathanson, & Brock, 2009).   Parents play a vital role in the

development of their children's social-emotional competence; however, some parents

may not have the parenting skills needed, or may be too busy to spend time with their

children to develop these skills (Iruka, LaForett, & Odom, 2012).

It is, therefore, important to identify effective and practical strategies to support

parents in their effort to promote social-emotional competencies in children. The current

study aimed to contribute to this line of investigation.

Definitions of Terms

In this study, social-emotional competence, direct instruction, parent consultation,

and preschool were defined as follows.

Social-emotional competence. Social-emotional competence was defined as the ability to: recognize and manage emotions, establish positive relationships, and solve problems efficiently. This conceptualization of social-emotional competence is based on the Collaborative of Academic, Social and Emotional Learning's (CASEL, 2003) definition of social-emotional learning. CASEL's definition of social-emotional competence was selected for this study because of the broad representation of each skill that related to an individual's overall social-emotional wellbeing.

Direct instruction. Direct instruction was defined as social-emotional instruction the researcher provided to children directly, during the school day.

Parent Consultation. In this study, parent consultation was defined as social-emotional instruction parents provide their children as a result of being coached by others. In other words, knowledgeable others educate parents on how to help their children develop social competence, and they in turn work with the children.

Preschool/Kindergarten. For this study, preschool and kindergarten were defined as an educational program designed for children ages three to six. This age range is in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2012) child development age ranges.

Given the definitions above, what does social-emotional development entail?

Social-Emotional Development

Social and emotional skills are often discussed in the same breath because of the reliance on emotional competencies during social interactions. According to Arslan and colleagues (2011), emotional development forms a foundation for social skills to develop (Arslan, Durmuşoğlu-Saltali, & Yilmaz, 2011). How an individual manages and

recognizes emotions determines how successful he or she will be in building and maintaining relationships (Ashiabi, 2007). To separate social and emotional competencies, Denham (2003) identified emotional competence as one's ability to "identify emotional expressions, determine the causes of emotions, regulate emotions during social interactions, and take the perspective of others." Alternatively, social competence includes the ability to "integrate cognitive, affective, and behavioral states to achieve one's goal in a social context" (McCabe & Altamura, 2011, pp. 514-515). In a 2003 publication, CASEL listed five interrelated skills that contribute to an individual's overall level of social-emotional competence. The five skills were self-awareness, social-awareness, self-regulation, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, which are discussed next (Zins & Elias, 2006).

  Self-awareness. This is the identification and recognition of emotions and the ability to express feelings constructively (Zins & Elias, 2006). This basic receptive and expressive understanding of emotion is one of the first social skills to emerge in early childhood (Rhoades, Warren, Domitrovich, & Greenberg, 2011). Around 2 years of age, children begin rapidly increasing their capability of labeling emotional expressions (Rhoades, et al., 2011; McCabe & Altamura, 2011; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997). By the age of 5, the majority of children are able to correctly identify most simple, and even some complex, emotions. Widen and Russell (2002) stated that most 5 year olds can identify: happiness, anger, sadness, fear, and to a certain extent surprise and disgust. As children build competence in self-awareness, social-awareness and self-regulation begin to develop (Gottman et al., 1997; Silvia, 2002).

Social-awareness. Social-awareness is the ability to demonstrate an understanding of another person's emotions (CASEL, 2003). Social-awareness guides an individual in recognizing the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others (Ştefan & Miclea, 2010). By three years of age, children are skilled at interpreting others' facial expressions and tones of voice to identify emotions (McCabe & Altamura, 2011). By four years of age, typically developing children are able to recognize many of the emotional expressions exhibited by peers and adults, and then respond appropriately ("milestones in social and emotional development," n.d.). CASEL stated that by elementary school, students are able to predict others' feelings and perspectives in various situations. When children struggle to identify the emotions of others, they tend to act inappropriately in social interactions (McCabe & Altamura, 2011). For instance, when another child expresses signs of sadness, a child with poor social-awareness may misinterpret the peer's expression of sadness as another emotion, such as anger. As a result of this misinterpretation of emotion, the child responds with how he or she would normally respond to anger, instead of demonstrating an appropriate response to sadness (McCabe & Altamura, 2011; Ştefan & Miclea, 2010). Over time, these inappropriate responses reduce the likelihood the child will be asked to join peer groups because of the peers' inability to predict the child's responses (Ştefan & Miclea, 2010). In other words, children with poor social-awareness are likely to experience peer rejection because of their unpredictable social responses.

Self-regulation. Also referred to as self-management, self-regulation is the process of managing one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, complete tasks, and overcome problems (Gillespie & Seibel, 2006). Bandura's 1977 theory of self-

regulation (as cited in Grusec, 1992) suggested that self-regulation requires one to

examine emotions and behaviors, compare these behaviors to an environmental standard,

and then adjust the behaviors accordingly to meet environmental expectations. The

process is initially mediated through parental/caregiver reactions to their child (Aviles, et

al., 2006; Grusec, 1992). How the caregiver responds to emotion and behavior allows the

child to internalize appropriate behaviors (Grusec, 1992). Through emotional-regulation,

the child is able to compare the demands of the social context, and adjust his or her

emotion appropriately, which typically results in a reduction in arousal (Silvia, 2002).

According to Blair (2002), a child's ability to self-regulate before school entry is

critically important to the child's school functioning. The demands of schooling can

challenge a child's ability to manage emotions, focus attention, and inhibit some

behaviors while activating others (Blair & Razza, 2007; Ştefan, 2008). Throughout the

school day, children are asked to inhibit many of their natural dominant responses. Some

areas that require self-regulation include waiting for a turn to play with a toy, raising a

hand instead of talking out, and adhering to a structured schedule (Rimm-Kaufman, et al,

2009). Children who struggle to manage their emotion are likely to become frustrated

and act out aggressively or impulsively (Ştefan, 2008). This negative expressiveness can

impair the child's ability to form and maintain meaningful relationships (Ştefan &

Miclea, 2010).

Relationship skills. Relationship or interpersonal skills refer to a child's ability

to form and maintain positive relationships, cooperate well with others, resist peer

pressure, along with resolving interpersonal conflicts, and asking for help when

appropriate (Spence, 2003). Gülay (2011) reported that relationship skills result from

prosocial behaviors. Prosocial behaviors include sharing, being polite, showing empathy, and providing help and support to others. Children who demonstrate these behaviors are typically considered more likeable by their peers. These skills also assist children in maintaining long lasting relationship.

> **Responsible decision-making.** The final social-emotional skill indicated in the CASEL (2003) report was responsible decision-making. Responsible decision-making was defined as one's "ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions". A responsible decision-maker weighs several factors before making a decision, including ethical standards, safety risks, societal norms, and the consequences of actions to self and others.   While this type of decision-making develops across the lifespan, preschool children can be taught to consider how their decisions impact others in their surroundings.

Each of the social skills discussed above contribute to the overall wellbeing of an individual. The ability to internalize skills and demonstrate appropriate emotions and behaviors benefits an individual in social, behavioral, and academic domains; however, children lagging behind in developing these skills are likely to struggle in each of these areas (Landry & Smith, 2010; McCabe & Altamura, 2011).

Implications of Social Skill Deficits

> **Social-interactions.** One troubling consequence of underdeveloped social skills is the difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships. McCabe and Altamura (2011) found that children who displayed appropriate social-awareness and self-regulation were identified by their peers as more likeable. In return, these children were more likely to be invited to join play opportunities. Play opportunities are critically important in furthering

the development of social-emotional skills. Interactions during play allow children to

practice their abilities, test social limits, and develop skills; over time, children acquire

personal values, beliefs about the world around them, and effective communication and

behavioral strategies (McCabe & Altamura, 2011). On the other hand, children who fail

to recognize and control emotions are frequently excluded from group play, while

children with adequate social skills are repeatedly asked to join play groups. Children's

limited social interactions reduce the opportunities for them to practice and shape

appropriate social skills (Whitted, 2011). Whitted explained: "a pattern is set in place in

which children who desperately need opportunities to engage with others are alienated

and excluded from activities that may enable them to learn and practice the skills they

desperately need to be successful in school" (p. 12). Over time, as this process continues,

more serious behavior problems can occur (Ştefan & Miclea, 2010).

Behavior problems. Children with inadequate social skills are more likely to

develop early-onset behavior problems compared to socially competent peers (Ştefan &

Miclea, 2010). Of these at-risk children, half will exhibit a more significant clinical

behavioral disorder in adolescence or adulthood (McCabe & Altamure, 2011). These

behavior disorders related to poor emotional regulation and problem-solving become

stable over time and can develop into externalizing and internalizing disorders (McCabe

& Altamura, 2011; Ştefan & Miclea, 2010). Brown and Conroy (2011) stated that

aggressive behaviors tend to be a direct consequence of a child's misinterpretation of his

or her surroundings. A child that has continuously misinterpreted emotions as threatening

now reacts more aggressively, often prepared for a confrontation (Brown and Conroy,

2011). At school, these non-compliant and aggressive behaviors are often met with

punitive disciplinary measures, further exacerbating the problem (Whitted, 2011). Some teachers, unprepared to handle aggressive children, have turned to special education or even expulsion to combat problem behaviors (Aviles, Anderson, & Davila, 2006; Whitted, 2011). A national study conducted at Yale University (Gilliam, 2005) found that preschool children with behavior problems were being expelled at an alarming rate. Of the prekindergarten teachers surveyed, 10.4% reported expelling one preschooler in the last year, while an additional 19.9% reported expelling more than one student over the same timeframe. These findings suggested that preschool children were expelled at a higher frequency than students in grades 1-12 (Whitted, 2011). McCabe and Altamura warned that expelling children from preschool can be a dangerous practice because the preschool years are the most appropriate time to teach and shape skills essential for later academic and social success. When behavior problems appear at high frequency and intensity in the early years of schooling, they are the best predictors of future struggles. McCabe and Altamura found behavior problems in preschool to predict school dropout, delinquency, gang membership, and even adult incarceration. Poor social skills and behavior problems have also been found to negatively impact academic functioning (Bulotsky-Shearer, Dominguez, & Bell, 2012).

Academic development. Researchers have linked social-emotional development to academic achievement, claiming they are not separate but interrelated areas (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Aviles, Anderson, & Davila, 2006). Izard and colleagues (2001) identified consistent longitudinal associations between early emotional recognition and later academic competence even when controlling for other childhood factors like age, verbal ability, and temperament (as cited in Rhoades et al., 2011). The more socially

competent individuals are, the more prepared they are to learn. This interwoven

relationship between social and academic achievement is especially clear in early

schooling where the majority of learning is socially mediated (Bulotsky-Shearer, et al.,

2012). Academic concepts are practiced at centers, where groups of students work on a

task together (Bulotsky-Shearer, et al., 2012). In this environment, children are required

to be comfortable in the social setting, while learning the new academic concepts. Aviles

and colleagues found that children struggling to manage the social strain of the learning

environment are left with a limited mental capacity to perform well on the task. Children

with poor self-management may also have a low frustration tolerance when learning new

concepts, potentially leading to aggressive outbursts and poor performance. Over time,

the continual outbursts and poor performance results in negative interactions with others

involved (Aviles et al., 2006). These repeated negative interactions between teacher and

student may lead to the child being referred for disciplinary actions, including suspension

or even expulsion (Whitted, 2011). As discussed earlier, these disciplinary practice result

in missed opportunities for the student to learn needed skills (McCabe & Altamura,

2011). In this instance, the missed academic instruction only increases the achievement

gap between well behaved students and those with poor social skills (Aviles et al., 2006).

Theoretical Models

In the foregoing, the nature of social-emotional development as defined by

CASEL (2003) and the implications of poor social-emotional development are discussed.

It appears that social-emotional development is based on social relationships and

interactions with significant others, and it is related to academic achievement. In the

following, a theoretical model, Bronfenbernner's Ecological Systems Theory, for

understanding how children develop social-emotional skills is presented.

Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) conceptualized that developmental competencies, like intelligence and social skills, were not solely genetic but also influenced by both direct and indirect environmental factors. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development suggests that all human development occurs through interactions with persons, objects, and symbols in one's environment. He theorized a nested approach to development with direct and indirect influences. Three layers of influence were described as systems titled: microsystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner, the microsystem includes family members, friends, and teachers. These individuals are likely to have the most influence on development because of the close relationship they hold with the target individual. As children develop social skills, they look to the environment around them for guidance, observing how parents, and later teachers and classmates, manage the social world, children begin to develop social skills of their own. The microsystem fits the developmental stage of children, 3 to 6 years of age; the current study investigated. Thus, in this study, the first stage of the Ecological Systems Theory, the microsystem, was used as a framework for understanding preschool and kindergarten children's social skills development. Furthermore, two other theories explain the mechanism how children acquire social competence, modeling and the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), respectively. According to these theories, children observe and imitate significant people in their lives, particularly parents and teachers; and because parents and teachers are more

knowledgeable, they support and guide children until the children internalize new skills. As illustrated in Figure 1 below, this process is understood to be the mechanism children acquire social-emotional competence.

Figure 1. *Theoretical Model for the Development of Social-Emotional Competence in*

Preschool and Kindergarten Children.
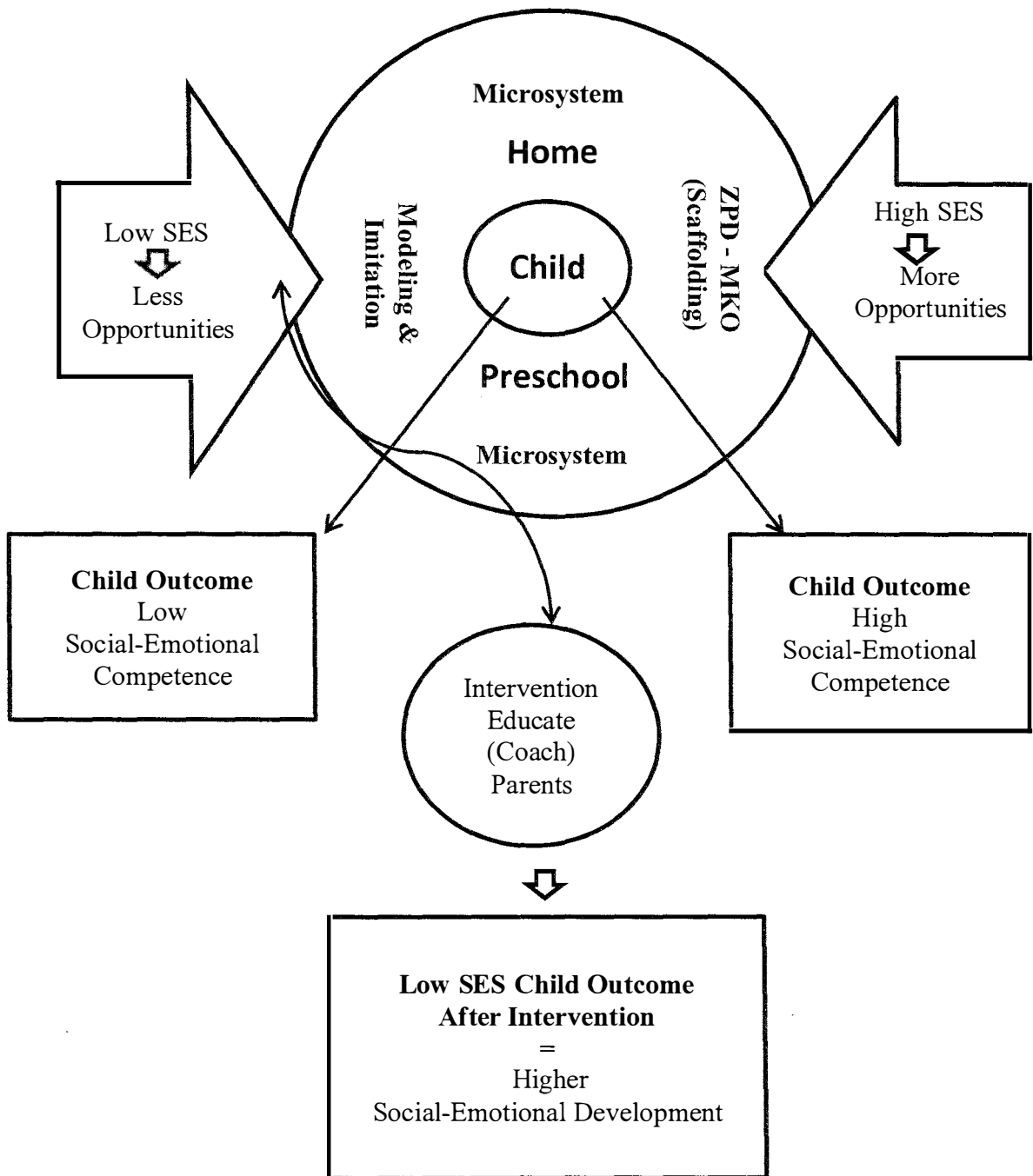
According to the proposed model, children learn social skills through modeling and imitation in the home and early school environment. A family's socioeconomic status influences the opportunities children have to experience quality modeling and social-emotional instruction. Fewer opportunities lead to a lower level of social-emotional competence for low SES children. By educating/coaching parents on ways to improve social skills in their children, children will experience higher quality instruction and modeling, leading to a higher level of social-emotional development.

The Role of Parents in Social-Emotional Development of Their Children

Parents are the initial source of social-emotional learning (McCabe & Altamura, 2011). Before their children are introduced to formal schooling, parents are the primary educators of social skills. Through parental feedback and observation, children learn how to display, interpret, and regulate emotion (McCabe & Altamura, 2011).

The importance of parents in their children's development is well understood, however, the parental qualities that contribute to children's social-emotional development continue to be investigated. In a dated, but informative study, Eisenber, Cumberland, and Spinrad (1998) suggested a number of parenting traits for promoting social-emotional development. The authors referred to these parenting traits as parental emotion-related socialization behaviors. On their list of parenting traits, they identified parental reactions to children's emotions, parental discussion of emotion, and parental expression of emotion as the three most important traits for encouraging social-emotional development.

According to Eisenberg and colleagues (1998) the parental reaction to the child's emotion influences arousal. If parents respond punitively to their child's emotion, their

reaction may induce feelings of anxiety, fear, or anger in the child. Alternatively, if parents are supportive in their emotional response, children are assisted in arousal reduction). Denham and Grout (1992) examined parents' reactions to their child's emotional outburst. They found that if parents meet their children's negative emotions with punishment or restrictive behaviors, the children are likely to become distressed. As a result of this distress, children commonly reduce their emotional output. This reduction in emotional output not only limits the opportunity to experience and identify both positive and negative emotions, it also interferes with the development of self-awareness (Denham & Grout, 1992). On the other hand, if parents encourage positive emotions and teach why negative emotions are often inappropriate, their children will learn to distinguish the difference between appropriate and inappropriate emotions, leading to better self-regulation (Denham & Grout, 1992).

Parental discussion of emotion is another parenting trait that supports social-emotional development. Families that openly discuss their feelings and emotions are more likely to produce children with a stronger understanding of emotions (Eisenber, et al., 1998). Parents can help their children interpret emotions and provide suggestions on how to handle difficult situations by having frequent conversations about emotions. Similar to Eisenber, et al, other researchers have suggested that through open discourse on emotions, children are more likely to identify and describe their emotions better than children with limited emotion-based conversations (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987).

The third parental emotion-related socialization behavior is parental expression of emotion. Parents who express their emotion appropriately provide positive models that can help their children learn and indentify various emotional responses (Daly,

Abramovitch, & Pliner, 1980). Denham and Grout (1992) found that when mothers frequently expressed positive emotions their children are likely to have a positive disposition; whereas, mothers with aggressive or negative emotional dispositions tend to pass down these emotions to their children.

Several researchers have examined the influence of parenting behaviors and the early learning environment on children's social-emotional development (Warren & Stifter, 2008; Hindman & Morrison, 2012; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Warren and Stifter found longitudinal relations between parents' emotion-related socialization behaviors and their children's awareness of emotions. When parents demonstrated non-supportive emotion-related behaviors, such as not discussing emotions with their children, their behaviors had a negative effect on their children's awareness of emotion. This study supports the assertion that parents play a significant role in the social-emotional development of their child. Parenting skills such as expressing positive emotions, discussing emotions with your children, and handling negative emotional expression positively seem to be related to the development of self-awareness (Warren and Stifter, 2008).

In addition, Grolnick and Ryan (1989) assessed three dimensions of parenting characteristics. They were concerned with autonomy support, parental involvement, and the provision of structure. They examined these characteristics in 64 mothers and 50 fathers of elementary school children. The authors viewed autonomy support as an influence on self-regulation. They defined autonomy support as "the degree to which parents value and use techniques which encourage independent problem solving, choice, and participation in decisions versus externally dictating outcomes, and motivating

achievement through punitive disciplinary techniques, pressure, or controlling rewards."
Autonomy is one of the key characteristic of authoritative parenting and is believed to be
the foundation of self-regulation and independence (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989).

The second parenting factor identified was parental involvement. Parental
involvement was conceptualized as the extent parents are interested in, knowledgeable
about, and take an active part in their children's lives (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Parental
involvement includes the parents' dedication and positive attention to the development of
their child. Parental involvement also facilitates the identification and internalization of
social values.

The final parenting style factor was the provision of structure. Structure in the
home provides the child with a sense of control outcomes. Families with appropriate
structure aid the child in determining who or what controls what happens (Grolnick &
Ryan, 1989). While it is important for children to be provided structure to develop cause-
and-effect outcomes, it may also hinder self-regulation. Too much provision of structure
can minimize the child's autonomy (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). It is important for parents
to be attuned to the needs of their child in order to provide the appropriate amount of
structure to promote development.

Grolnick and Ryan (1989) measured the three parenting characteristics through
parent interviews, child self-reports, teacher ratings, and objective measures as students'
grades. Results indicated that parental autonomy support was positively related to the
child's reports of self-regulation and academic achievement. The combined factors of
autonomy support and provision of structure also positively predicted child self-
regulation and were inversely related to acting out and learning problem.

In a more recent study, Hindman and Morrison (2012) examined the relationship between supportive parenting behaviors, the home-learning environment, the amount of autonomy and guidance given, and the management and discipline of behaviors, and children's early literacy and social skills development in 229 preschool children. The home learning environment is a construct the authors designed to describe the academically oriented materials and activities found in the home. The more exposure to items that teach social skills, the more opportunities children have to experience and internalize the skills.

The second supportive parenting behavior was the amount of autonomy and guidance given and included parental warmth and interest, their support for autonomy, and the expectations for appropriate behaviors. Displaying affection and giving positive reinforcement are considered parental warmth, while involving children in decision-making and problem solving indicate support for autonomy. Finally, behavioral expectations are assumed to guide children's autonomy and choices. The family's expectation of how their child should behave in society provides the child with a lens to view the appropriateness of her or his behavior (Hindman & Morrison, 2012). Through these parental nurturing characteristics, children are able to develop self-regulation, cooperation, and compliance (Hindman & Morrison, 2012). The encouragement helps children manage their emotions and behaviors, leading to a reduction of discipline and negative behavior management techniques. Since the children are not constantly being redirected or disciplined for inappropriate behaviors, parent-child interactions are overall more positive in nature. These positive interactions provide the children with an example of how to positively interact with others in the future (Hindman & Morrison, 2012).

Walker and MacPhee (2011) suggested there is an indirect pathway where warmth, support of autonomy, and expectations support social skills, which then predicts academic development (as cited in Hindman & Morrison, 2012).

The final parenting dimension examined was the parents' management and discipline of behaviors. Management of behavior is the proactive monitoring and the ongoing shaping of the child's behavior. Behavioral management is different than discipline which is a reactive approach to correcting the occurrence of negative behaviors. Parents that help their children manage emotions, create rules carefully, explain the rules thoroughly, and reinforce their child when the rules have been followed. When parents discipline children, they are punishing the inappropriate behavior, but often times not teaching what is appropriate (Hindman & Morrison, 2012).

Results showed that all three supportive parenting behaviors, discussed above aided the children in cooperation and compliance in preschool. The researchers also found that the management and discipline support parents provided was uniquely related to self-regulation (Hindman & Morrison, 2012). This study sheds light on parenting characteristics that can assist children in developing self-regulation, compliance, and cooperation skills needed to succeed in school.

The three studies on parenting behaviors and characteristics discussed above strengthen the argument that parents play a vital role in their children's social-emotional development. When parents appropriately discuss emotions with their children, react to their children's emotions, and express their own emotions (Eisenber, et al., 1998); when parents are involved and provide autonomy and structure (Grolnick and Ryan, 1989); and when parents provide guidance and manage discipline behaviors (Hindman and

Morrison, 2012), children seem to show increased social-emotional competence. This is supported by other research that shows that children with lower emotional and social competencies are more likely to come from families where parents express more hostile parenting, engage in more conflict, and give more attention to children's negative than positive behaviors. Children whose parents are emotionally positive and pay attention to prosocial behaviors appear to self-regulate and respond in nonaggressive ways to conflict situations (Cummings, 1994; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1999). As discussed earlier, social-emotional competence includes self-awareness, social-awareness, self-regulation, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2003), which are related to academic achievement (Aviles, Anderson, & Davila, 2006).

Further, the theoretical underpinnings of this study appear to be present in the discussion of the role of parents in social-emotional development of their children, particularly the parenting behaviors and characteristics identified by Eisenber, et al (1988), Grolnick and Ryan (1989) and Hindman and Morrison (2012). First, the parents are the primary influence of their children as they are part of the child's system, the microsystem (Bernbronbernner & Cici, 1994); secondly, children observe and imitate their parents as they interact with them (Bandura, 1977), finally, parents teach their children skills by guiding and coaching them until they internalize the skills (Vygotsky, 1978).

These studies, however, had some limitations; participants were largely from middle-class families. As discussed next, a family's socioeconomic status can be related to parent-child interactions, and subsequently the development of social skills. One of the purposes of this study was to support effective parental behaviors of low SES

families; thus, it is import to first understand how family socioeconomic status is related to parental behaviors and, therefore, children's social-emotional competency.

Family Socioeconomic Status and Children's Social-Emotional Development

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a construct that relates to a family's income, education, and occupation ("education and socioeconomic status", 2013). Education level has traditionally been the preferred measure of SES due to the instability of income and occupational factors (Dearing, McCartney, & Snow, 2009). Children from low income families where the parents have completed less than 10 years of schooling are at an increased risk for impaired social-emotional competencies as well as academic struggles in the first few years of schooling (Ștefan & Miclea, 2010). Rimm-Kaufman and colleagues (2009) found that family risk factors, such as single-parent households, low education level, and low income, often lead to a decreased availability of social and economic resources for their children potentially leading to higher levels of emotional and behavior problems. Two models have been proposed to explain the influences of familial risk factors on parent-child interactions; these models are the Family Investment Model (FIM) and the Family Stress Model (FSM) (Iruka, LaForett, & Odom, 2012).

The Family Investment Model (FIM) suggests that higher income and education level provides a family with the financial ability to purchase goods, materials, experiences, and services that promote their child's early development (Iruka, LaForett, & Odom, 2012). Families with low SES may not be able to provide an abundance of learning materials, or enroll their children in the best preschool. As a result, the children are placed at an early disadvantage compared to peers receiving high quality supports (Iruka, LaForett, & Odom, 2012). In addition, low SES parents often have limited access

to resources about child development. It is possible that providing parents information about child development can assist them in parenting. Ştefan and Miclea (2010) highlighted that when parents are not aware of what typical child development looks like, they may set expectations too high or too low for their children. For instances, parents may expect their children to regulate their own emotions before these skills have developed. Along with limited resource, low SES parents also face other stressors.

The second model, the Family Stress Model (FSM), proposes that the psychological stress associated with economic hardship disrupts the parent's ability to be sensitive and nurturing with their children (Iruka, LaForett, & Odom, 2012). Parents may have to work two jobs or long hours making it difficult to spend quality time with their children to foster social-emotional development (Whitted, 2011). Stressed parents also tend to use more punitive disciplinary practices and monitor the actions of their children less (Ştefan & Miclea, 2010). According to Ştefan and Miclea, another common behavior of overwhelmed parents is inconsistent discipline practices. For children, these inconsistencies make it difficult to internalize what behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate. If inconsistent discipline practices persist, overtime, children tend to become non-compliant, exhibit conduct problems, and even have difficulties accepting authority figures. These behavior problems continue the cycle, adding more stress to the family. Overall, both the lack of resources and the added stress negatively influence the quality of the parent-child interactions (Ştefan & Miclea, 2010).

It is interesting to note that lack of resources and stress may directly interfere with the mechanisms that allow children to acquire social-emotional competence, i.e., parents' responsibility to be primary teachers of their children (McCabe & Altamura, 2011), to

model appropriate social interactions (Bandura, 1977) to their children, and to guide and

coach (Vygotsky, 1978) their children's development. A low-SES home environment

may disadvantage children early, and without intervention, predispose them to academic

underachievement in the future.

One common prevention and intervention effort is parent training, which is

designed to address the social-emotional needs of future children (Stormshak, Bullock, &

Falkenstein, 2009) or to intervene by providing necessary parenting skills to families who

are already struggling. Providing parents with the resources needed to promote social-

emotional development can have benefits for the entire family. According to Stormshak,

Bullock, and Falkenstein (2009), working with one parent-child dyad may have spillover

effects on siblings' social skills. The benefits of teaching positive parenting

characteristics are not constrained to one parent-child relationship, they also promote

social-emotional competence for the entire family.

Although parent training is related to positive child outcome, the training is not

readily accessible to low SES families, who need it the most. For instance, Collins and

Fetsch (2012) conducted a review and critique of 16 major parent education programs

designed to teach effective parenting skills, such as STAR Parenting and Systematic

Training for Effective Parenting. The average required participation time was 8 two-hour

weekly sessions, the range was 6 two-hour to 12 to 26 two to three-hour weekly sessions.

Furthermore, the programs appear to be expensive. For the programs Collins and Fetsch

reported a price, the range was between $60.00 and $5,000.00.

Another program that enjoys research support is the Incredible Years (Gardner,

Hutchings, Bywater, & Whitaker, 2010 & Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). According to

the program's website, it has a series of parent training modules ranging from infancy to adolescents (Webster-Stratton, 2013). Because of its efficacy, the program has also been adopted by schools, child welfare agencies, and the justice system (The California Evidence-Based Clearing House for Child Welfare, 2013). However, the Incredible Years is also time intensive and costly; it requires several face-to-face weekly meetings and costs over $1,000.00 depending on the program (Webster-Stratton, 2013)

Given the lack of resources, both money and time, low SES families deal with, there are several challenges for traditional face-to-face parent training programs. First, parents may not have the financial means to afford costly seminars or workshops that teach parenting techniques. Even if families can afford the cost of the program, they may have a difficult time getting off work to attend the meetings. Consequently, low SES families have limited opportunity to learn parenting skills for supporting social-emotional development of their children. These challenges suggest a critical need to develop a nontraditional approach to parent training that does not require extensive time or monetary resources commitment.

Role of Preschool Programs in Social-Emotional Development of Children

Another organized approach that attempts to facilitate social-emotional competence in children is the preschool experience. According to Capizzano and colleagues (2000) three-fourths of children are enrolled in some type of preschool program prior to kindergarten entry (as cited in Green, Malsch, Kothari, Busse, and Brianne, 2012). The preschool years are an important developmental period when skills essential for later academic and social success are developed (McCabe & Altamura, 2011; Athanasiou, 2006). Arslan and colleagues (2011) identified this time period as the most

appropriate and important time for teaching social skills. Between the ages of three to six, children are developing rapidly and they are exposed to all kinds of new information. The authors suggest it is during these years that children are most influenced by their environment (Arslan, Durmusoglu-Saltali, & Yilmaz, 2011).

Once enrolled in preschool, children's social skills are now shaped by teachers and classmates, in addition to their caregivers (Dereli & Gulriz Akaroglu, 2011); in other words, caregivers and teachers have a shared responsibility of teaching and modeling social skills (Dereli & Gulriz Akaroglu, 2011). Bronfenbrenner (1989) addressed this shared responsibility when he said that for education to have lasting effects, a child's out-of-school environment must share similar goals to the preschool program. He argued, regardless of socioeconomic status, a child would not make significant developmental gains if learning was only valued in the classroom (as cited in Welshman, 2010). This challenges preschool and kindergarten programs to develop a working relationship with parents. These programs have the unique opportunity to teach children social-emotional skills at school, while simultaneously educating parents to reinforce the skills at home. However, preschool and kindergarten programs rarely take advantage of the relationship with parents to provide tips for fostering social-emotional competence (Conner & Fraser, 2011). Furthermore, current trends in early childhood education, increased demand for academic skills building, may be undermining the opportunity for children to develop social skills in preschool. This trend points to the importance of the home environment as well as parent education for teaching children social-emotional competence.

The qualities of the preschool and kindergarten programs influence the opportunities children will have to develop and practice their social-emotional skills

(Ramey, 1999). Ramey reported that high-quality early-education programs promote intellectual, language, and social-emotional development; unfortunately, many children from middle- to low-income families are served in low-quality child care settings with limited knowledge on ways to foster social-emotional development (Green et al., 2012). According to Burchinal and colleagues (2002) children in poor-quality preschool programs have been found to be delayed in academic and language skills, and demonstrate more behavioral problems than peers (as cited in Whitted, 2011). The quality of preschool programs is evaluated on several environmental factors, such as the physical location of the program, classroom organization, teacher to student ratio, and a teacher's level of emotional and instructional support. These factors, quality indicators, have been suggested to contribute to the early learning environment (Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early, & Barbarin, 2005; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). For example, high quality preschool programs are typically taught by teachers with advanced early-childhood education degrees; and as suggested by Whitted (2011) high-quality teachers may have the ability to shield children from risk factors. These teachers establish a well-structured classroom with a set routine, including lessons with hands-on activities and several opportunities for students to practice newly taught skills. Teachers demonstrate emotional support for each student's needs. They also provide scaffolding and assistance when students show difficulty with a task (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009; Pianta & Howes, 2005). According to Graves and Howes (2011), traditionally, the primary purpose of preschool and kindergarten programs was to model and shape social competences. During these years, learning occurs through socially mediated activities and play opportunities that include both explicit and implicit instruction. Through this

structure, classrooms provide children with a context in which they can rehearse their behaviors and learn appropriate ways to interact with others (Ştefan & Miclea, 2010). With the recent increased emphasis placed on academic achievement from legislation like No Child Left Behind, the promotion of social skill development, however, has taken a back seat to early academic instruction. Kagan and Kauerz (2007) reported that preschool programs have discredited the value of play opportunities for learning social skills and have refocused the school-day almost solely on the advancement of early academic skills (as cited in Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009).

As a result of the shift away from social-emotional development, children are entering kindergarten unprepared for the social-emotional demands of formal schooling. The National Academy of Sciences indicated that children were more prepared to meet the academic strain of kindergarten compared to the social-emotional demands (as cited in Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). According to the National Academy of Sciences survey, teachers reported only 40% of their students entered kindergarten with the social skills needed to interact appropriately; whereas, 60% of children had the cognitive skills necessary for kindergarten. Ashdown and Bernard added that more and more children are entering kindergarten with aggressive, oppositional, and non-compliant behaviors making it difficult for early education teachers to teach. The limited opportunities for children to practice social skills through play may be related to the increased number of behavior problems and expulsions found in preschools and kindergartens. As academic expectations increase and the time devoted to social-emotional learning decreases, it becomes more critical that parents are more equipped to teach social skills at home.

Summary

In summary, social-emotional competencies are needed to succeed in life. How children control their emotions and function in social settings have implications for social, behavioral, and academic success well into adulthood (Landry & Smith, 2010; McCabe & Altamura, 2011). Although social-emotional learning occurs across an individual's lifetime, the greatest gains in developing these competencies take place in the first few years of life (Feldman & Eidelman, 2009). During these early developmental years, parents and the early learning environment are responsible for promoting and teaching the skills needed for children to be successful; however, environmental risk factors influenced by social economic standing can hinder social-emotional learning (Ştefan & Miclea, 2010). Behavior problems in preschool and early school age children are observed in about 10%, and may be as high as 25% in socio-economically disadvantaged, children (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Webster-Stratton, 1998). Without early intervention, these children may be at risk for future behavioral and academic problems.

For instance, the quality of support children receive for developing social competence appears to be related to parental education, SES, and the qualities of preschools. For children from low SES families, the early critical years seem to be compromised, because of lack of resources at home (Iruka, LaForett, & Odom, 2012) and lack of preschool experience that is conducive to children's social-emotional development (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009).

Preschool programs were designed to promote academic, language, motor, and social-emotional development to ensure children are well prepared to face future

demands (McWayne, Cheung, Green Wright, & Hans-Vaughn, 2012). However, because of current trends that focus on academic achievement, social-emotional development seems to have taken a back seat (Graves & Howes, 2011). Instead, preschool children who lack social skills seem to be referred frequently for disciplinary actions and even suspension from school (Whitted, 2011). .

In conclusion, parents must realize that they are the primary teachers of their children and they must prepare their children for school success. Children with high social-emotional competence seem to be academically successful (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; & Aviles, Anderson, & Davila, 2006). At the same time, some parents may not have the skills or resources for teaching children social skills. The current study attempted to assess the utility of parent training that did not present time or resource challenges.

The Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to provide parent education through a consultative model to promote social-emotional development in early childhood. Consultation is an indirect model of service delivery wherein a consultant works collaboratively with parents to address the needs of a child (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2008). In this study, the researcher was the educator and coach, consulting with parents to apply research-proven strategies to improve their parenting practices. Cognizant of time and resource barriers most SES parents experience, the study was designed to teach parents to purposefully incorporate social skills experiences in everyday routine parent-child interactions. For instance, parents can incorporate social skills experiences during such routine family events as bath time, meal time, and while driving.

Although research has focused on parent education or training, there is limited research on the utility of consulting with parents on ways to improve the home learning environment (Sommers-Flanagan, 2007). According to Sommers-Flanagan, the few studies on consultation with parents have focused on single-session consultation, with one parent or a couple regarding a specific problem. In the current study, face-to-face meeting was not required, minimizing time and resource challenges. Instead, consultation was limited to information giving (educational and practical) and telephone support. If parents in this study improved the quality of their interactions, and if this was related to improved social skills in their children, the study would have ramifications on how to work with parents in the future. Educating parents has a long term benefit to all children in the family, because it changes the microsystem of the ecology children are rooted in.

Research Questions/Hypotheses

The primary purposes of this research project were to assess the efficacy of parent consultation (information giving and telephone follow-up) and direct instruction (explicit teaching) for fostering social emotional skills of children. In other words, the research aimed to answer the question, which one of the interventions, parent consultation or direct instruction, is more effective in improving preschool children's social skills?

The following Predictions were made:

Prediction 1. Children in the experimental groups, both the parent consultation group and direct instruction group, would demonstrate an increase in social-emotional competence compared to children in the control group, and children in the parent consultation group would demonstrate the most improvement overall. Children learn by

watching others (Bandura, 1977) or through direct instructions given by more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). When parents are provided useful parenting practices, their children may benefit the most because of the amount of time children spend with their parents compared to time spent at school. Hofferth and Sandberg (2000) found preschool children spend only 12 hours a week in school compared to 156 hours spent with parents or caregivers.

Prediction 2. Parents in the consultation group, those who are given information and support via telephone, would likely show increase in parenting knowledge, beliefs, and practices. The role parents play in social-emotional development of their children has been well documented. As the primary teachers of their children, parents model, communicate, coach, and guide their children (McCabe & Altamura, 2011; McWayne, et al., 2012), so useful information about parenting and parental support are likely to improve parenting practices.

Method

Participants

Children and their parents were recruited from the half-day preschool and kindergarten classrooms of an elementary school in central Connecticut.   Thirty-two preschool children and ninety kindergarten children and their parents received an invitation to participate in the study. Parents of 10 preschool and twenty-six kindergarten children signed consent to participate in the study for a total of thirty-six parent-child dyads. Two dyads withdrew from the study due to relocation and schedule changes, leaving a total of thirty-four parent-child dyads.

Overall, over 50% of participants were boys, over 70% were kindergartners, and 68% were Caucasian. Regarding parents, 44% had a college degree, 56 % were employed and married. Detailed student and parent demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Measures

Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales – Second Edition (PKBS-2). The PKBS-2 (Merrell, 2002) was used to assess children's social skills and problem behaviors. The measure was designed to examine a child's social competence in three areas (social cooperation, social interaction, and social independence) and problem behavior in two areas (externalizing and internalizing) from a teacher's and parent's perspective. On the PKBS-2, thirty-four of the 76 items comprise the Social Skills Composite score and 42 items are used to derive the Problem Behavior Composite score. Each item is rated on a four-point Likert-scale, ranging from 0 to 3 (never, rarely, sometimes, and often)

corresponding to how often the item related to the child.

The Social Skills Composite and the Problem Behavior Composite of the PKBS-2 both have strong internal consistency ($r = 0.96$ and $r = 0.97$, respectively; Merrell, 2002) and moderate to high test-retest reliability (social skills, $r = 0.58$ after three-weeks, and $r = 0.69$ after three-months; problem behavior, $r = 0.86$ after three-weeks, and $r = 0.78$; Merrell, 2002). The PKBS-2 also has good convergent validity as evidenced by the Social Skills Composite scale score correlating with the Social Competence score of the *School Social Behavior Scales* ($r = 0.86$; Merrell, 2002) and the Problem Behavior Composite scale correlating with the Hyperactivity subscale of the *Conners' Teacher Rating Scale-39* ($r = 0.85$; Merrell, 2002).

Table 1. Student and Parent Demographics by Subgroup

	Overall (N=34)	Direct Instruction (n=11)	Parent Consultation (n=12)	Control Group (n=11)
Age in years M (SD)	4.62 (0.65)	4.64 (0.67)	4.33 (0.49)	4.91 (0.70)
Gender N (%)				
Female	16 (47.1)	3 (27.3)	5 (41.7)	8 (72.7)
Male	18 (52.9)	8 (72.7)	7 (58.3)	3 (27.3)
Grade N (%)				
Prekindergarten	9 (26.5)	2 (18.2)	6 (50.0)	1 (09.1)
Kindergarten	25 (73.5)	9 (81.8)	6 (50.0)	10 (90.9)
Race N (%)				
White	20 (58.8)	7 (63.6)	6 (50.0)	7 (63.6)
Multi-racial	9 (26.5)	2 (18.2)	4 (33.3)	3 (27.3)
Unknown	5 (14.7)	2 (18.2)	2 (16.7)	1 (09.1)
Parent Education N (%)				
Graduate Degree	3 (08.8)	0 (00.0)	1 (08.3)	2 (18.2)
Bachelor's Degree	12 (35.3)	5 (45.4)	3 (25.0)	4 (36.4)
Some College	7 (20.6)	4 (36.4)	2 (16.7)	1 (09.1)
Diploma/GED	5 (14.7)	0 (00.0)	3 (25.0)	2 (18.2)
Some High School	2 (05.9)	0 (00.0)	1 (08.3)	1 (09.1)
Unknown	5 (14.7)	2 (18.2)	2 (16.7)	1 (09.1)
Parent Employment N (%)				
Employed	19 (55.9)	7 (63.6)	7 (58.3)	5 (45.5)
Unemployed	10 (29.4)	2 (18.2)	3 (25.0)	5 (45.5)
Unknown	5 (14.7)	2 (18.2)	2 (16.7)	1 (09.1)
Marital Status N (%)				
Married	19 (55.9)	6 (54.5)	8 (66.6)	5 (45.5)
Single	10 (29.4)	3 (27.3)	2 (16.7)	5 (45.5)
Unknown	5 (14.7)	2 (18.2)	2 (16.7)	1 (09.1)
Language Spoken N (%)				
English	24 (70.6)	8 (72.7)	9 (75.0)	7 (63.6)
English + Spanish	3 (08.8)	1 (09.1)	0 (00.0)	2 (18.2)
English + Other*	2 (05.9)	0 (00.0)	1 (08.3)	1 (09.1)
Unknown	5 (14.7)	2 (18.2)	2 (16.7)	1 (09.1)

Note: * Other category defined as: Polish and Portuguese.

PKBS-2-Teacher. Teachers completed the social skills and problem behavior measures. The social skills measure addresses how children follow instructions from adults, cooperate and compromise with peers, show appropriate restraint, gain and maintain friendships, and achieve social independence. Examples of items include: "Tries to understand another child's behavior ("Why are you crying?")", "Shares toys and other belongings", and "Shows self-control." Higher scores on social skills questions signify more adaptive and positive behaviors that are likely to lead to positive social outcomes (Social Skills Composite raw scores range from 0 to 102).

The problem behavior measure taps into early signs of potential externalizing (e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Conduct Disorder) and internalizing (e.g. anxiety disorders and depression) disorders. Items include: "Disobeys rules", "Has problems making friends", and "Is anxious or tense." Higher scores on the problem behavior items suggest an increased risk for developing serious externalizing or internalizing disorders (Problem Behavior Composite raw scores can range from 0 to 126).

PKBS-2-Parent. Parents of participating children also completed the PKBS-2 (Merrell, 2002) to report on their children's social skills and behavior problems at home. The PKBS-2 completed by the parents was an identical form to the PKBS-2 completed by teachers. The parent rating scale included the same items and score values. Tests of cross-informant reliability across home and school settings found low correlations (social skills, $r = 0.38$ and problem behavior, $r = 0.16$; Merrell, 2002) suggesting that preschool-age children may behave dramatically different across settings.

Parent Questionnaire. Parental influence on social-emotional competence of preschool children was assessed using the Parent Questionnaire (Appendix A, Parent Questionnaire) developed by the researcher. This questionnaire was designed for this study to measure parental knowledge, beliefs, and practices as they relate to the social-emotional development of their children. The questionnaire is based on Sommers-Flanagan's (2007) questionnaire that was used to assess parenting behaviors in a single-session consultation and the empirical literature, i.e., age appropriate social-emotional development of children. Sommers-Flanagan developed the questionnaire in a three-step process. First, a multidisciplinary professional team reviewed existing questionnaires at the time and identified 30 items. These items were then evaluated by 10 other people, including parents, who gave feedback. Finally, based on this feedback the multidisciplinary team cut 13 items and reworded some items. The final questionnaire had 17 Likert-type items.

For this study, more than 17 items were needed to capture parents' knowledge and beliefs about preschool-age children's social-emotional development and parental practices for fostering competence in this area. This Parent Questionnaire included 42 Likert-type items. Items were organized into three categories: Parent Knowledge (1-12), Parent Beliefs (13-28), and Parent Practices (29-42). Each item was rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 to 4(1, Strongly Disagree, 2, Disagree, 3, Agree, and 4, Strongly Agree). Total scores can range from 42 to 168. Scores for the Knowledge subcategory ranges from 12 to 48. Scores for the Beliefs subcategory ranges from 16 to 64. Scores for the Practices subcategory ranges from 14 to 56. Example items included: "I don't know what normal behavior is for my child's age", "I make time each day to play with

my child in an activity he/she chooses", and "I feel good about myself as a parent." Participating parents completed the Parent Questionnaire before the study began and immediately after the study was concluded. Although the questionnaire is based on a published research article (Sommers-Flanagan, 2007) and on empirical literature, its psychometric properties are unknown, which may be a limitation.

The beginning of the Parent Questionnaire included demographic information, such as ethnicity, language(s) spoken in home, education level, employment status, marital status, the child's age, number of siblings, and their relationship to the child (e.g., birth parent, step-parent, adoptive parent, etc.). The questionnaire also asked parents to indicate if their child was receiving outside counseling for behavior problems or social skills training.

Parent consultation. Parents whose children were in the Parent Consultation Group (those who did not receive face-to-face social-skills instruction) received a packet of information on social-emotional development of children (Appendix B, Parent Handout: Social-Emotional Development Activities). The packet was designed by the researcher to provide parents with a different social skill each week over seven weeks. Each week outlined parenting practices that can be used to foster the week's social skill (e.g. giving clear directions, discussing emotions, and praising positive behaviors). The items are based on the literature for social-emotional development of children. The weekly parenting information was provided to enhance their children's development in self-awareness, social-awareness, self-regulation, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2003). For example, parenting skills known to promote children's social competence and reduce behavior problems include the following weekly

topics: setting predictable routines, how to play with children, helping children learn,

effective praise and use of incentives, effective limit-setting and strategies to handle

misbehavior, communication skills, and problem solving skills (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989;

Hindman & Morrison, 2012).

The Parent Consultation included the following steps and consultant

characteristics: First, the consultant explains the Parent Consultation model to the

parents, this was followed by telephone contact for supporting parents and addressing

their concerns, modeling effective parental attitudes such as empathy, offering specific

and evidence-based information to parents regarding behavior management, family

communication, and activities for fostering the social skill for the week. At the end of the

intervention, parents completed an activities checklist (Appendix C, Weekly Activities

Checklist) to indicate which activities were attempted. This checklist measured the

integrity to which the parents implemented the intervention outlined in the parent

handout.

Social skills curriculum for direct instruction. A social skills curriculum was

designed for the Direct Instruction Group (Appendix D, Social Skills Curriculum). This

curriculum was used during bi-weekly structured play session to assist preschool and

kindergarten children develop social-emotional skills.   Identical to the Parent

Consultation topics, the direct instruction taught self-awareness, social-awareness, self-

regulation, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Topics along with the

activities were introduced on the first sessions of each week and then retaught during the

second session. Each week children engaged in activities for identifying emotions

(Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997), playing with others appropriately (e.g. share and take

turns) (Spence, 2003), controlling their emotions (Gillespie & Seibel, 2006), perspective taking (Ştefan & Miclea, 2010), friendship skills (Gülay, 2011), anger management (Gillespie & Seibel, 2006), interpersonal problem-solving (CASEL, 2003), and following rules and how to be successful at school (Blair & Razza, 2007).

Procedure

Parents of children from the preschool and kindergarten classes of the local elementary school were recruited. On October 14, 2013, a letter introducing the study (Appendix E, Parent Introduction Letter), a consent form (Appendix F, Consent to Participate in Research), and return envelope were sent home with each preschool and kindergarten student. The letter introduced the researcher and the purpose of the study, and invited parents and their children to participate. It also provided direction for returning the consent form and contact information for the researcher in case parents had questions. The consent form informed parents of their and their children's rights to confidentiality and that participation is voluntary. Parents who agreed to participate alongside their children signed and returned the consent form, providing their telephone number for communication during the course of the study. Parents had the option of returning the consent form directly to the researcher in a sealed envelope or returning the form in their child's backpack. To protect confidentiality, the consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home, with only the researcher having access to the cabinet.

Pre-test. Once consent forms were signed and returned, consenting parents received a letter (Appendix G: Introductory Parent Letter) further introducing the study and asking them to complete the PKBS-2 and the Parent Questionnaire. The parents were

asked to complete the scales and questionnaire and return them in a sealed envelope before the start of the intervention.

Preschool and kindergarten teachers completed the PKBS-2 for each participating student before intervention started.   Merrell (2002) stated "the only qualification for rating a child using the PKBS-2 is for the rater to know the child well enough to make an informed judgment about his or her behavior" (p. 14).   The intervention was scheduled one-month from the start of the school year to allow teachers the opportunity to become familiar with the students prior to completing the rating scales

Pre-observation. Before the start of the intervention, each student was observed to collect a baseline level of performance.   Children were observed in their classroom. The researcher observed students in groups of three, for twenty minutes and completed the pre/post-observation form (Appendix H, Pre/Post-Observation Form).

Random Assignment. Participating children and their parents were randomly assigned to one of three groups: (1) Direct Instruction, (2) Parent Consultation, or (3) Control.   Each group had 12 parent-child dyads, with 3 subgroups of 3 to 5 children. Random assignment allowed each participant the same opportunity to be assigned to any group, in an attempt to make the groups unbiased (Cherry, 2010). For this study, students were separated by classroom, and then randomly distributed into one of the three conditions. Each of the three conditions was comprised of children from all four teachers' classrooms.

Direct instruction. Children in this group received explicit direct social skills group instruction. Parents in this condition were not involved in any way (i.e., no consultation). To control for treatment effects, parents received weekly newsletters

listing current events at the school.

Intervention. Children in the Direct Instruction group received guided instruction from the researcher based on the social skills curriculum discussed above (also refer to table 2). Each week the children were presented with a new skill. The sessions began with a review of the previously discussed skills, followed by the lesson on the new social skill and a related activity. The opening and review lasted about five minutes. During the remaining time, children were introduced to the new skill and provided opportunities to practice their skills in a structured-play environment. For example, children had to take turns using a set of colored-pencils to complete a coloring sheet. Parents in the Direct Instruction group did not receive any information on the weekly topics or social-emotional development.

Parent Consultation. Parents in the Parent Consultation group received information on social skills development, to use at home with their children. The information provided to parents aligned with the weekly topics taught in the direct instruction groups. In addition, parents received weekly phone calls for support, consultation, and coaching. The children in the parent consultation condition did not receive direct social skills instruction from the researcher. Instead, to control for treatment effects, the children met with the researcher in a free-play situation; no social skills guidance or behavioral corrections were provided during free play.

Intervention. Children in the Parent Consultation group met with the researcher bi-weekly, where they engaged in play. Activities included coloring sheets, board games, and free play. During these sessions, the researcher

interacted with the children, but did not provide praise or guidance for appropriate behavior. For these children, their parents were engaged in social skills instruction. They received the Parent Handout informational packet on how parents can foster social skills in their children, a week prior to the beginning of the intervention, after completion of the pre-tests. Within the pre-test packet, parents provided their telephone number and contact times for consultation on weekly topics.

Parents were asked to read the introduction and guidelines part of the parent handout before November 4, 2013. The packet contained 7 sections of social skills activities, one section for each of the seven intervention weeks. Parents were asked to read the lessons, in order, on the Tuesday of each week and implement the parent-child interaction activities in their daily routine. Parents received follow-up telephone calls, at the agreed upon time, to discuss the lessons and activities, and ask questions.

Control group. In this group, participating children did not receive any form of social skills intervention (direct or parent consultation). To control for treatment effects, the children met with the researcher in a play situation and parents received weekly newsletters listing current events at the school.

Intervention. Children in the Control group met with the researcher biweekly where they engaged in play similar to the Parent Consultation group. As in the Parent Consultation group, the researcher interacted with the children, but did not provide praise or guidance for appropriate behavior. If a child's behavior became dangerous, the child would be corrected or removed.

The intervention lasted for a period of seven weeks (from November 4, 2013 – December 20, 2013). Participating children were seen twice a week for a total of fourteen sessions. They were pulled out of their classroom and escorted to a secondary location within the building, in groups of 3 to 5, for 25-30 minute sessions.

Post-test. At the end of the seven week period, parents were asked to complete the PKBS-2 and Parent Questionnaire. Parents received a letter (Appendix I: Parent Letter Final) during the last week of the intervention asking them to complete the rating scales and questionnaire. Classroom teachers also completed the PKBS-2 for each student after the intervention. Due to a poor return rate by the parents, a second letter was sent home asking parents to complete and return the rating scales and questionnaire. All post-test measures were completed by February 28, 2014.

Post-observation. At the end of the seven weeks, each student was observed again to collect a final level of performance. Children were observed in their classroom. The researcher observed each student in groups of three for twenty minutes and completed the pre/post-observation form.

Research Design

A Mixed Factorial Design was used to assess the method of instruction related to the most improvement in preschool-age children's social-emotional competence and the extent parent consultation increased parental knowledge, beliefs, and practices of ways to foster social-emotional development of children. The first independent variable (between-subjects) was instruction type (direct instruction and parent consultation). The second independent variable was the time of evaluation (pre vs. post; within-subjects). The dependent variables were the children's social-emotional competence (as measured by the

PKBS-2) and the parents' knowledge, beliefs, and practices about social-emotional

development of children (as measured by the Parent Questionnaire).

Results

All student participants from each condition were evaluated by their teachers and parents, before and after the seven week intervention, using the PKBS-2 (Merrell, 2002), to assess any change in the students' social-emotional competence over the course of the seven week intervention. Teachers and parents were both blind to participant conditions. Raw score differences were derived for the two PKBS-2 Composite scores (Social Skills Composite and Behavior Problems Composite) along with the three social skill (Social Cooperation, Social Interaction, Social Independence) and two behavior problem (Externalizing Problems, Internalizing Problems) subscales (Merrell, 2002). The Social Cooperation subscale related to students' prosocial behaviors (i.e. sharing, and listening to directions). The Social Interaction subscale associated with intervention lessons on social-awareness and interpersonal skills. The last social skills subscale, Social Independence, addressed lesson topics of self-awareness, self-regulation, and problem-solving skills. Students were also directly evaluated by brief behavior observations performed before and after the seven week intervention. Observations were designed to count the frequency of behaviors that related to the five social skill areas taught during the lessons: self-awareness, social-awareness, self-regulation, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving skills.

PKBS-2 Teacher Rating Scales

A two-way 2 (time of evaluation: pre-test or post-test) x 3 (condition: direct instruction, parent consultation, or control group) mixed ANOVA with repeated measures on the time of evaluation variable was conducted to measure changes in overall social skills as measures by the PKBS-2 Social Skills Composite scale. A significant main effect

of condition was revealed, $F(2, 30) = 4.71$, p = .02. The main effect of time of evaluation, $F(1, 30) = 1.25$, $p = .27$, and the interaction between time of evaluation and the participant condition, $F(2, 30) = 1.12$, $p = .34$, were non-significant. These findings suggested that regardless of time of evaluation, there were significant differences amongst groups. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated scores differed significantly between participants in the parent consultation condition and the control condition ($p = .02$). Participants in the control group received the highest social skills ratings at both pre-test and post-test. The students in the consultation group were rated as displaying slightly less social skills at post-test ($M = 84.42$, $SD = 14.59$) compared to pre-test ratings ($M = 85.08$, $SD = 13.60$).

Although not explicitly addressed in lesson topics, changes in behavior problem were also evaluated by teachers on the PKBS-2. Again, a two-way 2 x 3 mixed ANOVA with repeated measures was conducted to measure changes in overall behavior problems. There was a marginally-significant main effect of condition, $F(2,30) = 2.77$, $p = .08$. A significant main effect of time of evaluation, $F(1, 30) = 1.00$, $p = .32$, or significant interaction effect, $F(2,30) = 1.27$, $p = .08$, was not found. As with the overall composite score, these findings suggested significant differences between groups regardless of time of evaluation. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD indicated marginally-significant lower behavior problem scores for the control group compared to the consultation group and both pre-test and post-test ($p = .09$). Individuals in both experimental groups were rated as having more behavior problems at the end of the intervention, whereas students in the control group were rated on the post-test as displaying fewer behavior problems than before.

Two-way mixed-factorial ANOVAs were conducted to examine effects of time of evaluation and condition on each of the social skills and problem behavior subareas as measured by the PKBS-2. A marginally-significant interaction of the time of evaluation and participant condition on the Social Interaction subscale was found; $F(2, 30) = 2.94$, $p = .07$. This effect tells us that different types of social skills instruction had a differing effect on students' social-awareness and interpersonal skills at different points in time as measures by teachers on the PKBS-2 Social Interaction subscale (see figure 2 below). Paired-sample t-tests were conducted on the Social Interaction subscale for each of the three conditions. Marginally significant changes in behavior were found for the parent consultation and control groups. Teachers' ratings of student social interactions was marginally significant higher before ($M = 26.5$, $SD = 5.04$) than after ($M = 24.67$, $SD = 6.01$) parent consultation; $t(11) = 1.13$, $p = .07$ (one-tailed). Students in this condition demonstrated fewer social skills at the time of post-test compared to their pre-intervention evaluation. For students in the control condition, Teachers rated students' social-awareness and interpersonal skills marginal-significantly improved from before ($M = 30.82$, $SD = 3.52$) to after ($M = 32.18$, $SD = 1.60$) the intervention; $t(10) = 1.57$, $p = .07$ (one-tailed).

On the Social Cooperation subscale, a significant main effect of time of evaluation was found, $F(1,30) = 5.37$, $p = .03$, but was not qualified by a main effect of condition, $F(2,30) = 1.89$, $p = .17$, or an interaction of time and condition on prosocial behaviors measured by the subscale, $F(2, 30) = .43$, $p = .65$. These findings suggest that regard less of condition, all groups made improvements over time.

Figure 2. *Interaction effect of time of evaluation and condition on social-awareness and*

relationship skills as measured by the Social Interaction subscale.

Figure 2
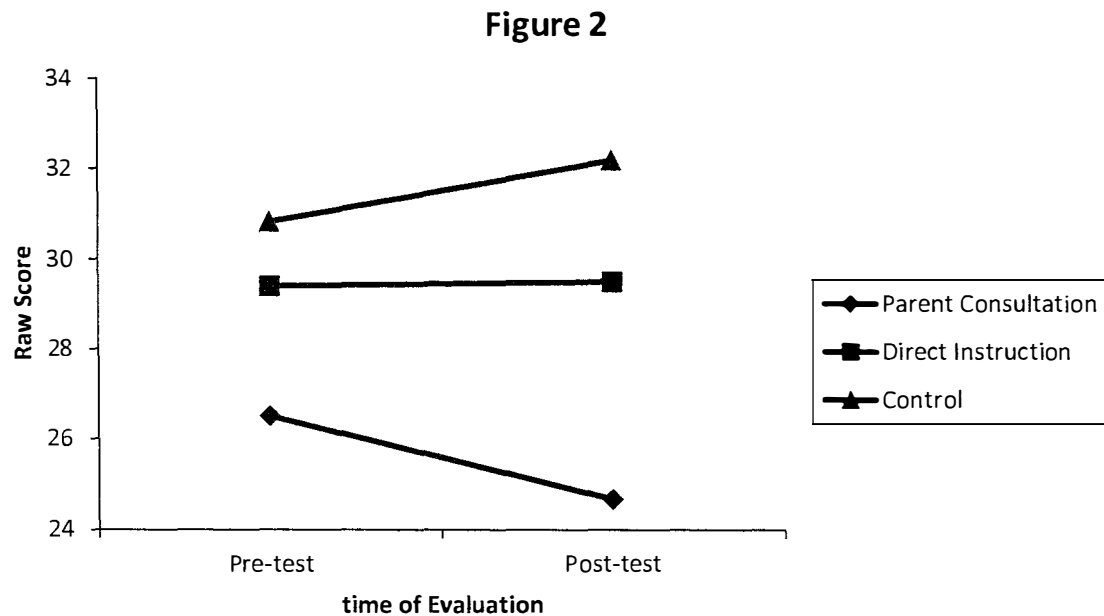
On the Social Independence subscale, a significant main effect of condition was found for students problems-solving skills, $F(2,30) = 3.98$, $p = .03$. Pairwise comparisons using Tukey's HSD indicated a marginally significant group differences between direct instruction and parent consultation conditions ($p = .08$) and a significant group difference between parent consultation and control groups ($p = .04$). Children in the control group produced the highest scores at both times of evaluation. Those children in the parent consultation condition scored the lowest at pre-test and post-test as their average score was the same at pre-test ($M = 28.33$, $SD = 4.46$) and post-test ($M = 28.33$, $SD = 4.42$).

An examination of the two Behavior Problem subscales, Externalizing Problems and Internalizing Problems, did not yield any significant findings. Students in the parent consultation condition were rated as displaying the highest number of behavior problems on both scales. Mirroring the results of the social skills subscale areas, students in the

control condition received the best scores at pre-test and post-test.

Behavior Observations

The thirty-four student participants from each of the three conditions were observed in their prekindergarten or kindergarten classroom for twenty minutes both before and after the intervention (the complete demographic information for each of the conditions can be found in Table 1). The students were observed for their frequency of behaviors relating to the intervention (e.g. self-awareness, social-awareness, self-regulation, interpersonal relationships, and problem-solving skills).

Two-way 2 (time of observation: pre-intervention or post-intervention) x 3 (condition: direct instruction, parent consultation, or control group) mixed ANOVAs with repeated measures on the time of observation variable were conducted to measure changes in behaviors relating to the five social-skill areas. There was a significant interaction between the time of observation and the participant condition, $F(2, 31) = 8.92$, $p = .001$, on observed social-awareness skills. This suggests that the different instruction types had a differing effect on the students' ability to appropriately identify and react to the emotional expressions of others (see figure 3 below). Follow-up paired-sample t-tests were conducted to determine if behaviors changed significantly from pre-observation to post-observation based on condition. All three conditions yielded marginally significant to significant changes in social-awareness. Students in the direct instruction condition demonstrated a significant increase in social-awareness skills from pre-observation ($M = 1.09$, $SD = .94$) to post-observation ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.37$; $t(10)= 5.16$, $p < .001$, one-tailed). Likewise, students in the control condition significantly increased in social-awareness skills from pre-observation ($M = 1.91$, $SD = .83$) to post-observation ($M =$

2.64, *SD* = .92; *t*(10)= 3.07, *p* = .001, one-tailed). Students in the parent consultation

only marginally improved their social-awareness skills from before (*M* = 1.17, *SD* = 1.53)

to after the seven week intervention (*M* = 1.33, *SD* = 1.61; *t*(11)= 1.48, *p* = .08, one-

tailed).

Figure 3. *Interaction effect of time of observation and condition on social-awareness*
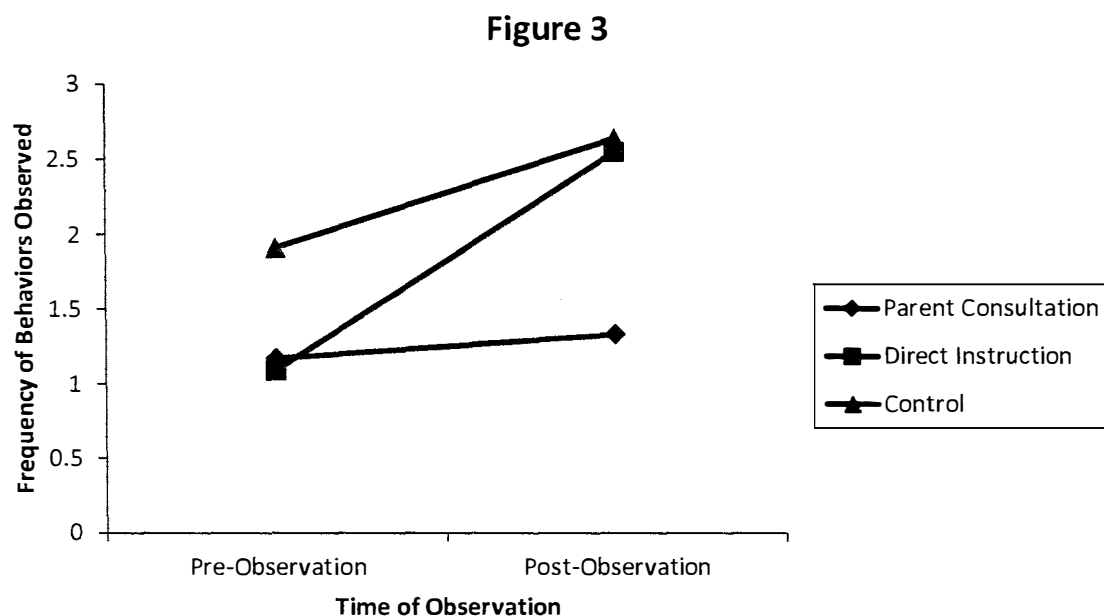
skills

Three of the five social skills areas (self-awareness, self-regulation, relationship

skills) did not yield significant interactions of time of observation and condition on the

observed social skill area; however, each of these skill areas produced a significant main

effect of time: self-awareness, $F(1,30) = 31.56$, $p < .01$; self-regulation, $F(1,30) = 4.85$, p

$= .04$; relationship skills, $F(1,30) = 5.35$, $p = .03$. Social skills in these areas increased

over the seven week intervention, regardless of participant condition. A significant main

effect of time of observation, $F(1,30) = 21.00$, $p < .01$, and a significant main effect of

condition, $F(2,30) = 4.76$, $p = .02$, was found for decision making skills, but these

findings were not qualified by an interaction between time of observation and condition, $F(2,30) = .52$, $p = .60$. Pairwise comparisons using Tukey's HSD yielded a significant difference between the parent consultation group and direct instruction group ($p = .02$) as well as a marginally significant difference between the parent consultation condition and the control group ($p = .09$). For each skill area other than relationship skills, children in the parent consultation condition demonstrated the lowest frequency of social skills behaviors at post-observation.

PKBS-2 Parent Rating Scales and Parent Questionnaire

Parents were asked to complete the PKBS-2 to measure changes in social skills and behavior problems observed at home. Parents were additionally asked to complete a parent questionnaire to measure their knowledge, practices, and beliefs of social-emotional development. It was hypothesized that parents in the consultation group, those who were given information and support via telephone, were likely to show an increase in parenting knowledge, beliefs, and practices.

All thirty-three families were provided with multiple opportunities to complete both assessment measures. Only 18 parents returned a complete set of rating scales (pre-test and post-test) for a return rate of 55%. Twelve of the remaining 15 parents returned one form, either the pretest or posttest, but not both. The 15 participants with incomplete data could not be included in analysis. Participants with complete assessment measures included: five students from the direct instruction condition, four students from the parent consultation condition, and nine students from the control group. With only a 55% return rate, and such a small sample from both of the experimental groups, a quantitative analysis of data could not be conducted.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to provide parents with the information and strategies needed to promote social-emotional development in their children. Parents were provided this information through a consultative approach, using the least obtrusive means possible. The seven week intervention relied on the dissemination of free information through phone and written correspondences. This program was designed to be different from other parent-training social skills programs that are expensive, time consuming, and require in-person training. If this method had proven effective, the study could have had implications on how to efficiently work with parents in the future.

Student Social-Emotional Competence

It was first hypothesized that children in the experimental conditions, both the parent consultation and direct instruction groups, would significantly increase their social skills over the course of the intervention. In addition, students in the parent consultation condition would demonstrate the largest growth. These predictions, however, were not supported.

A significant interaction of time of evaluation and participant condition on overall social skills as rated by teachers was not found. The significant main effect of condition suggests that there were group differences found at both pre-test and post-test. While the direct instruction condition demonstrated improved ratings from pre-test to post-test, children in the parent consultation condition were rated lower for overall social-skills at the end of the intervention compared to their pre-test ratings. These students did not demonstrate the most improvement, as predicted. Similar patterns were found for each of the PKBS-2 social skill subscales, with students in the control condition receiving the

highest teacher-rated pre-test and post-test scores and students in the parent consultation condition receiving the lowest scores, demonstrating little to no change over the course of the intervention.

A significant interaction of time and condition was not found for overall behavior problems. A marginally significant main-effect of condition was found, with significant differences between the parent consultation and the control group. When looking at individual student data, teachers rated several students as exhibiting more problem behaviors at the end of the intervention period. Again, students in the control group received the best scores at both point in time. Students in parent consultation condition were rated the poorest at pre-test and at post-test, and rated as demonstrating more behavior problems at the end of the intervention. Similarly, students who received direct instruction also received ratings for more behavior problems after the seven weeks. It is unlikely the intervention increased behavior problems, but possibly these ratings reflect students' increased comfort level in school, along with the teachers' increased exposure to problem behaviors.

In examining the behavior observations conducted by the researcher before and after the intervention period, a significant interaction of time of observation and condition on social-awareness skills were found. Students in each condition demonstrated improvements in these skills, with children in the direct instruction condition making the largest improvement. For each of the four other areas observed, a significant main effect of time was found. These increases in behavior regardless of condition suggest that the general maturation of preschool and kindergarten-age students largely contributes to advancement in social-skills and social-emotional competence. All students made great

strides in their development over the course of the two months the intervention was provided. Ladd, Birch, and Buhns (1999) found that students' participation in classrooms where they have built a positive network of relationship with teachers and peers influenced students' social development and academic achievement regardless of other interventions. The observed changes in behaviors across conditions may represent an overall group of students engaged in classrooms that emphasize strong teacher-student, and student-student relationships. The findings did not support the prediction that student-participants in the parent consultation condition would not only improve their social skills, but also yield the largest changes in social-emotional competence.

In examining the collective results of teacher ratings and behavior observations, it appears that there were differences amongst groups. Students in the control group were consistently rated higher than both experimental groups; their scores were the highest at pre-test and post-test for almost all areas. It is possible that the process of random assignment used failed to produce equal groups. Demographic differences such as mean group age, and grade level may have contributed to these results (consult table 1 for demographic information). Although students in the control group did not receive any type of social skills intervention, their scores still increased. It is possible that the general maturation of 3-6 year old children may explain these students' increase in social skills. Over the course of two months, as children become more familiar with other students in their room, and the expectations of the teachers, they are able to demonstrate more interpersonal, self-regulatory, and awareness skills.

Another possible explanation of the results, specifically the increase in problem behaviors, is the teachers' increased exposure to the students over the course of the

intervention. The intervention spanned approximately two months, over this time, teachers became more familiar with their class, and likewise, students became more comfortable in their environment. This increased awareness could have contributed to post-test outcomes. For example, at the beginning of the year (and time of pre-test) an occurrence of a child refusing to share may have been considered an isolated incident. As the school year progressed, and the child continued to not share, the teacher began to view this negative behavior as an attribute of the student and not simply as an isolated occurrence. Likewise, the increases in problem behavior scores reflect the teachers' increased exposure to problem behaviors.

An additional potential explanation for the intervention outcomes was the teachers' investments in the study, specifically when completing the rating scales. When reviewing rating scales for individual students, many students received perfect ratings on both pre- and post-intervention measures. While teachers may have truly felt students exemplified perfect behavior, it is also possible teachers did not take the time to fully read through each question and answer truthfully for each student. This potential problem is also related to the qualities of the rating scale used, which will be reviewed later.

The final possible influence to the inability to produce significant results may have been caused from properties relating to the rating scale used to measure social competence and problem behaviors. Parents and teachers were asked to rate students' social skills and problem behaviors on the PKBS-2. It is possible that this rating scale could not pick up on the short-term changes in behavior that occurred over the seven week intervention. As mentioned above, many students received near perfect or perfect

scores on both pre- and post-ratings. The ratings suggest that the participants were widely well adjusted, not having significant social skill deficits or problem behaviors to be identified on the rating scale. While it is likely the intervention further developed or shaped social skills, many students had already received the maximum score of the pre-test, leaving no room to measure improvement on the post-test rating scale. Using another data collection measure, such as weekly progress monitoring, along with the PKBS-2 could have increased the researcher's ability to pick up changes in behavior.

Parent Thoughts, Beliefs, and Practices

The second component of this study attempted to examine if parents' thoughts, beliefs, and practices relating to the social-emotional development of their children would change as a result of information gained from participation. It was predicted that parents in the consultation group, those who were given information in the Parent Handout and support via telephone, would likely show an increase in parenting knowledge, beliefs, and practices. As indicated under results, because of the poor response rate, this prediction could not be tested. The failure to establish an overall "buy-in" from parents and to collect a large number of pre- and post-test measures limits the inferences that can be made. Parents were introduced to the study through an introductory letter and consent form sent home in their child's backpack; as signed consent was received follow-up telephone calls were made by the researcher to further explain the study and pre-test measures were sent home. No face to face meeting was required. It is possible that some parents were not fully invested in the intervention or misunderstood the requirements for participation (i.e., the completions of pre- and post-intervention measures). For example, some parents completed the pre-test but failed to complete the post-test two months later.

Although participation requirements were explicitly explained through letters and phone calls, it is possible some parents viewed the post-tests as a continuation of the pre-test and did not feel the need to complete the same forms a second time.

Parents could have been invested in the intervention, but were too busy to fully implement the intervention and complete the assessment measures. This explanation is supported by Iruka and colleges' (2012) Family Stress Model. The added responsibility of completing assessment measures and participating in phone conversations were too much for complete investment. When parents were reached to discuss the intervention, several factors including work schedules, children's engagement in extracurricular activities (i.e., sports and boys and girls club), and recent additions to the family, were all indicated as distracters for completing the weekly activities. During the phone conversations, parents often sounded rushed (providing quick and concise responses) and distracted. Based on the quality of these correspondences due to lifestyle factors, it can be inferred that attendance at in-person meetings or training sessions would have been minimal.

Limitations

There are two main limitations to this study: the limited data and research assistance. First, because of the quality of data received from teachers and limited amount of data received from parents, no real inferences can be made from this study. To encourage buy-in and to answer questions directly, an introductory meeting could be beneficial. Participants would be able to meet with the researcher as a group to learn the purpose of the study and the requirements. Secondly, participants would have a formal opportunity to ask questions, and additionally benefit from questions asked by other

participants. Another consideration would be to have a pre- and post-intervention meeting where participants are provided the time to complete the rating scales and questionnaire.

Another way to improve participant investment would be to increase the fidelity of the weekly phone calls. During the seven weeks, parents were supposed to receive a weekly phone call to discuss the week's topic and have their questions answered. More times than not, parents did not answer the phone calls. When participants were reached, they typically would not go into detail about their practices at home. Some participants mentioned trying some of the strategies, but indicated that they were very busy. When asked to identify specific practices, participants would often change the topic to discuss problems their children were having at school (e.g., bullying, academic struggles, etc.). A more rigid approach to these phone calls by the researcher could have increased the participants' understanding of the study. Although this intervention attempted to provide information without significantly interfering with the families' busy lifestyles, even this intervention may have been too obtrusive.

The second main limitation of this study was the completion of the intervention by one researcher. A study of this magnitude would greatly benefit by having multiple researchers. The amount of time required to fully implement this intervention was at times difficult to manage alongside the daily school responsibilities. Future studies should strive to employ multiple researchers for the intervention, or provide a singular researcher time away from other responsibilities to complete the intervention. Finally, while the researcher implemented the intervention with integrity, he was not blind to the conditions.

Conclusion

The early school years, preschool and kindergarten, are vital years for teaching children social skills. Children who have well developed social skills entering elementary school are more likely to be well liked and to perform better academically. Parents and early learning programs share this important task of teaching their children appropriate behaviors and promoting social-emotional development. Education professionals are tasked with the responsibility of creating programs and providing services that meet the needs of families, in a way that fit into the busy lifestyles of parents raising young children.

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Table 2

Social Skills Curriculum for Direct Instruction and Parent Consultation Packet

by Week

Curriculum	Direct Instruction Activities	Parent Consultation Activities
Week 1: Introduction *Goal*: Rapport Building	(1)Introduction with the help of the classroom teacher. (2)Join children's activities in the classroom or playground.	(1) Send home Introductory Letter and Parent Handout (2)Make follow-up calls to answer questions, and thank parents for participation.
Week 2: Attending to Positive Behaviors and giving effective Instructions *Goal*: Encouraging positive behaviors and compliance	Children were (1) engaged in a play activity and they were praised for appropriate behavior, e.g., cooperative play. (2) asked to complete a task that required them to follow simple instructions (e.g.., putting away toys).	(1) Child selects an activity to do with a parent; parent joins in and shows interest in what they are doing by describing what they are doing and praising the child by saying: "I like how you are...". (2) When necessary, instruction/commands are stated simply and directly; not too many demands are given at the same time; and eye contact is maintained when giving instructions.
Week 3: Self-Awareness *Goal*: Identification of own emotions (i.e., happiness, anger, sadness, and fear).	(1) Demonstration of emotional expression using a book that includes different facial expressions. (2) Children were asked to draw the faces that correspond with different feelings and then discussed what make them feel happy, sad, etc.	(1) Parents read books about feelings and help children identify the different emotions. (2) Talk with children about their feelings; ask them how they feel in certain situations and what those feelings look like (i.e. show me what it looks like when you are happy?).
Week 4: Social-Awareness *Goal*: Identification of emotions of others (i.e., happiness, anger, sadness, and fear).	(1) Read a story with characters that experience different emotions and ask children questions. (2) Children acted out a feeling and the other children will guess the emotion.	(1) Provide opportunities for children to engage with other children in a variety of activities. (2) Demonstrate different emotions and ask children to guess what emotion you are acting out.
Week 5: Self-Regulation *Goal*: Regulation of emotions by inhibiting inappropriate actions	(1) Children listened to a story that demonstrates inappropriate behaviors and were asked to identify problem behaviors and alternatives. (2) Children were asked to draw a picture, and were forced to switch crayons with another student every 30 seconds. Children were praised for sharing and regulating emotions during transitions.	(1) Read stories with characters that exhibit inappropriate behaviors (i.e. yelling when being told to do something) and talk about why the behaviors were wrong and how the characters could have acted differently. (2) Give advance notice before transitions (i.e., "We are going to stop playing in 5 minutes, I will remind you when you have 2 minutes left.").
Week 6: Social Interactions *Goal*: Learn prosocial behavior (i.e., sharing and turn-taking).	(1) Children worked on a simple puzzle together. (2) Children played simple turn-taking game (i.e. memory).	(1) Set up play opportunities that require children to share toys. (2) Play simple games with your child that require turn-taking (i.e., memory).

Week 7: Decision-Making	(1) Children created a track around obstacle course. (2) Children were given only part of supplies needed for activity and will have to figure out what else is needed. (3)Researcher reviewed all weekly topics	(1) Present a problem and talk with your child about how to solve the problem. (i.e., "What can we do, we only have so many pieces?"). (2) Provide play opportunities that require your child to make decisions (i.e., pretend to be going to the store and allow the child to make decisions on what to purchase).
Goal: Learn responsible decision-making by solving problems in play activities		

Appendices

Appendix A

Parent Questionnaire

Parent's Name: _____

Child's Name: _____

Child's Age:_____ Number of Siblings: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Language(s) Spoken in Home: _____

Parent's Highest Education: _____

Parent's Employment Status: _____

Marital Status: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Boy _____ Girl _____ (Check One)

For the following items, please rate each item as it relates to your preschool child. Circle a number (1-4) for each question: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree agree, and 4 = Strongly Disagree.   For example, for the statement, "Children need to learn to read early", you would circle 2 if you agree.

No.	Item	SA	A	D	SD
1	The early years (birth to 5 yrs.) are an important time for my child to learn social skills.	1	2	3	4
2	I don't know what normal behavior is for my child's age.	1	2	3	4
3	I have someone (i.e. family, friends, professionals) to help me when I have questions about my child's behaviors.	1	2	3	4
4	I do not know how to talk to my child about feelings.	1	2	3	4
5	I can help my child learn about his or her feelings.	1	2	3	4
6	By the age of 5, most children can identify when someone is happy or sad.	1	2	3	4

7	Children who correctly identify feelings of others, get along with others.	1	2	3	4
8	Children who do not correctly identify emotions in others are more likely to feel upset or anxious.	1	2	3	4
9	The best way to help my child change a bad behavior is to discipline him/her.	1	2	3	4
10	Children learn social skills by playing with other children, e.g., pretending to be a mommy or daddy, a police officer, or teacher.	1	2	3	4
11	I don't know how to play or have fun with my child.	1	2	3	4
12	When my child complains, whines, or cries I'm not sure what I should do.	1	2	3	4
13	Children who have good social skills also learn better.	1	2	3	4
14	I expect preschool programs to teach more academic skills than social skills.	1	2	3	4
15	How I expresses my feelings can be passed down to my child.	1	2	3	4
16	It is important for me to say nice things to my child (i.e. saying "good job" or "what a nice job you did").	1	2	3	4
17	Play does not teach my child much.	1	2	3	4
18	I'm so stressed out I'm not doing a very good job at parenting.	1	2	3	4
19	I feel responsible for teaching my child social skills.	1	2	3	4
20	I should keep my negative feelings to myself when around my preschool child.	1	2	3	4
21	I believe children need to understand their own feelings.	1	2	3	4
22	I usually have a good idea about what my child is feeling.	1	2	3	4
23	It is the preschool teachers' responsibility to teach children how to behave.	1	2	3	4
24	I feel my child learns by watching what I do.	1	2	3	4
25	The way I interact with others has nothing to do with my child.	1	2	3	4

26	I feel overwhelmed by my child's needs or behaviors.	1	2	3	4
27	I expect my child to follow my rules, "because I said so".	1	2	3	4
28	I feel good about myself as a parent.	1	2	3	4
29	I use several different methods to discipline my child.	1	2	3	4
30	I value my child's opinions.	1	2	3	4
31	It's hard for me to say *no* to my child.	1	2	3	4
32	When my child misbehaves, I give him or her a fair warning before giving a consequence.	1	2	3	4
33	I discuss limits and consequences with my child in advance.	1	2	3	4
34	I'm able to comfort my child when he or she is angry or sad.	1	2	3	4
35	I teach my child to keep negative emotions to himself or herself.	1	2	3	4
36	I encourage my child to express him/herself in social situations.	1	2	3	4
37	I have to yell to get my child to listen.	1	2	3	4
38	I don't like how I respond when my child misbehaves.	1	2	3	4
39	I create play opportunities for my child to practice his/her social skills with other children.	1	2	3	4
40	My child is allowed to make some decisions, e.g., what to eat, TV programs, or what to wear.	1	2	3	4
41	I usually allow my child to try and solve problems before I help.	1	2	3	4
42	I make time each day to play with my child in an activity he/she chooses.	1	2	3	4

Appendix B

Social-Emotional Development

Parent Handout

By Michael Stinson

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this project designed to help children learn social-emotional skills. It is clear that parents want the best for their children, and they try very hard to teach their children necessary skills for life. However, everyday life responsibilities such as: work, general child care, meal preparation, housekeeping, and so on may leave little time for parents to be the primary teachers of their children.

In this handout it is suggested that some of the most important skills young children need to learn, social-emotional skills, can be learned during the family's daily routine, e.g., meal time, driving, shopping, and so on. In other words, parents can use their interactions with their children as an opportunity for teaching and learning (a teachable moment). For example, a parent and child see another child throwing a temper tantrum in a store; the parent takes the opportunity to talk about emotions, choices, and appropriate behaviors.

In the following, the definitions of social-emotional skills and their importance are given, followed by suggested activities for teaching young children social skills for the next seven weeks.

What are Social-Emotional skills?

Social-emotional skills are how well children get along with others to form positive relationships, and their ability to understand their emotions and the emotions of others (Ashiabi, 2007).

Importance of Social-Emotional Skill

The development of social-emotional skills is important for young children, because children who have good social skills in preschool and kindergarten are likely to be successful in academic and social areas in the future (Landry & Smith, 2010).

On the other hand, children who struggle with social skills in the early years of schooling (preschool & kindergarten) are more likely to have problems in future grades including: being less ready to learn academics, showing an increase of social and behavioral problems in grade school, and displaying continual learning and social problems throughout their schooling (Barbarin et al., 2006). Therefore, it is important to help children to develop positive social skills early. To develop social-emotional skill, children must learn self-awareness (understanding their own emotions and behaviors), social-awareness (understanding other people's emotions), self-regulation (learning appropriate and inappropriate behaviors), social interaction (relationship skills), and responsible decision-making (understanding choices and their consequences).

Overall, children who do not show appropriate social skills are less accepted by peers, and receive less positive attention from teachers, both leading to a negative view of schooling. As problems persist, and children struggle to learn, they are likely to be held back in grades, and are at an increased risk for school dropout (Raver & Knitzer, 2002).

For the next six weeks or so, it is important that you practice some of the activities listed for each week. You do not have to do all of them, determine which ones you can fit in your daily routine (e.g., while driving or at meal time).

It is important that you take advantage of *teachable moments*. At the minimum, work with your child at least 3 times a day (morning, afternoon, and evening) each day. As you introduce new social skills each week, continue to practice the skills you have already taught your child.

The activities listed below are based on research-based strategies to help children develop good social-emotional skill.

As explained in an earlier communication, you will receive a call each week to discuss any question you may have about the suggested activities.

Week 1: Positive Feedback and Effective Commands
(Nov. 11 – Nov. 15)

To be successful teachers, parents must pay attention to their child's good behaviors and provide positive feedback. Successful teachers are also skilled at giving effective commands.

1.1) Paying Attention to Your Child's Good Play Behavior

Children receive more corrections, "Don't do that", than they receive positive feedback, "I like the way you are playing." In order to develop useful behaviors, it is important that children receive positive feedback. Through positive feedback, children learn what a right behavior is. The *Special Time* activity is easy to do even with a busy schedule, and it allows you to give undivided attention and positive feedback to your child.

- Select a time each day for 15-20 minutes for a "special time" with your child (at least 5 times a week for the first few weeks, and then 3 times a week there after).
- This is a special time for you and one child, other children are not involved.
- Say: Its now our special time to play together, what would you like to do? The child chooses the play activity, within reason.
- Relax! Watch what your child is doing. Then, describe out loud what your child is doing. This shows your child that you are paying attention and are interested.
- Do not ask any questions or give any commands! This is important. This is your child's special time to relax and enjoy your company (not a time to teach).
- Occasionally, provide positive statements of praise or approval. "I like it when we play quietly like this", or "I really enjoy our special time together."
- If the child misbehaves, simply turn away and look elsewhere for a few moments. If it continues, calmly tell the child the special playtime is over, and you will play later when he/she can play nicely.
- You may want to spend a "special time" with each of your children.

Children who receive their parents' undivided attention, no matter how short, are less likely to be demanding and clingy.

1.2) How to Give Effective Commands

We all have witnessed the frustrations of parents in public places when their children do not follow their directions. Using effective commands, children can be easily taught to follow commands. However, this needs to be practiced at home first:

- Make sure you mean it! That is, never give a command that you do not intend to see followed up to its completion (back it up with appropriate consequences to show you mean it).
- Do not present the command as a question or favor. State the command simply, directly, in a business-like tone of voice.
- Do not give too many commands at once. Most young children are able to follow only one or two instructions at a time. Try only one command for the first few times.
- Make sure the child is paying attention to you. Be sure that you have eye contact with the child.
  Reduce all distractions before giving the command. A very common mistake that parents make is to try to give instructions while a television show or video game is on.
- If you are not sure your child heard the command, ask him/her to repeat the command.

Week 2: Self-Awareness
(Nov. 18 – Nov. 22)

Self-awareness refers to knowing one's emotions, knowing ways to express them in a helpful manner (constructively), and knowing how to manage and deal with them. These skills help your child handle stress, control impulses, and motivate him/her to overcome problems. Young children deal with many of the same emotions adults do. Children get angry, sad, frustrated, nervous, happy, or embarrassed, but they often do not have the words to talk about how they are feeling. Instead, they sometimes act out these emotions in very physical and inappropriate ways.

2.1) *Make a Face*
- Start the game by saying, *"I am going to make a face, guess what I am feeling by looking at my face."*
- Make a happy or sad face. When your child guesses the feeling word, respond by saying, *"That's right! Do you know what makes me feel that way?"* Follow by describing something simple that makes you have that feeling (e.g., *"Going to the park makes me happy." "I feel sad when it rains and we can't go to the park."*).
- Next, say to your child, *"Your turn, you make a face and I will guess what you are feeling."* This game can be played while bathing or dressing the child, for example.

An alternative of this game, ***Make a Sound,*** is a game that can be played in the car. Instead of making faces you make sounds. For example, *"Ha, ha, I am laughing. How do you think I feel",* and so on.

2.2) Other Activities
- Offer materials for pretend play. Encourage your child to express his/her emotions while playing with blocks or drawing.
- Read books about feelings and talk about the outcome
- In daily interactions, help your child talk about how they feel when they experience certain situations (both positive and negative).
- Use expressions such as "I feel" or "That must have made you feel…" when interacting with your child.
- Verbally describe your child's emotional expressions, such as "When your lips are turned down, it sounds like you are sad."

Week 3: Social-Awareness
(Nov. 25 – Nov. 29)

Social-awareness, learning positive relationships with others, is central to success in school and life. This skill requires the ability to recognize the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others, including those different from one's own.
Social-Awareness Development Tips and Activities
- Provide opportunities for your child to engage in a variety of play activities with other children (pretend play, art projects, block building, and outside play).

- Read books with your child and ask him/her to describe how the characters are feeling at different points in the story.
- Help your child identify how other children are feeling. For example, when watching characters on TV, or witnessing other people interact in the store, ask your child *"how do you think that child feels?"*
- Help your child join other children in ongoing play.
- Engage your child in conversations with another child.

Week 4. Self-Regulation
(Dec. 2 – Dec. 6)

Self-regulation is the ability to manage one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, complete tasks, and overcome problems (Gillespie & Seibel, 2006).

Self-Regulation Development Tips and Activities

- Provide guidance when your child needs assistance managing his/her emotions. For example, say: *"It's ok to tell me how you feel, but it's not ok to hit me when you feel frustrated."*
- Use logical consequences and guidance practices that support self-control (*"As soon as you put away your toys, you can go outside"* rather than *"You didn't put away your toys so you can't go outside"*).
- Provide activities that engage children in self-control practice, such as turn-taking games.
- Give your child advance notice that play is coming to an end. For example, say: *"You have 5 minutes to finish; do you see this clock, when the hand gets here, it will be five minutes. I will remind you when you have 2 minutes left."*
- Give clear directions with expectation that the child will comply.

- **Use Books:** Books offer opportunities to discuss emotions from a safe distance. When reading to your child, stop and ask him/her what different characters are feeling.
- **Use your words:** Redirect negative behaviors and remind your child to use words to explain what he/she feels or needs.

- Develop a few simple and basic rules that your child can follow independently.

Week 5. Relationship Skills (Interpersonal skills)
(Dec. 9 – Dec. 13)

Relationship skills refer to one's ability to establish and maintain healthy, positive relationships based on: cooperation, the prevention, management, and resolution of interpersonal conflict; and seeking help when needed

Relationship Skills - Tips and Activities

− Use eye contact and body proximity (e.g., standing by the child) to give your child support when needed.
− Be available to help children resolve conflicts rather than removing the child/toy, or offering solutions.
− Give your child words to use in difficult situations, "Tell her how that made you feel."
− Describe others' feelings during difficult situations, "Look at Susie's face. She is mad."
− Read books about empathy and discuss the outcome.
− Set timers for toy or equipment sharing.
− Invite children to help others, *"Can you help Mary with her jacket?"*
− Praise children's efforts to help others *"I like the way you helped Thomas."*
− Help your child join other children in ongoing play
− Engage your child in conversations with another child.

Week 6. Responsible decision-making
(Dec. 16 – Dec. 20)

It is never too early to learn age appropriate responsible decision-making skills. Children who are able to make decisions based on consideration of reason, safety, social norms, respect for self and others, and likely consequences of their actions are more successful socially and academically.

Promoting Responsible Decision-Making

− Provide activities that allow your child to solve social problems (e.g., pretend play like being a mommy/daddy, police officer, or banker).
− Give your ample time to solve problems before intervening.
− Model appropriate strategies for conflict resolution and use questions to stimulate thinking (e.g., *"What's happening here?"*).
− Read stories in which characters solve conflicts appropriately.
    Comment on decisions made by characters in stories, e.g., *"Do you think Charlie made a good decision? Do you think he should have done something different?"*
− Build problem solving skills by engaging your child in conversations to make decisions and find solutions (e.g., *"What can we do, you both want the ball?"*).
− Model and provide your child with words to use when in a conflict (e.g., *"Tell him he can have it when you are done." "May I have that when you are done*?").
− Provide opportunities to make simple decisions: *"Do you want a peanut butter or cheese sandwich?" Do you want the red or the blue t-shirt?" "Okay, tell me why you chose..."* Asking a child to explain the reasons for his/her choices helps develop skills of evaluation.
− Encourage your child to consider options when making a decision. For example, if you are trying to buy a birthday gift for dad, you might talk about different choices, and compare them with one another before making the decision.

Thank You For Your Participation!

As a parent, you have the special opportunity to be a role model and primary teacher for your child. I hope this training program has reinforced your parenting practices and provided you with realistic tips and strategies for promoting your child's social-emotional development.

Michael Stinson, BA
School Psychologist Intern

Appendix C

Home Activities Checklist

The activities listed below correspond with weekly activities outlined in the *Social-Emotional Development Parent Handout.* Please check the YES box if the activity was attempted.

CHILD:	PARENT:	
WEEK	**ACTIVITIES**	**YES**
1	Special Time	
2	Make a Face: child guesses/makes the corresponding feelings	
2	Pretend Play: child expresses emotions during play	
2	Reading Book/Discuss Feelings	
2	Talking about Feelings	
2	Using emotional expressions (i.e. "I feel…" or "That must have made you feel…")	
2	Verbally Describe your child's feelings while they are occurring (i.e. "You look sad when your lips are turned down.")	
3	Pretend Play	
3	Reading Book/Discuss Feelings	
3	Discuss the Emotions of Others (i.e. other children)	
3	Child Conversations (engage your child in conversations with other children)	
4	Regulation Guidance	
4	Using Logical Consequence	
4	Start-Stop Games	
4	Advance Notice (i.e. letting the child now how much time is left before play time is over)	
4	Reading a Book and Discussing How to Control Emotions (i.e. taking a deep breath)	
4	Reminding your child to use their words to express their feelings	
5	Providing Eye Contract and Body Proximity When Needed	
5	Assist Child in Conflict Resolution	
5	Give Children the Words to Use in Difficult Situations	
5	Describe Others' Feelings During Difficult Situations	
5	Reading Book/Discuss Outcomes	
5	Set Timers for Toy or Equipment Sharing	
5	Help Others	
5	Assist Child in Joining Ongoing Play	
5	Child Conversations (engage your child in conversations with other children)	
6	Give Child Time to Solve Problem Before Intervening	
6	Model Problem-Solving Strategies	
6	Reading Book/Solving Problem	
6	Engage Child in Conversations That Require Problem-Solving	
6	Model appropriate Problem-Solving Strategies	
6	Allow Child to Make Simple Decisions (i.e. what to wear, what to eat)	

Appendix D

Social Skills Curriculum

Leader: Michael Stinson

Group Members: Direct Instruction Group

<u>Intervention</u>
the preschool years are an important time to promote social-emotional competence. Children with well-developed social-emotional skills are often more likable by peers and teachers, perform better academically, and exhibit fewer behavior problems (Landry & Smith, 2010; McCabe & Altamura, 2011). This intervention will address each of the five social-emotional skills identified by the Collaborative of Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2003).

Goals:

1. Members will increase positive behaviors and compliance through positive reinforcement and effective instructions
2. Members will identify their own emotions (i.e., happiness, anger, sadness, and fear).
3. Members will identify emotions of others (i.e., happiness, anger, sadness, and fear).
4. Members will regulate emotions and inhibit inappropriate actions
5. Members will learn prosocial behavior (i.e., sharing and turn-taking).
6. Members will learn responsible decision making by solving problems in play activities.

<u>Outcome Evaluation Plan:</u>
Pre- and Post-intervention observations will be conducted to determine the influence of the intervention on the development/improvement of social-emotional skills.

<u>Lesson Plans:</u>

Week 1 (Positive Behaviors and Compliance)

Objective: Encourage positive behavior and compliance.

Materials: toys (i.e., blocks, dolls, pretend-play outfits and tools).

I.   Opening
    a. Group introduction
        i. Have each student say their name and some person fact (i.e., favorite food, color, and toy).

        ii. Inform the group that they will be meeting with you for six weeks twice a week to do some activities and play some games.

        iii. Inform the students if they are not able to be respectful and play appropriately they will first be warned, then removed from the group for the day.

II. Working

    a. Play Activity

        i. Students will be introduced to the toys the leader has provided and told they have (15) minutes to play.

            1. During the play period, the group leader will pay attention to the students' behavior and praise appropriate behavior (i.e., walking instead of running, sharing, taking turns).

            2. When the leader has to give instructions he will provide calm, clear, concise instructions.

III. Closing

    a. After 10 minutes have elapsed, students will be told they have five minutes.

    b. After the 5 minutes have elapsed, students will be asked to stop playing and clean up the toys.

        i. The leader will praise the students who followed directions.

    c. Students will be told of next meeting time and how many sessions are left.

Week 2 (Self-Awareness)

Objective: Members will identify their emotions.

Materials: paper with 4 circles (blank faces); piece of paper divided into four sections; crayons

I. Opening

    a. Read the story *How Are You Peeling?*

        i. Have children guess what emotions the characters are displaying

        ii. Ask: *"How do you express how you are feeling?"*

II. Working

    a. Discuss the different facial expressions for happy, mad, sad, and scared.

        i. Teach students a song to remember the expressions that correspond with each emotion.

          1. The group leader will talk with each student about their different faces pointing out differences.

    b. Face drawing

        i. Students will have to draw the faces that go along with the four different emotions (happy, mad, sad, and scared).

       ii. The researcher will ask the students to share their drawing and discuss similarities and differences among students.

III.   Closing

    a. The group leader will review the topics discussed during opening and working time.

    b. Students will be asked to think about their faces and the faces of others over the week and what these faces are saying to one other (i.e., displaying emotions).

Week 3 (Social-Awareness)

Objective: Members will identify the emotions of others.

Materials: Social-story book

I.   Opening

    a. Review last week's topic

        i. Where thoughts, feelings, and behaviors occur?

       ii. Faces

    b. *Why is it important to know how others are feeling? How can we tell when someone is happy (sad, angry, fearful)?*

II.   Working

    a. Social-Story

        i. Read the story aloud to the group. At various points in the story ask the students to describe how characters are feeling at this point in the story. *"How do you think he is feeling?" "How do you think he is feeling now?" "Why do you think that?"*

    b. Feelings-charades

        i. Students will take turns acting out an emotion/feeling while the other students guess.

           1. Ask: What about (student's) actions made you guess (feeling)?

III.   Closing

    a. The group leader will review the topics discussed during opening and working time.

    b. Students will be told to pay close attention to their friends' faces and actions over to help them decide how they are feeling.

Week 4 (Self-Regulation)

Objective: Members will regulate emotions by inhibiting inappropriate actions.

Materials: Social Story; coloring sheets, crayons

I.   Opening
   a. Review last week's topic
      i. What can help us learn how others are feeling?
   b. *"How do you act when you don't get your way?"* Discuss positive ways to control emotions (i.e., deep breaths, using your words).

II.   Working
   a. Social-Story
      i. Read the story aloud to the group where the character demonstrates inappropriate behaviors. At various points in the story ask the students to describe the characters actions and more positive alternatives. *"How did (character) act when...?" "Do you think that was a nice thing to do?" "What do you think (character) could have done differently?"*
   b. Transition activity
      i. Inform the students that they will be coloring a picture, but will have to share the crayons. After every 30 seconds, students have to switch their crayons and papers to the person next to them. The activity continues until the paper has been around the entire circle. *Praise student who demonstrate positive play behaviors and those who transition easily.*

III.   Closing
   a. The group leader will review the topics discussed during opening and working time.
   b. Students will be reminded of the character's actions in the story and how (character) could have acted better.

Week 5 (Social Interactions)

Objective: Members will learn prosocial behaviors (i.e., sharing and turn-taking)

Materials: puzzles; memory cards

I.   Opening
   a. Review last week's topic
   b. *"Why is it important to share and take turns?" "How do you feel when people do not let you play with them?"*

II.   Working

      a. Puzzle
         i. Students are presented with a puzzle and have to work together (taking turns, sharing pieces) to complete it.
      b. Memory
         i. Students will take turns during a memory game. Students will be praised for waiting patiently, and other appropriate behaviors.

III. Closing
      a. The group leader will review the topics discussed during opening and working time
      b. Students will be reminded about how people feel when you do not share and encouraged to demonstrate sharing and turn-taking to their classmates.

Week 6 (Decision-Making)

Objective: Members will learn responsible decision making by solving problems in play activities

Materials: yarn; scissors; blocks; shape puzzles

I. Opening
      a. Review last week's topic
      b. *"What do you do when someone takes your toys?" "How do you act when you want to ask your teacher a question?"*

II. Working
      a. Obstacle Course
         i. Blocks are arranged in various spots on the floor. Using the yarn, children will make a "road" to walk around the obstacles (blocks). The group leader will assist children as they make decisions on where to put the road.
      b. Missing Pieces Activity
         i. Students will be given puzzles with pieces missing. The group leader will observe how students react to this problem. If a student asks for a missing piece, they will be given the piece.

III. Closing
      a. The group leader will review the topics discussed during opening and working time
      b. A summative review of the previous weeks' topics will be conducted.

Appendix E

Parent Introduction Letter

Dear Parents,

My name is Michael Stinson and I am a graduate intern for school psychologist, Mrs. Kristen Cicchetti at Greene-Hills School. As part of my internship, I will be completing a seven-week intervention with preschool children. During these seven weeks I will be meeting with students in small groups twice a week for approximately 20 to 30 minutes a session. At these meetings, students will be engaged in play-based activities designed to promote social skills development. During this seven week intervention, parents will also be provided with a packet that introduces a new social skill each week along with tips and activities for working on these skills at home.

The preschool years are an important time for teaching social skills because the greatest gains in development occurs during this time. Children who are competent in social skills are often considered more likable by others, have fewer behavioral problems, and do better in school. This intervention aims to teach children and work with parents on how to build the social skills children need to be successful now and in the future.

I am writing to ask you to participate in this project, partnering with me to promote social skills development in preschool children. I believe this project will benefit your child and also contribute to knowledge.

Along with this letter you will find an informed consent form that goes into further detail about the intervention. If you choose to participate (i.e., you and your child), please sign, date, and complete the contact information found on the last page. The informed consent form can be mailed to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided or returned directly to the preschool teacher or myself in a sealed envelope. If you agree to participate please return the signed consent form **by October 15th**.

Sincerely,

_____
Michael Stinson, B.A.
School Psychology Intern
Greene-Hills School

Appendix F

Consent to Participate in Research

Partnering with Parents for Fostering Social-Emotional Skills of Preschool Children.

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Michael Stinson who is completing his internship in school psychology at Greene-Hills School. The purpose of this research project is to teach preschool children social-emotional skills that all children need to be successful learners; at the researcher gain knowledge on how best to deliver such services to young children.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- **Complete a questionnaire, which will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete**
- **Read an informational handout on social-emotional skills development of young children, use the information to help your child, and receive a weekly follow-up telephone call from the researcher to answer any question you may have about using the activities in the handout**
- **Provide a telephone number for the weekly call, and**
- **Consent for the researcher to work directly with your child to provide instructions social-emotional skills development.**

Also, please know the following:

- **There are no risks involved**
- **There are benefits for you and your child: You will receive research supported information on social-emotional skills development of young children, and your child will receive lessons in the same area.**
- **All information will remain confidential with regard to you and your child's identity, and**
- **Participation in this project is voluntary, not a requirement, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.**

Please understand that if you have any questions concerning this project, you may call or write us:

Dr. Assegedetch HaileMariam (217-581-2127)   Michael Stinson (860-993-7117)
Eastern Illinois University   Greene-Hills School
Department of Psychology   School Psychology Intern
600 Lincoln HWY   718 Pine Street
Charleston, IL 61920   Bristol, CT 06010

Further, if you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree for me and my child to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation or my child's participation at any time. I have also provided my telephone number below, and I understand that I may receive a weekly telephone call for the duration of the project. I have been given a copy of this form.

Please print you name_____and

your child's name_____.

My telephone number is_____ I am available for a phone

follow-up on _____ or _____ from _____
                         Date   Date   Time

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the study to the above participant(s).

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix G

Introductory Parent Letter

Dear Parents,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the social skills intervention/training. This program will last for seven weeks (November 4th - December 20th). During the seven week period, I will be meeting with your child in small groups, two times a week. Each session will last approximately 30 minutes. You may also receive handouts or telephone calls (once a week during the times you provided) to provide you with research-based tips and strategies for promoting your child's social-emotional development at home.

This letter is accompanied by a behavior rating scale (PKBS-2) and a parent questionnaire. These items will be used solely for the purpose of this study. It is important to answer each question. Please complete both the behavior rating scale and parent questionnaire and return the packet (directly or in your child's backpack) by **November 8th**.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at: (860) 584-7822 ext. 52103.

Sincerely,

_____
Michael Stinson, B.A.
School Psychology Intern
Greene-Hills School

Appendix H

Pre- and Post-Observation Form

Student: _____ Date: _____

Rater: _____ PRE _____ POST _____ (check one)

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Play-based Social Skills	Activities	Frequency	No Opportunity to observe
Self-awareness	-Uses words to express needs -Uses feeling words, e.g., I'm happy. - Acts out at least two different emotions in pretend play		
Social-Awareness	-Is aware of peer's feelings, e.g., consoles someone who is sad. -Initiates appropriate physical affection, e.g., hugs - Uses words to describe others' feelings, e.g., Maggie is angry.		
Self-regulation	-Transitions from one activity to another with ease -Follows directions -Performs some tasks with little or no assistance - Maintains eye contact when given directions		
Interpersonal Skills	-Shares toys with peers -Engages in pretend play with other children -Listens to others -Takes-turns during games without complaint		
Problem solving	-Asks for help -Tries to figure things out for him/herself -Makes decisions when given a choice -Solves multistep problems		

Appendix I

Final Parent Letter

Dear Parents,

Thank you for participating in the social skills intervention/training. It was a pleasure to work with each of your children. The purpose of this study was to compare direct instruction (social-skills lessons taught at school) with parent consultation (some parents received a *Parent Handout* for promoting social-emotional development at home). *For those families who did not receive the Parent Handout, I have attached a copy for your review.*

The final step of the program is to complete a behavior rating scale and parent questionnaire as you did at the beginning of the intervention. These tools serve as the starting and stopping points for each student. Again, information provided from the behavior rating scale and questionnaire will be used solely for the purpose of this study. Please answer the questions based on your child's behavior since the beginning of the intervention (November 4, 2013). I apologize for the redundancy to those who just received and returned the initial packet.

This letter is accompanied by the behavior rating scale (PKBS-2) and the parent questionnaire. *Some packets may also include a checklist to identify which activities were attempted at home.* It is important to answer each question. Please complete and return the packet (directly or in your child's backpack) by **January 24th**.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at: (860) 584-7822 ext. 52103.

Sincerely,

Michael Stinson, BA
School Psychology Intern
Greene-Hills School