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TEACHING PRO-SOCIAL SKILLS TO HELP YOUNG CHILDREN AT RISK TO  
SUCCEED IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

By  
Susan M. Weston

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of the Master of Arts in  
Teaching Degree of Special Education of  
The Graduate School  
At  
Rowan University  
May 2005

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

Date approved June 10, 2005



## ABSTRACT

Susan Weston

PROSOCIAL SKILLS INTERVENTION AMONG REGULAR EDUCATION PRE-K  
STUDENTS AT VALLEY PARK SCHOOL

2005

Dr. Mian Wang

Master of Arts in Special Education

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the pro-social skills program that the Valley Park Pre-K students have been exposed to. Ten typically developing 4-year-olds participated in this research study. A review of observations revealed that this pro-social skills program reduced problem behavior. These children greatly improved in their social skills. They were extremely cooperative and attentive during the teaching activities and lessons. They all willingly participated and were very interested in partaking in the games. I believe that this was a very successful program and could be implemented and integrated in other preschool classrooms and curriculums.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

Most early childhood educators want to give their young students the education, patience, and love that they need and deserve to function and mature into young adults. Although my school has a Pre-K curriculum, it doesn't have an intense, specific, pro-social skills training program or curriculum with it. Although the program can be revised, it is important in the meantime to provide the students with the necessary skills and tools they will need to be socially accepted.

Although conventional wisdom suggests that pre-schoolers should be learning things in school such as pre-academic skills, studies have shown that social competence is the ultimate goal of preschool educational services (Pohlman & McWilliam, 1999). It is noted that the problem of preschoolers is not their pre-academic skill level, but how malleable is their social competence and how might improved social competence affect their developmental levels.

Teaching prosocial skills in an integral part of preschool learning and development. There is a general assumption that a child's lack of social competence will greatly affect his or her life down the road. The younger the children learn the prosocial skills training, the better off they will be.

Skillstreaming is a teaching process that focuses on four direct principles of learning. These learning procedures-modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and generalization are used to teach appropriate prosocial behaviors. A skillstreaming



model makes the assumption that the learner has a deficit in social skills. This theory then enables the teacher to use proactive instruction and teach desirable skills. It's a vicious cycle because if the child has a deficit in their social skills, they are more likely to be a big behavior problem. That is why the teaching of prosocial skills is extremely beneficial to young children.

“Problem behaviors” are defined as behaviors that are inappropriate and socially unacceptable. There is a set of prevention and intervention strategies that derive from functional behavior assessment (FBA) and positive behavior support (PBS). These prevention strategies which will stop students' inappropriate behavior from occurring have increasingly become more popular practice over the last decade due to its emphasis in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). It is recommended in IDEA that the use of FBA is preferable to other behavior assessment and intervention techniques in the process of forming a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) to support and help children with severe and challenging behavior.

The key difference between traditional discipline and PBS practice sheds light on the emphasis of teaching new and appropriate social skills as the basis for intervention. It is about manipulating the student's environment in a positive manner so that he or she will be able to succeed in the classroom. PBS is also created and intended for the individual needs of the child. FBA goes hand in hand with the PBS. The purpose of FBA is to detect why the inappropriate behaviors occur and how to remedy them with different approaches and interventions.

## Significance of the Study

Rather than rewriting the entire curriculum, it is hoped that these new activities will help the children to acquire the appropriate skills necessary in order to function appropriately in school, at home, and in public. There are various facets to the features of social skills Interventions for preschoolers. There is prompting, and rehearsal of target behavior, play-related activities, free-play generalization, reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, modeling of specific skills, storytelling, direct instruction of social skills, and the imitation of appropriate behaviors.

There have been many different studies performed on children with social skills deficits and how it affects them in the classroom. Teachers appear to be less positive than parents about the outcomes from the social skills intervention. It is important to take different rater's perspectives into consideration when interpreting changes in a child's social behavior. The major intervention strategies that were reported in the studies are: modeling, play-related activities, rehearsal/practice, and prompting.

According to Storey and Danko (1994), it cannot be assumed that social skill intervention will be generalized to non-trained students. General case programming will be necessary to facilitate the generalization of social skills interventions.

Through the follow-up of social skills instructions for preschoolers with disabilities, 5 different skills were taught such as: getting a friend's attention, sharing, sharing requests, play organizers, and compliments. They pointed out the acquisition of social skills will positively affect the person's quality of life,

According to Rafferty, Piscitelli, and Boettcher (2003), preschoolers with less severe disabilities did not make greater gains in inclusion settings. Children with more severe disabilities did not make greater gains in segregated settings. In another study that examined how to train developmentally delayed preschoolers to perform specific social behaviors, they provided educators a useful social skills program for developmentally delayed preschoolers. It is found that students in the control group did not improve their social skills significantly in comparison with those in the treatment group who did. This study indicates the importance of social skill train that will lead to decrease of inappropriate behavior of preschool children with disabilities, and increase of positive social interactions.

In addition, a number of studies have been done on mainstreaming and integration. There have also been studies on examining the effects of integration on child development and social interactions among preschoolers with disabilities. In Craig's and McWilliam's (2002) study that focused on the benefits of full inclusion and integrated therapy in a preschool learning environment, it was found that children 's goals and objectives are related to social competence. Therefore, social competence can be a framework for all therapy goals and services.

#### Purpose of the Study

It is assumed that the Pre-K students at Valley Park School do enjoy school, their teacher, and learning activities. It is further assumed that the children will be cooperative attentive in order to get the appropriate training which will lead to an improvement in their social skills.

Although it is extremely difficult to hold the attention span of children of this age

and assess their progress, it is assumed that they will cooperate, and I will use appropriate teaching, tools, and methods to perform this study. The success of the study will depend on the cooperation, participation, and the patience of the children in this study. The children will be in an extremely rigid and intense daily prosocial skills lessons and activities. The basic learning outcomes and objectives that I will be focusing on are: listening, cooperating, improving peer relations, and following directions.

The purpose of this study is to provide Valley Park students with the necessary Pro-social skills to help them interact better with their peers, teachers, and families. The Objective of the research is to determine the effectiveness of implementing a pro-social Skill program in the regular education pre-K classroom.

The scope of this study is limited to Pre-K students at Valley Park Elementary School. Although older students could benefit from this program at a higher level, I believe it is most crucial for the younger children to learn these social skills at a young age. The brevity, lack of depth and scope, and the non-random sample of this study limits its generalization, and the results cannot be assumed to apply to a larger or different population.

#### Research Questions

1. Will Pre-K students improve their social skills as a result of participation in the pro-social skills program?
2. Does learning pro-social skills lead to the decrease of students' problem behaviors?

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Children who have learned appropriate social skills have more advantages over children who have not learned basic social skills. Social readiness skills will help children learn and be ready for school. Appropriate social behaviors are positively correlated with academic performance. Children learn appropriate and inappropriate social skills from many different places and from many different people. A caregiver's response to a child's inappropriate behavior is a big predictor of that child's future misbehavior. In the following sections, I will focus the literature review on the three specific topics: (a) Issues on social skill development, (b) overview of pre-social skill training, and (c) an overview of functional behavior assessment and positive behavior support.

#### Social Skill Development

A number of studies have been done over the years showing that children who have communication and language deficits and delays have a great difficulty with social interactions with their peers. This then could possibly turn into a severe behavior problem when a student's needs and wants are not being understood or met. Craig-Unkefer and Kaiser (2002) reported the results of a study that examined the effects of a three-Component intervention on the social-communicative interactions of a few pre-school Children. The children were taught to plan their play, use conversational social interaction strategies, and self-evaluate their play interactions. This study revealed

that the language, communication, play, and behavior had significantly improved after this special training.

### *Social Skills*

Storey and Danko (1994) reported that teacher-directed token systems were an effective social skills intervention program. This study dealt with the generalization of social skills interventions for pre-schoolers. The five intervention strategies included getting your friend's attention, sharing, share requests, play organizers, and compliments. The results of this study showed that it can not be assumed that social skill intervention effects will generalize to non-trained situations.

Storey and Danko (1992) assumed that the acquisition of appropriate social skills will positively affect a child's quality of life, although this assumption has received little or no empirically proven data. Their study provided that social behavior changes brought by peer-mediated interventions may generalize to new social contexts.

### *Interventions*

Rafferty, Piscitelli, and Boettcher (2003) discovered that a planned intervention designed to promote social interactions had a significant impact on language development, but not on other learning outcomes. An interaction was, however, found for a planned intervention and social competence. Their study discovered that social competence among pre-schoolers in an integrated versus segregated settings did not differentiate between social skills and problem behaviors.

Vaughn et al. (2003) conducted a study between 1975 and 1999 on social skills interventions for young children. Positive outcomes were associated with a variety of interventions, such as modeling, play-related activities, rehearsal/practice, and

prompting. There were basic social skills interactions training to pre-schoolers on promoting play and friend interactions. These are a few features of social skills interventions for preschoolers: rehearsal of target behaviors, play-related activities, free-play generalization, reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, modeling of specific social skills, storytelling, direct instruction of social skills, and imitation of appropriate behaviors. This study revealed that educators and children will benefit from this type of a social skills intervention program because it can connect with their early childhood programs.

Matson, Fee, and Coe (1991) conducted a study on implementing a social skills training program for 4 and 5- year olds in a free play situation. The types of instructions, strategies, and methods were direct instruction, modeling, and behavioral rehearsal with teacher prompts. The authors targeted specific behaviors such as greetings and asking to see a toy. Inappropriate social behaviors were tantrums, aggression, and grabbing toys. Appropriate social behavior was taught through puppets, peer modeling, role playing, and instructions.

Cited in Pohlman's and McWilliam's (1999) study, Guralnick states that, "gains in cognitive, motor, and language development are important correlates of improved social competence," (1990, p. 87). Some educators and researchers believe that social competence should be the framework for conceptualizing goals in early childhood education.

Unfortunately, children with language or motor delays can have potential difficulties in the social domain. Odom and Ogwawa (1992,) proposed that "facility and verbal communication and facility in play are two classes of social

competence.” (p. 467) In other words, if a child is unable to communicate or has limited mobility, then he or she will probably have difficulty with social activities. The final conclusion of this study was that developmental level is related to social competence.

#### An Overview of Prosocial Skill Training

Cited in McGinnis and Goldstein’s (2003) study, Walker (1982) explain, “parenting practices related to prosocial behavior include appropriate and fair discipline, sufficient supervision, involvement in the child’s life, an attitude of support, and the ability to resolve conflicts and handle crises in the family.” (p. 212) Teaching pro-social skills at school is extremely important; however, a parent is such a crucial role model to our youth of today.

Prosocial skill training is extremely important to enforce appropriate social skills and discourage inappropriate social skills. According to Allen and Marotz (2000) children develop at different rates with their social, language, and cognitive skills. As children grow, their friendships become more complex and more important according to Hartup (1983).

Young children in preschool, pre-k, and kindergarten are expected to know and do a lot nowadays. They need to be attentive, pay attention, sit still, listen, transition well, play cooperatively, and follow instructions given by the teacher. The problem with this is that not all children are given these specific experiences and opportunities at home. Chan and Rueda (1979) state that there is an assumption that all children enter school with the same values. Unfortunately, some children have had prior teaching and schooling, and some have not.



Very young children can benefit from prosocial skill training. Spivack and Shure (1974) discovered that 4 and 5 year olds can be taught to identify alternative problem solutions, anticipate consequences, and use other problem solving skills to better themselves socially.

Skillstreaming is a strategy that encompasses 4 direct instruction techniques of learning: modeling, role-playing performance feedback, and generalization. This type of behavior management strategy focuses on the proactive instruction, instead of having to redirect a child's inappropriate behavior. It is pertinent to teach socially appropriate skills, rather than punish them for negative behavior.

According to Cox and Gunn, (1980) there are many reasons why children have such a difficult time learning appropriate social skills. There is a lack of knowledge, insufficient practice, insufficient reinforcement, and unusual emotional reactions.

Positive behavioral support planning is developed as a comprehensive intervention plan to meet the behavioral needs of each individual child. The educator needs to teach a replacement skill which will be socially acceptable and used academically and for coping. It would be great for everyone to be on the same page about social skills and problem-solving training.

There are many points that are important to the social skills training for effective instruction. There is the general teaching skills, a knowledge and understanding of skillstreaming procedures and knowing the skills in managing behavior problems. The instructor needs to remain positive and encouraging and have a cultural understanding of the group of students.

In addition to social perceptions of today, Dodge (1983) offers a model for

processing social information that is important in teaching the social skills to young children. This model includes encoding relevant information, applying relevant meanings, accessing a response, evaluating a response, and enacting a response.

Hibbert and Sprinthall (1995) designed a research study to promote social and emotional development among pre-schoolers. Their research provided important information such as the necessity to have a safe and secure environment for children. Under this special social skills training program these children made significant gains in the social, emotional, and cognitive domains. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to provide positive social interactions among students and their peers. Teachers who have the ability to integrate social and emotional skill development directly into their curriculum activities enhance the psychological development of children placed in their classrooms.

**An Overview of Functional Behavior Assessment and Positive Behavior Support**  
Functional Behavior assessment and positive behavioral support are teaching strategies and techniques that are used to manage extremely challenging behaviors. This type of behavior management model has been around for years, but it has become more prevalent due to the Individuals with disabilities act (IDEA) of 1997. The whole basis for this type of treatment is to provide positive educational outcomes for the students.

There is another facet of the FBA and PBS which is the behavioral intervention plan (BIP). A BIP is necessary if the student's placement has been changed. Because of all of the changing laws and regulations, we are still unsure if districts will continue the FBA without a federal law to enforce that.

Before FBA, PBS, and BIP there was a traditional method of discipline. Teachers used traditional consequences based on behavior-modification plans which just used rewards and punishments to discipline the students inappropriate behavior. PBS is a collaborative effort, not just involving what is happening in the classroom. FBA is used in conjunction with the PBS to determine why the child is acting a certain way and then in turn will be able to help to develop an appropriate and effective intervention and strategy.

The main reasons why students' act out in a negative way is increased attention, escape or avoidance, and sensory stimulation. There are various assessment methods used for FBA's like interview, direct observation, and functional analysis.

There is a ten step guide and procedures for analyzing FBA's. First the severity of the problem needs to be addressed. Secondly, the target behavior needs to be defined. The next step is to collect data about the inappropriate behavior. Then, the next step is to analyze the given and collected data. The fifth step is to create a reason why you think that the behavior is occurring. The next step is to test your guess about the function of the behavior. The next step is to create a behavioral intervention plan and try it. The next step is to monitor the implementation of the plan. The ninth step is to assess the effectiveness of the behavior plan. The last step is to change behavior intervention plan.

There have been many studies on how effective FBA is in the classroom. Results proved that 12/14 students improved in their social skills. Problem behaviors were lessened to almost 0/7 studies. The overall consensus is that FBA interventions improved students behaviors and social skills.

## Summary of Literature Review

Research has shown that there are many different types of models and styles of pro-social skills training programs. Many of them have similarities and familiar characteristics. This research shows that one specific program is not necessarily better than the other. Like Storey and Danko (1995), I believe that this is because you can pick and choose the best parts of each and create your own. Learning appropriate social skills is an extremely integral part of early childhood education and curriculum. Learning social skills will benefit the child for the rest of his life. Cooperating, sharing, communicating, manners, and patience are all characteristics that adults are expected to have in today's society. Through various activities and exercises, hopefully these skills will be learned, developed, and used. By indicating both the desired behaviors and learning outcomes, the results of this study should provide a firm basis for a useful and beneficial pro-social skills program implementation in the regular Pre-K classroom.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### Samples

The study focused on two typically developing 4 year-old children who have pro-social skills deficits. They were selected by the researcher of this study who teaches them in an inclusion classroom. The boy and girl have similar behavior issues such as not listening (academic, cooperation, peer relations), not following directions (not completing tasks), and interrupts inappropriately (under inappropriate circumstances).

Mark is a four year old boy who seems to be very emotionally needy at times. He is an only child and appears to have very sudden mood swings. He is either very cooperative and happy one minute, and angry and uncooperative the next. He is learning to observe the class and school rules. Mark's skill level with cooperating with others is emerging. He can be very impatient at times. So he has a difficult time with postponing and delaying his own personal needs in the classroom. Sometimes he becomes confused with changes in the routine and his environment. Mark is extremely fidgety and inattentive during circle time. He is always rushing to be first.

Suzy is a four year old girl who is extremely talkative and has difficulty of listening and following directions. She has an extremely short attention span and can barely sit still during circle time. She is always rushing to be finished first. Sometimes she can be disrespectful and has to have the last word in. I am worried about her academic future because of her deficit in social skills. She is very sociable, however, the inappropriate behavior is impeding her learning process.

## Settings

The town of Pennsville is located in Salem County right before the Delaware Memorial Bridge. It is a small, blue collar town. The budget has not passed in Pennsville for over 15 years. Valley Park Elementary School is one of three elementary schools in the Pennsville School District. It is the only school with the special education children. Valley Park School is also the only school with the Pre-School/Pre-K Program as well. The school has approximately 475 students and 35 staff members, and it serves students from Pre-K to fifth grade.

## Procedure and Measures

Various observations were conducted focusing on the children's target behaviors for a few weeks to get the baseline data. I used anecdotal recording method to gather observation notes. I also used the scatter plot and the ABC chart (i.e., antecedent, behavior, consequence-recording form). In terms of the baseline behavior data, I made the hypothesis statements, and created the competing behavior model.

Next, I implemented a basic daily pro-social skills training program for the students and hope to see an improvement on their appropriate behavior and a decrease on their inappropriate behavior. The skills of the skillstreaming that I will choose for my interventions are : listens (academically, cooperation, peer relations). The skills for instructions are Skill 1 (Listening) and Skill 8 (ignoring). Another skill I would like to work on is: Follows directions and completes tasks (academic, self-control, cooperation). The skills for instruction are Skill 9 (asking a question), Skill 10 (following directions) and skill 11 (trying when it's hard). The last skill that I would like to work on is

interrupting inappropriately (self-control, academic, assertion). The skill for instruction is skill 12 (interrupting) and skill 35 (knowing when to tell).

These skills can be used as the replacement behaviors of the students' problem behaviors. For skill 1 (listening) I will teach them the three steps for listening: to look, stay still, and think. I will give them verbal cues like "Do you have your listening ears on?" For skill 8 (ignoring) I will teach them the 3 steps for ignoring: look away, close your ears, and be quiet. For skill 9 (asking a question) I will teach them 4 steps: what to ask? Whom to ask? When to ask? Ask. I will model certain questions for them. For skill 10 (following directions) I will teach them the 4 steps: listen, think about it, ask if needed, do it. I will only give them 1 or 2 step directions to follow. For skill 11 (trying when it's hard) I will teach them the 3 steps: stop, and think, say "it's hard, but I'll try", try it. I will make their tasks practical and feasible to complete. For skill 12 (interrupting) I will teach them the 4 steps: decide if you need to, walk to the person, wait, and say "excuse me". Teach an emergency versus a non-emergency. For skill 35 (knowing when to tell) I will teach them the 3 steps: decide if someone will get hurt, whom should you tell? Do it. Discuss different types of thing that cause hurt to others.

This is how the intervention plan will be carried out. Each week I will work on a different skill. I will teach them for 15 minutes each day and let them practice the skill for 15 minutes each day. That is a total of 30 minutes per day. There are only at school for 2 hours and 30 minutes each day. I will be using a variety of positive reinforcements. (material-tangible: stickers, candy, happy faces, awards.) (activities-extra free play, playing with special toy, extra outside play) (social reinforcers-nonverbal-smiling-high five, thumbs up) (verbal-good listening, good thinking, wow!) For skill 1 (listening)

they will play Simon Says. For skill 8 (ignoring) I will walk around the room and try to distract the kids while they work independently at their work stations. For skill 9 (asking a question) we will practice asking questions in a game format. I will make a statement and they will have to turn it into a question. For skill 10 (following directions) we will play a treasure hunt game and read the book *Strega Nona* and discuss it. For skill 11 (trying when it's hard) we will read *The Little Engine That Could* and discuss it. For skill 12 (interrupting) I will provide pictures of a variety of situations and have them put the pictures into different categories. "do not interrupt, ok to interrupt, and emergency." For skill 35 (knowing when to tell) we will develop a list of common situation, using pictures and as a class decide id children should tell or try to solve the problem themselves.

#### Data Analysis

The single case-study design was used in this study. For the purpose of examining intervention effectiveness, the researcher compared the baseline data with the post-intervention data. The line graph method was used to present the comparison between baseline and intervention data. In addition, the ratios of the target behaviors change between the two time periods were computed to determine overall effectiveness.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The skill-streaming program focuses on 4 direct instruction principles of learning. The teaching methods, strategies, and procedures used were: modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and generalization. These were used to teach 3 socially appropriate pro-social skills in the classroom and to decreased inappropriate behavior in the classroom. These skills were not only beneficial for academic reasons but for sports and daily life skills as well. These procedures taught the children appropriate pro-social behaviors. This was an extremely intense, planned, and systematic instruction. Teaching these appropriate social skills to the children was a valuable intervention which helped them to master daily routines, solve interpersonal conflicts, and deal effectively with emotions. There was an inviting learning climate and positive behavioral support planning.

As the facilitator of the pro-social skills training program I had many responsibilities. I had the general teaching of the skills. Next, was the knowledge of skill-streaming. Then, there was the management of the group and having the cultural understanding and awareness of the children and their families.

The assessment tools used were: direct observations, ABC, skill checklists, rubrics, and scatterplots. The methods of instruction were: prompting, encouraging, reassuring, and rewarding. Each lesson and activity was no longer than 20 minutes for pre-k students. Their attention span is not that long at such a young age. I had performed large-group instruction, small-group instruction, and individual instruction.

There is a 9 step teaching progress to follow when teaching pro-social skills. Step 1 is to define the skill. Step 2 is to model the skill. Step 3 is to establish the skill. Step 4 is to select the first role player. Step 5 is to set up the role play. Step 6 is to conduct the role play. Step 7 is to provide performance feedback. Step 8 is to assign skill homework. Finally Step 9 is to select the next role player.

It was found that the prosocial skills program definitely benefited the pre-k students at Valley Park School. There was visible increase in appropriate behaviors and a significant decrease in the inappropriate behaviors. It is noted that the children were more attentive, less distracted, and they interrupted less as a result of the teaching of prosocial skills. In addition, it was assumed that some children who exhibit problem behaviors lack certain social skills prior to the program. The prosocial skills training resulted in a decrease of a few problem behaviors in the classroom.

#### Effectiveness of Social Skill Training

The class as a whole was more cooperative, patient, and followed the classroom rules and routine more easily. The children learned the steps on how to stop, look, and listen when necessary. They understood when not to interrupt and knew whether it was an emergency or not. The children were also able to follow directions more quickly and follow more complex ones than before.

The effectiveness of this program was apparent in the attitudes and behaviors of the four year old pre-k students in this study. Before the prosocial skill program was implemented, their inappropriate behaviors at the baseline stage indicated a lack of social skills. The skillstreaming process contained 4 basic principles of learning procedures. This incorporated: modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and generalization.

All of these teaching strategies and techniques were used in the classroom to improve students' mastery of social skills.

#### Decrease of Inappropriate Behavior

After the prosocial skill training through planned and systematic instruction, it was found that the children's inappropriate behaviors decreased. There was less interrupting occurring in the classroom. The children were able to listen to a story without interrupting the class. When directions were given, the children were looking at the teacher and listening. We established classroom rules and routines. The children were well aware of the positive reinforcement used, the expectations, and the consequences for inappropriate behavior.

#### *Summary of Baseline Data*

The data collection in this study involved, first of all, recording baseline data for 3 behaviors for 2 typically developing 4 years old in a pre-k inclusion class. I then taught them a pro-social skills curriculum using various methods and techniques. Finally I recorded data on their behavior after the skill teaching was done. The children had learned appropriate social skills and how to use them. There was a decrease in inappropriate behavior and an increase in appropriate behavior.

The baseline data reveals that the children were not following directions before the prosocial skill training. The children were also constantly interrupting prior to the intervention. In addition, the baseline data shows that the children were not listening in the classroom.

*CASE 1: MARK*

Mark is a typically developing 4 year old boy who seems to be emotionally needy at times. He is an only child and appears to have sudden mood swings. He is either cooperative and happy one minute, or angry and uncooperative the next. He is learning to observe the class rules. Mark's skill level with cooperating with others is still emerging. He can be very impatient at times. He has a difficult time with postponing and delaying his own personal needs in the classroom. Sometimes he becomes confused with changes in the routine or his environment. He is extremely fidgety and inattentive during circle-time. He is always rushing to be first. There were 3 target behaviors that were observed: following directions, interrupting, and listening. Following directions includes: academics, self-control and cooperation. Interrupting inappropriately includes: self-control, academic, and assertion. Listening includes: academics, cooperation, and peer relations.

*ABC chart.* It was assumed that the reason for inappropriate behavior of the children is due to environmental reasons and the lack of prosocial skills in these young children. The information gather through A-B-C charts displayed the relationship between antecedent, behavior, and consequence. When I was conducting circletime, Mark was not following directions. I gave him a verbal cue to help him to know what I expected. When I was teaching a lesson and he kept interrupting me, he was reprimanded. If Mark was at play center time and he constantly interrupted another teacher he had a delay in his activity. Mark had difficulty completing his work because he was not listening. I had to talk with him frequently about this problem. If the bell rang for cleanup time and he was not following directions to clean up, we delayed his play. If Mark had a struggle with a friend over a classroom job, then he would have to choose

another job instead. The assumption of the the study was that once the prosocial skill is taught and mastered by Mark, then there will be improvement on his appropriate behavior.

*Not following directions.* For the first two observation settings for the baseline data with Mark he was not following directions for 12 times. Then for session 3 he went down to 11 times. For session 4 he was down to 10 times and back up to 11 for session 5.

*Not listening.* When recording Mark's target baseline behavior for listening on session 1 and 2 he was not listening at a rate of 12 times. For sessions 3 and 4 this decreased to 11. For session 5 it was at 10 times.

*Interrupting.* The next baseline targeted behavior observed was interrupting. For session 1 Mark was interrupting 10 times. For session 2 and 3 he was interrupting 8 times. For session 4 it was 9 times. For session 5 it was 7 interruptions.

#### *Case 2: Suzy*

Suzy is a typically developing 4 year old in a pre-k inclusion classroom. She is extremely talkative and has a very difficult time listening and following directions. She has an extremely short attention span and can barely sit still during circle-time. She is always rushing to be first. Sometimes she can be disrespectful.

*Not following directions.* When recording baseline data on the targeted behavior of following directions for Suzy during session 1 it was 12 times. For session 2 it was 11 times. For session 3 it was 10 times. For session 4 it was back up to 11 times. For session 5 it was down to 10 times.

*Not listening.* When recording baseline data for the targeted behavior for listening it started out in session 1 and 2 as 10 times. For session 3 it increased to 11

instances. During session 4 it returned to 10 times and in our last session it increased again to 12 occurrences.

*Interrupting.* When recording Suzy's baseline targeted observable behavior of interrupting, the data showed a steady increase in poor behavioral skills. Suzy had 9 instances of misbehavior in our first session, 10 occurrences during our second and third sessions, and grew steadily worse, increasing her instances of misbehavior again to 11 times in our fourth session and 12 occurrences in our fifth.

#### *Summary of Intervention Data*

The interventions and prosocial skills training changed the inappropriate behaviors by teaching the skillstreaming steps to promote positive and appropriate behaviors. It was important to have a positive learning climate by keeping a schedule and routine, defining rules and expectations, and creating a positive physical structure for the learning climate. Many management techniques were used to reward positive behavior, consequences, and choices. All of these skills and strategies used were an asset to the social skills training program.

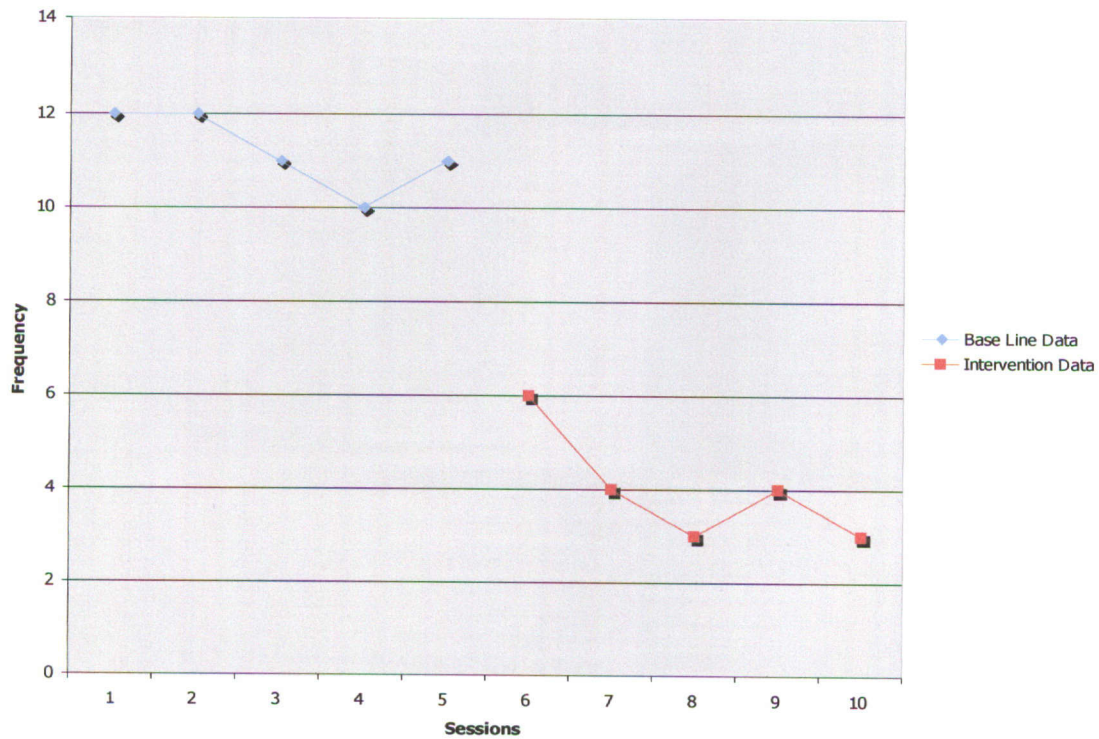
#### *CASE 1: MARK*

*Not following directions.* I taught the children the 4 steps for following directions: what to ask, whom to ask, when to ask, and ask. After they learned this skill in an appropriate manner, they were immediately rewarded with a high five. We played a treasure hunt game and read the book *Strega Nona* and discussed it.

After teaching the pro-social skill training for following directions with Mark session 1 was 6 times. Session 2 decreased to 4 times. Session 3 decreased to 3 times.

Session 4 increased to 4 times. Session 5 decreased to 3 times. Figure 1 presents the change of target behavior between baseline and intervention stages.

Figure 1. Line graph of the target behavior change: not following direction

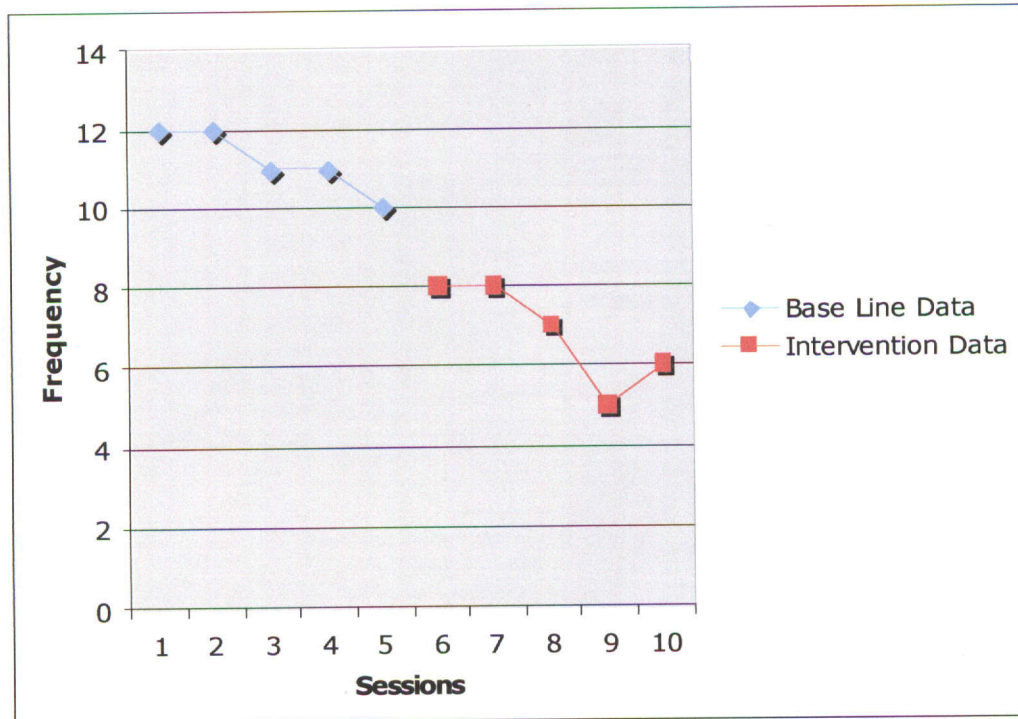


*Not listening.* After observing and recording Mark's baseline target behavior in the target skill areas I began the skill teaching intervention. For skill # 1 listening, I taught them the three steps for listening: to look, stay still, and think. I gave them verbal cues like, "Do you have your listening ears on?" We also played Simon Says. When they listened well they were rewarded with a sticker.

Mark had highly improved his listening skills. After the pro-social skill intervention on session 6 and 7 Mark's inappropriate listening behavior was reduced to only 8 times. For session 8 it dropped to 7 instances, happened only 5 times during session 9 and increased back up to 6 times for the last session. His inappropriate behavior

of not following directions was soon replaced with listening appropriately. Figure 2 presents the target behavior change of not listening between baseline and intervention stages.

Figure 2. Line graph of the target behavior change: not listening



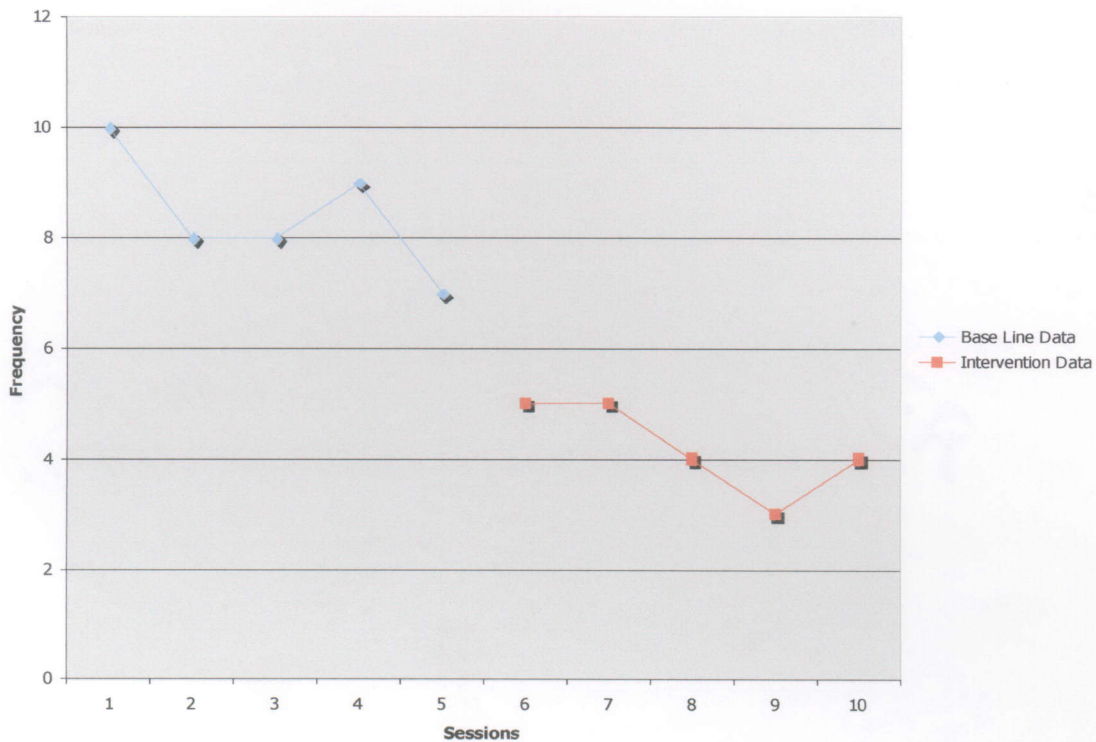
*Interrupting.* I proceeded with the pro-social skill intervention training program. For skill # 12 I taught them the 4 steps as a rule of thumb for interrupting: decide if you need to, walk to the person, wait, and say, “excuse me”. When the children practiced this skill and had demonstrated improvement they got a piece of candy for their increase in appropriate behavior. I provided pictures of a variety of situations and had them put pictures into a variety of situations and had them put pictures into different categories, “do not interrupt, ok to interrupt, and emergency.”

After the intervention, Mark’s interrupting had dropped to 5 instances during sessions 6 and 7. It dropped again during session 8 to only 4 instances and again to only 3



times during our fourth session, increasing only slightly to 4 interruptions during our last session. Figure 3 presents the target behavior change of interrupting between baseline and intervention stages.

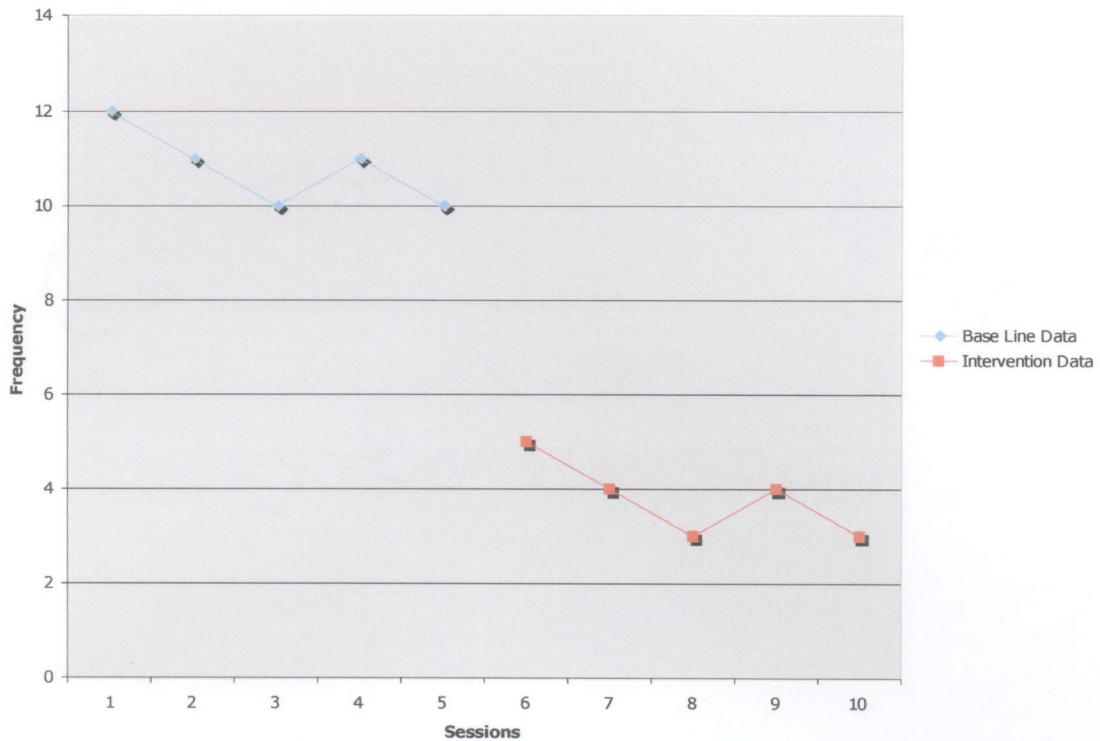
Figure 3. Line graph of the target behavior change: interrupting



### CASE 2: SUZY

*Not following directions.* After teaching the appropriate skills for following directions the inappropriate behavior decreased for intervention session 6 to 5 times. For session 7 it decreased to 4 times. For session 8 it went down to 3 times. For session 9 it increased to 4 times. During our last session it decreased to 3 times. Figure 4 presents the target behavior change of not following direction between baseline and intervention stages.

Figure 4. Line graph of Suzy's target behavior change: not following direction

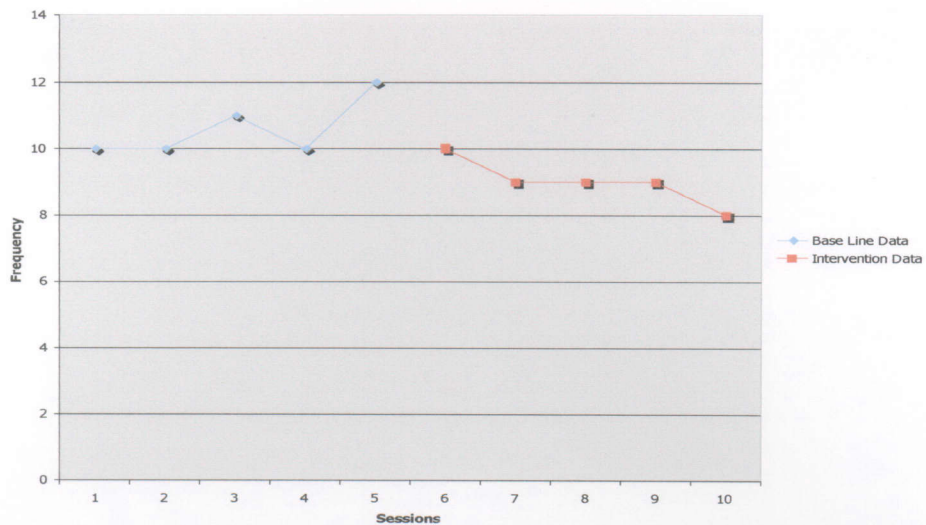


*Not listening.* After teaching the appropriate listening skills the inappropriate behavior decreased and the appropriate behavior increased. To illustrate this, her first intervention remained 10 instances but during our next three sessions it dropped to only 9 occurrences and decreased to 8 times during our last session. Figure 5 presents the target behavior change of not listening between baseline and intervention stages.

*Interrupting.* After teaching the appropriate skills, lessons, and activities for not interrupting there was a decrease in the inappropriate behavior and an increase in the appropriate behavior.

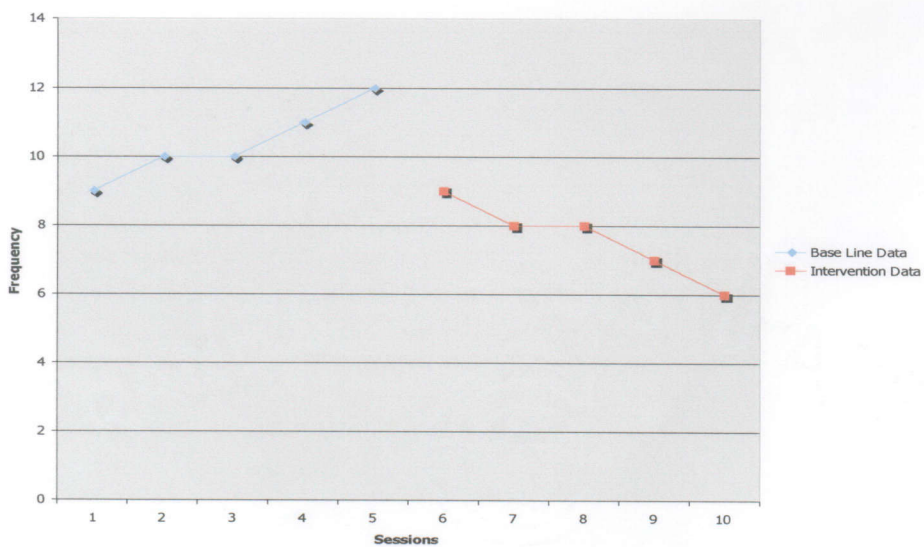
Suzy's tendency to misbehave reduced to only 9 instances during our first intervention and then reduced to again to only 8 instances during our next two meetings.

Figure 5. Line graph of the target behavior change: not listening



By our fourth intervention, her rate of interrupting had diminished to only 7 times and then finally reached only 6 occurrences during our last session. These are the summarized results of the data collection for the pro-social skills Intervention program at the preschool level. Figure 6 presents the target behavior change of interrupting between baseline and intervention stages.

Figure 6. Line graph of the target behavior change: interrupting



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that Valley Park pre-K students including Mark and Suzy did improve their social skills as a result of their participation in the pro-social skills training program. The skill for listening was taught which impacted them in their academics, cooperation, and their peer relations. I had observed much improvement in this skill area. In teaching the skill of how to ignore, this avoided problematic or conflict situations by ignoring the other kids. This skill affected their peer relations, academics, self-control, and cooperation. I observed an improvement in this skill as well.

I taught them skills for asking a question, following directions, and trying when it's hard. This affected the domains of academics, self-control, and cooperation. I observed an improvement in these various skill areas as well. By teaching them the skills for interrupting and ignoring they had improved very much. These skills focused on self-control, academics, and assertion. In particular, as the targets of the study, both Mark and Suzy had similar areas of weakness prior to training. After prosocial skills training, not only did they decrease their inappropriate behaviors, they but also have made amazing improvement on these social skill areas in such a short period of time so as to promote their development of peer relation, self-control, and cooperation.

Matson et. al (1991) found that preschoolers were taught specific social skills in a naturalistic setting in the classroom. The lessons consisted of a structured group activity. Target social behaviors were introduced through puppets and peer modeling. Children were praised appropriately for using a targeted social behavior. Minimal prompts were

also used as a teaching tool. In this study they were looking for social play such as: interacting verbally, parallel play, or cooperative play. This study demonstrated a successful case like what Matson described to provide social skills training in naturalistic setting.

As Storey and Danko (1992) noted, there was an underlying assumption that social skills instruction will positively affect the person's quality of life. The fact that there was significant improvement in the social skills of Pre-K students in this study suggests such an assumption is proved true in this study.

The supportive interventions and teaching strategies used to manage the classroom behavior include: planned ignoring, proximity control, signal interference, interest boosting, humor, restructuring the classroom program, removing seductive objects from the classroom, taking a break, and reality appraisal. Using all of these teaching strategies, techniques, and methods help to increase the positive and appropriate behavior changes or/and decrease the negative and inappropriate behaviors. It is important that the Pre-K students have the love, encouragement, patience, interest, and support of their parents at home to reinforce the learning. They can practice these social skills with their family members.

It is also important that the teacher is capable of building a positive relationship with the parents of the children involved in this new program. When working and collaborating with parents of young children, there are three types of involvement levels: orientation, support, and cooperative. This social skills program should be an integrated part of any typical preschool program. I cannot even imagine any negative points about

it. It's beneficial to all young children, and they are actively engaging in fun lessons and activities that are developmentally appropriate for them.

Mark had 3 target behaviors including: not following directions, not listening, and constant interruption. These type of inappropriate behaviors would occur at different times of the day: story-time, snack-time, and center-time. After teaching the appropriate skills to increase appropriate behavior and a decrease in inappropriate behavior, it was found that his self-esteem and confidence were strengthened by using positive reinforcement. However, one of the barriers or limitations that I think might interfere with student's progress is inconsistency at home with follow-up on the social skill training.

In analyzing the baseline data versus the intervention data for the target behavior of following directions, there seemed to be a pattern. For sessions 1 and 2 Mark did not follow directions for 12 times. For session 3 baseline it had dropped to 11 times. For session 4 it had decreased to 10 times. Finally for session 5 baseline it had slightly increased to 11 times again. I think he might have been aware of me recording him and watching him and therefore the inappropriate behavior was slightly decreasing before the intervention took place.

After the pro-social skills intervention lessons and activities for following directions, there was a significant decrease in the inappropriate behavior and an increase of the appropriate behavior. I attribute this to various reasons. The children loved role-playing in the classroom. They knew exactly what was expected of them. They were aware of the rules in the classroom. They wanted to please the teacher. They wanted and expected their reward for completing and finishing a good job.

Listening was a much more difficult skill for Mark to learn. That is why I think there was not as much of a drastic difference from the baseline data to the intervention data as there was for the following directions. Session 1 and 2 went from 12 to 8 times . Sessions 3 and 4 went from 11 to 7 and times. Finally session 5 went from 10 times to 6 times which was almost a 50% decrease in the inappropriate behavior!

Suzy had 3 targeted behaviors such as: having a difficult time of listening, not following directions, and constantly interrupted throughout the day. According to everyday notes, narratives, and based upon daily observations, Suzy had made an improvement from her inappropriate behavior to more appropriate behavior. I definitely attribute this to the pro-social skills training.

After the pro-social skill intervention on the first session Suzy's inappropriate decreased and her appropriate behavior increased. She did not follow directions only 5 times. After session 2 of the pro-social skill intervention Suzy did not follow directions only 4 times throughout the observation. On session 3 after the intervention Suzy did not follow directions only 3 times. During session 4 after the pro-social skill training she did not follow directions only 4 times. During the last intervention for following directions Suzy did not follow directions only 3 times.

Suzy had an extremely difficult listening in class. I had observed her baseline behavior prior to the pro-social skills intervention. During day one she didn't listen 10 times. On the second day she also didn't listen 10 times. During the third day she wouldn't listen 11 times. On the fourth session she didn't listen 10 times. In the last session of baseline data, she listened the least amount of times which was 12.

After the pro-social skill intervention for Suzy for listening, she had slightly improved. I think that outside factors were partly responsible and to blame for this. Her parents were separating and getting a divorce. I think that this influenced the results of her progress. For session 6 her inappropriate behavior of not listening stayed the same. On session 6, 7, and 8 she didn't listen only 9 times. During our last intervention session she didn't listen only 8 times which was about a 20% improvement from the first session.

As for the baseline data for Suzy interrupting, she progressively got worse. Her inappropriate behavior had increased over the first 5 sessions. After the pro-social skills training there was a decrease in her inappropriate behavior and an increase in her appropriate behavior. On session 6 she was interrupting about 9 times and by the last session she was only interrupting 6 times. There was a decrease in the inappropriate behavior by about 30%.

It was observable that class's behavior as a whole has greatly improved after the pro-social skills intervention program. Everyone seemed more attentive during various lessons and activities. The children were able to identify the rules and regulations of the classroom. They knew what was expected of them. The students were able to resolve their issues more independently. They knew the steps and procedures for following directions, listening, and interrupting. This pro-social skills program would highly benefit any preschool/pre-k program. I would highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in using it with their students. This program changed the student's inappropriate behavior to appropriate behavior by teaching them different strategies, techniques, and methods.



## LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study include the time limit and data constraint. The progress remains consistent however over a longer period of time and with more students being studied this would have been a more effective study. The message and lesson learned from this study is that prosocial skills can be taught and learned. There are appropriate behaviors and inappropriate behaviors. The results of a longitudinal study would probably have varied as opposed to this case study of a typically developing 4 year old boy and girl.

In conclusion, this study showed that the prosocial skills training program is highly effective for typically developing 4 year olds in an inclusion classroom. The inappropriate behavior is targeted, the appropriate behavior is taught and will replace the old behavior. There are various tools, methods, techniques, and strategies provided by the classroom teacher. Positive feedback and positive reinforcement is extremely crucial for this program to work.

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