The purpose of this paper is to communicate the findings of a study assessing the effectiveness of a school-based social skills program that was conducted with urban elementary students demonstrating behavior problems. This program was designed to increase positive social skills in students who meet literature-based criteria for being “at risk” for emotional behavioral disorders. It was predicted that participation in the program would result in an increase in measures of social acceptance by both teachers and peers. An analysis of the dependent variables indicates an increase in measures of social acceptance by teachers for nearly all participants. An increase in social acceptance by peers was inconclusive for this study based on the pre/post measure used, however, teachers did report an increase in areas related to interactions with peers. The importance of implementing social skills interventions in schools as part of a positive behavior support initiative is explored.
EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER-MEDIATED SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING ON MEASURES OF SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN DISPLAYING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIORS

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Faculty of Miami University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Educational Specialist
Department of Educational Psychology, School Psychology

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2011

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Introduction

School administrators and educators strive to make their schools safe learning environments in an effort to create the opportunity for students to reach their highest potential and to have a positive educational experience. Educators must determine effective prevention and intervention strategies to modify the behavior patterns of students who may negatively impact the school environment. Past research and evidence from the field support the efficacy of social skills programs as important prevention and intervention strategies. Social skills training can help students adjust easier to a variety of situations, and has been shown to positively affect a child’s future in that they are less likely to drop out of school, show delinquency, and suffer from adult mental health problems (Gresham & Nagle, 1980).

This paper will describe a research project evaluating the effectiveness of a peer-monitored social skills program on African American students from an urban school district. This program is an intervention designed to increase positive social skills in students who meet literature-based criteria for being “at risk” for emotional behavioral disorders based on their number of office discipline referrals, sociometric ratings, and behavior checklist ratings. It was predicted that participation in the program would result in an increase in measures of social acceptance by both teachers and peers. From this paper, readers will learn about the impact this social skills program had on its participants. Additionally, readers will learn the research-based components of this program, and how these individual components can be merged into a cohesive intervention. Readers will learn the importance of implementing social skills interventions in their own schools as part of their positive behavior support initiative.

Literature Review

Student Antisocial Behavior

In school communities, educators must be able to manage problem behaviors displayed by students. Determining effective ways of prevention and intervention for problem behaviors is important in keeping schools safe and providing an appropriate learning environment for students. Beard and Sugai (2004) have described antisocial behaviors as acts by a student that are considered a violation of socially acceptable behaviors. In young children, this may include whining, noncompliance with parents and teachers, and fighting. If these antisocial behaviors are not resolved in early childhood, they can lead to problems in middle school, such as lying, theft, and cheating. If these behaviors are still not resolved in middle school, they can lead to problems
in high school, such as stealing, assault, vandalism, and other acts of criminal behavior. Because the development of antisocial behaviors are difficult to undo, it is important to address these problems as early in a child’s development as possible. Loeber & Hay (1997) also identified childhood aggressive behavior as a substantial precursor of antisocial behavior in adolescence and adulthood. They predict that the age at which aggression starts in boys is gradually decreasing, and that although physical fighting seems to decrease as one gets older, serious violence incidents and the constancy of aggression tends to increase.

Another study (Schaeffer, Petras, Ialongo, Poduska, & Kellam, 2003) of antisocial behavior examined the developmental pathways in African American boys in an urban school setting. Among the four major trajectories of aggression that were found, more than half of the students were considered to be on the moderate aggression trajectory. These students showed an increase in aggression over time and were also at an increased risk for antisocial outcomes (i.e. juvenile & adult criminal acts) later in life. These studies show that there is a need for effective programs that are able to specifically target the reduction of antisocial behaviors.

Treatment of Antisocial Behavior

Positive behavior support (PBS). PBS is used as a way of prevention and intervention for antisocial behaviors. It involves altering a child’s environment to reduce problem behaviors and to increase the child’s quality of life (Horner, 2000). It is an alternative to punitive methods and is often more appropriate in that it focuses on replacement behaviors as opposed to punishment. Metzler, Biglan, Rusby, & Sprague (2001) studied the effects of a Positive Behavior Support system to manage behavior problems of middle schools students. Their Effective Behavior Support Program was successful at decreasing Office Discipline Referrals and providing students with a safer environment. They concluded that there are several factors that are crucial to implementing PBS successfully. Some of these factors include teaching the students appropriate behaviors, reinforcing appropriate behaviors, introducing a small number of rules and communicating these rules effectively, consistently providing consequences when rules are broken, and using appropriate progress-monitoring.

Social Skills Training (SST). Positive Behavior Supports may include targeted social skills training as possible Tier two or Tier three interventions. Social skills training may be used to help remediate antisocial behaviors. The social skills deficits a child may display include peer denial, social isolation, seclusion, and problems with maintaining constructive social
relationships (Mathur, Kavale, Quinn, Forness, & Rutherford, 1998). The effectiveness found with social skills programs for children with antisocial behaviors has been mixed. However, there are several reasons why social skills programs can be important for children with antisocial behaviors. These reasons include teaching children who isolate themselves from others how to interact properly with their peers and to teach children to replace antisocial behaviors with more appropriate ones. Social skills training can also help children adjust easier to many situations, and has been shown to positively affect a child’s future in that they are less likely to drop out of school, show delinquency, and later, suffer from adult mental health problems (Gresham & Nagle, 1980).

Social Skills Training teaches students appropriate behaviors in social situations and has become a widely used intervention for children who display antisocial behaviors. Studies have shown that there are some important components of Social Skills Training. These components include selecting the most important social skills that need to be improved for the student, modeling the skills that need to be improved, coaching the child, having them practice the skills they are learning, reinforcing the child when they show understanding, and generalizing the skills learned to real-life situations (Quinn, Kavale, Mathur, Rutherford, & Forness, 1999).

Peer Monitoring. Another possible treatment for remediating antisocial behaviors is peer monitoring. Peer monitoring involves using peers as active participants in the intervention plan. This method may be especially appealing because it helps to save both time and money. A study by Christenson and Young (2004) examined the use of peer monitoring and self-evaluation. A student rated his own behavior and then compared his ratings with that of a peer. The peer partner would reinforce and praise positive behaviors exhibited by the target student throughout the intervention. Results of the study indicated that while peer monitoring did not help with self-management skills, it did positively affect behavior. Milich, Landau, Kilby, & Whitten (1982) found, through the use of a peer nomination tool, that inappropriate and disruptive behaviors exhibited by preschool students is associated with peer rejection. Their results imply that the inappropriate and disruptive behaviors exhibited by preschool children are recognized as inappropriate and disruptive to the students’ classmates. These results indicate that interventions that employ students acting as change agents have shown positive results, and that further research should be done in this area.
Minority Considerations in Treatment of Antisocial Behaviors. Research has shown an overrepresentation of African American students placed in special education because of an emotional or behavioral disorder diagnosis. Social skills programs designed specifically for the purpose of reducing antisocial behaviors may aid in reducing this overrepresentation (Olmeda & Kauffman, 2003). McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge (2003) studied the use of Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) in a culturally diverse, urban school district. Previously, research on the use of PBS specific to urban schools and with culturally diverse students was lacking. According to the authors, urban schools often have students who are at a higher risk for developing disruptive behavior disorders, partially due to the large amount of students who are exposed to undesirable conditions at home or in the community. The results of the study indicated that the PBS program had a positive effect on discipline, as indicated by a decrease in Office Discipline Referrals and in student fighting (a component of antisocial behavior). Some researchers believe that cultural diversity may play a role in the presence of antisocial behaviors, and so can affect the social skills training a child receives.

Carteledge and Loe (2001) recommend four strategies to consider when implementing social skills training programs for culturally diverse children. The first strategy is creating positive affirming environments. According to the authors, culturally diverse children tend to support a collectivist orientation, where the needs and goals of a group are emphasized (as opposed to an individualistic orientation). Teachers should be sure to provide an environment where the students learn as a community and focus is given to both helping others as well as oneself. The second strategy is managing disruptive behaviors. Teachers should take a proactive, instead of reactive, approach to dealing with problem behaviors. This means informing the students of positive behaviors and their positive consequences instead of just telling them what they cannot do and the negative consequences. The third strategy is teaching culturally relevant social behaviors. Culturally relevant social behaviors include the communication style of the student, the relevance of the skills to be learned, and the technique in which the skills are taught to the children. The fourth strategy is getting behaviors to persist. Teachers should continue to reinforce students for displaying appropriate behaviors after the training has occurred. This will ensure the child is able to continue to generalize what they learned in social skills training to many situations and settings.
Statement of Purpose and Hypothesis

Studies have been conducted in the past to evaluate the effectiveness of social skills training programs for children at risk for developing emotional and behavioral disorders. The current study will replicate the Please Officers program, a program using social skills instruction, peer monitoring and peer modeling, as a way to prevent antisocial behaviors from escalating. This program is different from many other social skills training programs because it not only teaches participants’ prosocial behaviors, but also allows them to act as change agents and role models. The previous study found significant increases in positive social behavior for all twelve participants. This study was done with a limited population and with a small sample of students (Shaffer, 2009). By replicating the study, the researcher hopes to determine if the results of the original study can also be applied to other populations (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This replication will alter the population by researching African American participants, as opposed to Caucasian participants, to see if there is a difference in the effectiveness of the program across populations. Based on concerns from the staff at the school and a review of current literature, the length of the program will be doubled in order to allow for more time to build rapport between instructors and participants and to provide more time to reinforce the skills being taught to participants. The purpose of this study will be to evaluate the effectiveness of the “Please Officers” program on African American participants to increase social acceptance by both teachers and peers.

The research question is: “What are the effects of attending a peer-monitored social skills training program, and demonstrating the skills learned to younger peers through peer-monitoring and peer-modeling, on social acceptance of teachers and students?” The researcher hypothesizes that: The “Please Officers” program will significantly increase the social acceptance by both peers and teachers of African American children who are considered at risk for developing Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

Method

Participants

The participants involved in this study were fourth and fifth grade African American students from the same elementary school. Two social skills groups were run, one group of fourth graders and one group of fifth graders. There were seven students in the fourth grade group and five students in the fifth grade group, totaling 12 students in all. Students were
considered eligible for the study using literature-based criteria that placed them as at-risk for developing emotional and behavioral disorders. Criteria for participation included nomination by the school principal and teachers and at least one of the following criteria: number of office discipline referrals that exceeded the school norm, named by one or fewer student on a sociometric rating tool, and a score of at least one on the Critical Events Index rating scale. Also, student assent and parent consent were received before the start of the program. In addition to the participants, five teachers were also involved in the study, three fourth grade teachers and two fifth grade teachers, as well as suggestions and input from the school principal and other staff.

Setting

Research procedures were conducted in a spare classroom and in the classrooms of younger students (kindergarten and first grade) at the elementary school the participants attended. The social skills training portion was instructed in a private spare classroom, the peer-monitoring portion took place in the kindergarten and first grade classrooms during math group work, and the peer-modeling presentations took place in the kindergarten and first grade classrooms. All activities took place during the participants’ lunch period.

Measures

Dependent Measures. Milich, Landau, Kilby, & Whitten (1982) found the use of peer nominations by preschool children of both prosocial and externalizing behaviors to be both reliable and valid when compared with teacher ratings of the same behaviors. A sociometric measure was used to research peer acceptance pre-treatment, post-treatment, and as a follow-up 4 weeks after treatment (Appendix A). In this study, classmates of the participants filled out two story starters that asked to name three classmates they’d like to play with and three classmates they’d like to work with on a school project. These story starters were reviewed to see if the participants were named and, if so, how many times during each of the phases. Sociometric tools were also been viewed as a useful way to monitor student’s behaviors.

Teacher expectations and perceptions have been used as an effective way of measuring antisocial behaviors. Lane, Pierson, and Givner (2003) found that when asked to rate social skills on their importance, the majority of teachers believed that cooperation and self-control were more important than assertion. Also, five major skills were identified that teachers feel their students should possess: following directions, attending to instructions, controlling temper in a conflict situation with a peer and with an adult, and responding appropriately to physical
aggression from peers. These skills, and others, can be measured and monitored in the form of a Behavior Report Card. Daily Report Cards can act as a way for teachers, school psychologists, and parents to monitor the students’ problematic behavior (Riley-Tillman & McDougal, 2002). In the current study, the teacher was asked to fill out a Weekly Report Card (WRC) at the end of each week for two weeks before treatment, four weeks during treatment, and four weeks after treatment (Appendix B). It is a rating scale adapted from the previous study that describes the student’s classroom behavior, work, and social interactions (Shaffer, 2009).

Independent Measures. The Please Officers program lasted a total of four weeks, and included a social skills training portion, providing presentations of new skills learned to younger children, and peer monitoring of younger students during class group work time.

Research Design

A Multiple Baseline across Subjects Design was originally chosen for this study, however, due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts with the study location, only two groups were used instead of three. Starting points for the two groups were staggered by one week. Then, after the four-week program, each group returned to baseline conditions for a total of four weeks.

Research Procedure

Baseline. Baseline data were collected for two weeks prior to the treatment. During the baseline phase, students were treated as they typically were before being recruited for the program. Teachers filled out the Weekly Report Cards (WRC) at the end of each week. Also, during the first week of baseline, the sociometric ratings and office discipline referrals were collected.

Treatment. Following the baseline phase, the Please Officers Program began and lasted for four weeks. Students and instructors met for thirty minutes, three days per week. The program consisted of three major portions: social skills training, peer monitoring, and peer modeling. Students participated in the social skills training portion, which is based on the Boys Town method (Tierney, 2007). Student were taught three important skills that help to ensure success in school. These three skills include: 1) how to use free time effectively, 2) how to resolve peer conflict using problem-solving techniques, and 3) how to accept feedback from adults (Appendix C). After completing the social skills training portion, students performed skits to teach the new skills they learned to younger students. Finally, the students peer monitored
younger students during group work time. They were also allowed to present “Caught You Being Good” tickets to younger students who were exhibiting prosocial behaviors. During the treatment phase, teachers continued to fill out the WRC each week. At the end of the treatment phase, a second administration of the Sociometric Rating tool took place in each of the participants’ classrooms.

Post-Treatment. Following the program, post-treatment data was collected for four weeks. Post treatment data included weekly collection of the WRC from teachers, as well as a third administration of the sociometric rating tool at the end of the four-week post-treatment phase. During this time, conditions returned back to those at baseline. No further social skills instruction, peer monitoring, or peer modeling occurred.

Treatment Integrity

Integrity checklists were completed for each of the three major portions of the program, including social skills training (Appendix D), peer modeling (Appendix E), and peer monitoring (Appendix F), to ensure that the program was implemented as intended.

Protection of Human Subjects

Approval was received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning recruitment of participants and data collection. Written informed consent/assent was obtained from both the parents/guardians and the students involved in the research study (Appendix G, Appendix H). Any identifying information from the data collected throughout the study was removed to protect the privacy of the participants. Also, no deception was used in this research project.

Data Analysis

Research Question

The research question for this study is: “What are the effects of attending a peer-monitored social skills training program, and demonstrating the skills learned to younger peers through peer-monitoring and peer-modeling, on increasing social acceptance of teachers and students?” To attempt to answer this question, sociometric rating scores were examined at pre-treatment and post-treatment to see if the participants were included more. Also, scores on the Weekly Report Card were looked at to see if they increased throughout the program. An increase in one or both of these measures across all participants would suggest that the program has led to an increase in social acceptance by teachers and/or peers. This was also contingent on the Please
Officers program being the only intervention introduced during the study. Data collected pre-treatment, during treatment, and post-treatment were graphed and analyzed using visual analysis to see if there were any common trends. A nonparametric test, Friedman’s two-way analysis of variance of ranks, was also conducted to examine both Sociometric and Weekly Report Card data collected.

**Generalization**

According to Horner, Carr, Halle, McGee, Odom, and Wolery (2005), there are certain criteria that must be met in order for a study to be considered evidence-based. Criteria include a minimum of at least five studies by at least three different researchers in at least three different geographical locations using a total of at least 20 participants. This study continues to develop new information obtained on the effectiveness of the Please Officers study because we added 12 participants from a different location and of a different ethnicity using two new researchers. While two studies cannot qualify a program as evidence-based, this study can help to expand the literature on the Please Officers program.

**Results**

*Weekly Report Card (WRC).* The WRC was collected to see how teacher expectations and perceptions of students socially appropriate behavior changed throughout the course of the Please Officers program, specifically in the areas of: using free time wisely, avoiding peer conflict, and accepting feedback. Teachers were asked to fill out the Weekly Report Card (WRC) at the end of each week for two weeks before treatment, four weeks during treatment, and four weeks after treatment. It is a rating scale that describes the student’s classroom behavior, work, and social interactions and has been adapted from the study being replicated (Shaffer, 2009).

Of the seven fourth grade students, the frequency of appropriate social behavior increased from a weekly mean of 6.36 (range, 4 to 13) during baseline to a mean of 7.71 (range, 4 to 14) during treatment, and a weekly mean of 9.54 (range, 3 to 15) showed an increase over the four-week post-treatment phase. Visual analysis of individual progress shows that 6 of the 7 fourth grade students showed an increase in appropriate social behaviors over the course of the Please Officers program, and 2 of the 7 fourth grade students showed continual progress in the 4 weeks after the program. Changes in each fourth grade student participant can be seen individually in Figures 1a-g.
Figure 1a: Student 4A

**Weekly Report Card - Student 4A**

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Figure 1b: Student 4B

**Weekly Report Card - Student 4B**

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Figure 1c: Student 4C

Weekly Report Card - Student 4C

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Weeky Report Card - Student 4D

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Figure 1e: Student 4E

Weekly Report Card - Student 4E

Week

Baseline  Treatment  Post-Treatment

Week

Figure 1f: Student 4F

Weekly Report Card - Student 4F

Week

Baseline  Treatment  Post-Treatment
The Weekly Report Card (WRC) was also collected from the fifth grade teachers to look at the participants’ behavior over time. Just as with the fourth grade, teachers were asked to fill out the WRC at the end of each week for two weeks before treatment, four weeks during treatment, and four weeks after treatment. Of the 5 fifth grade students, the frequency of appropriate social behavior increased from a weekly mean of 9.0 (range, 4 to 13) during baseline to a mean of 10.17 (range, 6 to 15) during treatment, and a weekly mean of 11.58 (range, 6 to 15) showed an increase over the four-week post-treatment phase. Visual analysis of individual progress shows that 5 of the 5 fifth grade students showed an increase in appropriate social behaviors over the course of the Please Officers program, and 3 of the 5 fifth grade students showed continual progress in the 4 weeks after the program. Changes in each fifth grade student participant can be seen individually in Figures 1h-l.
Figure 1h: Student 5A

[Weekly Report Card - Student 5A graph]

Figure 1i: Student 5B

[Weekly Report Card - Student 5B graph]
Figure 1j: Student 5C

![Weekly Report Card - Student 5C](image)

Figure 1k: Student 5D

![Weekly Report Card - Student 5D](image)
The changes in the individual behaviors listed on the Weekly Report Card before during, and after the program can also be examined. These include the students’ ability to use free time wisely, avoid peer conflict, and accept feedback. The skills listed on the WRC are based on the skills taught during the social skills training portion of the program, which as derived from the Boys Town method.

Of the seven fourth grade students, the frequency of using free time wisely stayed the same at an overall weekly mean of 2.5 (range, 1 to 4) during baseline to a mean of 2.5 (range, 1 to 4) during treatment, and increased to a weekly mean of 3.08 (range, 1 to 5) over the 4-week post-treatment phase. Visual analysis of individual progress shows that 4 of the 7 fourth grade students showed an increase in using free time wisely over the course of the Please Officers program, and 5 of the 7 fourth grade students showed continual progress in the 4 weeks after the program.

Of the seven fourth grade students, the frequency of avoiding peer conflict increased from an overall weekly mean of 1.86 (range, 1 to 5) during baseline to a mean of 2.54 (range, 1 to 5) during treatment, and a weekly mean of 3.08 (range, 1 to 5) over the 4-week post-treatment phase. Visual analysis of individual progress shows that 7 of the 7 fourth grade students showed an increase in avoiding peer conflict over the course of the Please Officers program, and 5 of the 7 fourth grade students showed continual progress in the 4 weeks after the program.
Of the seven fourth grade students, the frequency of accepting no for an answer increased from an overall weekly mean of 2 (range, 1 to 4) during baseline to a mean of 2.67 (range, 1 to 5) during treatment, and a weekly mean of 3.38 (range, 1 to 5) over the 4-week post-treatment phase. Visual analysis of individual progress shows that 6 of the 7 fourth grade students showed an increase in accepting no for an answer over the course of the Please Officers program, and 5 of the 7 fourth grade students showed continual progress in the 4 weeks after the program. Changes in each fourth grade student participant can be seen individually in Figures 2a-g.

Figure 2a: Student 4A

![WRC - Individual Skill Progress - Student 4A](image)

Figure 2b: Student 4B

![WRC - Individual Skill Progress - Student 4B](image)
Figure 2c: Student 4C

**WRC - Individual Skill Progress - Student 4C**

<table>
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<th>Skills</th>
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<th>Post-Treatment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use Free Time Wisely</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Peer Conflict</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept Feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2d: Student 4D

**WRC - Individual Skill Progress - Student 4D**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Post-Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use Free Time Wisely</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Peer Conflict</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept Feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2e: Student 4E

WRC - Individual Skill Progress - Student 4E

![Graph showing skill progress for Student 4E with categories: Use Free Time Wisely, Avoid Peer Conflict, Accept Feedback.](image)

Score

Skills

- Baseline
- Treatment
- Post-Treatment

Figure 2f: Student 4F

WRC - Individual Skill Progress - Student 4F

![Graph showing skill progress for Student 4F with categories: Use Free Time Wisely, Avoid Peer Conflict, Accept Feedback.](image)

Score

Skills

- Baseline
- Treatment
- Post-Treatment
The changes in the individual behaviors listed on the Weekly Report Card before during, and after the program were also examined for the fifth grade students. Of the 5 fifth grade students, the frequency of using free time wisely increased from an overall weekly mean of 2.9 (range, 1 to 5) during baseline to a mean of 3.0 (range, 2 to 5) during treatment, and a weekly mean of 3.84 (range, 2 to 5) over the 4-week post-treatment phase. Visual analysis of individual progress shows that 3 of the 5 fifth grade students showed an increase in using free time wisely over the course of the Please Officers program, and 4 of the 5 fifth grade students showed continual progress in the 4 weeks after the program.

Of the 5 fifth grade students, the frequency of avoiding peer conflict increased from an overall weekly mean of 3.3 (range, 2 to 4) during baseline to a mean of 3.5 (range, 2 to 5) during treatment, and a weekly mean of 3.9 (range, 2 to 5) over the 4-week post-treatment phase. Visual analysis of individual progress shows that 3 of the 5 fifth grade students showed an increase in avoiding peer conflict over the course of the Please Officers program, and 4 of the 5 fifth grade students showed continual progress in the 4 weeks after the program.

Of the 5 fifth grade students, the frequency of accepting no for an answer increased from an overall weekly mean of 2.8 (range, 1 to 4) during baseline to a mean of 3.67 (range, 1 to 5) during treatment, and a weekly mean of 3.84 (range, 2 to 5) over the 4-week post-treatment
phase. Visual analysis of individual progress shows that 4 of the 5 fifth grade students showed an increase in accepting no for an answer over the course of the Please Officers program, and 3 of the 5 fifth grade students showed continual progress in the 4 weeks after the program. Changes in each fifth grade student participant can be seen individually in Figures 2h-l.

Figure 2h: Student 5A

![WRC - Individual Skills Progress - Student 5A](image)

Figure 2i: Student 5B

![WRC - Individual Skills Progress - Student 5B](image)
Figure 2j: Student 5C

WRC - Individual Skill Progress - Student 5C

![Bar chart showing skill progress for Student 5C.]

Figure 2k: Student 5D

WRC - Individual Skill Progress - Student 5D

![Bar chart showing skill progress for Student 5D.]

22
A nonparametric analysis of the Weekly Report Card means (pre/post/follow-up) using the Friedman two-way analysis of variance of ranks was also conducted to compare students’ scores on the WRC during baseline, post treatment, and follow-up. The Chi-Square statistic, $F(7) = 8.000, p < .05$, indicated a difference in the fourth grade students’ scores across baseline, treatment, and follow-up phases. The Chi-Square statistic, $F(5) = 6.400, p < .05$, also indicated a difference in the fifth grade students’ scores across baseline, treatment, and follow-up phases. This shows that there is an overall difference between social behavior ratings by teachers throughout the Please Officers program for both the fourth and fifth grade students. Across the phases, overall mean scores indicate more positive social behaviors were being exhibited by the students.

**Sociometric Rating Tool.** A sociometric measure was used to examine peer acceptance and was given to participants’ classmates 3 times: pre-treatment, post-treatment, and as a follow-up 4 weeks after treatment. Classmates filled out two story starters that asked to name three classmates they’d like to play with and three classmates they’d like to work on a school project with. These story starters were reviewed to see if the participants were named and, if so, how many times during each of the phases. While it was expected that the participants would be named more often during and after the program, visual analysis shows inconsistent results for both fourth and fifth grade students. For the fourth grade students, 1 out of 7 students increased
in the number of times they were named by their classmates from baseline to post-treatment (3 stayed the same). 1 out of 7 students increased from post-treatment to follow-up (2 stayed the same). Overall, 1 out of the 7 fourth grade students had an overall increase from baseline to follow-up administration (2 stayed the same). For the fifth grade students, 1 out of 5 students increased in the number of times they were named by their classmates from baseline to post-treatment (3 stayed the same). 2 out of 5 students increased from post-treatment to follow-up (1 stayed the same). Overall, 1 out of the 5 fifth grade students had an overall increase from baseline to follow-up administration (3 stayed the same). An average of the fourth and fifth grade student results can be seen in Figures 3a-b.

Figure 3a: Fourth Grade Students

![4th Grade - Sociometric Ratings](image-url)
A nonparametric analysis of the Sociometric Rating Tool means (pre/post/follow-up) using the Friedman two-way analysis of variance of ranks was also conducted to compare students’ rating by classmates during baseline, post treatment, and at follow-up four weeks later. The Chi-Square statistic, $F(7) = 3.100, p > .05$, indicated no difference in the fourth grade students’ scores across baseline, treatment, and follow-up phases. The Chi-Square statistic, $F(5) = 0.000, p > .05$, also indicated no difference in the fifth grade students’ scores across baseline, treatment, and follow-up phases. This shows that there was not an overall difference between social behavior ratings by peers throughout the Please Officers program for both the fourth and fifth grade students.

**Discussion**

Results of this study indicate that the Please Officers program may be an effective program to help develop African American students’ social behavior and acceptance by teachers and peers. The Weekly Report Card (WRC) measure indicated significant positive trends in social behavior changes in participant’s behavior over the 4-week Treatment phase. While the Sociometric Rating Tool did not show significant results over the course of the program, teachers reported positive interactions with peers over the course of the study. Future studies may look into a more concrete pre/post measure.

**Permeability with the School.** Notable factors that influenced the progression of the Please Officers program were the series of alterations to the program the researchers were faced
with when attempting to start the program and to work collectively with the teachers and staff of the elementary school. For example, the program was originally supposed to last for two weeks, however, after discussing the program with the principal and teachers, the length of the program was doubled. The principal and teachers felt that it would be important for the researchers to develop relationships with the students in order for them to benefit from the program. There was also discussion with the principal on how to be sure that the program would not provide a lot of extra work for the teachers. The teachers would fill out a behavior form once a week for each child, and the researchers would take care of collecting Office Discipline Referrals and administering the Sociometric Rating Tool to the classrooms. The program was also administered during lunchtime, so that students would not miss class time. Overall, these alterations and accommodations provided to the school seemed to have positive effects in ensuring that the program was provided appropriately with cooperation from the teachers and school community.

*Teacher Perceptions.* Teacher feedback showed a positive impact on the students while the program was in session. It was reported that the students looked forward to their time with the leaders and wanted to do well when they knew they could be rewarded. They felt it was nice for the students to be guaranteed something positive in their week. The teachers felt that the leaders were very organized, hard-working, and caring. They also appreciated that there was no loss of class time as the students met for the program during lunch. One suggestion that was made was that it would be helpful to find a way to streamline the paperwork process, such as an electronic or online form. It was also noted that is may be beneficial for the students to continue to meet with the instructors after the program, to continue to encourage them to practice the skills they learned. Teachers were asked to rate the Please Officers program using a Likert scale, where 1 indicated Strongly Disagree and 5 indicated Strongly Agree. The scores can be seen in Figure 4.
Limitations. After completion of the study, the researcher identified key limitations and areas of improvement for future research and implementation of the program. Because teachers only completed the Weekly Report Card form once per week, their scores may not have accurately represented the students’ behavior for the entire week. If time permits, a Daily Report Card may be more suitable in gathering more accurate data. Also, due to scheduling conflicts and a large number of student referrals, instructors made larger groups than was originally intended. In the future, smaller groups of 3 students or less would be optimal to ensure a greater impact of the program. Another limitation noted was that there was no systematic way of reinforcing the skills in the classroom during and after the program. It may be helpful to develop a way to incorporate usage of the skills by the teachers throughout the school day in addition to the time spent with the program instructors. This may also include a way to be sure the students are showing positive behaviors once the program is complete. “Booster sessions,” in which the instructors and/or teachers meet with the students to review the main points of the program and each students’ progress, may be helpful in ensuring students continue to use the skills they learned in the future. Also, the program may have made the teachers more vigilant of the participants’ behavior in their classroom, which may have affected how they scored the students each week. There are also some concerns with the reliability of the sociometric measure, which measured participants’ social acceptance by peers throughout the program. On one or more of the sociometric tool administrations, some participants of the study were absent, which may have
affected their likelihood of being nominated. Also, because the sociometric administrations were given only 4 weeks apart, students may have been more likely to list the same class members each time. These limitations should be considered for future usage of the Please Officers program.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the “Please Officers” program on African American participants to increase social acceptance by both teachers and peers. Visual and statistical analyses were used to assess the effectiveness of the program for this population of students, and showed positive results, especially when visually analyzing the teachers’ weekly behavior ratings of the students’ behavior. These results show that the program may be beneficial if added as part of a Positive Behavior Support System in an urban school. It could be implemented as a Tier 2, small group intervention, and may even be altered as a Tier 1, class wide intervention to promote positive behavior in all students in a grade. The results of this study help to solidify the results of a previous study, and generalize the results to multiple populations. The Please Officers program can be used as a way of prevention and intervention, and may be an important component in keeping schools safe and providing an appropriate learning environment for students.
References


Appendix A
Sociometric Rating Tool Format

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:
Ask children to take out a blank sheet of paper and to write their own name at the top, and number the first five lines 1-5. “Today I want to find out how fast most 4th graders write.” Write the following story starter on the board: Last night my friends and I played school at my house. Say, “Let’s read the first sentence together… Think about what you could do if you could invite anyone in this room over to your house to play school.

Now, I am going to help you put the story together. First, pretend it is recess at your house. Write down the names of 3 kids in this classroom that you would like to play with at recess. Write down their first name and last name. If you can’t spell it, just do the best you can. Ready? Go.

Next, pretend it is class time at your house. Write down the names of 3 more kids you would like to work with during class time. Write down their first name and last name. If you can’t spell it, just do the best you can. Ready? Go.

Next, standard CBM WE instructions: Now I want you to write a story. Write as many sentences as you can in 3 minutes…”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recess</th>
<th>Work time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chris Booker</td>
<td>We could play in my bakyard for a bout a half hour. But then after that it would be time to go inside so that mine freiends could finish the homework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sally Matt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Georgia Cates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mark Morgan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pat Liter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Andy Gore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

WEEKLY REPORT CARD

Student Name: _______________________________ Date: _____________________

Please circle the number that best describes the child’s classroom behavior, work, and social interactions during the past week. Also, please provide any additional comments. Thank you!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using Free Time Wisely</th>
<th>Avoiding Peer Conflicts</th>
<th>Accepting Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Always</strong> used free time appropriately. No warnings or disruptions.</td>
<td>Exhibited excellent problem solving skills with peers. No correction or guidance given.</td>
<td>Accepted feedback well from peers and staff all of the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Almost always</strong> used free time appropriately. One warning or disruption.</td>
<td>Exhibited good problem solving skills with peers. Minimal correction or guidance needed.</td>
<td>Accepted feedback well from peers and staff most of the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequently</strong> used free time appropriately. A few warnings or disruptions.</td>
<td>Exhibited adequate or average problem solving skills with peers. Some correction or guidance needed.</td>
<td>Accepted feedback well from peers and staff some of the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sometimes</strong> used free time appropriately. Some warnings or disruptions.</td>
<td>Rarely exhibited problem solving skills with peers. Correction or guidance needed.</td>
<td>Accepted feedback well from peers and staff rarely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rarely</strong> used free time appropriately. Frequent warnings or disruptions.</td>
<td>Exhibited no problem solving skills with peers. Continuous correction or guidance needed.</td>
<td>Accepted feedback well from peers and staff none of the time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Comments

Appendix C
Boys Town Method Social Skills

**Trying New Tasks**

1. Identifying a new task or activity you've never done before.
2. Request permission from the appropriate person.
3. Think of all the steps needed for the new task.
4. Breathe deeply and try your best.
5. Ask for help, advice, or feedback if the task is difficult.

**SODAS**

**Problem Solving Steps**

S: Define the **Situation**
O: Generate two or more **Options**
D: Look at each option's potential **Disadvantages**
A: Look at each option's potential **Advantages**
S: Decide the best **Solution**

**Accepting “No” for an Answer**

1. Look at the Person.
   - Looking at the person shows that you are paying attention.
2. Say “Okay.”
   - Saying “Okay” lets the other person know that you understand.
   - Staying calm allows you to hear exactly what the other person is saying.
4. If you disagree, ask later.
   - If you disagree right away, you will appear to be arguing.

Appendix D

**Integrity Checklist for Social Skills Training**

Please Officer(student) Name: _________________________
Teacher Name: _________________________
Please Chief (social skill trainer) Name: _________________________
Social Skill: ___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Step</th>
<th>Please Chief completion check</th>
<th>Teacher completion check</th>
<th>Please Officer completion check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Give initial praise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identify the skill and give examples.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Describe the appropriate behavior (give the skill steps).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Give a rationale (reason)/Request acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give feedback.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give a positive consequence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Schedule a follow-up practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Offer praise and encouragement throughout.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shaffer, E.A. (2009)
Appendix E

Integrity Checklist for Classroom Skits

Checklist for Classroom Skit Development

Please Officer(student) Name: _________________________
Teacher Name:_______________________
Please Chief (social skill trainer) Name:_____________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skit Development Steps</th>
<th>Please Chief completion check</th>
<th>Teacher completion check</th>
<th>Please Officer completion check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prior to skit development, Please Officers have completed Boys Town social skills training.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identify social skills to be included in skit and review with Please Officers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Introduce Please Officer to skit scripts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Assign roles in script.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Practice skit.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shaffer, E.A. (2009)
Appendix F

Integrity Checklist for Peer Monitoring

Please Officer(student) Name: _________________________
Teacher Name:_______________________
Please Chief (social skill trainer) Name:_____________________
Social Skill: ___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recess Monitoring Steps</th>
<th>Please Chief completion check</th>
<th>Teacher completion check</th>
<th>Please Officer completion check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Inform school staff and teachers of specified recess times where monitoring will take place.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Allow teachers to introduce Please Officers and Excitations to their class and offer group contingency reward plan for collection of Excitations if teachers choose to provide rewards.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide Please Officers with identifying badges and Excitations to issue for “catching” other students exhibiting positive social skills on the playground.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Review examples of what positive social skills look like.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shaffer, E.A. (2009)
Appendix G
Parent Consent Form

October 5, 2009

Dear Parent:

Your school is working on a project with Miami University graduate students to improve peer relationships in our school. The purpose of this letter is to ask for your consent for your child to participate in the program. Please read the attached consent form, which tells about the program and your child’s rights as a participant in a research study. After reading it carefully, please sign the form and return it to your child’s teacher. You may also contact us if you have questions.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to make a positive impact on all children in our school.

Sincerely,

__________________________

Michael Woodin, PhD
School Psychology Program
Miami University
PARENT CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Purpose: Your child, __________________, is invited to participate in a project that will try to help students who struggle with using positive social skills. After teaching these students new skills, the program will then empower these students to recognize and encourage the use of positive social skills by all students in the school.

Procedure: Your child will be asked to participate in the program during the school day for approximately 30 minutes a day. We will meet for a total of six days over two weeks. For the two weeks, your child will have the opportunity to participate in a social skills training program called the Please Officers. As a “Please Officer,” your child will be taught several social skills which are vital to success in school settings. Your child may receive treats after each 30-minute session. The “Please Officers” will then have the chance to demonstrate their new skills to other children by performing skits about social skills to other classrooms and issue “X-Citation” certificates to children on the playground that they “catch” using positive social skills at play. Teachers may then use these X-Citations as part of a reward system for their classroom. The teacher will rate your child’s behavior each day over the course of the study. We will be collecting this data for about two months. The findings will be shared with other teachers, but no child’s names will be used. All information will be coded so that no one except your child’s teacher will know who participated. Your child’s name will not be placed on any material or records. Once the program is over, a summary will be sent to you.

Parent’s Rights: Your agreement to allow your child to participate in this project is voluntary. You have the right to refuse participation, or withdraw your child from this study at any time. You may withdraw by contacting the child’s teacher or either contact person listed below. The project director and the primary investigators are also available to answer any questions and to make certain that you understood the program. You may also contact the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship via phone (513-529-3600) or email (humansubjects@muohio.edu) for questions about the subject’s rights.

Project Director  Primary Investigator  Primary Investigator
Steuart Watson, PhD  Sarah Behrle, MS  Laura Florkey, MS
Dept of Educational Psych  Dept of Educational Psych  Dept of Educational Psych
201 McGuffey Hall  200 McGuffey Hall  200 McGuffey Hall
Miami University  Miami University  Miami University
513-529-0173  513-675-9342  937-361-0222
watsonts@muohio.edu  behrlesh@muohio.edu  florkele@muohio.edu

I have read and understand the purpose of this project, the procedures involved, and my rights. I agree to allow my child to participate in this project. By signing below, I acknowledge that I am 18 years or older.

______________________________
Student’s Name

______________________________  ________________
Parent’s Signature  Date
Appendix H
Student Assent Form

Please Officers Program

We are doing a study to learn about how much students like participating in the Please Officers Program. In the Please Officers Program you will learn several skills you can use in the classroom and on the playground. We would really like your help and we hope you will enjoy the program.

If you agree to be in our study we will ask you to leave class and meet with us in a small group to learn some skills that can help you work with your teachers and classmates. We will ask you to participate in our group sessions for 30 minutes for 12 days.

You can ask questions about this study at any time. If you decide at any time not to finish the program, you can ask us to stop.

If you sign this paper, it means that you have read this and that you want to be in the study. If you don’t want to be in the study, don’t sign this paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don’t sign this paper or if you change your mind later.

Your printed name:_____________________ _________________

Your signature:___________________________ Date __________