Integrating Social Skills Instruction Into a Guided Reading Curriculum

What do we know about social skills?

- Social skills (the ability to behave appropriately, make good decisions and communicate effectively) are an integral part of school success.
  
  Wagner & Rutherford, 1983

- Social skills are considered to be part of the hidden curriculum.
  
  Students who display social skills deficits experience less peer acceptance and potential adverse effects on academic success.

  Edens, 1996

- Social skills deficits have been associated with academic underachievement, impaired social relationships, increased rates of school drop out, juvenile delinquency, and unemployment in adulthood.

  Wagner & Rutherford, 1983

What do we know about social skills?

- Some students need explicit instruction that provides alternatives to antisocial behaviors.
  
  (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1998)

- Social Skills deficits occur for one of two reasons: the students either do not possess the skills (skill deficit) or the student possess the skills but does not perform them (performance deficit).

- Skill deficit instruction should focus on teaching students when and why to use skills rather than how.

- Performance deficit instruction should focus on teaching students when and why to use skills rather than how.

(Scott, Nelson, & Liapsis, 2001)

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Social Skills Instruction

- Social skills instruction consists of three phases: planning, instruction, assessment.
- **Planning**: logistics (when, where and who), instructional content (skills, maintenance and generalization procedures).
- **Instruction**: introduce skills, practice skills, provide reinforcement.
- **Assessment**: assess student behavior over time and in varying contexts.

Social Skills Instruction in Inclusive Settings

- Students with social skills deficits are increasingly participating in the general education curriculum.
- Teachers in general education settings are hesitant to devote academic time to social skills development.
- Pull-out programs that occur in isolation rarely result in successful generalization and maintenance of target skills.

Social Skills Instruction in Inclusive Settings: A Review of Literature

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Background

- Fall 2004
- Research question: Will a combined reading and social skills intervention improve the reading achievement and social skills of students identified with academic and behavioral deficits?
- Experimental design
  - Control group
  - Reading only group
  - Reading and social skills group
  - Social skills only group

Background

- **Dependent Variables**:
  - Reading achievement (measured using DIBELS scores)
  - On-Task Behavior (measured through daily observations)
- **Independent Variables**:
  - UFLI Small Group Reading Intervention
  - Small Group Social Skills Instruction (Pull-Out)
- **Results**:
  - No differences between control group/reading only group and groups receiving social skills intervention

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Background

- Questions remained:
  - How can we address the lack of research in the area of combining social and academic instruction?
  - Many researchers have discovered a comorbidity exists between reading and behavior difficulties.
  - More research that evaluates the extent of the connection between reading and behavior difficulties.
  - Could embedding social skills instruction in a guided reading curriculum be more beneficial than using a pull out program?

Method: Participants

- 3 African American boys in 2nd grade from a public elementary school in North Florida
- School population: 458 students in grades K-5
- Demographics: 78% African American, 11.3% White, 5.4% Hispanic, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander.
- 92% of students at this school qualify for free or reduced lunch

Selection Criteria
- Students were nominated by teachers as displaying social skills deficits that affected academic achievement.
- Checklist
  - Achenbach of 25 or higher on Social Problems domain
  - Did not respond to intervention from previous study
  - Behavioral Observations
  - Parental Consent

Method: Dependent Variable

- On Task Behavior
  - remains engaged in class work
  - uses materials appropriately
  - does not get distracted by others
  - does not distract others
  - does not leave desk during independent seatwork
  - completes work
  - has materials ready at beginning of lesson
  - asks for help appropriately
  - waits for help appropriately
  - chooses an appropriate activity when finished with work

Method: Observation System

- Two undergraduate data collectors and two doctoral student researchers served as data collectors
- All classroom observations were done using data recording sheets that consisted of fifteen minute sessions divided into ten-second intervals.
  - Using a partial interval recording system, researchers recorded a “+” for on task behavior or “0” for off task behavior for each interval such that, if a student was off task for any part of the ten-second interval, a “0” was recorded for that interval.
  - Classroom observations were conducted three days per week for the duration of the study.
  - Percentage of time on task was calculated by dividing the total number of intervals in which the student was on task by the total number of intervals observed.
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Method: Experimental Design
- A multiple-baseline across subjects design (Kazdin, 1982) was used to determine the effects of embedding the social skills intervention within a guided reading lesson on the on task behaviors
- The experimental procedure consisted of three conditions:
  - Baseline
  - Social Skill Instruction with student self-monitoring
  - Maintenance
- Each condition was introduced to each student in a staggered manner to control for historical confounds

Method: Baseline
- Baseline data were collected on students’ on task behaviors during students’ scheduled morning reading period
- The researchers had no contact with students and teachers during baseline data collection and no social skills instruction was provided to the students
- The students were not aware that they were being observed

Method: Independent Variable
- Social Skills Intervention
  - Students were to receive the social skills intervention during the last 10 minutes of their guided reading (small group) instruction
  1. Review of rules of the lesson occurred at the onset of each lesson (maintain eye contact with person talking, do not talk while others are talking, and stop talking or moving if teacher says “Freeze.”)
  2. Introduction of skill
  3. Skill Instruction using “Model-Lead-Test” method
  4. Description of self-monitoring procedure using prompt card
  5. Student independent practice

Method: Instructional Procedures
- Social Skills Intervention
  1. Introduction of the skill: “Today we are going to talk about asking for help. Can you think of a reason why asking for help is an important skill to have in reading?” Discussion of skill rationale and purpose took place with researcher and teacher involved. The student was then presented with the skill card.
  2. Ask the skill: Researcher models the metacognitive strategy of “thinking aloud” with the steps listed on the skill card.
  3. Practice the skill with feedback: The student practiced the skill listed on the skill card using the think aloud strategy. The researcher and teacher provided feedback on the student’s performance.
  4. Test the skill: The student reviewed his deck to test the skill with the teacher providing prompts for skill use.
  5. Review of point sheet on skill card
- Student performance reinforced at end of day

Self Monitoring
- The classroom teacher prompted students’ use of skills throughout the day using verbal praise and use of their point cards
- During each skill lesson, the first or second author reviewed the use of the point system located on the bottom of the skill card
  - Each student’s schedule was printed on the card with a box next to each subject for points to be assigned.
  - The student assigned themselves points for each five class periods based on their correct use of the skill:
    - 3 = Excellent, 2 = Satisfactory, and 1 = Fair.
  - Students set goals for how many points they would earn each day.
  - After the points were totaled at the end of the day, the student would receive a sticker from his teacher for meeting his goal.
  - Stickers could be traded at the end of the week for other tangible rewards.

Method: Prompt Card
- Asking for Help
  1. Ask yourself, “Can I do this alone?”
  2. If not, raise your hand.
  3. Wait. Say to yourself, “I know I can wait without talking or playing.”
- Point Scale:
  - 8:00 – 9:00
  - 9:00 – 10:00
  - 10:00 – 11:00
  - 11:00 – 12:00
- Total Points
  - 3 = Excellent
  - 2 = Satisfactory
  - 1 = Fair

Adapted from: Wellnessmart’s Elementary School Child Skill Cards, McGinnis & Goldberg, 1997

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Self Monitoring
- At the beginning of each school day after the initial skill instruction, the student received the skill card with point sheet
- The point sheet served as a reminder of the skill, and was then reviewed by the teacher at the conclusion of each daily guided reading lesson

Maintenance/Generalization
- During this final phase of the study, the students were observed in subject areas other than reading to determine whether they continued to use the skills taught during their reading lessons.
- Teachers continued to prompt students to use skills taught and provided praise and feedback for appropriate skill use.

Interobserver Agreement
- Observer Training
  - The researchers trained the undergraduate observers prior to collecting baseline data. The observers received a description of the study with purpose, definition of the dependent variable along with data collection sheets, and practiced recording on task behavioral data with the student researchers until 90% observer agreement was achieved.
- Interobserver agreement
  - Data were collected on a total of 32% of 84 reading period sessions and was identified as the percentage of agreement on the occurrence of on task behaviors. This was calculated by dividing the total number of agreements by agreements plus disagreements, then multiplying by 100 to obtain a percentage.
  - The overall mean agreement was 94.2% with a range of 87% to 99%.

Procedural Integrity
- Formal procedural integrity data were not collected, however, the first and second authors observed the classroom teachers providing prompting sessions to the participants on the days following initial instruction for each social skill taught.
- The first and second authors attended one embedded social skills intervention session for the first participant to check for procedural integrity during the maintenance phase of the study.

Results

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