

FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

A Social/Behavioral Program for the Adolescent Student with Serious Learning Problems

Charles Meisgeier

Rejection — steady, unremitting, and nearly universal — is the daily experience of many children with serious learning problems. Teachers, administrators, and other school personnel show markedly less preference for them (Garrett & Crump, 1980), and peers often reject them (Scranton & Ryckman, 1979). The picture emerges of a child who experiences (a) constant, discouraging lack of success in the academic tasks of schooling; (b) painful failure in the social experiences of school and community life; and (c) subsequent tension and stress in the interactions of home life.

Emotional support systems for children normally have their roots in relationships with parents or siblings, teachers and school staff, or peers. For normal children, many social/emotional/behavioral growth tasks are encountered in the context of these relationships; and, further, the tasks are addressed with a certain amount of help from friends, teachers, or family. Children with learning problems may be presented with fewer growth experiences because of fewer social contacts and the likelihood of being denied normal support of others in working through relevant issues. Therefore, children who begin school life facing serious daily difficulties with learning find themselves falling farther and farther behind in their emotional and social development, and maturity as well.

Although it is recognized that the child who does not learn easily is handicapped, it is not adequately understood that poor social skills may be more limiting than academic deficits. Compounding both the social and the learning problems are the distress and personality disturbances the child experiences internally. Along with difficulties in relationships with others, students may develop painful and counter-productive feelings about themselves. One psychiatrist reported that one-third of the referrals to his clinic needing psychotherapy for depression and related disorders are cases with primary learning disorders and secondary adjustment problems (Schecter, 1974).

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If adolescent learning disabled students are going to begin to show a greater measure of academic progress and overall success in school than is now common, those working with them will have to accept responsibility for the social and emotional progress their students make, as well as for their academic learning. In programs in which affective needs are not addressed, academic programs tend to bog down.

By adolescence, many of the techniques teachers and parents use to help learning disabled children are not proving effective. Data now available suggest that efforts to improve this situation should focus as much on what is occurring inside the student as on what is happening in the classroom. Many adolescent LD children resist efforts to help them learn. Often, this stems from the tremendous ego devastation during their elementary schooling and the urgent, desperate need to protect themselves from more defeat and pain.

Those who approach the problems of children with learning difficulties from a personality theory framework indicate that "children who fail at school tasks — the tasks most highly valued by their society — fail to develop a global sense of competence" (Erikson, 1968). Without some fragment of hope that a job can be accomplished, an adolescent student comes to the place where the probability of more failure is simply too

painful to be endured. All effort may come to a grinding halt. Erikson has stressed that failure to develop critical competencies in the microcosmic culture of the elementary classroom can confirm a child's fear of insignificance and powerlessness. In that state very little initiative or effort can be expected. A child will withdraw, avoid learning situations, and abandon exploratory behaviors (White, 1959). In nearly every situation, the student will anticipate failure so that even the most creative teacher will have a difficult time persuading him or her to risk trying to understand or learn again.

Erikson (1968) suggested that mastery is the intrinsic reinforcer that encourages industry. Careful engineering of the classroom can set in motion a cycle of initiative — industry — mastery — sense of success that usually will foster continued learning, but by adolescence it is seldom enough to ensure successful integration of students into the mainstream of school life (Gable, Strain & Hendrickson, 1979) or prepare them for what they must face when they leave school. "The debilitating effects of inferiority, social isolation, and frustration that have accumulated since the early school years cannot be counteracted simply by improving the student's reading, writing, and math skills" (Cook, 1979).

The Synergistic Education System (Meisgeier, 1981) addresses these issues by providing a highly structured program option that (a) vividly shows the student his or her own continuous success in reading and other subjects through his or her own daily measurement and charting of tasks prescribed at appropriate levels; and (b) introduces powerful individual and group experiences that enable a student to learn to understand, accept responsibility for his or her own social behavior and its consequences, and for more adequately meeting his or her own affective and social needs. Complete and detailed instructions for theoretical and applied learning comprise the 60-lesson Synergistic Education Social/Behavioral Curriculum.

ELEMENTARY PROGRAMMING OVERVIEW

At the elementary level, many good programs have been developed that attempt to improve students' academic performance, and a few pilot-type programs have focused on improving the student's self-image or self-concept. Baskin and Hess (1980) reviewed seven affective programs designed to understand and change the emotional and social behavior of students:

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1. *A Cognitive Approach to Solving Real Life Problems* (Spivack & Shure, 1974) is designed for 4-5 year olds in structured groups of six to eight children and a teacher. This program attempts to increase behavioral adjustment by (a) developing alternative solutions to problems occurring in social interaction and the consequences of these alternative solutions; and (b) enabling the students to understand the causal association between actions or problems and prior causative events.
2. *Developing Understanding of Self and Others* (DUSO) (Dinkmeyer, 1970) was developed for K-primary, with discussions led by the teacher for 20 minutes each day. The program attempts to help children learn specific words to describe feelings, to talk freely about feelings, goals, and behavior, and to understand their interdependence.
3. *Human Development Program* ("Magic Circle") (Ball, 1974) is intended for elementary children and is structured in 10-30 minute daily circle sessions for 5-12 participants. The students are given the opportunity to increase "their own personal effectiveness, self-confidence, and understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal relations."
4. *Interpersonal Skills Training* (Aspy & Roebuck, 1974) is a teacher training program designed to increase student mental health and academic achievement through the teacher's use of specific interpersonal skills. It is intended for grades 1-12.
5. *Project AWARE* (Elardo & Cooper, 1977) was produced for elementary aged children. The goal is to facilitate their affective and social development by increasing (a) their ability to assume the role of another; (b) their ability to be more accepting and understanding of individual differences; and (c) their ability to solve interpersonal problems by being able to define problems, suggest alternatives, and understand consequences.
6. *Schools Without Failure* (Glasser, 1969) provides no prescriptive curriculum for the teacher's use but, rather, uses the vehicle of classroom meetings to develop an identity that fosters a sense of success, increases levels of self-esteem, and develops a sense of responsibility for one's own behavior and for fulfilling one's own needs.
7. *Teacher Effectiveness Training* (Gordon, 1974) presents problem-solving methods for teachers, relying heavily on communication skills and a heightened sense of respect for each student. It was designed to increase productive learning time by decreasing discipline events.

SECONDARY PROGRAMMING OVERVIEW

At the secondary level (junior high-senior high), there appears to be a paucity of relevant program information and materials, in either the academic or affective area, for LD students. Most attempts to develop secondary programs appear to adapt techniques and strategies used at the elementary level. Their relative effectiveness is probably a moot point, for efforts to use them with older students seem to intensify these students' resistance to academic remediation. New programs designed specifically for the adolescent student are needed rather than an adaptation of existing elementary level programs.

To achieve substantial change in adolescent students, no single approach (i.e., one that focuses either on academic deficits or on social/emotional problems) appears to be sufficient. Meisgeier (1977) advocates programs that simultaneously impact a student's skill deficits and affective problems. His concept of "synergistic education" represents this dual approach. *Synergy* is the term used to illustrate the concept that a combination of affective and academic interventions will have a greater impact on the student's development than either intervention would produce in isolation.

The Synergistic Education Program was piloted and successfully implemented in all the junior and senior high schools of the Spring Branch Independent School District, Houston, Texas. It includes:

- (1) High Intensity Learning Center (HILC) — A synergistic program requiring one semester to complete, designed to run three consecutive hours in a self-contained classroom and providing:
 - (a) Academic Component — Designed to rapidly and significantly improve reading fluency, comprehension, and basic skills.
 - (b) Affective Component — Designed to improve the student's social skills and self-concept, and to alleviate students' self-perception of powerlessness in school and learning situations; presented as a 60-lesson course in psychology.

- (2) Parent Program — A series of eight programs complementary to the social/behavioral component, for parents of children enrolled in the program, and designed to involve parents in an active and supportive manner in their child's educational experience.
- (3) Content Mastery — An ongoing, follow-up program for students who have completed the HILC program; focuses on mainstreamed students and offers:
 - (a) A support system for the teacher who has a learning disabled student in his or her class.
 - (b) A support system for a learning disabled student who is placed in the mainstream.
 - (c) A program that redefines and retrains the secondary level special education teacher in a consultant/facilitator role.
 - (d) A system that provides, through consultation, development of adaptation strategies and procedures for instruction that will accommodate a learning disabled student so that all content instruction may occur in the regular classroom.
- (4) Essential Skills — An ongoing follow-up program for students who have completed the HILC program, employs prescriptive individualized instruction designed to continue, in a resource setting for one period each day, the social/behavioral and remedial skill and reading fluency programming initiated in the HILC.

Other components of the Synergistic Education Program have been reported elsewhere (Meisgeier, 1981). This paper focuses on the Social/Behavioral Curriculum used in the High Intensity Learning Center of the Synergistic Education Program.

THE SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS

Caution should be taken when applying characteristics to individual students, but students with serious learning problems often exhibit some of the following:

- major cognitive deficits
- high distractibility

- inflexibility toward ideas and activities
- secondary emotional problems
- immaturity
- frustration with self
- inner rage
- passive or active aggression
- feelings of inadequacy
- difficulty in choosing from alternatives.

Further, a number of students have suggested that peers, parents, and teachers of learning disabled children view them in the following negative ways:

<i>Peers</i>	<i>Parents</i>	<i>Teachers</i>
not as popular as others	unable to control impulses less considerate than others	less cooperative than others
	having poor judgment	less accepting of responsibility less socially acceptable aggressive

It has been stated that students with serious learning problems receive daily messages of rejection, and that a student's interaction with family, teachers, and peers is an extremely important factor in the development of self-concept and may provide ample justification for the rejection he or she experiences. The student may make no relationship between the rejection and his or her own inappropriate behaviors. A person's self-concept grows out of interactions with others and is a reflection of the way others view him or her. To reverse these negative messages and traits, new behaviors must be learned to alter the "others'" view of the student.

Often unaware of their impact on others, these students do not act on incidental cues that influence a typical student's actions. They more often mislabel emotions than do "average" students, and sometimes the mislabelings are extreme. Spontaneous learning about behavior and response and the development of social sensitivity seem markedly less apt to occur in LD students. Specific training is necessary to compensate for this deficit.

Students who feel they are failures, who see themselves as "nobodies," are likely to be rejected by their peers and excluded from group interaction. Peer groups, however, represent an important socializing agent for adolescents. Without the opportunity to engage in group

activities and to learn from peers, a student's self-concept can be further undermined and socialization further retarded. LD students who are receiving instruction in the regular classroom must be taught skills that will help them be acceptable to teachers and peers. Without this help, LD students may not have a fair chance to be included in the classroom and other social activities of the mainstream of school life.

THE DEMANDS OF REGULAR CLASS PLACEMENT

Most educators are now aware of the term "least restrictive alternative." In just a few short years the emphasis of special programming for students with serious learning problems has turned from self-contained, or separate track, programs to a focus on service for these children in the regular classroom. This new emphasis has further highlighted the importance of teaching social/behavioral skills to students who will be mainstreamed, to significantly improve their chances of acceptance and approval by peers and teachers.

Yauinan (1980) and Rebner (1978) reported slightly lower self-concept scores for elementary mainstreamed LD/MBD students than similar special class students and significantly lower self-concept scores than "normal" students. Both the increased demands and competition of the regular class and teacher attitude have been cited as factors contributing to lower self-esteem and the subsequent tendency to failure in the regular class. Kaufman, Gottlieb, Agard, and Kukic (1975) identified three interdependent elements involved in successful integration of handicapped students into the mainstream: (a) temporal integration (amount of time spent in regular classroom); (b) instructional integration; and (c) social integration (acceptance by classmates). Low peer status of LD children has been consistently reported (Kaufman et al, 1975).

Regular class teacher attitudes toward the LD student have been reported as less than positive. To wit:

- They are less desirable in class than other students (Bryan & McGrady, 1972; Keogh, Tchir, & Windeguth-Behn, 1974).
- The label "LD" causes negative connotations, biasing the ability to observe a student's behavior objectively (Jacobs, 1978).

- LD students are more likely to be ignored by teachers and peers when they initiate an interaction (Bryan & Wheeler, 1972).
- More criticism and warnings about classroom behavior are directed toward LD students than others in the regular classroom (Chapman, Larsen & Parker, 1979).

In a study of 350 LD students in grades 4-6, Garrett and Crump (1980) reported results similar to the above. LD students in their study:

- received significantly lower social status scores;
- were less preferred by teachers than were their classmates; and
- viewed their social status differently than did their classmates, tending to overestimate their status or achievement.

The authors concluded that "if goals of mainstreaming are to be realized, social skills must be considered in the educational planning and programming for the learning disabled child." They indicated a need for increased emphasis on group dynamics and curricular experiences designed to develop social skills essential for increased acceptance by peers. According to Gable, Strain, and Hendrickson (1979), "The accumulated evidence points to the fact that the ability to apply a range of teaching strategies designed to improve the social adjustment of LD children is critical to the success of the mainstreaming movement." They further indicated that teachers are seldom trained in this area.

Learning disabled students are capable of learning subject material if accommodations are made in the way information is presented and retrieved. The students, however, may come to a secondary teacher in a specific subject area with serious gaps in exposure to that subject because of the school hours devoted to elementary school remediation of basic skills. The student is behind from the start. It is uphill all the way. Secondary teachers generally focus on information presentation developmentally and have little training, time, or inclination to deal with remedial aspects of instruction. Faced with the prospect of sympathetic but untrained teachers, unsympathetic teachers, competition with average or above-average achievers, negative feedback from peers,

and face-to-face confrontation with their own strengths and limitations, students obviously will need a positive self-image and all the ego strength they can develop to successfully cope with the demands and realities of regular education.

PURPOSE OF THE SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL CURRICULUM

The Social/Behavioral Program is designed to promote a strong self-image and to increase acceptance and communication with peers, teachers, and others. The program influences academic achievement and overall success orientation by providing detailed instruction in four broad areas and by exposing each student to a series of structured success experiences. Goals of the program are to help the student to:

- communicate and interact effectively and appropriately with peers and adults;
- accept responsibility for personal behavior and decisions through autonomous inner-directed behavior;
- cope appropriately with frustration and stress;
- be appropriately assertive without being aggressive or passive aggressive; and
- develop rational problem-solving behavior.

PROGRAM FORMAT

Areas and Program Emphases

The Social/Behavioral Curriculum is divided into four major skill areas: Responsibility, Communication,

Assertiveness, and Problem Solving. The activities in these categories follow a continuum of skills that begin with the student taking responsibility for his or her statements and actions and concluding with the more complex and abstract problem-solving skills. Each area provides skills that are needed and utilized in the next level of the sequence. Each major area has its own goals and goal-associated skills for the student to acquire. Definitions of each area are:

- **Responsibility:** Becoming responsible for one's own statements and actions, as well as actively seeking positive ways to cope with everyday stress and frustration.
- **Communication:** Any verbal or nonverbal means of conveying a message, feeling, or thought to another person.
- **Assertiveness:** Positive verbal and nonverbal means of communicating needs, opinions, suggestions, and questions.
- **Problem solving:** Active involvement in the process of seeking a positive, constructive solution to a problem.

The 60 lessons are divided among the skill areas in the following manner: 22 lessons for Responsibility, 9 for Communication, 11 for Assertiveness, and 8 for Problem Solving — leaving more than 10 lessons for individual teacher-student interaction sessions. Figure 1 lists the first 30 lessons in the sequence. The importance of the topic to the student's self-concept development determines the number of lessons created in that area. For example, being responsible for one's self and own needs is basic to personal survival and to building a positive self-image. The concept of accepting responsibility for

1. Introduction	10. Communication: <i>Verbal Communication</i>	21. Communication: <i>Your Stroke Support System</i>
2. Communication: <i>A Discussion Model</i>	11. Nonverbal Communication: <i>Eye Contact</i>	22. Communication: <i>Negative Strokes</i>
3. Responsibility: <i>Responsible Statements</i>	12. Nonverbal Communication: <i>Body Language</i>	23. Individual Sessions
4. Responsibility: <i>Assuming Responsibility</i>	13. Individual Sessions	24. Communication: <i>Negative Stroke Rejection</i>
5. Responsibility: <i>Dealing with Persons in Authority</i>	14. Assertiveness: <i>Aggressive Behavior</i>	25. Communication: <i>Compliments and Conversations</i>
6. Self-Concept: <i>Having a Learning Disability</i>	15. Assertiveness: <i>Passive Behavior</i>	26. Communication: <i>Making Requests</i>
7. Student Conferences: <i>LD and Goals</i>	16. Assertiveness: <i>Assertive Behavior</i>	27. Communication: <i>Refusing Requests</i>
8. Student Conferences: <i>LD and Goals</i>	17. Assertiveness: <i>Assertive Overview</i>	28. Individual Sessions
9. Communication: <i>Two-way Communication</i>	18. Individual Sessions	29. Assertiveness: <i>Denial of Rights and Expressing Opinions</i>
	19. Assertiveness: <i>Society's Stereotypes</i>	30. Assertiveness: <i>Coping with Anger</i> (+ 30 additional lessons)
	20. Communication: <i>Positive Strokes</i>	

FIGURE 1
Partial Sequence of Affective Lessons

one's behavior, problems, and successes is difficult for students to easily accept and, therefore, contains the largest number of lessons.

The lessons in Communication provide students with skills they often lack and which are a necessary foundation for more complex social skills. Most adolescents, and especially learning disabled students, have a great deal of difficulty expressing their feelings and thoughts to others, as well as correctly reading another's thoughts and feeling messages. The goal of instruction in this area is to teach students skills that will improve their ability to communicate with others in both the sender and receiver roles.

Assertiveness builds on communication skills. This area supplies the student with positive, constructive, alternative ways to communicate with peers and adults. LD students frequently deal with peers and adults either aggressively or passively. In doing so, they are reflecting a poor self-concept, causing peers and adults to view them in a similar, negative manner. If a student can project a more positive image of self through assertive behavior, peers and adults will view him or her from this positive viewpoint. As a result, students who receive this positive treatment from peers and adults will likewise begin to view themselves in the same positive way.

The area of Problem Solving appears at the end of the program because it is the most complex and abstract skill involved. At that point, students should be introduced to the process of problem solving, hopefully integrating as many skills as possible and implementing this process in solving real identified problems. Active involvement is sought through a problem-solving model that can be used in making everyday decisions.

Daily Schedules

The format for each day is the same and has a detailed lesson plan with activities, procedures, and materials listed. This positive learning model consists of deep breathing exercises to relax; a mini-lecture; the experience activity; and self-reflection time, as given below.

- (5 min.) Deep Breath/Relaxation Exercises
- (5 min.) Introduction to Day's Activities/ Mini-lesson
- (35 min.) Activities (skills to be learned)
- (5 min.) "Ego Trip" Journal Writing and Positive Stories

Relaxation Exercises

The deep breath/relaxation exercises have three primary purposes. First, students who have encountered frustration during previous academic sessions may need to relax before they can participate effectively in and learn from the day's activity. Second, many of the activities undertaken during the session may produce anxiety and stress. These relaxation periods may also be used to vent problems the student has chosen to ignore or hide from. Third, students who have practiced relaxation exercises regularly in class, it is hoped, will be able to transfer this skill to other stressful situations in school, at home, or with friends.

The relaxation method used is a simple, muscle relaxing activity led by the teacher. Students are instructed to inhale and exhale for a series of counts, to tighten their leg and thigh muscles for a series of counts, to clench their fists for a series of counts, and to contract their facial muscles for a series of counts.

Introduction to Activity

The purpose of the introduction is to review ideas presented in earlier lessons which are incorporated in the day's activities; to give the objective of the current lesson; and to create within the student the desire to develop new skills in the areas to be discussed.

Activities

The activities related to each topic take many forms. Role plays, games, discussions, activities based on video or audio tapes, labeling behaviors, practice exercises, and synopses are frequent methods used. A typical session includes two or three activities that relate directly to the topic. For example, four representative activities from the 24 lessons on self-responsibility are:

1. A group game in which students experience external control over simple physical actions. The game is followed by a discussion of how it feels to be told what to do and how it feels to do the controlling.
2. An exercise with cartoon strips depicting adolescents in situations in which they experience external control (on the job, at home, etc.). The students

solve problems about how to control their mental outlook when faced with such everyday situations.

3. A mini-lecture explaining and demonstrating the concept that each individual makes a choice in assigning meaning and feelings to certain situations.
4. A workbook activity in which students graph their daily schedule (sleep, eat, recreation, work) and identify how they could better meet their physical needs.
5. A discussion in which students identify a stressful situation for them, their usual behavior in this situation, and a possible alternative way to cope with the stress.

Discussions, frequently part of the daily activities, are used to increase student skills in the behavior being addressed. A good discussion extends a student's understanding of activities by eliciting other students' ideas and opinions. Discussions also develop a student's skill in participation and expression of ideas. Because discussions are often held in content classrooms, the discussions related to the social/behavioral lessons have been structured to cue each student about his or her participation, interruptions, and off-task remarks. In this way, the affective curriculum has additional carry-over into the regular academic program.

Ego Trip/Journal

The final activity of each lesson is an exercise titled, "Ego Trip/Journal." Students are handed a mimeographed sheet to use for their personal journal. Printed at the top of the sheet is the "ego trip" message, which reads:

"I am an important person."

"I am a worthwhile person."

"I like myself and I feel good today because . . ."

Students and teachers recite this message in unison. As they come to the blank after "because," each student fills in a statement relating something he or she has done that day that made him or her feel good. Examples from student journals include:

"I like myself and I feel good today because I am ignoring some of the people who are being silly."

"I like myself and I feel good today because I read 64 words in a minute."

"I like myself and I feel good today because I learned that I'm not dumb."

Then the student completes a statement that begins, "Today I learned . . .," writing either a summary of the day's lesson or some entry about the way he or she felt during the lesson. The journal pages are accumulated in each student's journal notebook.

The "Ego Trip/Journal" serves several purposes in the program. First, it forces each student to verbalize daily that he or she has value as a person. The act of saying it impresses on the student that the words apply to him or her. Second, the "ego trip" requires students to specify and acknowledge at least one thing they did well that day. Third, writing a summary of the day's activity makes the topic for that day more personally relevant to the student.

The structure of the social/behavioral group lessons is summarized in Figure 2.

Excerpts from Lesson 20 of the Social/Behavioral Curriculum Guide

The following excerpts are taken from a lesson in the curriculum. These samples will give you a better idea of the content.

"Positive Strokes"

Orientation: Teacher must work through his or her own belief system about "strokes." We define a stroke as any verbal or nonverbal attention message. In our society, social mores regarding strokes tend to stifle our need for support from others and thus stifle our emotional health. Eight common examples of these messages are:

1. Don't ask for strokes.
2. Don't accept strokes.
3. Don't give strokes.
4. Don't reject strokes (remain neutral to a compliment).
5. Don't give strokes to yourself.
6. Give strokes only to those who *really* need them.
7. Women are not to expect or accept strokes from men, but are to give strokes to men.

8. Men are not to give strokes to women, but must accept and expect strokes from them.

strokes. *Example:* Student: "Hi, Mrs. James." Teacher: "Hi, John. I really like it that you speak to me when you see me."

If teachers accept the above statements as sound, they will have to assess their behavior before teaching the social/behavioral lessons. As teachers of these lessons they must model positive stroking in the "here and now." Teachers often do not give positive strokes to students for good behavior because they "expect" the students to act right. ("They should behave.") At the same time, the teacher gives plenty of attention to the students' negative behavior (by giving conduct cuts, yelling, sending children to the office, etc.). This tells students that if they want attention, they should misbehave. A teacher can discourage students' negative behavior far more effectively by giving strokes for positive behavior rather than paying attention to negative behaviors.

Teachers should encourage students' initial weak attempts at positive stroking, and, in fact, should respond to all student

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Time</i>
1. Relaxation Exercises		5 min.
2. Introduction	To help students see that they choose to be aggressive, passive, or assertive to get attention.	5 min.
3. Strokes and Discussion	To introduce the concept of strokes to students.	10 min.
4. Modeling Positive Strokes	To give students examples of positive strokes.	5 min.
5. Practicing Positive Strokes	To allow students practice in giving and receiving positive strokes.	10 min.
6. Giving Positive Strokes	To offer students the opportunity to give and receive nine positive strokes.	10 min.
7. Journal		5 min.

Lesson Structure	Instructional Arrangement	Activities	Time
1. Relaxation Exercise	Group	Muscle relaxation	5 min.
2. Introduction to Activity	Group	Mini-lecture/discussion	5 min.
3. Activities	Group, partners, individual	Mini-lecture, discussion, role play, simulations, games, filmstrips, etc.	35 min.
4. Ego Trip/Journal	Group, individual	Oral affirmation statement on journal sheet	5 min.
			50 min.

FIGURE 2
Social/Behavioral Lesson Format

1. Relaxation Exercises (procedure omitted)

2. Introduction

Purpose: To help students see that they choose to be aggressive, passive, or assertive to get attention. (5 min.)

(procedure omitted)

3. Strokes and Discussion (with dog or other animal)

Purpose: To introduce the concept of strokes to students. (10 min.)

(procedure omitted)

4. Modeling Positive Strokes

Purpose: To give students examples of positive strokes. (5 min.)

Step 1: Say: "Giving positive strokes is sometimes difficult because we are afraid that people won't accept them or believe them. We are afraid people will laugh at our compliments or think we are stupid for giving them. But all of us like to get positive strokes. So why wouldn't someone like to get a plus stroke from us? With some practice, giving strokes can become easier."

Step 2: "I am going to give a positive stroke to each of you. I want you to notice how you feel when I give you the stroke." Stroke each student sincerely. Examples:

Sue, I really think your hair is pretty.

Bill, I appreciate how gently you handled the dog.

Karen, I like how you entered the discussion. You really gave good answers.

(Give each stroke sincerely. Take your time.)

Step 3: Ask the students to volunteer to report honestly how they felt.

- a. "Did it feel good?" "Why?" (If students have trouble answering these questions, relate how you sometimes feel when someone pays you a compliment.)

- b. "Did it make you uncomfortable?" "Why?"

- c. "Many times, giving strokes is harder than receiving them. Why do you think this is so?" (We are not sure they mean what they say; we get embarrassed; we don't know what to say; etc.)

- d. "What can we do to acknowledge a stroke?" (Say thank you; smile; say something about the stroke, etc.)

- e. Emphasize that the person giving the stroke and the person receiving the stroke should maintain eye contact with each other.

5. Practicing Positive Strokes

Purpose: To allow students practice in giving and receiving strokes. (10 min.)

(procedure omitted)

6. Giving Positive Strokes

Purpose: To offer student the opportunity to give and receive nine positive strokes. (10 min.)

Step 1: Give each student nine blank cards. Have each write his or her name on all nine cards. Take up the cards and place them by student's name in rows on the table. Have each student take one card from each row so that all students end up with their own stack of cards, each card with a different classmate's name.

- a. Tell the students to write one positive stroke on each student's card. While the students are writing, place an envelope with each student's name on it on the table.

- b. When the students finish writing the strokes, have them put each student's card in the correct envelope.

- c. Give students the envelopes with their names on them to read quietly at their seats. (Optional: Join the stroke system by including your name and filling out cards along with the students.)

Step 2: Homework (1 min.): Ask students to give three positive strokes to family members.

Have them write the strokes down and, later, record how they felt giving the strokes and what the persons who received the strokes did.

7. Journal (procedure omitted)

TEACHER SKILLS

The teacher of the Social/Behavioral Program is primarily a teacher, not a counselor, although most teachers provide individual guidance and counseling to students when appropriate. The Social/Behavioral Program requires the teacher to be a presenter, group facilitator, and an appropriate model for the concepts and skills being taught. Inappropriate behaviors are dealt with through an appropriate, positively oriented behavior management system. Inappropriate behavior is addressed and discussed within the context of the concepts and skills presented by the program. Therefore, student behavior may be labeled and discussed as aggressive behavior, passive-aggressive behavior, negative stroking, blaming, outer directed behavior, inappropriate or misread verbal or nonverbal communication, stress reactions, avoidance of responsibility, need for problem solving, and so on. These behaviors become examples and reminders concerning the concepts and skills being taught and should be identified, labeled, and discussed at the appropriate time.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE STUDENT

In presenting the Social/Behavioral Program, care should be taken so that students do not get the idea the teacher is doing something to them because they are inadequate. Every facet of the program is positive and success oriented. The format and activities are new and different and, with assurance and support from the teacher, students can overcome negative feelings and participate positively in the program activities. A lack of self-confidence is often characteristic of adolescence, and most students with serious learning problems feel they are quite different from their peers. The teacher's positive, supportive, encouraging attitude toward learning about relationships, feelings, and so forth will help students build self-confidence and a willingness to participate and grow.

EVALUATION

Affective programs are difficult to evaluate, and research on program outcomes has been spotty and subjective (Hudgins, 1979). Assessment of goals in the internal/emotional area is hampered by the complexity of the phenomena to be assessed, contextual influences, uncertainty of stability of behavior over time, and a host of other factors that confound the evaluation of affective programs (Baskin & Hess, 1980). Because of these problems, many procedures have been used to evaluate the programs, and have included student and parent responses. Students, teachers, and parents responded enthusiastically and positively to the Social/Behavioral Program of the Synergistic Model. Some of the comments of students and parents are listed below.

Student Responses

- "I don't have a heart attack when I take a test now, even when I don't know the answers."
- "It helped me deal with problems. I am calm now."
- "It helped a lot to communicate with other people."
- "It let me get out my feelings."
- "Other people could help me when I had problems."
- "I feel better about myself. I feel good."
- "I didn't feel I was smart. Now I understand and feel good about myself."
- "(I learned) how to cope with some situations."
- "I can solve problems a little better now."
- "It helps you know how to cope, learn how to handle things."
- "It helps you feel better, you know what will help you in doing things."
- "It helps you take a test, breathe easier, and calm down so you can remember what you're supposed to."
- "You can come out and say things, to tell how your feelings are."
- "I feel good. It makes you think a lot."
- "It helped me explain my problems, and that made me feel better."
- "You could talk about a lot of different things, like how you felt."

Parental Responses

1. Has your child's image of himself/herself changed? How?

"He feels he has achieved — is confident and proud of his good grades."

"Can't tell any difference."

"Yes, she has an improved self-image and seems to be much more self-confident."

"More accepting of herself. Possibly more positive attitude."

"He tries harder. He does his homework without being told. He feels better in the fact that he is not frustrated."

"More self-assertive."

"Feels better about self and special classes. Knows that she can accomplish things."

"He is more self-assured, confident, and has more self-esteem."

"Yes — Mike seems more sure of himself. He feels he can make good marks on his report card. He is very proud of himself."

"Yes — because the teachers are aware of his problem — he feels better about it, and is anxious to work toward overcoming his problems."

"He realizes he has a problem, but that's fine; so does everyone. He accepts it. He sits straighter, stands taller, is more outspoken, isn't as timid, defends himself when he thinks he should."

2. The most beneficial aspect for my child has been:

"Recognition of interactions between people, 'eye contact,' behavioral choices, etc."

"His confidence has been built up. The program interested him and he was enthusiastic about his ability to progress with our help and the help of the teachers and counselors."

"He has positive thoughts about school. He was beginning to have thoughts of quitting. Now I feel when the time comes he will want to further his education past high school. The program has made him know he can do it."

"Problem solving; direction and assertive training."

SYNERGISTIC EDUCATION STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Intensive training programs are conducted periodically for teachers and other educators desiring to implement the Synergistic Education Program. A three-day workshop focuses on procedures for implementing the High Intensity Learning Center (HILC) Program, which includes Oral and Silent Fluency Skills, Academic Skills, and the Social/ Behavioral Program. The training for the Social/ Behavioral Program usually requires 1½-2 days. A shortened version requires one full day. A separate three-day program is designed to cover procedures for Content Mastery, Essential Skills Program, and the Parent Training Program.

HILC Training: (1) overview of the concept of Synergistic Education and the High Intensity Learning Center; (2) Oral Fluency procedures (fluency rates, charting, preparing for oral fluency, steps in oral fluency); (3) Silent Fluency procedures (silent fluency procedures, materials, book conferences; reading impress strategies; managing the silent fluency period); (4) Skill Development program (gaining information, creating HILC skill program); (5) introduction to HILC affective program; (6) skills needed to lead group affective lessons; (7) skills needed to lead individual affective lessons; and (8) scheduling concerns.

Content Mastery Training: (1) philosophy and overview of the Content Mastery Program; (2) successful accommodations for the regular class: modifying information presentation, test modification, contracting; (3) matching student needs to accommodations; (4) conferencing with teachers and students; (5) setting up a Content Mastery Center — materials, teacher roles, scheduling options; (6) the Content Mastery period: teaching study skills that generalize to content materials; and (7) consultation skills.

For further information about training programs and publications, contact: Dr. Charles Meisgeier, Professor of Education and Chair, Guidance and Counseling, Foundations of Education and Special Education, College of Education, University of Houston, Houston, TX 77004, (713) 749-7625.

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CLASSROOM FORUM

by Beverly Dexter
Lynchburg College

Well, it's that time of the year again — evaluation by the supervisor of special education. I don't mean anything personal, but he has been in my classroom a total of 30 minutes all year, yet he is considered capable of evaluating me as a special education teacher. I think I'm doing a very good job in the classroom, but how can he know that with any certainty after such brief visits twice a year?

The question of who, what, and how evaluation should take place has been an ongoing one ever since this practice was implemented in the public schools. On paper, it seems logical that a supervisor or principal should evaluate a teacher in the classroom through some sort of observation. The problem arises when the supervisor tries to do this evaluation "according to the book." For some reason, most authors of texts on supervision fail to mention the true logistics of systematic observations of classroom teachers. They neglect, for example, to mention the number of clock hours actually involved in such observations.

A school system may have as many as 50 special education teachers, all of whom are to have semi-annual evaluations. If observations and evaluations were the main responsibilities of supervisors, as stated in most texts, this would still be quite an undertaking for one

person. In reality, administrative paperwork often becomes the priority, and observations tend to be minimal because of the time factor involved.

Even more important, but closely related to the time factor, is the consideration of what to look for during observations of teachers in the classroom. A multitude of observation forms have been developed by supervisors and teachers alike in an effort to pinpoint observable behaviors that can be stated in print. Characteristics like "neat appearance," "good voice quality," and "smiles frequently" are still found on many observation forms. Unfortunately, these behaviors are interpreted in the "eye of the beholder." For example, what actually constitutes "neat appearance?" Ten years ago a male with a beard might have been marked down because facial hair was not readily accepted as a positive characteristic for classroom teachers. Now the same issue receives little resistance except when the facial hair appears "unkempt" or "untrimmed." Again, this is a value judgment.

Several years ago someone developed an evaluation of Socrates as a teacher. It has appeared in so many articles and texts that the originator is no longer even given credit. Nonetheless, in today's world of the public schools, poor Socrates would be considered a loser, and he would not likely be hired even by the most desperate school system. After all, he wore sandals to class all the time! And instead of answering his students' questions, he would respond with even more questions. Also, he never grouped his students according to their needs. Instead, he taught everyone through the oral discussion method and never once referred to his teacher's manual to make certain that his students were acquiring the necessary prerequisite skills for future learning tasks. Worse, he didn't use standardized tests to determine which students were not performing at grade level or who should be referred to the special education teacher for remedial reading or math. He also refused to keep seating charts, collect lunch money, or record attendance for the purpose of A.D.M. reports to the superintendent. Such behavior would not be tolerated in the field of education today. Yet, Socrates is sometimes said to be the greatest teacher of all time.

This leads to the question of what skills or attributes a teacher should have (and, thus, be evaluated for). Recently I decided to investigate this question by asking two graduate classes of 50 teachers to list the five strongest and five weakest professional characteristics as

they defined the characteristics necessary for being a good teacher. Then I took the top 10 strongest characteristics as listed by these teachers and had them rank order these according to their individual priorities for being a good teacher. A weighting scale was devised so that each rank designated by an individual would earn a certain set number of points. As a combined group, these 50 teachers ranked the 10 categories in the following order:

1. Concern for children
2. Like teaching
3. Patience
4. Education
5. Improvement of teaching skills
6. Organization of time
7. Getting along with peers
8. Consideration for others
9. Honesty/trust
10. Open to suggestions

There were 25 regular teachers (K-7) and 25 special teachers (TMR, EMR, LD) in these two classes, so I decided to compare the rankings made by the regular teachers with those made by the special teachers. Both groups agreed on the rankings for three categories: (1) "concern for children," (2) "like teaching," and (3) "patience." The next seven categories showed anywhere from mild to extreme discrepancies among the respondents.

While the regular teachers ranked "consideration for others" and "getting along with peers" as their lowest two categories, the special teachers ranked these as sixth and fifth, respectively. The special teachers ranked "honesty/trust" and "open to suggestions" as their lowest two categories, while the regular teachers ranked them as fourth and seventh, respectively. A comparison of all the ranking is given below:

Category	Special Teachers	Regular Teachers	Combined Groups
Concern for children	1	1	1
Like teaching	2	2	2
Patience	3	3	3
Education	4	6	4

Improvement of teaching skills	8	5	5
Organization of time	7	8	6
Getting along with peers	5	10	7
Consideration for others	6	9	8
Honesty/trust	9	4	9
Open to suggestions	10	7	10

Although these two groups of teachers generally agreed on the first three priority characteristics of a good teacher, they did not agree on the ranking of the seven other characteristics on the list. If these teachers cannot agree on what characteristics good teachers should have in their repertoire, how can evaluations of their teaching be considered appropriate? Even if the rankings by the combined groups were used to develop an evaluation tool, how could such characteristics be objectively evaluated? How could one possibly evaluate "concern for children" on a rating scale?

The point is that even though a general consensus may emerge as to what characteristics a good teacher should possess, the priority of each characteristic will be viewed differently by individuals and by categorical groups of teachers. Based on the information supplied by these teachers, the implication is that there should be two different evaluation forms for the two groups of teachers. If a more in-depth analysis of the data were to be made, it might reveal that separate evaluation forms would be indicated for the various grade levels and specific content areas as well. But the feasibility of doing this is questionable.

A more realistic approach might be an IEP for each teacher, developed and carried out in much the same way as the IEP is currently being utilized with exceptional children. Individualized evaluation procedures — IEPs — would be developed by teachers and their supervisors as a cooperative venture. Like individualized education programs, these procedures would focus on the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers based on the needs of the situation at hand. The teacher would be compared to other teachers in certain areas of proficiency, as determined by educators in the same

categorical area, but growth would be evaluated on an individual basis.

Such an idea may sound like "pie in the sky" thinking but, then again, if anyone had told special educators 10 years ago that written individualized education programs for their students would one day be mandatory, the same comment may have been forthcoming from many educators. Ideas don't just happen. Someone has to experiment with them — to make them happen — before they become more than just a figment of one's imagination. Someone has to implement them to make them real. Let's hope we don't always have to rely on legislation for the implementation of sound educational practices such as individualized evaluation procedures for teachers.

ALERT

The proceedings from a national conference hosted by the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in June, 1979, have been summarized in a new book, *Speech Assessment and Speech Improvement for the Hearing Impaired* is now available from the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf. Dr. Joanne D. Subtelný, professor in the NTID Communication Program at RIT, is the editor.

A panel discussion synopsis in the book focuses on how to recruit competent individuals for the profession, prepare personnel, and establish high professional standards. There are also articles on speech assessment, audiological assessment, principles, objectives, and strategies of speech training, evaluation of speech training, and current research.

For further information and order, write: Information Services, Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf, 3417 Volta Place NW, Washington, DC 20007.

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