

RSE-TASC REPORTER

LOWER HUDSON REGIONAL SPECIAL EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT CENTER

Does Teaching Social Skills Really Work?

By Sara Fienup, RSE-TASC Behavior Specialist & Patti Slobogin, RSE-TASC Director

Long-term life outcome studies like the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health & Development Study (2011), in which 1,000 children in New Zealand have been followed from birth to age 38, demonstrate the critical importance of self-regulation and social skills in attaining positive academic, career and health outcomes. Wouldn't it be great if we could teach students these critical behavioral and social skills in the same planned and systematic way we teach academic skills? Well, we can, can't we? Isn't social skills instruction an evidence-based practice proven to produce positive social and academic outcomes for students?

That was our mindset as we prepared for this article, but as we reviewed the research on social skills instruction, a more nuanced picture emerged. In a "review of reviews", Maag (2006) looked at the outcomes of multiple meta-analytic studies of social skills instruction conducted between 1986 and 2003 and concluded that, "The state of social skills training with students with emotional behavioral disorders seems to range from dismal to guarded optimism". He noted many problems in the studies in the meta-analysis, including a wide range of activities included under the umbrella of "social skills instruction", the lack of valid outcome measures, and the lack of sound pedagogical principles, or good instruction, in many of the training programs.



In two more recent meta-analyses focused on school-based universal social skills instructional programs, however, Sklad et. al (2012) and Durlak et. al (2011) found a more positive picture. Both reviewed more recent studies and found large effect sizes (Cohen, 1988) for teaching social emotional skills in improving social-emotional skills. Sklad et. al also found moderate positive effects on academic achievement, prosocial behavior and positive self-image, while Durlak found a moderate effect on academic performance. The positive impacts on social skills were equally large at elementary and secondary schools.

Durlak et. al also examined the elements of the training programs that

produced better outcomes. They coded programs as to whether they included four recommended social skills training practices known as SAFE. SAFE stands for:

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What's Coming Up in 2016? Lower Hudson RSE-TASC Regional Trainings *What Works for Students with Disabilities*

Mark Your Calendar

School-Wide Systems

Transition

February

- CAN*DO 2 (By Invitation Only), 2/11
- Career Development and Occupational Studies Commencement Credential—Overview, 2/24
- CDOS Credential—Implementing Program Options, 2/24

March

- Transition Planning Tools and Resources, 3/7
- Student Directed IEPs (By Invitation Only), 2/9
- Promoting Self-Determination for the Transitioning Student, 3/29

April

- Transition Assessment and Planning for Students who have Multiple Disabilities, 4/26

May

- Student Directed IEPs (By Invitation Only), 5/13

Behavior & Discipline Supports

February

- PBIS Study Hall, 2/9
- PBIS Tier 2 Supports: Incorporating Student Self-Monitoring into CICO and SAIG, 2/24

March

- PBIS Coaches' Forum, 3/2
- PBIS Booster: Social/Behavior Lesson Plans, 3/17
- Function-Based Thinking: Making Sense of Challenging Behaviors, 3/29 or 3/30
- PBIS Forum for Administrators, 3/30
- PBIS Booster: Data Tools, 3/31

April

- Developing and Monitoring Social and Behavioral Goals for Preschoolers, 4/19
- PBIS Coaches' Forum for Special Topics, 4/25

May

- PBIS Booster: Data-Based Decision Making, 5/3
- PBIS Regional Forum—Restorative Relationships with Students Who Display Challenging Behavior, 5/17
- PBIS Coaches' Forum, 5/24

Individualized Educational Planning and the CSE Process

February

- CSE Part 2: Next Steps, 2/29

March

- Development and Measurement of Effective IEP Goals (2-Day workshop), 3/2 and 3/31 ***WAIT LIST***

April

- Testing Accommodations, 4/18

May

- New CPSE/CSE Chairperson Training (3-Day workshop), 5/2, 5/9 and 5/16 ***WAIT LIST***

Instructional Practices

February

- Explicit Direct Instruction: Study Hall, 2/9
- Explicit Direct Instruction: Study Hall, 2/10
- Research-Based Comprehension Strategies for Struggling Readers, 2/29

March

- Improving the Sentence: Research Based Writing Strategies for Struggling Students, 3/1 ***WAIT LIST***
- Explicit Direct Instruction: Study Hall, 3/8
- Explicit Direct Instruction: Study Hall, 3/15

April

- Explicit Direct Instruction: Study Hall, 4/18

Leadership

February

- CPSE Colloquium, 2/26

April

- CSE Roundtable, 4/20

May

- Special Education for Principals, 5/17

To Register for our Regional Workshops

Please go to www.pnwbores.org/catalog to register online. Click on the down arrow next to the box that says "Click one or more options...", then select RSE-TASC and click "Search". Scroll down the webpage until you see the workshop in which you are interested and then click on its name to see details and enroll.

Community Events

- **Integrated Co-Teaching for English Language Learners at Orange-Ulster BOCES**; 2/5/16, HVRBERN, www.swboces.org/support.cfm
- **Thinking Maps®: Path to Proficiency for Addressing Disproportionate Suspension Rates: Cultural Responsiveness and Alternatives to Suspension (4-Part Series)**; TAC-D at NYU, https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/center/technical_assistance/program/disproportionality/events
- **2/5/16—What Are We Doing To Address Suspensions?: Assessing Ourselves & Alternatives to Suspension 101**
- **3/24/16—Alternatives to Suspension 102**
- **5/3/16—Taking Action to Support our Students**
- **Don't Hit Send: Helping Adolescents Understand the Impact of Social Media**; 2/8/16, SW BOCES, www.swboces.org/support.cfm
- **iPads for Special Education Classrooms**; 2/10/16, SWBOCES, www.swboces.org/support.cfm
- **Disciplining Today's Student: How to Maintain Discipline and Dignity**; begins 2/15/16, The Hudson River Teacher Center, www.pnwbooces.org/catalog
- **Relationship and Sexuality Issues for People with Developmental Disabilities**; 2/10/16, Rockland BOCES
- **and the Rockland Transition Consortium, dkitz@rboces.org**
- **Simple Solutions for Engaging Struggling Boys: From Failure to Success in the Secondary Classroom**; 2/23/16, SWBOCES, www.swboces.org/support.cfm
- **Differentiated Instruction in Today's Schools**; begins 2/25/16, The Hudson River Teacher Center, www.pnwbooces.org/catalog
- **The Common Core and RTI: Quality Audit for School Leaders**; 2/26/16, SW BOCES, www.swboces.org/support.cfm
- **AHA's Spring Conference: Issues in Independent Living for Adolescents & Adults on the Autism Spectrum**, Adelphi University, www.ahany.org/events/aha-conferences/

School Tool: CASEL.org



The mission of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is "to help make evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) an integral part of education" and "to ensure all students become

knowledgeable, responsible, caring and contributing members of society." They support educators in this work in multiple ways. Click on the following to explore their resources:

- ♦ The CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning programs at www.casel.org/ guide identifies and rates well

-designed, evidence-based SEL programs

- ♦ Brief on SEL and bullying preventions: www.casel.org/bullying/
- ♦ Videos of students, educators and researchers speaking about SEL: www.casel.org/videos/

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- ♦ Sequenced step-by-step training approach;
- ♦ Active forms of learning, e.g., role-playing or behavioral rehearsal;
- ♦ Focused teaching of social or personal skills; and
- ♦ Explicit learning goals.

A large effect size was found for programs with these elements.

These findings align with the research showing that teaching students social and behavioral skills within a 3-tiered framework such as School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

leads to improved outcomes such as increases in attendance and achievement and reductions in office discipline referrals and suspensions (see, for example, Sugai & Horner, 2002). PBIS emphasizes the direct teaching of skills essential to school success, such as following classroom routines, following teacher expectations, and dealing with peer and adult conflict. What does social skills training look like integrated into a PBIS service delivery model?

At the Universal/Tier 1 Level, school-wide expected behaviors are

defined and taught to all students in the setting in which the behaviors occur (i.e., classroom, cafeteria, hallway, etc.). Lessons take 20-30 minutes per week to teach and involve teacher modeling, student role-play, and teacher feedback (Netzel & Eber, 2003). Students are positively and explicitly acknowledged for engaging in expected behaviors. For students identified for Tier 2 intervention based on discipline data, teacher referral, or screening measures, the same expectations

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and skills are re-taught in small groups and students are positively acknowledged through a standardized daily progress report card. For students identified for Tier 3 interventions through discipline data, teacher referral, screening measures, or failure to make progress at Tier 2, behaviors are taught and acknowledged through an individualized behavior support plan.

So, yes! Teaching social skills does work when done well. For educators interested in learning more about specific social skills training programs,

please see our School Tool on page 3. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning has a wealth of resources for moving forward.

References

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- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2002). The evolution of discipline practices: School-wide positive behavior supports. *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*, 24, 23-50.

Bright Spot!

Our Bright Spot this month comes from Gina Cerone at Ardsley High School.

What student outcome was achieved?

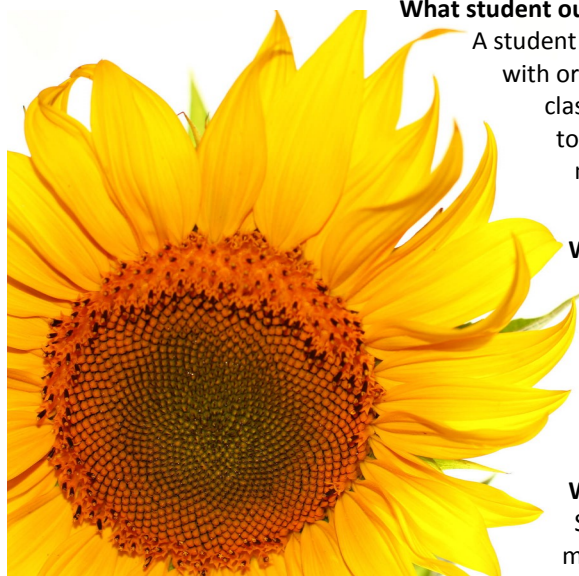
A student was struggling academically in her chemistry class because of challenges with organization, notetaking, writing down homework assignments, and getting to class on time. Then she started keeping a weekly chart of what she wanted to improve and what she was accomplishing. Both she and her teacher noted major improvements in organization, effort and participation in the class, resulting in both better grades and a more positive attitude towards class!

What instructional practice or systemic change supported this student success?

After attending the RSE-TASC training on Student-Directed IEPs, Gina decided to engage this student in a student-directed IEP process. She worked with the student to help her understand her IEP goals and gave her a binder with a checklist for tracking her own progress. This simple process of engaging the student in monitoring her own progress produced tremendous results.

What can we learn from this?

Student self-regulation, or the process of engaging students in setting and monitoring their own progress towards meaningful goals, produces greater academic and behavioral success.



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