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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAM USED WITH  
CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

By  
Sandra L. Dalton

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
Of  
The Graduate School  
At  
Rowan University  
May, 2000

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_

Date Approved 5/4/2000

## ABSTRACT

Sandra L. Dalton

The Effectiveness of a Social Skills Program Used with Children with Learning Disabilities

2000

Dr. Jay Kuder  
Special Education

This research study investigated the effectiveness of a social skills program both inside and outside of the classroom. Its purpose was to see if positive behaviors increased and negative behaviors decreased both inside and outside of the classroom. The results showed that overall, for the class, positive behaviors increased and negative behaviors decreased. Individual results varied. The implications of this are great. If we teach our students with learning disabilities the necessary social skills now, they will be able to take these skills outside of the school setting and successfully integrate into society.

MINI - ABSTRACT

Sandra L. Dalton

The Effectiveness of a Social Skills Program Used with Children with Learning Disabilities

2000

Dr. Jay Kuder  
Special Education

This study was conducted to test the effectiveness of a social skills program used with children with learning disabilities. A direct instruction and competency based approach to teaching social skills was used. Results were encouraging, but further research is warranted.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are several people whom were instrumental in the completion of this project. I would like to thank my family who believed in me from the very beginning and supported me every step of the way. I would also like to thank my colleagues and the administration of my school district for their support and help. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Kuder for all of his patience, guidance and help.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The time students spend in school may seem like an eternity to them. In reality, though, those thirteen years go by very quickly. Students go from being small, innocent children with little or no responsibility to young adults about to enter the “real world” in what seems like a “blink of an eye”. Educators do their best to prepare their students for the real world or “life” by teaching them the academic skills needed to survive. But little, if any, emphasis is put on the social skills that are needed to survive in school and then in life. According to Korinek and Popp, (1997), social competence is universally recognized as critical to success both in school and in life for all students. Job supervisors may even consider social competence more important than actual job skills (Sabornie and Beard, 1990). Most children will acquire these skills over time. However, research suggests that this is not necessarily the case for learning disabled children. Learning disabled children do not pick up on verbal and non-verbal cues in social situations. Many learning disabled children are perceived by their peers and adults as being socially unappealing (Vaughn, 1985). Problems in adulthood, juvenile delinquency, and psychiatric hospitalization have all been related to social skills deficits (Sabornie and Beard, 1990). There is little being done in schools to help learning disabled students acquire the social skills they are lacking. If social skills are taught in the classroom through direct instruction, will anti social behaviors decrease? A person



would assume that the anti social behaviors would decrease and social competence would increase after the implementation of a social skills program.

### **Research Problem**

The research problem to be examined is whether a social behavior program that is implemented with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students with special needs in a self-contained, special education classroom, will reduce their anti-social behaviors and increase their pro-social behaviors both inside and outside the classroom. More and more students are being served in inclusionary or general education classes. These students will need to reduce anti-social behaviors in order to survive in these classes and in life.

### **Definition of Terms**

Blackbourn (1989) defines social skills as “those skills that enhance and facilitate a students’ ability to interact successfully with peers and adults.” For the purpose of this study, those skills would be: raising hand and waiting to be called on, being a good listener, following classroom/school rules, respecting teachers, completing classwork, completing homework, following directions first time asked, ignoring poor behavior of others, and remaining calm in a bad situation.

### **Purpose**

The results of this study could have great impact on many lives, most importantly the lives of the students. In order to survive in school, students must know how to interact appropriately with their teachers and peers. Research shows that learning disabled students lack necessary social skills, which results in poor reports with teachers

and peers. These students need to be taught the much-needed social skills in order to survive in school and later in life. The results of this study could also impact the students' parents, employers, and acquaintances. If these students can learn appropriate social skills, it will make for a better atmosphere at home, work, and public.

The results of this study could have an impact on school behavior, which could improve the report between the students and their teachers and peers. The special education teacher should be responsible for the direct instruction of the skills taught. Instruction should be provided on a consistent basis over a long period of time. However, research also shows not only a great need for direct instruction, but also using the "teachable moment", which can happen at any part of the day.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The term “social skills” is a very complex and confusing term. The definition that is used depends upon the author that is being read and in what context “social skills” is being used. One definition seems to be the umbrella for all others. That one says that social skills are “responses which, within a given situation, prove effective, or in other words, maximize the probability of producing, maintaining, or enhancing positive effects for the interactor” (Epstein and Cullinan, 1987). In 1998, Elksnin and Elksnin, listed six different types of social skills: Interpersonal behaviors, Peer-Related Social Skills, Teacher-Pleasing Social Skills, Self-Related Behaviors, Assertiveness Skills, and communication Skills. Later in this chapter several social skills curricula will be addressed and will show how many of these types and in what context these social skills can be taught.

#### **Importance of Social Skills**

Social skills are needed by all children to ensure success in school and in life. “Appropriate social skills provide a firm foundation for competent performance in a range of academic, personal, vocational, and community contexts” (Walker, Schwartz, Nippold, Irvin, and Noell, 1994). However, it is well documented in the literature that students with learning disabilities often lack the necessary social skills needed to be

socially competent. Research has established that students with learning disabilities are not well accepted by their peers, have social skills deficits, and have difficulties making and maintaining friends (Mcintosh, Vaughn, and Zaragoza, 1991). In addition, students who are deficient in social skills do not tend to outgrow these deficits. They are likely to develop more life adjustment problems such as school dropout, psychiatric dysfunction, and criminal behavior (Epstein and Cullinan, 1987; Kavale and Forness, 1996). It is obvious that these students need to be targeted in social skills training programs so that they will have a chance to be successful.

### **SOCIAL SKILLS DEFICITS IN LD STUDENTS**

There are many theories explaining why students with learning disabilities exhibit social skills deficit, however none are conclusive. The most appropriate conclusion seems to be one that implies that social skills deficits may coexist with learning disabilities but are not necessarily consequences of learning disabilities (Kavale and Forness, 1996). What is agreed upon is that students with learning disabilities can exhibit social skills deficits in three distinct areas. The first is where the student may not have learned a specific skill. This would be a skill deficit. The second is a performance deficit. This is where the skill has been learned, but the student is not performing it. The third is where the student displays behaviors that interfere with the acquisition and performance of the appropriate social skills. This is referred to as a self-control deficit (Kavale and Forness, 1996).

In school, there are two settings in which social skills are very important. The first is the classroom setting. In this setting, research has shown that teachers value

academic-related social skills more highly than peer-to-peer social skills. Teachers feel that it is more important to decrease behaviors that threaten classroom control than to teach prosocial behaviors that might generalize beyond the classroom (Pray Jr., Hall, Markley, 1992). A sample of the social skills teachers feel are needed in the classroom setting are: to cooperate with others, listen carefully to teacher instructions, make assistance needs known (in an appropriate way), comply promptly with commands, respond appropriately to corrective teacher feedback, following rules, and display self-control (Walker et al., 1994). This is just a sample of what teachers feel are the social skills needed to survive in the classroom.

The second setting is free-play. Here, the student needs to develop satisfactory peer relations and to fully participate in ongoing peer-controlled activities. In order to do this, the student must be able to initiate appropriately to peers and respond appropriately to others' instructions if needed, be able to assist others, interact with one or more peers for relatively long periods of time, communicate effectively, and cope with peer provocations. Research has shown that failure in either one of these social-behavioral areas increases the chance of school failure (Walker et al., 1994)

### **EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION**

While there is much research on the need for social skills and social skills training programs, there had been little research into the effectiveness of social skill training. Each social skills training program claims that their program will improve students' social skills. However, it was difficult to find longitudinal studies to attest to these claims. One long term (one year) study using the "Skillstreaming for Elementary School

Child” curriculum found that “the use of social skills training with students with disabilities positively affected their social interactions and involvement with their nondisabled peers” (Ciechalski and Schmidt, 1995).

Many studies have been conducted on the effects of social skills training and interventions. A review of several studies will follow.

In 1985, J.M. Blackbourn conducted a study on the acquisition and generalization of social skills in elementary-aged children with learning disabilities. The study consisted of four elementary school-aged children with learning disabilities. They all had average to above-average intelligence and were achieving academically one to two years below grade placements. They all received instruction in a learning disabilities resource room for approximately 1 1/2 hours per day. Each student possessed inappropriate social behaviors that interfered with his or her interaction with others. For the purposes of this study, target behaviors were identified on an individual basis. The particular behavior selected seemed to be the major obstacle in preventing the child from interacting successfully with his or her peers.

The intervention consisted of four stages. In the first stage, the researchers obtained baseline data using frequency charts. The subjects were observed in the resource room and in other classroom settings. In the resource room, verbal rehearsal and controlled practice were used to teach the appropriate target behavior. In two subsequent settings, the researchers attempted to establish acquisition of the trained target behavior through prompts and systematic teacher attention. Teachers and parents outside of the learning disabilities resource room were trained in the use of the target behavior prompts and reinforcement in the form of systematic, contingent attention. This was done so that

when the student became proficient in using the appropriate skill inside the resource room, an attempt would be made to establish the skill outside the resource room. In the final stage of the intervention, the prompts and reinforcers were withdrawn in order to determine if the skill had generalized to the new setting.

The training of the skills, inside and outside the resource room, took place over a twelve-week period in the spring semester of 1985. Once the behaviors of interest had been established in controlled situations, the subjects were observed in new environments, over nine consecutive weeks, during the fall semester of 1985, to determine if skill generalization had occurred. The results showed that all subjects in the study demonstrated a generalization of the target behavior to environments other than those in which they were trained. The researchers attribute the success of the intervention to two factors. One factor was the training of parents and teachers outside of the learning disabilities resource room on the prompts and reinforcers to use to obtain the desired behavior. The other factor was the average to above-average intelligence of the subjects. They offer that the higher the subjects' level of intellectual functioning, the fewer the number of trained people outside of the classroom were necessary to bring about skill generalization.

In 1991, McIntosh, Vaughn, and Zaragoza conducted a review of social interventions for students with learning disabilities. Twenty-two studies were reviewed that reported the effects of social skills training and intervention on 572 students with learning disabilities between the ages of five and nineteen in grades one through twelve. The settings ranged from exclusively serving students with learning disabilities to regular education classrooms. The students were equally divided among elementary, middle, and

high school grade groupings. Each grade grouping had seven studies associated with it. One study selected students across grade groupings from first through ninth grade. Five of the studies intervened with only males. One study selected a single female. The remaining sixteen studies selected students of both sexes. The duration of the interventions ranged from one to twenty-five weeks or from five to eighty-three hours. Ten studies selected students who were deficient in certain social behaviors, were low peer accepted, or who were identified by teachers and or parents as needing social skills intervention. Intervention group size varied. Four studies used a single subject. Ten studies used a small group, two to ten students, for intervention. The remaining eight studies used a group with up to thirty-five students for intervention.

The results indicated that five elementary, three middle grade, and six high school studies showed positive intervention results. There was no difference in the responsiveness to intervention between males and females. In regards to setting, students placed in full-time LD programs were less successful than interventions with students receiving LD services part-time and are mainstreamed into the regular classroom for part of the day. The authors note, however, that students who attend a full-time learning disabilities program probably have more difficulties in both academic and social areas. They also offer that students with learning disabilities who primarily interact with other students with learning disabilities have fewer opportunities to observe desirable social behaviors or interact with non-disabled peers. The duration of intervention was related to positive effects of the intervention. Those studies that reported success provided nearly three times as much intervention time for training. Nine of the ten studies that selected students who were deficient in certain social behaviors reported success. Only four of the



twelve studies that selected students primarily because they were learning disabled reported success. Group size also seems to have a dramatic effect on success. All of the single-subject designs and eight of the ten small group designs reported positive intervention effects. Only two of the eight large group designs reported positive intervention effects.

These results show that there are several characteristics needed to have an effective social skills training program. They include: selecting students who have social skills difficulties or low peer acceptance, use of a model that includes cognitive behavioral procedures, individual or small group instruction, and long-term intervention and training programs. An important point to note is that although fourteen of the twenty-two studies reported positive intervention effects, behavior changes frequently did not generalize to natural settings.

In 1996, Kavale and Forness conducted a meta-analysis of 152 studies on social skills deficits and learning disabilities. There were 6,353 students, 72% of whom were male, with an average age of 10.75 years and an average IQ of 95. A variety of formal and informal assessment procedures were used to investigate if there were social skills deficits in students with learning disabilities. The social skills of students with learning disabilities were evaluated as being two-thirds standard deviations below those of their non-learning disabled counterparts.

An analysis was then done to examine different person's perceptions of the social skills deficits. Assessments of students with learning disabilities included teacher assessments, peer assessments, and assessments by students with learning disabilities. On the basis of teacher and peer ratings, three out of four students with learning

disabilities would be evaluated as deficient in social skills. Students with learning disabilities rated themselves slightly lower than their teachers and peers. Overall, no matter who performed the assessment, students with learning disabilities were found to manifest social skills deficits when compared to non-learning disabled students.

Teachers perceived lack of academic competence and less social interaction as the major social skills deficits in students with learning disabilities. Non-learning disabled peers perceived students with learning disabilities as less popular, not competent in verbal and non-verbal communication, and not as cooperative. Therefore, students with learning disabilities fell into a group with whom non-learning disabled students would not socialize. Students with learning disabilities assessed themselves to be most deficient in the areas of academic competence, interpreting nonverbal communication, and on measure of social problem solving. About 70% of students with learning disabilities had a poor self-concept and a lack of self-esteem, which could be a contributor to social skills deficits.

In 1998, Choi and Heckenlaible-Gotto conducted a study on the effectiveness of classroom-based social skills training and its impact on peer acceptance. Two first-grade classes from two different school districts in a state in the Midwest were used. Both classes had closely matched demographic data. The treatment group consisted of thirteen students, seven females and six males, with an average age of 7 years 3 months. The control group consisted of twelve students, five females and seven males, with an average age of 7 years 2 months.

A peer rating sociometric procedure was used to measure the effectiveness of social skills training. The two sociometric criteria used were “likes to work with” and

“likes to play with”. Using a pre/post design, classmates used a 5-point Likert-type scale to rate each subject in the treatment group and in the control group. Once the pretest data were collected, the classroom teacher of the treatment group participated in two one-hour training sessions.

The social skills training program used in this study used a psychoeducational, behavioral approach for teaching prosocial skills. The four basic components used to teach prosocial skills were modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and transfer of training. The treatment group received four hours of direct intervention. The intervention sessions were approximately 30 minutes in length, occurred two days per week, and lasted for four weeks. Each week was devoted to learning on prosocial behavior. The training took place in the regular first-grade classroom.

The results showed that on the pretest, the control group scored significantly higher than the treatment group on both the “work with” and “play with” peer rating scales. The treatment group scores increased significantly between the pretest and posttest measures for the “work with” peer rating scale. There were no significant increases or decreases between pretest and posttest measures on the “play with” peer rating scale for the treatment group. No significant increases or decreases were found for the control group on either the “work with” or “play with” peer rating scale. The researchers noted that one factor that led to the success of this intervention was the increased confidence of the classroom teacher in her ability to teach social skills within her classroom.

It is clear that students with learning disabilities possess social skills deficits. However, the unanswered question is why these deficits occur.

## **SOCIAL SKILLS CURRICULA**

Research shows that there are two major approaches to the training of social skills. One is a behavioral, skill-based approach and the other is a cognitive, problem-solving approach. The procedures are not mutually exclusive even though they are clearly different in emphasis and procedure (Walker et al., 1994).

The behavioral approach is a more structured approach that focuses on identifying critically important social skills that underlie social effectiveness. Direct instruction and social contingencies are used to develop the social skills. The instruction is under careful control of the person doing the training (Walker et al., 1994). According to the research, token systems, individual and group contingencies, and continuing contracts can be used to modify students' behaviors (Nowacek, 1998).

The cognitive problem solving approach focuses on how students think about and approach interpersonal problems. In this approach, students must identify a problem, provide a solution to the problem, and consider the consequences of their actions. Students must become sensitive to interpersonal problems and master five types of cognitive processes: alternative thinking, causal thinking, consequential thinking, means-end thinking, and perspective thinking. Although this approach is less structured, it is more demanding of its recipients with respect to generating alternative solutions (Walker et al., 1994). According to researchers, an ideal social skills program would combine both the cognitive and behavioral approaches.

When selecting a social skills program, two important factors must be considered. The first is to consult the research (Walker et al., 1994). Much research has been done on

various programs and the needs they meet. The second is the student. A program must be selected that meets the needs of an individual or of a group as a whole. A skill, or skills, that has been identified as a common student need or that would enhance the student's ability to work with classmates to complete a task successfully, would make a logical objective (Korinek and Popp, 1997). A brief description of several social skills programs will follow.

One of the most widely used programs to teach social skills is A Curriculum for Children's Effective Peer and Teacher Skills (ACCEPTS). Social skills are taught through a direct instruction paradigm that: defines each skill to be learned, provides examples and non examples of the behavior, allows for active practice through role playing, offers performance feedback through assessment, and provides for generalization of skills through contracts with participants (Sabornie and Beard, 1990). There are 28 skills in five major content areas: classroom skills, basic interaction skills, getting along, making friends, and coping skills. The format of the program allows for one-to-one, small group, or large group instruction. The overall goal of the ACCEPTS program is to prepare disabled students in grades one through six to enter and succeed within mainstreaming or other less restrictive environments (Epstein and Cullinan, 1987).

Skillstreaming the Adolescent centers its instructional program around a structured learning approach. Components of the program include skill modeling by the teacher, role playing, direct feedback to students, and teaching for skill generalization (Sabornie and Beard, 1990). There are 50 skills grouped into six categories: beginning social skills, advanced social skills, dealing with feelings, alternatives to aggression, skills for dealing with stress, and planning skills (Epstein and Cullinan, 1987). This

program was designed for students who are aggressive, immature, or withdrawn. It can be used in a variety of settings, from regular classrooms to residential psychiatric facilities (Sabornie and Beard, 1990). Skillstreaming for the Elementary Child is available for younger children.

Another program used with adolescents is A Social Skills Program for Adolescents (ASSET). The major emphasis of the program is to increase social interaction skills. There are eight skill areas: giving positive feedback, giving negative feedback, accepting negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, problem solving, negotiation, following instructions, and conversations. Videotapes are used to illustrate adolescent's appropriate or inappropriate application of a specific skill. A group discussion follows the videotapes to focus awareness on the skill. Then, students are taught the specific behavioral steps for each skill using modeling practice, feedback, and reinforcement. Students also receive homework assignments, and progress notes are sent home to the parents (Sabornie and Beard, 1990).

## **CONCLUSION**

Students with learning disabilities obviously lack the necessary social skills needed to survive in school and then in life. The reason as to why they lack this skills is yet unknown. What research does know is that with the appropriate training, students can learn social skills. However, the biggest challenge is to get the students to be able to generalize these skills from the classroom to outside of the classroom.

The present study will provide the students with the training they need, through direct instruction, to learn specific social skills. This training will occur in the classroom.

In addition, the students' special area teachers will be surveyed before and after the intervention to see if the skills taught generalized to outside of the classroom.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

**SUBJECTS**

Six fifth grade students are involved in the research study. They include five males and one female whose chronological ages range from ten to twelve years. All students have a special education classification and receive all academic instruction in a self-contained special education classroom. The students are included with all other fifth grade students for all non-academic classes, including lunch. A detailed description of each student follows.

1. JD is a male with a chronological age of 10 years, 7 months. He has been classified as having a specific learning disability (SLD) and receives services from the speech-language therapist. JD also has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) for which he takes medication twice daily. He is a kind boy who is always eager to please.
2. AM is a male with a chronological age of 10 years, 9 months. He has been classified as having a SLD and receives services from the speech-language therapist. He is quite immature for his age.
3. TP is a female with a chronological age of 11 years, 1 month. She has been classified as multiply disabled (MD). She is a very shy, introverted



girl. TP has very little self-confidence and very rarely will take the initiative to do anything.

4. AR is a male with a chronological age of 10 years, 10 months. He has been classified with a SLD. AR also has ADHD for which he is maintained on medication twice daily. He is a very friendly, talkative young man. He can also be very stubborn.
5. ET is a male with a chronological age of 10 years, 11 months. He has been classified as having a SLD. He is a perfectionist and is very compulsive about it. If his routine is disrupted, he does not cope very well. Although they have decreased, ET has been known to throw full-blown temper tantrums if things are not going his way.
6. JW is a male with a chronological age of 12 years, 0 months. He has been classified as MD. He also has ADHD for which he takes medication twice daily. JW is always full of energy, even with his medication. He is a hand-on learner.

### **DESCRIPTION OF INSTRUMENT/MATERIALS**

The ACCEPTS (A Curriculum for Children's Effective Peer and Teacher Skills) Social Skills Curriculum was chosen to use for instruction. The major goal of the ACCEPTS curriculum is to prepare disabled children to enter and perform satisfactorily within less restrictive environments. A secondary goal is to directly teach skills that facilitate classroom adjustment and contribute to peer acceptance.

The ACCEPTS curriculum is designed for use with mildly and moderately disabled children in the primary and intermediate grades. The curriculum was designed to have either special education or regular education teachers deliver instruction. However, other school professionals, such as school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and speech-language therapists can use the program effectively.

The ACCEPTS curriculum uses a direct instruction and competency based approach to teaching social skills. Twenty-eight skills, grouped into five major content areas, are taught by the curriculum. The areas are: classroom skills, basic interaction skills, getting along, making friends, and coping skills. The program generally takes five to ten weeks of daily instruction to complete. It is structured so that one skill is taught and mastered daily. However, the curriculum can adapt to the progress of the students. Each of the skills was developed to have a maximum of nine instructional steps. The steps are: definition and guided discussion, positive example, negative example, review and restate skill definition, positive example, activities, positive example, criterion role plays, and informal contracting. It is suggested that 40 to 45 minutes be devoted to each instructional session.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE**

Two forms of assessment will be used to determine of the implementation if the ACCEPTS curriculum produced positive results. The first assessment is a teacher created behavior chart that records the number of times a student exhibits specific negative and positive behaviors and is tallied daily (see Appendix A). The positive behaviors include: the student raises his/her hand and waits to be called on, is a good

listener, respects the teacher, follows directions first time asked, follows classroom rules, attempts classwork, and ignores poor behaviors of others. The negative behaviors include: the student calls out in class, is disrespectful to the teacher, is disrespectful to peers, does not follow classroom rules, is out of seat, refuses to attempt classwork, uses foul language, and does not mind his/her own business. It has been maintained since the first week of school. The second is a teacher survey (see Appendix B). Teachers of non-academic subjects will be surveyed at the beginning of the intervention. The survey asks the teacher to rate the frequency of ten different behaviors that each student exhibits using a Likert-type scale. The teachers will be given the same survey at the end of the six-week intervention. Students will receive social skills instruction, using the ACCEPTS curriculum, four days a week, approximately 40 minutes per day, for six weeks. The self-contained, special education teacher will deliver instruction two days per week. The other two days per week, the self-contained, special education teacher and school social worker will provide the instruction.

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

At the completion of the intervention, data will be collected from both the teachers' surveys and behavior charts. The teachers' surveys will be compared to see if there was any change in the frequency of the behaviors the students exhibited. This will also show if any of the social skills generalized to outside of the classroom. The behavior charts will be analyzed using a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. Graphs will be created to show the increase or decrease in each behavior on a weekly basis.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

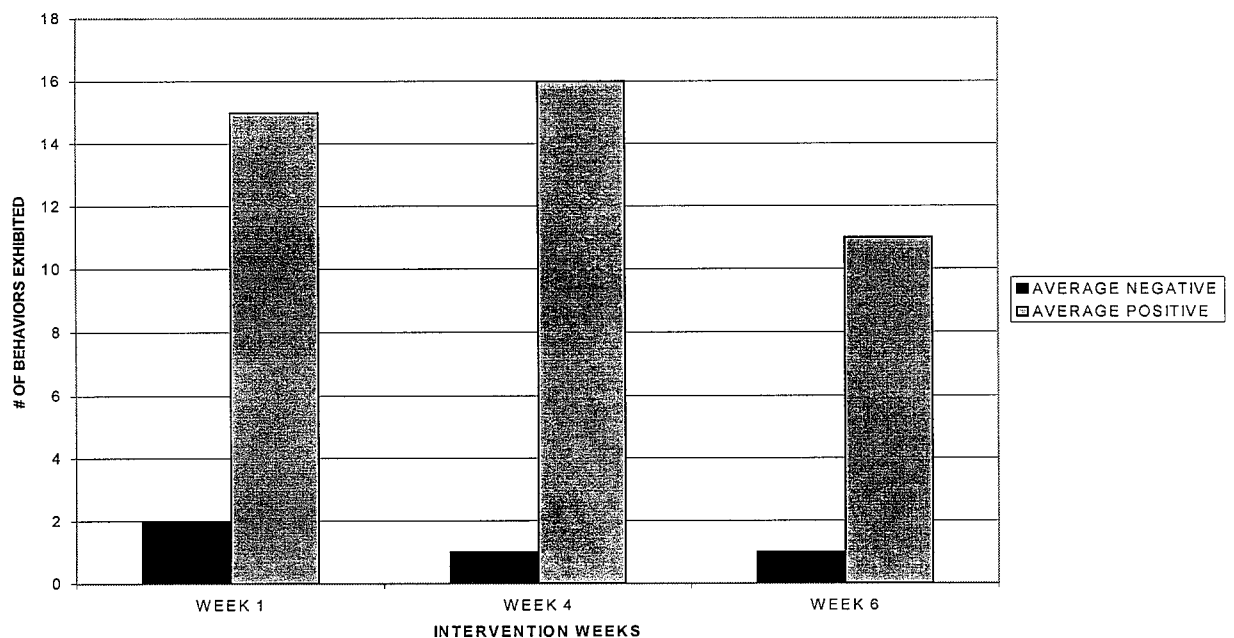
In this study, the effectiveness of a social skills program, ACCEPTS, was tested. Six fifth grade students were involved in the intervention. All students have a special education classification and receive all academic instruction in a self-contained special education classroom. The students are included with all other fifth grade students for all non-academic classes, including lunch. The intervention consisted of 40-minute sessions, four days a week for six weeks.

Two forms of assessment were used to analyze the effectiveness of the program. The first was a daily classroom behavior chart, which tallied the number of, times a behavior, positive or negative, occurred during the day. For the purposes of this study, the daily tallies were compiled into weekly totals. This was used to see if classroom behaviors that were directly related to the social skills program increased or decreased as a result of the intervention. The second assessment used was a teacher survey. All special area teachers (e.g. art, music, gym, health, computers, Spanish, and home economics) were surveyed before and after the intervention. Using a five-point Likert-type scale, they were asked to rate how often each student exhibited a list of behaviors. The results of each assessment follow.

The classroom behavior chart was divided into two sections, positive and negative behaviors. The positive behaviors included: the student raises his/her hand and waits to be called on, is a good listener, respects the teacher, follows directions first time asked, follows classroom rules, attempts classwork, and ignores poor behaviors of others. The negative behaviors include: the student calls out in class, is disrespectful to the teacher, is disrespectful to peers, does not follow classroom rules, is out of seat, refuses to attempt classwork, uses foul language, and does not mind his/her own business. The differences in both positive and negative behaviors over the six-week intervention period were analyzed, charted, and graphed for the class as a whole and for each student.

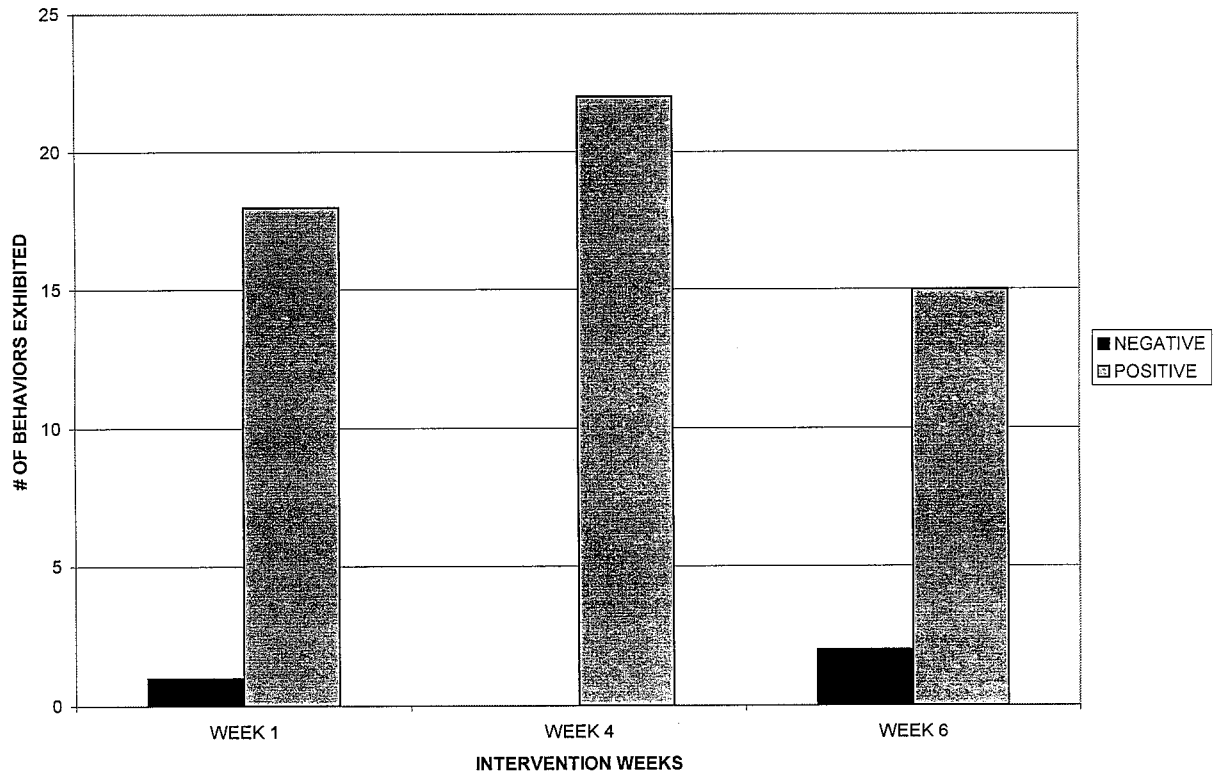
During week one, there was an average of 2 negative behaviors for the class. This number decreased to 1 during week four and remained at 1 during week six. There was an average of 15 positive behaviors during week one. This number increased to 16 positive behaviors during week four. During week six, the number of positive behaviors decreased to an average of 11 (see Figure 4.1).

FIGURE 4.1 - CLASS AVERAGE



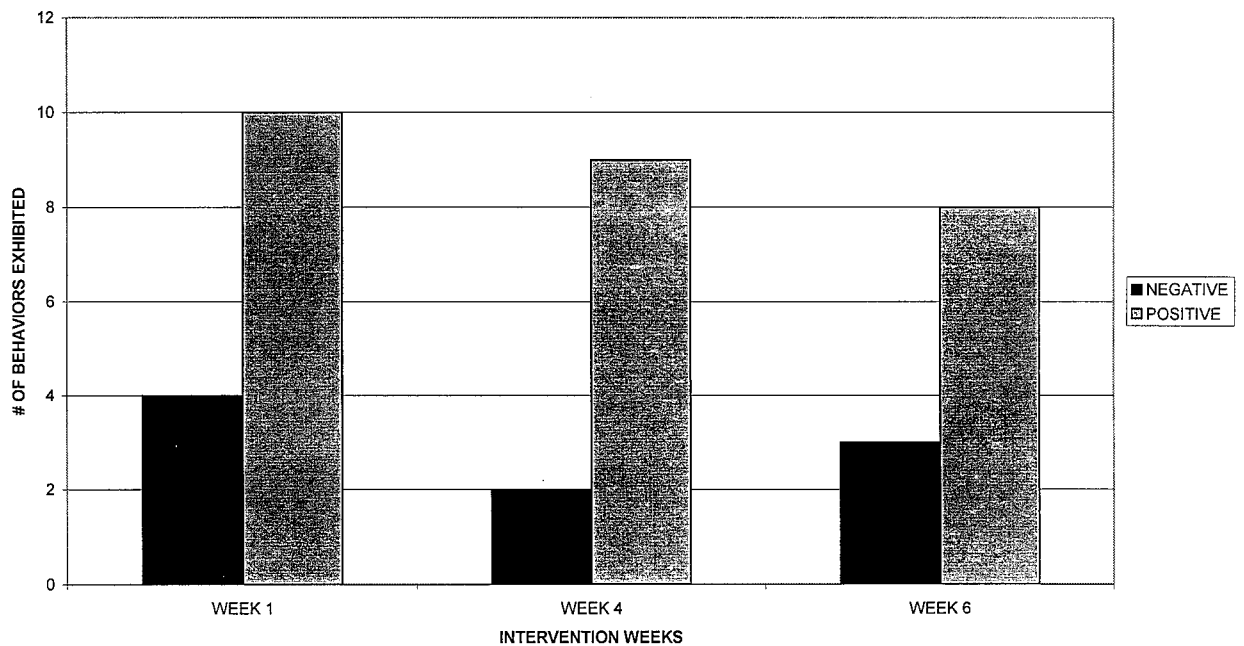
Individual results for change in positive and negative behaviors are as follows. JD had no apparent change in his negative behaviors over the six-week intervention. In week one, he had 1 negative behavior. In week four, he also had zero negative behaviors. In week six, he had 2 negative behaviors. However, JD's positive behaviors seemed to increase over the intervention. In week one he had 18 positive behaviors. In week four, the positive behaviors increased to 22. In week six, he had 15 positive behaviors (see Figure 4.2).

FIGURE 4.2 - JD'S RESULTS



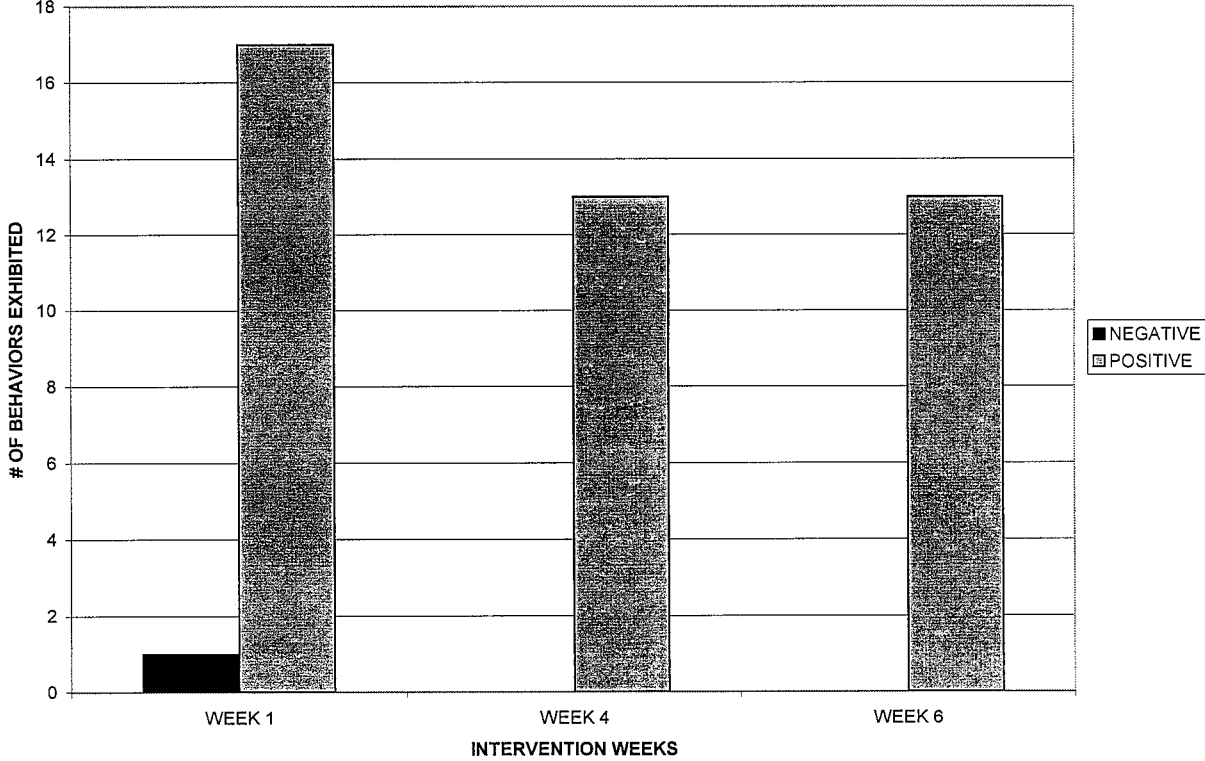
AM had a slight decrease in negative behaviors from week one to week six of the intervention. In week one, he had 4 negative behaviors. This number decreased to 2 negative behaviors during week four and increased to 3 negative behaviors in week six. His positive behaviors also appeared to decrease over the six-week intervention. He had 10 positive behaviors in week one, 9 positive behaviors in week four, and 8 positive behaviors in week six (see Figure 4.3).

FIGURE 4.3 - AM'S RESULTS



TP very rarely exhibits any negative behaviors. This is evidenced by the results of negative behaviors during the intervention period. In week one, she had one negative behavior. In weeks four and six, she had no negative behaviors. TP's positive behaviors appeared to increase over the intervention period. In week one, she had 17 positive behaviors. This number decreased to 13 positive behaviors in week four and remained at 13 positive behaviors in week six (see Figure 4.4).

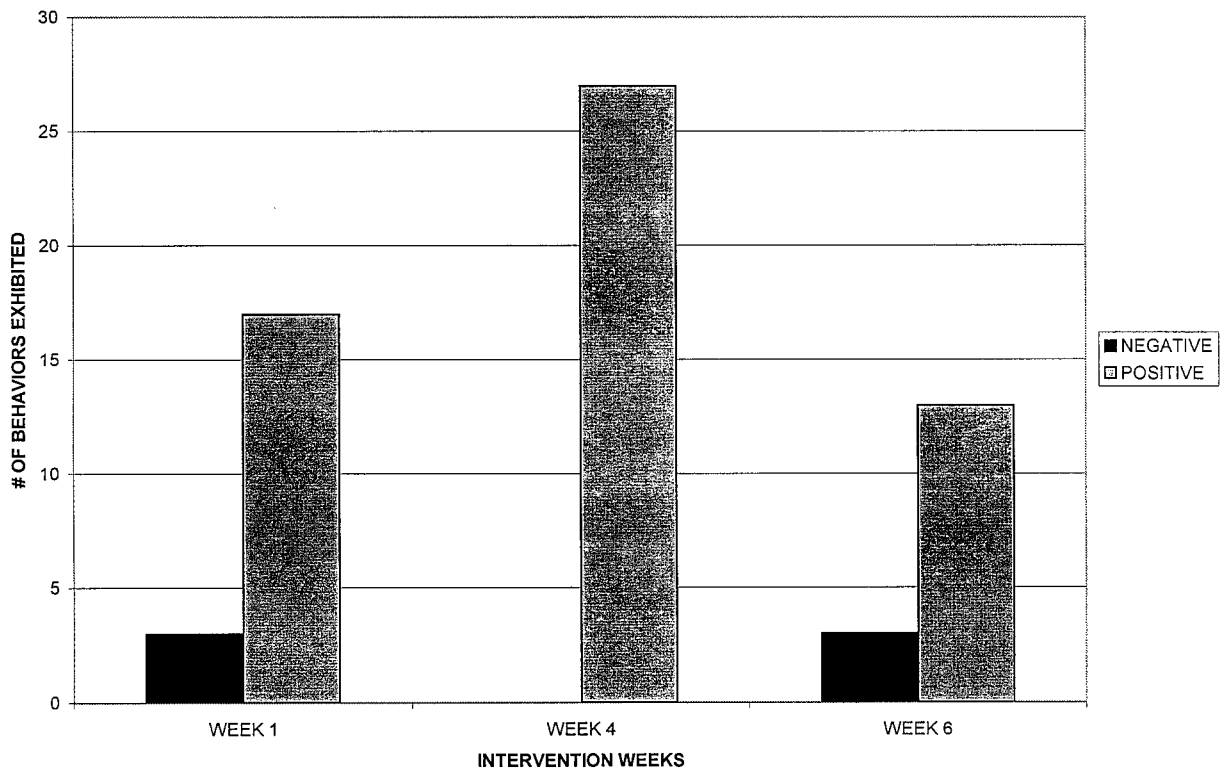
FIGURE 4.4 - TP'S RESULTS





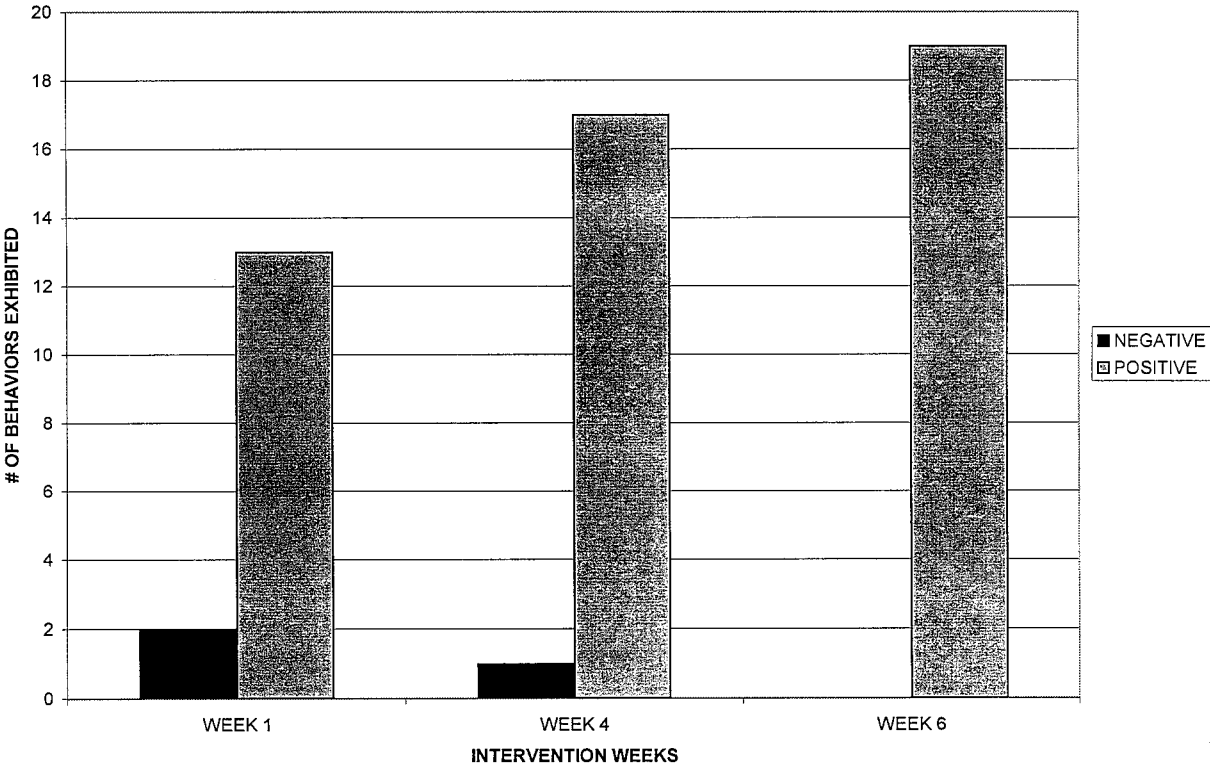
AR's negative behaviors remained almost constant during the intervention period. In week one, he had 3 negative behaviors. In week four, he had no negative behaviors. This was the only week that he had no negative behaviors. In week six, he had 3 negative behaviors. His positive behaviors also appeared to remain constant over the intervention period. He had 17 positive behaviors during week one. In week two, he had 27 positive behaviors. This was an exceptional week for AR. In week six, he had 13 positive behaviors(see figure 4.5).

FIGURE 4.5 - AR'S RESULTS



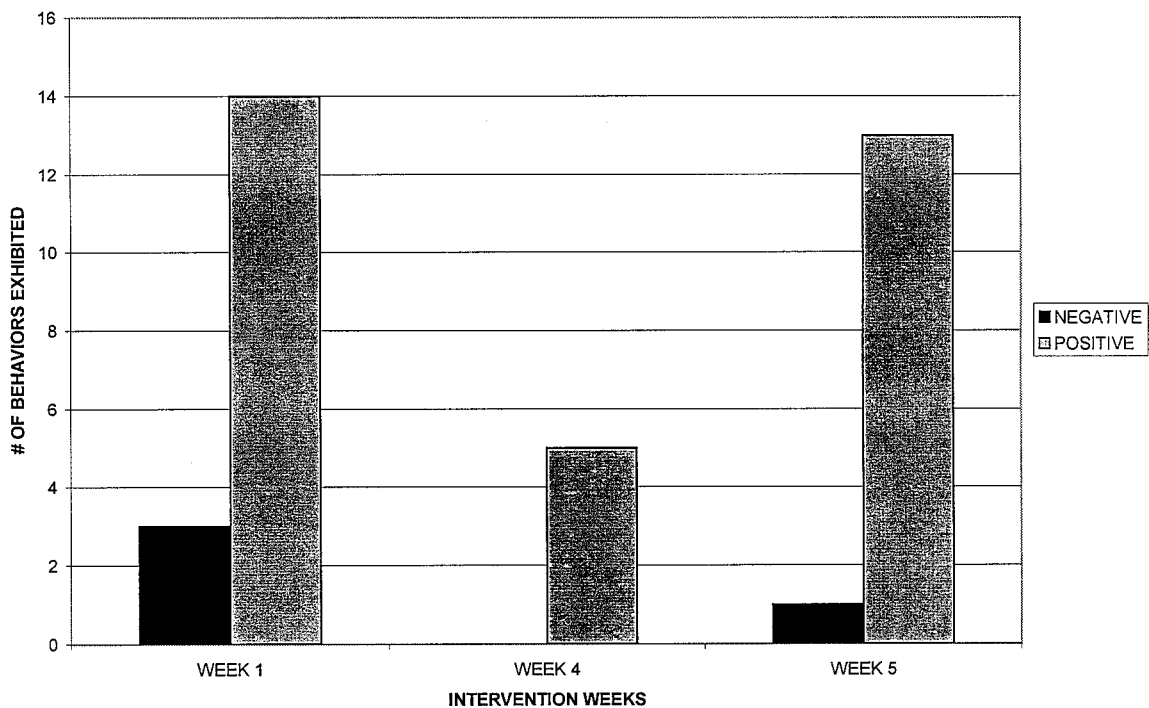
ET had a definite decrease in negative behaviors over the intervention period. He had 2 negative behaviors in week one, 1 negative behavior in week four, and no negative behaviors in week six. There was also a definite increase in his positive behaviors. He had 13 positive behaviors in week one, 17 positive behaviors in week four, and 19 positive behaviors in week six (see Figure 4.6).

FIGURE 4.6 - ET'S RESULTS



JW had a definite decrease in his negative behaviors over the intervention period. In week one, he had 3 negative behaviors. In week four, he had no negative behaviors. There are no results for week six because he did not bring his behavior chart back to school. However in week five, JW had 1 negative behavior. JW's positive behaviors were fairly inconsistent over the intervention period. He had 14 positive behaviors in week one, 5 positive behaviors in week four, and 13 positive behaviors in week five (see Figure 4.7).

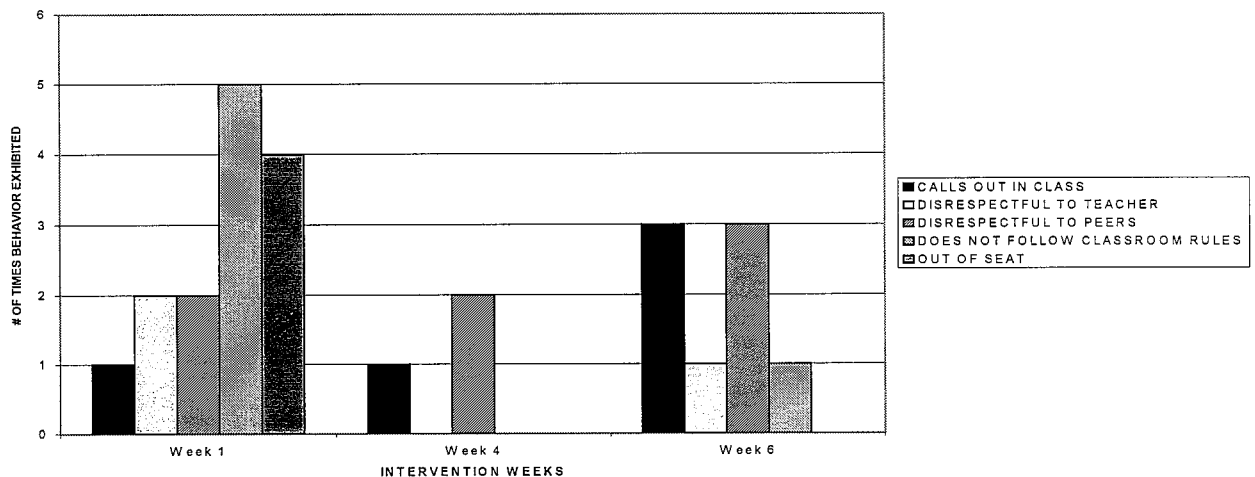
FIGURE 4.7 - JW'S RESULTS



Overall, three out of the six students in the class appear to show a decrease in negative behaviors over the intervention period. The remaining three students remained the same. There was no apparent increase in negative behaviors. Positive behaviors had slightly better results. Four out of the six students appeared to have an increase in positive behaviors. One student's positive behaviors stayed constant, and one student had a decrease in positive behaviors.

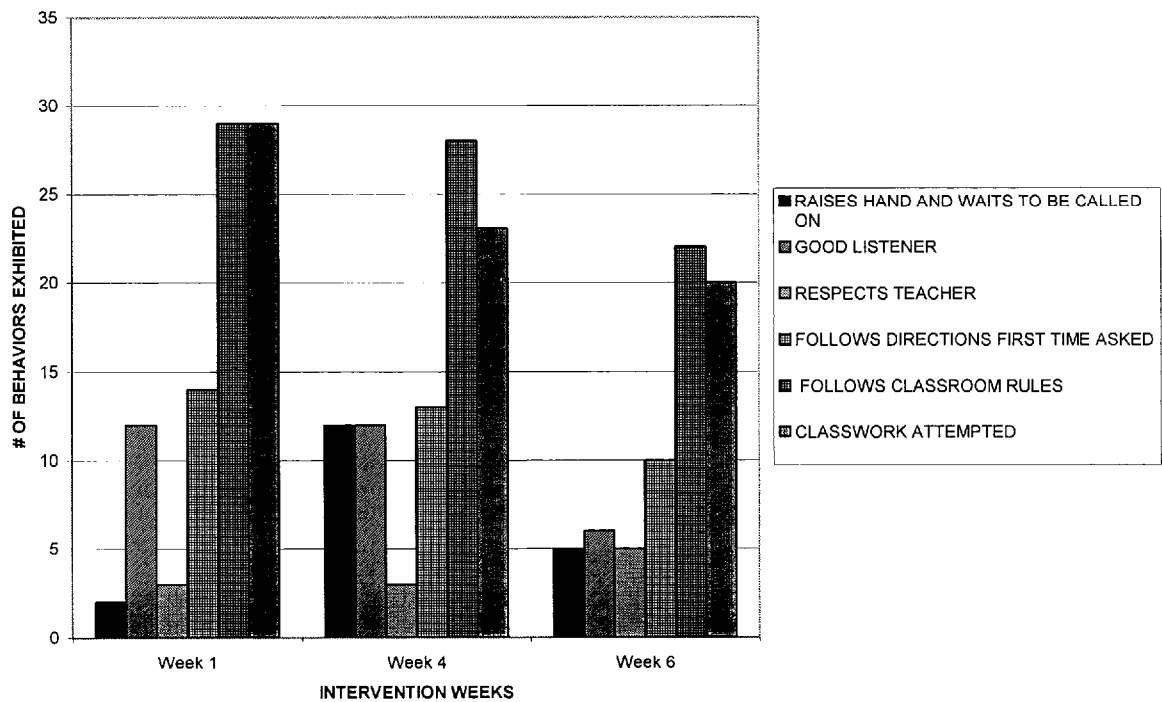
An analysis was done on each behavior, both positive and negative. The results are as follows. There were a total of nine negative behaviors analyzed. Two negative behaviors, refuses to attempt classwork and uses foul language, were not exhibited by any student during the entire six week intervention period. There were only two instances of not minding his/her own business and one instance of not being a good listener during the entire six week intervention. Of the remaining five negative behaviors, two behaviors, do not follow classroom rules and out of seat, had positive results of decreasing the behavior. Disrespectful to teacher slightly decreased over the intervention period. Disrespectful to peers and calls out in class increased slightly during the intervention period (see Figure 4.8).

FIGURE 4.8 - NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS



There were a total of seven positive behaviors analyzed. One behavior, ignores poor behavior of others, was exhibited only in two instances during the entire six-week intervention. Two behaviors, follows classroom rules and classwork attempted, appear to decrease slightly during the intervention period. The remaining four positive behaviors, raises hand and waits to be called on, good listener, respects teacher, and follows directions first time asked increased during the intervention (see Figure 4.9).

FIGURE 4.9 - POSITIVE BEHAVIORS

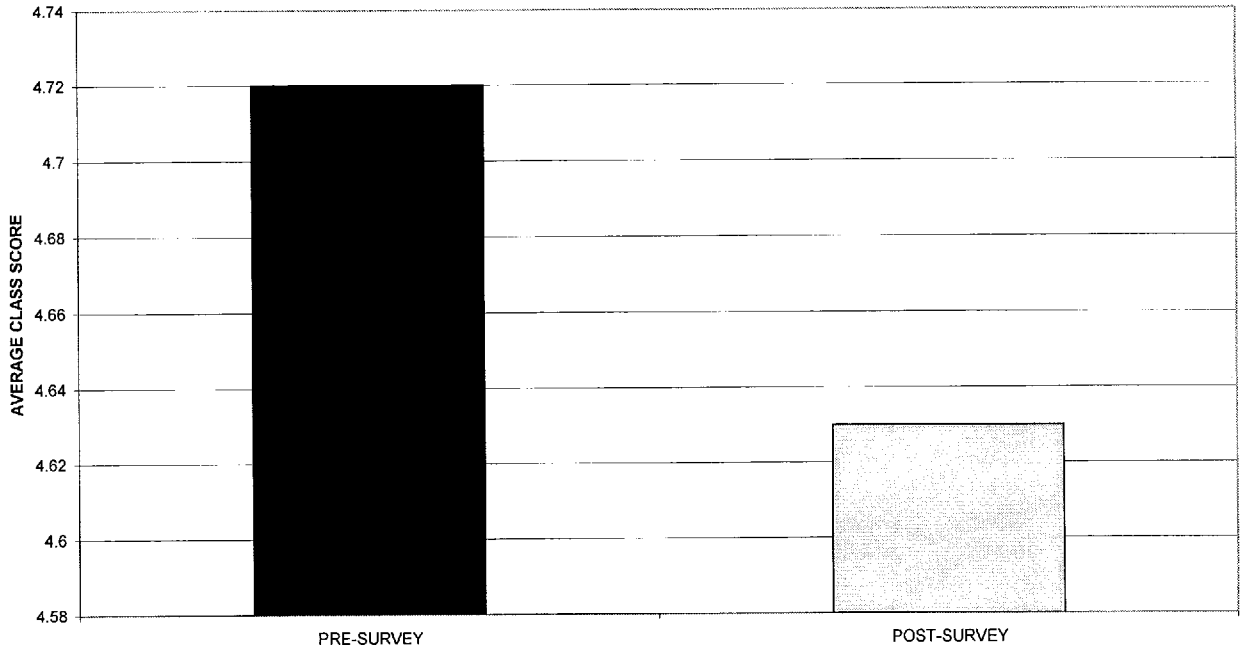


The teacher survey was given before the first week of the intervention and after the intervention was complete. The purpose of the survey was to see if the social skills taught in the classroom generalized to outside the classroom. It consisted of eleven statements, ten phrased in a positive manner, and one phrased in a negative manner. The positive statements included the student: raises his/her hand and waits to be called on, is a good listener, respects the teacher, respects other students, follow teacher's directions first time asked, follows classroom rules, attempts classwork/assignments, minds his/her own business, stays in his/her seat, and remains calm in a bad situation. The negative statement was the student uses foul language. Each statement was clarified for the teachers so they knew exactly what behaviors to look for. The teachers rated each student for each statement using a five point rating scale. The ratings were as follows: 2 = the behavior was never exhibited, 3 = the behavior was rarely exhibited, 4 = the behavior was sometimes exhibited, 5 = the behavior was almost always exhibited, and 6 = the behavior was always exhibited.

The surveys were analyzed to determine if the class as a whole generalized the behaviors outside the classroom, if each student generalized the behaviors outside the classroom, and to see which behaviors generalized outside the classroom. The results follow.

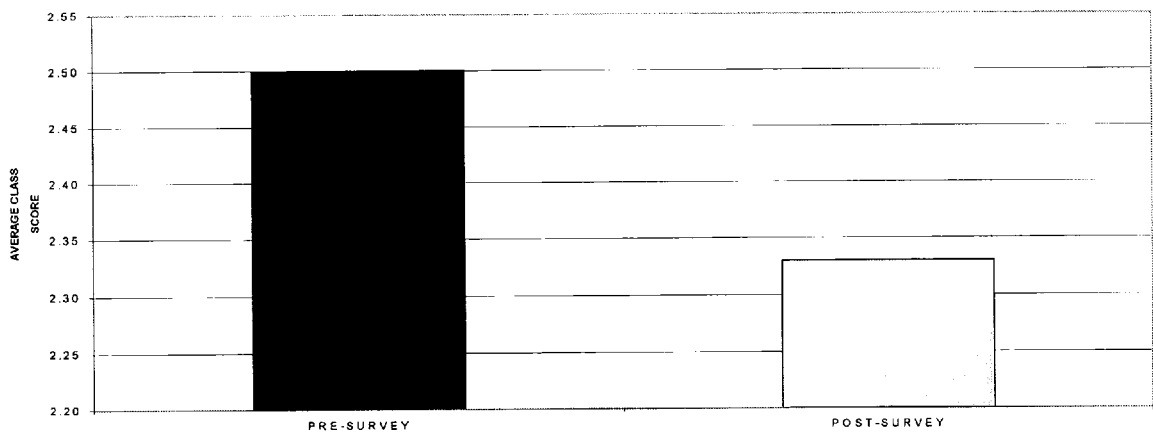
On the pre-survey, the class as a whole had an average score of 4.72, which included all positive statements. On the post-survey, the average decreased very slightly to 4.63. In both instances, the students were exhibiting the positive behaviors "sometimes" (see Figure 4.10).

FIGURE 4.10 - POSITIVE STATEMENTS



According to the pre-survey, the students received an average score of 2.5 for using foul language. The post-survey indicated that the students decreased their use of foul language. The average post test score was 2.33. This indicates that the students rarely to never use foul language (see Figure 4.11).

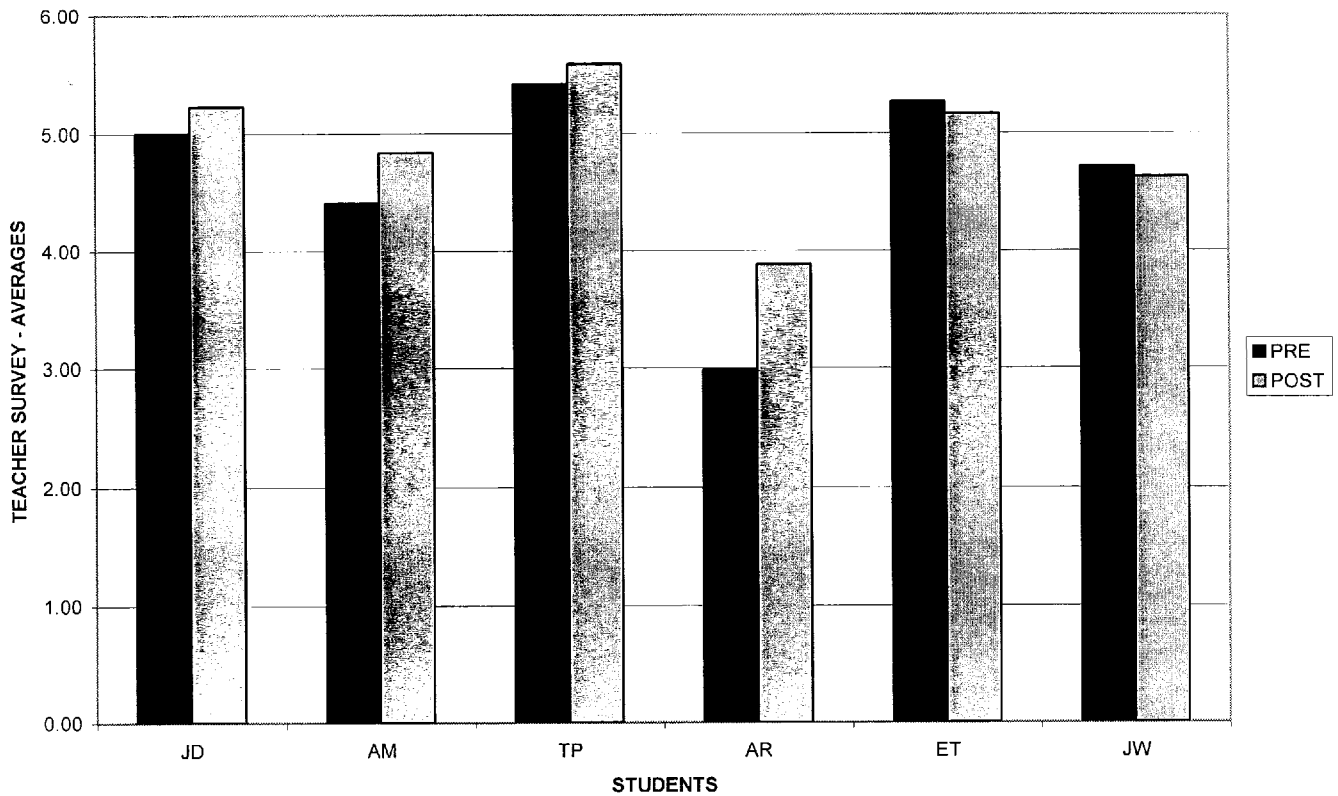
FIGURE 4.11 - NEGATIVE STATEMENT



The individual results for the positive statements are encouraging. Four of the six students increased their average from the pre-survey to the post-survey. JD increased from an average score of 5.00 to an average score of 5.23. This indicates that he went from almost always exhibiting the positive behaviors outside the classroom to a little more than almost always exhibiting the behaviors outside the classroom. AM increased his pre-survey average from a 4.41 to 4.84. He went from a little more than sometimes exhibiting the behaviors outside the classroom to closer to almost always exhibiting the behaviors outside the classroom. TP slightly increased her averages. She went from an average of 5.42 to an average of 5.58. She continues to more than almost always exhibit the positive behaviors outside the classroom. AR had the greatest increase, almost a full point. His pre-survey average was a 2.98, which means he was rarely exhibiting the positive behaviors outside the classroom. His post-survey average of 3.88 indicates that he is very close to sometimes exhibiting the behaviors outside the classroom. Two students decreased their scores slightly. ET had a pre-survey average of 5.27. His post-survey average was 5.17. This indicates that he continues to almost always exhibit positive behaviors outside the classroom. JW's averages also decreased. His pre-survey average was 4.72 and post-survey average was 4.63. This would indicate that JW is close to almost always exhibiting positive behaviors outside the classroom (see Figure 4.12).



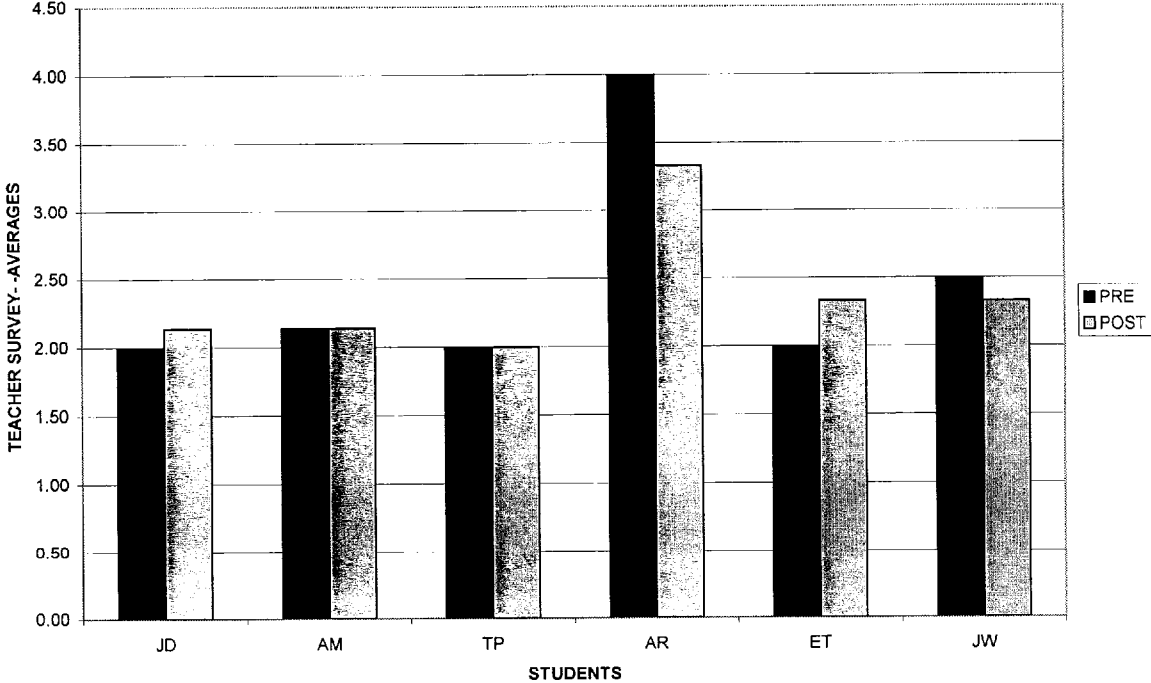
FIGURE 4.12 - CLASS AVERAGES - POSITIVE STATEMENT



The results for the negative statement, uses foul language, were sporadic. Two of the six students decreased their averages, two students' averages stayed the same, and two students increased their average from the pre-survey to the post survey. AR's average decreased his average from 4.00 to 3.33. This indicates that he went from sometimes using foul language to almost rarely using foul language. JW had a pre-survey average of 2.50, which decreased to 2.33 on the post-survey. He is rarely to almost never using foul language. AM and TP's pre and post-survey averages stayed the same, 2.14 and 2.00 respectively. AM is very close to never using foul language. TP never uses foul language. JD and ET slightly increased their use of foul language. JD had a pre-survey average of 2.00, which means he was never using foul language. The

post-survey average of 2.14 indicates that he used foul language, but very rarely. ET also went from a pre-survey average of 2.00, which means he was never using foul language, to a post-survey average of 2.33, which indicates that he used foul language, but very rarely (see figure 4.13).

FIGURE 4.13 - CLASS AVERAGES - NEGATIVE STATEMENT



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

This study was developed to test the effectiveness of a social skills program for six fifth grade, special education students in a self-contained classroom. The classroom teacher used the ACCEPTS social skills program to teach social skills over a six week period. Using a classroom behavior chart, a record was kept on each student to see if positive behaviors increased and negative behaviors decreased. Special area teachers were also surveyed before and after the intervention to see if the social skills learned generalized to outside of the classroom.

The results of the intervention showed that four of the six students had an increase in positive behaviors in the classroom. One student's positive behaviors stayed constant. The remaining student had a decrease of positive behaviors in the classroom. The results of the teacher surveys were very encouraging. Overall, the class remained constant. They used social skills outside of the classroom "sometimes". However, four of the six students increased their use of social skills outside of the classroom. Three students had only a slight increase. One student increased his use of positive social skills from rarely to sometimes. This was the greatest difference. This same student also had the greatest difference in the negative skill of "using foul language". He went from sometimes using foul language to almost rarely using it. One other student decreased his use of foul

language. Two students stayed the same, while two students slightly increased their use of foul language.

The present study had similar results to the research reviewed. Research has shown that social skills training programs that use a small group design over a long period of time will achieve positive results (McIntosh, Vaughn, and Zaragoza, 1991). The present study had both of these elements. Research also shows that students placed in full-time LD programs are less successful than students who receive part-time LD services or who are mainstreamed for part of the day (McIntosh, Vaughn, and Zaragoza, 1991). The students in the present study receive all academic instruction in the self-contained classroom. However, they receive instruction in special area subjects with all other fifth grade students. Therefore, they are outside of the classroom for 25% of their day. This could be an additional factor leading to the success of the intervention.

There is one area in which the present study and research differ. That area is the generalization of the skill to outside of the classroom. The research shows that although a social skills program may have positive results, behavior changes frequently do not generalize to natural settings (McIntosh, Vaughn, and Zaragoza, 1991). The present study found that more than one half of the students increased their use of positive social skills to outside of the classroom.

Several factors may have had an impact on this study. One factor was the absenteeism of one student and the suspension of another student. One student was absent for a total of six days during the study, which was 25% of the time. Another student was suspended from school for two days during week four and failed to bring in

his behavior chart during week six. Therefore, no results were reported for him during week six. In both instances, individual, as well as, class results could have been skewed.

During week six, there was no school on one day. This could have impacted the results for all students. For example, JD had an average of 18 positive behaviors in week one, 22 positive behaviors in week four, and only 15 behaviors in week six. If he had been in school an extra day, he may have met or exceeded the 22 positive behaviors he had in week four.

Some of the other factors that may have had an impact on the results were the time of the year of the study, a new student added to the class, and the objectivity of the person recording the behaviors. The present study was conducted at the beginning of the third marking period. The students were already adjusted to the routines and procedures of the classroom as well as the expectations of the classroom teacher. The results may have differed if the study had been conducted at the beginning of the school year. Whenever the routine of the students is interrupted, there is almost always a change in their behavior. Having a new student added to the classroom probably altered their behavior, therefore altering the results on the behavior chart. Lastly, there were two days during the study in which the classroom teacher was absent. During those days, the classroom aide tallied the students' behavior charts. Although the classroom teacher and aide are in agreement on what constitutes positive and negative behaviors, it is not known for sure if the classroom teacher would have produced the same tallies.

The implications of this study are great. If social skills are introduced and taught to students with disabilities at a young age, by the time they got to the middle and upper grades, they would have the skills necessary to develop appropriate relationships with

their teachers and peers and then in life outside of school. It was very apparent in this study that a direct instruction approach, drill and repetition, worked extremely well with learning disabled students. Infusing social skills into the curriculum for students with learning disabilities could be the best investment a school district could make for these students' futures.

Additional research could be conducted using a longer intervention period to see if the same results are found. Also, research could be done across grade levels. It would be interesting to see what impact starting a social skills program in the early elementary grades and continuing it each year would have on the social skills of students with learning disabilities.

This research study investigated the effectiveness of a social skills program both inside and outside of the classroom. Its purpose was to see if positive behaviors increased and negative behaviors decreased both inside and outside of the classroom. The results showed that overall, for the class, positive behaviors increased and negative behaviors decreased. Individual results varied. The implications of this are great. If we teach our students with learning disabilities the necessary social skills now, they will be able to take these skills outside of the school setting and successfully integrate into society.

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## Appendix A

WEEK OF:	FRIDAY 5/12/00	MONDAY 5/15/00	TUESDAY 5/16/00	WEDNESDAY 5/17/00	THURSDAY 5/18/00
<p><b>NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS</b></p> <p>calls out in class</p> <p>talks disrespectively</p> <p>ignores teacher direction</p> <p>improper class behavior (not following classroom rules)</p> <p>out of seat</p> <p>no homework</p> <p>refuses to do classwork</p> <p>uses foul language</p> <p>student did not mind his own business</p> <p>improper line behavior</p> <p>talks back to teacher</p> <p>is not a good listener</p> <p>form not signed</p> <p>chart not returned previous day</p>					
<p><b>POSITIVE BEHAVIORS</b></p> <p>raises hand and waits to be called on</p> <p>is a good listener</p> <p>respects teachers</p> <p>follows directions first time asked</p> <p>exhibits proper class behavior (follows classroom rules)</p> <p>homework handed in</p> <p>classwork done when directed</p> <p>student ignores poor behavior of others</p> <p>remained calm in a bad situation</p> <p>works quietly</p> <p>proper line behavior</p> <p>brought back form signed</p>					
<p>TEACHER SIGNATURE</p>					
<p>PARENT SIGNATURE</p>					

## Appendix B

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Section \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the following survey for the above named student. Each statement will be rated according to the following scale:

- 1 = Not Applicable
- 2 = Never
- 3 = Rarely
- 4 = Sometimes
- 5 = Almost Always
- 6 = Always

Circle the number for each statement that you feel best describes the student.

	N/A	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always
1. The student raises his/her hand and waits to be called on.	1	2	3	4	5 6
2. The student is a good listener (i.e. Makes eye contact with teacher/speaker, desk is clear, is paying attention to teacher/speaker, not fooling around).	1	2	3	4	5 6
3. The student respects the teacher (i.e. Does not roll eyes at teacher, is not sarcastic, does not use hand gestures).	1	2	3	4	5 6
4. The student respects other students (same	1	2	3	4	5 6

description as above).

5. The student follows teacher directions first time asked.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. The student follows classroom rules.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The student attempts classwork/assignments.	1	2	3	4	5	6
	N/A	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost	Always
	Always					
8. The student uses foul language.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. The student minds his/her own business (i.e. ignores what others are doing or saying)	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. The student stays in his/her seat.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. The student remains calm in a bad situation (i.e. does not get in the middle of a verbal or physical fight)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Subject taught \_\_\_\_\_