SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP FOR CHILDREN WITH SERIOUS EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS (DINA DINOSAUR SCHOOL)

BY

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A Practicum report submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Social Skills Group for Children with Serious Emotional Behavioral Disorders

(Dina Dinosaur School)

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

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Social Skills Group for Children with Serious Emotional Disorder

Abstract: This report provides a description of a social skills group implemented in a school setting for children with Serious Emotional Disturbance. Six children, ranging from age nine to thirteen, participated in the group facilitated at a day treatment school where all of the children attend. The children have mental health diagnosis such as Attention Deficit Disorder, Depression, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Anxiety Disorder. Their symptoms include verbal and physical aggression, cognitive delays and deficits in social and emotional functioning. This report includes a review of the relevant literature and a description of the need for the group. The skills were taught in four segments; identifying feelings, problem solving, anger control and friendship skills. Each of the 22 group sessions are summarized and examples of the materials used are included. In addition, data collected from students, parents and school personnel as well as outcomes from the group are discussed. The children in the group were able to demonstrate knowledge of the skills and a decrease in the intensity and frequency of t extreme behaviors was noted. The limitations of the group and the need for further services is also discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

My interest in working with children has been a lifelong experience and has led me to a career in assisting some of the most needy families and children, those with severe mental health needs. In my current position as a social worker in the children's mental health division of a county agency, I have seen the need for therapeutic interventions with children and became interested in becoming more qualified to provide those services myself, leading to my interest in obtaining my MSW.

Over the past years, supervisors and colleagues (as well as myself) in my agency have seen the need for parenting and family programs in our community. About three years ago, many of us were introduced to The Incredible Years Program, a program that incorporates parent, child and teacher training for children who have demonstrated conduct problems at home and in school. I was trained and have implemented both the parent and child programs. National and the local community outcomes have been successful and I have experienced, first-hand, the rewards of parent and child improvements.

One of the aspects of my particular job is that I work closely with students at a day treatment school, a school designed to provide therapeutic support to children in need of emotional behavioral skills training. All of the children on my caseload attend this school. As our agency and community developed our own Incredible Years (IY) Program, we quickly saw the need for this program to be implemented at the day treatment school. The IY program was developed for children younger than those who attend this school however the students' need for

the intervention was high, so I chose to use the curriculum to develop a program that fit their needs.

My hope was to find out how useful and effective this type of program was for this particular population and to develop my skills as a group leader, specifically of a children's' group. I also wanted to learn and practice the cognitive-behavior interventions incorporated in the program. If effective, several agencies who financially support the day treatment school are also interested in continuing the group each year.

I feel that my goals were achieved as well as I had expected. I have gained confidence and improved my skills as a children's group leader and am currently facilitating another Incredible Years program for children (another Dina Dinosaur group). I believe that the data collected also demonstrates overall improvement in the children's behavior and also positive parent reaction.

This report includes five chapters, a bibliography and an appendix containing the materials used throughout the group process. Chapter One includes a review of the literature on issues of children with serious emotional and behavioral disorders and various interventions for them including groups, particularly groups facilitated in school settings. In Chapter Two the intervention used in this practicum is described. A summary of each group session is found in Chapter Three. Chapter Four consists of the evaluation methods used and explanations of the data. In Chapter Five, there is discussion regarding summary and results of the outcomes, my personal learning and experience as a student and implications for further learning and programming.

<u>OBJECTIVES</u>

There were three main goals of the practicum. The first was to provide the specified clients with a new set of social skills, some "tools" to help them cope other individuals in their environment. The children were already in a specialized school where they were receiving more assistance and being taught social skills already. The group was meant to be an additional service or resource for the children with a curriculum that was new to them. More specifically, the objectives of this goal were to use the curriculum and the theories of cognitive behavior methods discussed in Chapter One to help decrease the antisocial behaviors and conduct problems in the children and increase their knowledge and use of more positive social interaction skills. The group was based on my experience and training with the widely researched and established Incredible Years Parent and Child Series curriculum. I used some of the tools provided in the curriculum to design a group that worked specifically on the skills needed by a group of elementary children, ages 9 to 13, at a day treatment school. Even though these were older elementary school children, their social and emotional functioning was at the level of younger elementary aged children.

The children who participated in the group, due to anti-social behaviors that are disruptive in a mainstream classroom (i.e. aggression, running, defiance, work refusal), have been given an Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD) title by their school district and have been labeled as children with Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) by a mental health professional. They have been placed in a

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specialized school specifically designed to assist with emotional and behavioral issues.

The goal of the day treatment school is to teach the children the socialization, anger management, self-control and problem solving skills needed to return to their mainstreamed schools and classrooms. The children are already receiving varying forms of group therapy daily in the school. The group intervention I facilitated was an additional group method using techniques such as videotapes, role play, the use of puppets, question and answer discussion, and play and art activities. The goal was to determine how effective these types of group techniques are in reducing aggression and disruptive behaviors and increasing positive social skills in children with serious emotional disturbance.

The second goal was to determine the effectiveness of using the specific methods and techniques discussed here in a social skills group in a school setting with children with serious emotional disturbance. The students themselves, their parents and the school staff all participated in evaluating the students behavior before and after the group. I used this data as well as data on the students daily behavior to evaluate this goal. I was also interested in determining the effectiveness of these particular group technique in this school setting with severely impaired children. My employing agency, Children's Mental Health Resource Center (CMHRC), was also interested in the outcome. If successful, the hope was to continue this group, in conjunction with parent training groups, at this particular setting as well as expanding to other similar settings (i.e. public schools, other alternative schools, and other children's programs). CMHRC is a

collaborative program made up of Olmsted County Community Services and two other community agencies and is supportive of these and other similar programs. Youth Alternative Learning Experience (YALE), the day treatment school, is also a collaborative program consisting of employees from the Rochester Public School District, a community mental health agency and coordinates services with CMHRC. The administrators and staff at YALE were also supportive of the group, the outcomes, and hopeful continuation.

The third goal was also to increase my knowledge and skills in facilitating a cognitive-behavioral social skills group for children and to practice the proposed techniques. I have extensive experience with children, but am limited in my practice of group. My goals was to better understand the dynamics and process of group work as well as specific skills needed to facilitate children's groups. My hope was to be able to continue to facilitate this type of group and continuously improve my skills

Chapter One:
LITERATURE REVIEW

For this practicum, literature was reviewed in the area of mental health concerns and outcomes for children, particularly in the areas of emotional behavioral problems. From there, a review was conducted of the most recent literature regarding interventions recommended for children with emotional behavioral difficulties. The focus in this review was on outcomes for groups with children, particularly social skills groups that used cognitive behavioral interventions.

The Client Problems

According to the 2003 Report of the Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health (a collaboration of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, and the Department of Justice) the growing number of children burdened with mental health needs has created a health crisis in the U.S. According to their sources, in the U.S., one in ten children and adolescents suffer from mental illness severe enough to cause some level of impairment. Yet, it is estimated that about one in five of such children receive specialty mental health services. Other research (Spalding, 2000, Webster-Stratton & Taylor, 2001, Osher & Hanley, 2001) expresses concerns about the estimated 10 to 12% of children with mental health concerns and the lack of support available to them and their families. Webster-Stratton (2003) reported

recent projections suggesting that less than 10% of school-aged children who need services for aggressive behavior actually receive them. The Surgeon General's report goes on to state that the World Health Organization indicates that by the year 2020, the numbers of children with severe mental health disorders will rise by over 50% internationally to become one of the five most common causes of morbidity, mortality, and disability among children. Their answer was to set the guidelines for a health system to meet these needs that included a move toward community mental health systems. Strongly stressed among these systems as necessary steps were community and school-based research, prevention, early detection of, and universal access to mental health care for children.

According to the Minnesota Statute 245.7871. Subdivision 6, the definition of a child with severe emotional disturbance (SED) is a child who has an emotional disturbance and who meets one of the following criteria:

(1) the child has been admitted within the last three years or is at risk of being admitted to inpatient treatment or residential treatment for an emotional disturbance; or

(2) the child is a Minnesota resident and is receiving inpatient treatment or residential treatment for an emotional disturbance through the interstate compact: or

(3) the child has one of the following as determined by a mental health professional:

(i) psychosis or a clinical depression; or

(ii) risk of harming self or others as a result of an emotional disturbance; or

(iii) psychopathological symptom as a result of being a victim of physical

or sexual abuse or of psychic trauma within the past year; or

(4) the child, as a result of an emotional disturbance, has

significantly impaired home, school, or community functioning that has lasted at

least one year or that, in the written opinion of a mental health professional,

presents substantial risk of lasting at least one year.

The burden of suffering of children with serious mental health disorders is

significant. Increasing numbers of children, due to both internalized and

externalized sources are experiencing emotional and behavioral problems that are

most likely to reduce their quality of life and lower their life chances. Common

disorders of children with SED include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

(ADHD), anxiety and depressive disorders, Conduct Disorder (CD) and

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD).

Barret (1998) reports that anxiety disorders in children such as overanxious

disorder, separation anxiety, and social phobias, can prevent the child from

enjoying age-related activities and from participating in academics to the fullest of

their ability. Children with the diagnostic label of ADHD tend to be children who

have significant deficiencies in attention, organization, impulse control and

regulation of activity level. Depression, low self-esteem, interpersonal conflicts, as

well as behavioral, emotional, and academic difficulties are highly likely with

children with SED, leading often times to their rejection by peers, exclusion from

classroom and other age-related activities and aggression toward peers and adults

(Sheridan & Dee, 1996, Landau & Moore, 1991, Handwerk & Marshall, 1998,

Shechtman, 2002). Research has indicated that children's emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment is as important for school success as cognitive and academic preparedness (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2002).

Not only do children and their families suffer while children are young, but as they age into adolescence, the antisocial behavior progresses toward more extreme conduct and risk-taking behavior (Webster-Stratton & Reid 2002, Sheridan & Dee, 1996, Frick 2001). Webster-Stratton & Taylor have studied children with CD and ODD and found that they are at greater risk of engaging in substance abuse or delinquent acts in adolescence. They also report that physically aggressive behavior in children has been repeatedly linked to depression and school dropout rates. Shechtman (2002) also connected childhood emotional and behavior problems in children to deviant behavior in adolescents including withdrawal, depression, suicidal behavior, eating disorders, aggression, violence, and delinquency.

Armstrong, et. al. (2003) found that, without effective strategies and treatments, children with Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED) have poorer social skills, lower academic achievement and higher incidences of psychiatric conditions. These characteristics were further linked to early adulthood problems such as lower high school graduation rates, limited post-secondary participation, fewer employment opportunities, less financial independence, and more limited interpersonal relationships. These young adults were also shown to be more likely to suffer from depression, and to be involved in high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse and criminal activity (also Sheridan & Dee, 1996, Smith 1997,

Landau, 1991). In other words, without support, they have fewer positive opportunities as adults in the workplace, community and the home.

The Methods of Intervention

During the review of the literature, the common perspective found among the research was an ecological view of treating children with SED. There is an abundant amount of outcome research showing positive results from parent training, children's therapeutic and social skills groups and the use of psychotropic medication. The majority of this research was compellingly convincing that the most effective interventions involved, in varying degrees and levels, the use of all three of these methods in combination.

Early intervention, parental involvement and collaboration among families, schools and service providers were listed among the key components for programs who serve children with SED (Handwerk & Marshall,1998, Osher & Hanley 2001). Concurrent parent training group and cognitive behavioral groups for children with emotional and behavioral problems were proven effective for changes in behavior at home and at school (Hemphill & Littlefield 2001, Webster-Stratton, et. al. 1997). While parent training has been shown to be effective, using this intervention alone has limitations. For example, a large number of parents do not complete the parenting programs and there is a lack of program effectiveness for the most dysfunctional families (Frick 2001). In addition, parent training programs often fail to involve teachers in the treatment plans (Webster-Stratton, et. al., 1997).

Hoag (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of 56 studies indicating that group therapy is effective for children with psychiatric symptoms and related problems. In a review of group research, cognitive behavioral groups were found to be the most common and effective for children with emotional and behavioral problems, reportedly due to their demonstrated accountability, their effectiveness as a short-term, time-limited intervention, and their structured nature (Barrett, 1998, Landau, 1991, Shechtman 2002, Frick 2001, Sheridan & Dee 1996). What also emerged from the literature review was that children show a high need for self-expression, social acceptance and support, as well as guidance and training in areas of social deficit. Interpersonal approaches, used in many adult groups, require insight, disclosure and acceptance of feedback. These are qualities often lacking in children, especially those already struggling with emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Recent research concluded that while medication has proven to be successful in many cases of children diagnosed with mental health disorders, the children continued to experience interpersonal difficulties because medication alone does not generate the socially appropriate behavior necessary for peer acceptance, thus verifying the need for adjunctive, social skills training (Landau 1991, Frick 2001, Sheridan & Dee 1996).

SCHOOLS and SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES

Shechtman (2002) completed an extensive review of studies on educational, counseling, and psychotherapy groups in schools and found groups to

have an important place in the school setting, particularly therapeutic groups which were found to be the most lacking. The support for groups was found in results that suggest that children benefit more often from group treatment than from individual. Since friendship and peer acceptance are high priorities for children, social skills training is also important. Schools were supported as a highly suitable place for groups due to several factors: less stigma and embarrassment of visiting a mental health center in a community, children are naturally organized in groups and perceive group interventions as part of their daily routine, and are already in the environment to practice the skills learned (Shechtman 2002).

Forness (2000), completed a study of a skill building curriculum based on direction following, sharing, decision making and other social and behavioral skills in a Head Start program. All eight children in the program showed significant changes in adaptive behavior, social interaction, inattention and problem behavior. Two of the eight students no longer scored below clinical cut-off points. In review of the literature, Handwerk 1998, found evidence of 27 studies of cognitive behavioral social skills groups for children, where all but one had positive outcomes. More specifically stated was that the most effective groups were those that combined instruction with rehearsal in real-world, natural environments such as schools where children could practice social skills in classrooms and on playgrounds (also Frick 2001, Cashwell et. al. 2001, Sheridan & Dee 1996, Hemphill & Littlefield 2001, Osher & Hanley 2001). Musser (2001) also conducted a study of a multicomponent intervention that included teacher training and social skills taught in a school setting. The results were a reduction of student disruptive

behavior from 37% to 10 %. Cashwell, et. al. (2001) also supported teacher training in reinforcing positive behaviors.

Specific techniques for group interventions have been recommended in the literature as being effective with younger children. Examples of effective techniques are the use of games, puppets (Carter & Mason 1998), videos, role play, fantasy play and art (Spalding, 2000). Specific techniques that are highly recommended are positive reinforcement (as opposed to negative feedback), ignoring negative behaviors, and positive role modeling of acceptance, empathy and constructive interaction (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2002, Shechtman 2002, Frick, 2001, Cashewell, et. al. 2001). Groups that focused on communication, empathy and problem solving were shown to be the most effective (Henley 1999, Frick 2001). Webster-Stratton & Reid (2002) recommend that children with emotional and behavioral problems need particular training with anger management, social skills, emotional regulation, and friendship skills, since these skills are not necessarily automatic in these children.

Children with SED are a high-risk, high-need population and the outcomes for improvement without intervention are poor (Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). The literature reviewed strongly suggests that early intervention is best, especially as early as pre-school and early elementary school (Webster-Stratton, 2003). Early detection and intervention can help prevent long-term and increasingly serious problems in these individuals.

In addition, it is clear that therapeutic groups for children with emotional and behavioral problems have been utilized for years and have varied in theoretical

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and methodological ways. Groups, as opposed to individual interventions are recommended due to the nature of the skills taught (Handwerk & Marshall, Hoag & Burlingame 1998, Landau 1991). Social skills groups include coaching, modeling, rehearsal, feedback and reinforcement and teach specific skills such as communication, interpersonal and personal skills such as empathy, direction following, sharing and problem solving skills. These are all skills that are best taught and practiced in a group format (Handwerk & Marshall 1998, Henley 1999, Forness et. al. 2000). Henley (1999) found that outcomes are more successful when children are taught problem solving in a group setting where there is an opportunity to safely practice resolving problems with staff guidance and encouragement. Fortunately, an abundant amount of research has also been conducted on these groups and the most recent researchers are able to cite very specific techniques that have repeatedly been proven successful. These recommendations include cognitive-behavioral approaches that focus on basic social, emotional and behavioral issues (Hoag,1998). Cognitive-behavior therapy is defined as therapy that is designed to reduce unhealthy feelings and unwanted behaviors by intervening with a maladaptive learning process and providing new and more appropriate learning experiences (Brewin, 1996). This cognitive change is brought about by a variety of interventions, including the practice of new behaviors, analysis of faulty thinking and the teaching of more adaptive self-talk (Enright, 1997, Sanderson, 1997). It is shown that children cannot discuss serious issues concerning themselves until they have those basic skills to be able to identify and discuss their feelings as well as understand feelings of others.

The most effective groups recommended have been those that are facilitated in natural environments where the children can practice, first-hand, the skills taught (Shechtman, 2002). School is the most popular natural environment suggested. In addition, common group techniques of sharing and discussing are shown to be too advanced for young children. Instead, for this age, the authors recommend techniques that are active, interactive, and stimulating for children such as the use of puppets, games, arts and craft, video examples and other creative activities that promote practice of skills (Forness, 2000, Carter & Mason, 1998, Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2002).

Summary of Literature

In review of the literature, there is a significant amount of research that shows that an ecological view of treating children with emotional and behavior problems is critical. The most important components of this include parental involvement, medication and group training for children, particularly involving the schools (Frick, 2001, Osher & Hanley, 2001). Despite these findings, it was clear that there were a limited amount of programs that were successfully able to combine these components, particularly in engaging parents, therapists and schools to work together. The programs that were successful required a tremendous amount of support from administration, from financial resources, and from those working directly with the children and families.

It appeared that even though the recommendations are for community, family and school to work together, actually implementing the practice is difficult.

This could perhaps be addressed by looking more closely at the programs that *are* able to fulfill this ecological ideology. By researching in more detail the factors that have made these programs successful, there could be more replication studies and more success to report (Forness et.al 2000, Hemphill 2001, Musser 2001). In addition, more longitudinal studies are needed to justify the cost-effectiveness. I believe this is even more critical in this time of economic limits. I have seen first-hand, that budget cuts and "down-sizing" first effect the preventative programs such as those discussed here.

Chapter Two:
INTERVENTION

As recommended in the literature review, the group in this practicum is considered a social skills group intervention based on cognitive behavior philosophy. The goals of the group were not to be considered the sole intervention to change the children's behavior, but rather a way to provide the children with a set of skills that they can use in their various environments to cope with what frustrates them. The goals were to decrease the antisocial behaviors and conduct problems that the children were displaying and try to teach them new and more positive sets of social skills. In this chapter, the clients, personnel, setting are explained, followed by a discussion of the specific group work and procedures The chapter concludes with a description of the planning and recording methods.

CLIENTS

The clients in the group are children from the ages of 9 to 13 who have been diagnosed with a Severe Emotional Disturbance by a psychiatrist and identified by the public school system as have an Emotional/Behavioral Disorder, requiring special education services. These students not only have the above labels, but also have been provided the maximum special education services possible in the mainstream public schools and are still experiencing difficulties (i.e. being removed from the classroom and the school consistently due to behavior issues) in the school and have been placed in a day treatment school.

The children whom I have chosen for involvement in the proposed social skills group are all currently receiving treatment by a psychiatrist and subsequently receiving medications to treat their specific mental health symptoms. In addition, the children's families (i.e. parents, foster parents, siblings) have either participated in, are currently participating in, or have been offered and refused, parent training and/or some sort of support for dealing with their child's mental health concerns. Even though the children range from age 9 to 13 and technically are already reaching the adolescent age, they are socially, emotionally, and developmentally delayed compared to their peers. They are still fitting for a group recommended for pre-school and early elementary school intervention. I have chosen to focus on what the literature points to as a gap: providing cognitive-behavioral training in a natural setting (i.e. school), in a group format, to teach severely emotionally disturbed children the skills to cope in environments despite their SED diagnosis.

There were seven children originally participating in the group, however, one of them moved away at the start of the second group, so I did not collect data on him. Descriptions of the children including age and mental health diagnosis are as follows:

Katie   age 9   Bi-polar, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Oppositional
                          Defiant Disorder
Benjamin age 9   Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Nonverbal
                          Learning Disorder
Fran age 11   ADHD - Impulsive Subtype, Generalized Anxiety Disorder
Brady   age 11   ADHD and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
Nate   age 13   Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified,
                          Learning Disorder NOS
Joe   age 13   ADHD, ODD, Reactive-Attachment Disorder
Travis   age 12   Conduct Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

As stated in the previous section, the children are all receiving treatment from a psychiatrist and are taking medication to treat their mental health symptoms. In addition to the services provided by the day treatment school, these children and their families are receiving support services from either Children's Mental Health Resource Center (CMHRC) or from another Olmsted County agency. Some of the children also have outside individual therapists and/or mentors. The families of some of these children have also participated in a parent training and support group and/or have received services from an in-home family therapist. The purpose of the group is not to compare its efficacy with other programs or interventions, but to determine what kind of effect the techniques used in the group have on the children participating. The second purpose is to provide the children with increased knowledge and skills to deal with different types of situations at home, at school, and in the community. The skills learned are intended to replace the less socially acceptable behavior currently being displayed by the children.

Parents of the participating children were given forms to sign, giving their child permission to participate in the group and to be videotaped. I also talked with the parents, face to face and/or via telephone, to explain the goals and the content of the group and to receive their input on the specific issues of their child. Parents also received notes after each session reviewing the skills taught, the activities, the prizes earned by the child and specific comments about the child's participation that session. We also occasionally sent home educational information for the parent to correspond with the skill taught in group. Some of

these were specific parenting tips and techniques, other were detailed steps for

how they could help their child practice the skills.

SETTING

As mentioned above, the students in the proposed group attend Youth

Alternative Learning Environment (YALE), a day treatment school in Minnesota in

the Rochester Public School District. The definition of a day treatment school

according to MN STATUTE 245.487, SEC. 38, SUBD.10 is as follows:

> "Day treatment consists of group psychotherapy and other
> intensive therapeutic services that are provided for a minimum
> three-hour time block by a multidisciplinary staff under the
> clinical supervision of a mental health professional. The services
> are aimed at stabilizing the child's mental health status and
> developing and improving the child's daily independent living and
> socialization skills. Day treatment services are distinguished
> from day care by their structured therapeutic program of
> psychotherapy services. Day treatment services are not a part
> of inpatient hospital or residential treatment services. Day
> treatment services for a child are an integrated set of education,
> therapy, and family interventions.
>
> A day treatment service must be available to a child at least five
> day a week throughout the year and must be coordinated with,
> integrated with, or part of an education program offered by the
> child's school."

The requirement for intake of students into this program is that they have already

received the maximum amount of special education services (under the EBD

label) available in their mainstreamed school and are still having little success in

the classroom. The purpose of the program is to first assist the student with

mental health issues, and second, assist them academically. The students

receive three class periods of group therapeutic services per day, consisting of a

small group therapy, social skills group and a recreational group. I facilitated the social skills group two times per week during the students' regular social skills group time that is typically led by the therapist alone. For this group, she and I planned and facilitated together two times per week. The group is called the Dina Dinosaur group, based on the Incredible Years group for children.

PERSONNEL

I facilitated the group with Laura Dusso, the therapist for the elementary classroom. She has a Bachelor degree in psychology and is currently working on her Masters degree in psychology to become a licensed therapist. Wendy Helget, the elementary classroom teacher, also participated with planning and facilitating a few sessions of the group. As stated in the literature review, teacher involvement is critical. Wendy was a critical piece of the planning process as she was able to assist with input on activities that were appropriate for the students. She also operated the Dina Dinosaur puppet and assisted with individual attention if needed. In addition, a para professional, Pam Craven, participated to assist with individual behavior intervention, operation of the videotapes, directing the group during less structure activities such as during the prize distribution. The entire group was led by Laura and myself with assistance only when needed from the teacher and para professional.

GROUP INTERVENTIONS

In this section, I would like to discuss some of the literature on group intervention and how it incorporated into this social skills group. I have focused on the areas of the advantages and limitations of group treatment, group process and dynamics, specific rationale for using cognitive behavior group intervention and the use of mutual aid thought the group.

Group treatment has proven to be effective for children Hoag & Burlingame 1998, Spalding 2000, Webster-Stratton & Reid 2002) and recommended especially for those with conduct and other behavior issues (Webster-Stratton 1993). In particular, specific methods are recommended, methods that are best taught in a group setting where interactions can be practiced (Frick, 2001, Henley 1999, Landau & Moore 1991). These methods focus on communication, empathy and problem solving using a cognitive behavioral approach. Groups help members realize that others have similar issues and concerns and can give each other support and feedback (Toseland & Rivas, 1995). Also, in this particular group, the goal is to work on social skills – the group setting allows for practice of the skills with other members in a safe and guided arena. In planning, preparing, and implementing the group, I observed that the skills recommended in the literature were the skills taught in the Incredible Years curriculum that I used and that these skills were extremely difficult to teach to a child individually. The modeling, discussion, interaction, role plays, games and other forms of learning and practice could best be facilitated in

a group setting where the students could practice in a real-life situation with guidance from the facilitators.

Because of its basis on theories of change, the cognitive behavioral approach to group work seemed to fit most effectively with this particular group. The idea behind the cognitive behavioral approach is to take unwanted behaviors and replace them with the more desired behaviors. In group work, cognitive behavioral change occurs in the group as a whole as well as benefiting each member. The group members use their collective strengths and skills to identify, understand and practice the skills. The group in this practicum is a social skills group. The goals are to help the members identify more socially acceptable behaviors, then allow them a safe environment among each other to implement the skills and to learn from each other. The nature of the skills (social), combined with the theory of cognitive behavior change, implies that change in social behavior cannot occur unless the members have a social environment in which to learn the skills.

This group in this situation is considered a treatment group because the goal is to meet members' personal needs and the success is based on the members meeting treatment goals (Toseland & Rivas, 1995). This group is slightly unique in that the members (the students) in this situation were already formed as a group. They have worked together as a classroom and as a therapeutic group, considered a "formed group" according to Toseland and Rivas, 1995. Note, however, that two of the students (Nate and Brady) were in the middle school room and were new to the group dynamics. The students in

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the elementary room knew them and worked with them in other areas of school, but not daily in their groups. Some of the students in the elementary room knew Nate from the previous year when he was in the elementary room. Since the students in the group have experience together, especially experiences as a therapeutic group, some of the beginning stages of a group were already established. For instance, Corey and Corey (2002) cite establishing trust, group norms, group cohesion and early conflict as necessary in the early stages. In addition, Laura, my co-facilitator was the students' regular group leader at YALE and I already worked individually with a majority of the students. In other words, we had developed trust and relationships with the students prior to the group. This was an advantage in the sense that we were able to begin the educational and learning part of the group from the beginning. Students had established their trust level and group dynamics. There was also a disadvantage to this component. The students already knew each other, knew each other's weakness to attack and already had struggles in relating to each other, At times, I feel that this prevented some of the students from participating to their fullest potential. For instance, some students were teased more because that had already been established as a pattern outside of the group. The students knew each other well, knew how to annoy others and already had little patience with others who annoyed them. There was quarreling and taunting among the group members from the beginning.

Corey & Corey, 2002, also discuss important aspects to developing a group. Support from administration is one of these aspects. I had strong support

from both my administration at Children's Mental Health and from the school district administration at YALE. There had been previous collaborative work that had been successful.

A second aspect is consent by members/parents and involvement of parents. As stated earlier, I already worked with most of the students and their families. I had in-person or discussions over the phone with all of the parents and obtained written consent for their child to participate in the group and to be videotaped. I experienced only positive reactions from both students and parents for participation in the group. Parent involvement consisted of the notes taken home by students after each group. Laura and I also expressed to parents that we were available for their questions and comments at any point throughout the group. Parents were receptive to our feedback to them about the group and their child, however, we experienced no parent-initiated contact. I also observed that more parent involvement would have possibly promoted the students to a greater level of retaining the information and making behavior change.

Other important aspects of the initial stages of group work discussed by Corey & Corey, 2002 are self-disclosure and confidentiality. Even though the group was considered a treatment group, the students were not asked to engage in much self-disclosure. At times, we asked them to describe a time that they had a certain feeling or experienced a problem. However, their responses were asked to be voluntary and were centered on general feelings and situations. Since the students currently worked together as a therapeutic group, confidentiality was previously established. We did reiterate the rules and

expectations of their group and school. In a way, this was an advantage because students could talk about problems in a more generic way without having to reveal sensitive information about themselves and were able to participate more easily. As a disadvantage though, students did not have the opportunity, if they wanted to, to obtain feedback and assistance with their particular problem. We tried to compensate for this disadvantage by using the knowledge we had of each student and incorporating situations into the games and activities that were pertinent to their lives.

Middleman (1966) discusses program content as important to therapeutic group work. Program Content consists of both constructive and distracting activities that comprise the group's and the individual's experiences, in other words, what is being done and how. It is the vehicle through which the relationships are made and the needs and interests of the group and its individual members are fulfilled. It should be used to help the individuals grow in self-value and to help the group become able to act on increasingly responsible and social goals.

It is also important for groups, particularly for children, and particularly where the members have mental health concerns, to be interesting and pleasurable (fun) but to also lead the individuals to increased awareness of self, greater self-esteem as well as group pride and awareness and responsible group behavior (Middleman, 1966). This is accomplished through using a variety of forms of didactic materials and using play as a teaching tool (Middleman, 1983).

Middleman goes on to describe this as non-verbal content, that children learn through the "doing" kinds of activities, not just being able to use the words, but to demonstrate concrete displays of action. There were a wide variety of teaching skills used in this group. Visual aids, including cue cards, puppets, written work by the students, and props were used always with our discussion. Each session also consisted of an activity that required students' participation in a game, art, reading activity or other forms of physical interactions. We also used role-plays regularly on a formal and informal basis. Often we would ask the students to demonstrate the skill they were discussing rather than just describe it. For instance, when they used apology as a solution, we asked them to actually look at us, and say the words they would say to someone and how they would say it in an apology.

Middleman (1966) also explains that children's learning is defined as a change in behavior produced by rewarding the desired behavior. Reward must be appropriate and immediate so that small steps can shape behavior toward the goal. The reward system we had in place used this philosophy. The students were rewarded immediately, verbally praised and visually rewarded receiving popsicle sticks that were used as points toward rewards at the end of each session.

Middleman (1966) also explains the importance of making learning "fun", particularly with children with emotional disturbance so that they can realize that learning is not always a negative experience. I found this especially true with the students in this group who have struggles with schoolwork, and classroom

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learning beyond those of a typical child. Games can be stressful for some and facilitators must make it comfortable and easy for group members (Middleman, 1963). This was accomplished by trying to make games enjoyable and not put the children "on the spot". We did ask for student participation and, at times, this seemed to make some of the students uncomfortable. However, we used positive encouragement and support and encouraged support from the other students, but did not force any student to participate.

There are also some disadvantages to group treatment that apply to this group which revolve around group dynamics. Often in groups, members can scapegoat individual members. Also, group attention and focus could be on the more assertive or talkative members. I experienced both of these in this group which will be discussed in more detail in the reports of each session and in the conclusions and discussions. For instance, one of the students was quite assertive, which, in the beginning, was helpful to get the students enthusiastic and participating. However, as the sessions progressed, he began to dominate the group and we were required to find ways to reinforce his participation positively while also limiting it to give others more opportunities. I was also able to observe a situation where a student was a scapegoat. He was a student who struggled with cognitive delays and had some qualities that annoyed the other students. The group members would often tease him or taunt him when they did not want to participate or point him out as the slow one when the group as a whole was struggling with a concept or activity. As a facilitator, I also struggled with my own limited patience with his behaviors and needed to constantly be

aware of my action with him. In discussions with my co-facilitator and using creativity, I found ways to redirect him and focus the attention away from his behaviors without actually pointing out his behaviors to the group. I did this by ignoring him, strategically directing the seating arrangement of the group, and rewarding others who ignored him or who interacted with him in a positive way..

It is also critical in group work practice to be aware of leaders own personal and professional limitations and concerns (Corey & Corey, 2002, Middleman, 1963, Middleman, 1983, Toseland & Rivas 1995), . I will discuss a few of my own and how I handled them.

The first concern was my lack of experience with children this young. My experience with group work has been with adults and adolescents and I was aware that there would be significant differences. I was not accustomed to planning more intensely structured activities. I was able to become more comfortable by using the Incredible Years curriculum and by observing and talking to others who had facilitated similar groups. I also purposely chose Laura as a co-facilitator wanting to learn from her. Laura has extensive experience with this population of children and group work. Laura also has worked with these children daily and could help me determine effective techniques and activities based on their particular needs. Laura and I planned the groups together and I realized the detail required in planning a structured group. I was able to look to her experience facilitating groups to learn from. It was also helpful to have her to process the sessions afterward as well as assess the entire group. This made it

possible to learn and make adaptation along the way to try to fit the needs of the children most effectively.

I was also concerned and nervous about using the puppets, which was a new experience for me. I had received the Incredible Years training in which we were given opportunities to use the puppets and extensive time watching the trainer use the puppets. The Incredible Years curriculum suggests that facilitators modify their voices to make the puppets more interesting and realistic. I practice different voices (often as I drove), practiced using the puppets with children I knew personally, and observed other groups/watched tapes of other group leaders using puppets. I was still anxious at the start of the group and was able to use the videotapes of my group to help improve my puppetry skills. Based on my previous experiences facilitating group, I recognize that one of my limitations was successfully responding to members who verbalize negative comments or answers that are "off track." Toseland & Rivas (2002) explain skills critical to group leaders: the ability to reflect, clarify, and summarize, the thoughts and comments of group members. My goal is always to support group members even when their answers/comments are not exactly the answer we were looking for, to be able to guide them to a more appropriate answer without insulting them or making them think they were "wrong". I often struggle with effective ways to accomplish this though. I was especially concerned with this population – children with serious emotional disturbance. I was aware that they become easily frustrated when they think they made a mistake and also interpret situations often in a negative way. In other words, they often feel that they are

not doing well based on an assumption. Again, I was able to use Laura, my co-facilitator, as a model and as someone to help process situations. I felt that she has skills in this area and was able to learn from her.

Mutual aid was also a component of this group. Similar to the strengths perspective of social work theories, mutual aid is described as a group with leadership that focuses on the strengths of each member to help the group meet its goals. It is a process that is looked at as a respect for differences that uses empathy, risk-taking and shared responsibility in the process toward growth. (Steinberg 2004). The purpose of teaching these particular social skills in a group format was to help the children learn in a way that was more meaningful to them. In other words, their participation in the group and their involvement with each other was also a part of the learning process. Instead of just didactically teaching the concepts and steps, there were built in discussions and activities that encouraged them to work together to find the answers on their own rather than relying on us as facilitator solely for instruction and learning. For instance, in the discussions, the groups began with an introduction of the overall concept. Instead of just introducing the skills, the individual steps or skills were not told directly to the children, but rather "hinted" at for the students themselves to come up with the answers. They would all have different input that they shared. Using the collective pool of their ideas and encouraging the appropriate ones, we then had a set of skills to introduce. The goal was for the students to see that they each had strengths to contribute to the group and that as a group they discovered how they could use the skills they already knew and also expand on

them. In addition, the group setting allowed them to then practice the skills and

take the risks of trying something new with each other. With our encouragement

of positive interaction, the goal was for them to learn how to support and help

each other rather than increase the frustrations. Formal and informal role plays

were built in to almost all of the sessions. An example of an informal role play is

a situation where a student would give an answer or a solution. We would then

ask the student to expand on their answer by telling us (or turning to another

student to tell them) the actual words they would use for that solution. For

instance, if a student's solution to a hypothetical conflict that we presented them

with was to apologize, instead of just accepting that as their solution, we would

ask them to tell us the words and show us their body language that they would

use as if it were happening at that moment.

The activities used were also designed as a way to reinforce and practice

the skills as well as for the purpose of mutual aid. The rules of the games

encouraged the students to work together and support each other. For instance,

all of the games were played together as a group. They were encouraged to

take turns and to help a group member when he or she was struggling rather

than having that member turn to the group leaders for assistance. If there was

conflict among any of students for any reason, the entire group was stopped and

they were encouraged to use the skills being taught to work out a solution. As

group leaders, we were there to help guide and support this process, but to also

allow them to work out issues among themselves.

The puppets were also used purposely to help the students relate and connect as children with common ground, common issues. The puppets were also used to encourage them to use their strengths to work together. Often one of the puppets would have a problem and the students were asked to pool their ideas to help the puppet find solutions. Other times, two of the puppets would argue or have a conflict with each other. The students again were asked to work together to help the puppets resolve their issue. Each student would contribute an idea and the puppets would help work through each idea until a collective, effective solution was generated. The puppets were to be viewed more as participatory members of the group, rather than as facilitators.

Chapter Three explains the sessions in detail. There is a statement of the goals of each session, description of the activities, and a discussion of the group process and dynamics that occurred along the way to help readers understand specifically, the mutual aid and group intervention that occurred for this practicum.

PROCEDURE

The general goals of the social skills group were to decrease the antisocial behaviors and conduct problems while increasing positive social skills.

Reduce negative concerns such as:

- Aggression and conduct
- Defiance of direction and redirection from teachers and staff
- Conflict with peers
- Academic frustration and work refusal
- Long-term effects of social and emotional difficulties

Increase positive skills such as:

* Feelings identification
* Emotional awareness
* Increased self-esteem
* Problem-solving skills
* Friendship skills
* Ability to control anger

The techniques discussed in this section are based on the Incredible Years Dinosaur Social Skills and Problem Solving Child Training program, a widely researched and documented effective program for improving children's behavioral issues (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2002, Webster-Stratton et. al., 2001, Webster-Stratton, 2003). The program includes a parent training group, a teacher classroom training and the child social skills group. My experience has been involvement implementing the parent group and less experience with the children's group. Carolyn Webster-Stratton (2003) recommends the group for children from pre-school age to age 8 or 9. However, in discussion with the school administrators, YALE staff, and Children's Mental Health staff, we believed that the group method and techniques of the group would be beneficial to the proposed population at YALE. Even though the children are age 9 to 13, their social, emotional, and developmental levels are delayed to the extreme that

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they function in these areas as though they were younger. This has been shown

not only in the observations of those working with the children, but also in the

tests and evaluation given by mental health professionals and school staff. For

instance, most of the children have IQ scores in the low end of the average range

and have been labeled with a Borderline IQ.

The content of the program consists of four units: Identifying Feelings,

Problem Solving, Controlling Anger and Friendship Skills.   The goal for the

children was to first be able to help them identify and understand feelings. From

there they, can begin to understand which feelings have led them to a problem.

They can then start to work on solving their problem more positively and

effectively than they have often chosen in the past. One of the problems the

children face however is the lack of impulse control and anger control. This was

reason for the next unit, Controlling Anger. The purpose of this unit was to teach

the children skills in being able to stop themselves in the moment of a problem,

to think about solutions, rather than reacting on their anger. The last unit,

Friendships Skills focused more specifically on some positive alternatives to

interacting with others that can help the children avoid situations that anger them

in the first place. For instance, we taught the children skills such as sharing,

talking and listening to others, helping and teamwork.

Each of the sessions included some, at times all, of the following techniques:

1. Video tapes with short vignettes were used as a concrete way to model
   the skills. Some vignettes modeled the desired skills while others
   modeled ineffective actions, then allowed time for discussion on the poor
   choices and on problem-solving better choices.

2. Fantasy play and instruction through the use of puppets was used as recommended in the literature and the Incredible Years curriculum to help the students connect and relate to the skills being taught. The puppet were part of the Incredible Years curriculum and were purposely made the size of a small child to help make it more realistic for the children to connect to.

3. Rehearsal and role play was incorporated throughout the discussions and activities to continuously give the children opportunity to practice the skills. The also gave the group facilitators a chance to model the appropriate behavior by demonstrating the role play.

4. A review of previous lessons and skills was always the introduction of the group to reinforce the material taught.

5. Various types of games and art projects were used as activities. They were designed to be activities that were viewed as fun and enjoyable by the students to ensure participation, but also were used as teaching tools. Some activities simply reinforced skills by making them into an art project as reminders. Others were designed to help teach social skills during the activity (i.e. taking turns, sharing, teamwork). Others were designed as tools to help the children gain insight into their own feelings and difficulties.

6. Positive reinforcements and praise – Children were be praised for their participation, positive responses and effective actions. In addition to verbal praise, children were frequently given sticks in a cup with their name on it for positive behavior. The sticks were added up at the end of the session and traded in for tangible rewards. Negative behavior in the group was ignored. Furthermore, children who ignored others negatives behaviors were additionally rewarded, again with verbal praise and sticks.

7. Maintaining skills in natural settings – Children were given opportunity for "free-play", a time to practice their skills. This usually occurred at the end of the group. Facilitators observed, intervened with suggestions of the skills learned and praised when necessary. In addition, the facilitators

observed the children in the classroom, during other group times, and during free times for the same reason.

8. Visual aids were incorporated throughout all of the session as another way to teach and reinforce the skills. Colorful pictures and cards demonstrating and reminding children of the social skills were used during discussion, during games and role-plays and also posted in the area of the group.

9. Homework was used as a way to help the children to transfer the skills to their home environment and also as a way for parents to know and understand the skills being taught in the group. Notes were sent home after each session to parents describing the skills learned in group and asking them to practice the skills with their child with specific questions and techniques. Occasionally the children were asked to return with a written lesson or to be prepared to discuss the assignment.

I used the puppets and the videotapes for modeling and to assist with the presentation of the material. However, I looked closely at the recommended activities used to help the children practice the skills taught. I modified the games and activities to fit the older age group. I used extensive involvement from Laura and the classroom teacher during the planning also. Their expertise with the population and their knowledge of the children were essential. I also used only the videotapes that were more appropriate for the ages. The use of the puppets replaced the videos not used. In using Wally and Molly (the names of the main puppets) we used our voice to mimic the voice of an older child rather than the voice of a pre-school child as recommended in Incredible Years training. In addition, we use Wally and Molly to role-play situations parallel to the experiences of the children in the group. For example, Wally discussed his

problems in school, his difficulty with the schoolwork and with feeling different from other children. Molly talked about her difficulty meeting new kids and being friendly which most of these students experience as they attempt to re-enter their mainstream school.

Since all of the children participating, have, in some way, a more extreme lack of self-esteem and self-image, we focused heavily on the praise and rewards of positive behavior. We used a token system consisting of colored popsicle sticks to put in individual cups with their names on them to reward the children intermittently throughout the group. The idea was to catch them whenever they were following directions, participating in discussion/activities or any efforts made and then to reward them in verbal and/or tangible ways. At the end of the group the sticks were traded for tangible prizes.

We also emphasized the technique of ignoring negative behavior. I taught all the participating facilitators the technique of paying attention to the group and those children behaving positively while ignoring the negative behaviors. For instance, as a child tries to disrupt the group, the facilitators rewarded the others who were following instructions with sticks in their cups and verbally labeled those behaviors while ignoring the other child. The theory is that the child being ignored will soon realize that he or she is not receiving attention or rewards for the behavior and will join the others in the appropriate behavior to get the rewards. With the more severe mental health concerns of this particular group, we needed to implement this technique more often and for a longer length of time than recommended. I also taught the facilitators to reward the children not only

for their appropriate behavior, but also for ignoring the child who is acting out and not getting distracted by the behavior.

DURATION

The Incredible Years Dina Dinosaur curriculum recommends 18 to 20 sessions when using their tools. I facilitated two groups, each group with 11 sessions, for a total of 22 sessions. The first group began November 17th with the second group following immediately through the end of February. Most weeks, the group was held twice. However, due to some conflicts such as school closings due to weather and other school days off, there were a few weeks that the group only met once.

PLANNING AND RECORDING

As stated above, I planned the groups in detail in coordination with Laura, my co-facilitator. We also included the classroom teacher in most of the second group. Before the group started we followed the outline and tentatively planned sessions. We also met weekly during the group to plan more detail, design activities and make supplies and also make any changes needed. As the group progressed, some changes were made, but we continued to follow the curriculum in order. Preparation for the group usually took about 30 minutes to set up and included some last-minute changes.

The group was recorded in two different ways. First, each session was videotaped with the camera focused on the facilitator rather than the students. Laura and I reviewed the tapes and then the tapes were made available to

practicum committee members. Second, I took notes after each session of the content as well as impressions of individual students and the group overall. I reviewed each videotape and often Laura viewed them with me. Laura and I also debriefed after each session to discuss positives and concerns as well as to review our goals for the group and the students' individual goals. We also included discussion with the classroom teacher and paraprofessional at times.

Chapter Three:
REPORT OF GROUP SESSIONS

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

I facilitated two groups, each with 11 sessions, then a final graduation session. The same children participated in both groups. The purpose of the first group was to teach basic skills to help students identify their own feelings as well as those of others, then to give them some coping skills to solve their own problems that come up in their daily lives and conflicts with others. In the second group, these skills were reinforced, and in addition, more specific skills were taught consisting of anger management and friendship skills such as sharing, helping, and teamwork.

The following is an outline of the groups, listing the skills taught in each session. This outline of sessions follows the Incredible Years curriculum. The children first learn to identify and discuss feelings before they begin the problem solving steps. The rationale is that the first step to solving a problem is recognizing that there is a problem. The children are taught to recognize problems based on negative feelings they are having. Therefore, the must first be able to realize their feelings. Once students can identify the steps to solving a problem, they need to be able to practice the skills in real situations. For the children with SED, often frustrations and anger are barriers to implementing the steps. Thus, the focus of the second group is on specific anger control steps. For example, they learn how to stop to think before reacting, giving them time to use the skills taught in the first group. There is also a focus on specific

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friendships skills that teach positive ways to interact with others with the hope of

avoiding problems in the first place. The pages that follow the outline contain

more detailed information about the goals content of each session. There is also

commentary about the individual students and overall impressions for each

session. Appendices D through S contain copies of some of the materials and

activities used as well as notes sent home to parents.

GROUP 1 – Identifying Feelings and Problem Solving

Session 1: Introduction to rules and reward system
Session 2: Introduction to Identifying Feelings
Session 3: Continued Identifying Feelings
Session 4: Defining Feelings
Session 5: Continued Defining Feelings
Session 6: Problem Solving – Step 1 Identifying Problem
Session 7: Problem-Solving – Steps 2 & 3 Solutions
Session 8: Problem-Solving – Step 4 Consequences to Solutions
Session 9: Problem-Solving – Defining Solutions
Session 10: Problem-Solving – Steps 5 & 6 Choosing the Best Solution and
Evaluating Solution
Session 11: Problem-Solving Review

GROUP 2 – Anger Management and Friendship Skills

Session 1: Controlling Anger – Learning Steps
Session 2: Controlling Anger – Practicing Steps
Session 3: Controlling Anger – Ways to Calm Down
Session 4: Controlling Anger – Practice
Session 5: Controlling Anger
Session 6: Friendship Skills – Helping and Sharing
Session 7: Friendship Skills – Teamwork
Session 8:
Session 9: Friendship Skills – Listening and Talking
Session 10: Friendship Skills – Praising and Apologizing
Session 11: Review of all skills
Session 12: Graduation

<u>Group 1, Session 1 - Introduction</u>

Goal: Introduce group purpose, establish rules and reward system, and introduce puppets
Skill: Students should be able to identify rules and demonstrate them

This first session was an introduction. All of the students were present. Since the students already knew each other and worked in groups together and knew Laura and I, we did not need to do individual introductions. Since the students already knew the school rules, we just reminded them that those rules also apply in group.

We started by introducing the reward system and showed them the cups with each of their names on them. We wanted to be able to start that process right away. We then gave a brief overview of the program and the skills that they would be learning. The next step was to introduce Wally, the puppet. Since the goal was to incorporate teaching aspects into all the activities, we treated Wally as another child and explained to the students that Wally was nervous about meeting the group and was afraid to join them. We helped the students find ways to encourage Wally to come out. They did very well, found many positive things to say to him until he showed his face. Wally was positive and modeled appropriate ways to introduce himself. Wally discussed his experience going through "Dinosaur School" and answered questions from the students. With Wally's assistance we then explained the "Show Me Five" set of rules (see Appendix D). Even though these are rules that the students are expected to follow in school anyway, we wanted to have a technique specific to the group.

The "Show Me Five" rules consist of Eyes on Teacher, Closed Mouth, Listening Ears, Quiet Hands, and Still Feet. We used a glove with Velcro on each finger. Laura wore the glove and as each rule was introduces, a picture of that body part (eyes, ears, etc.) was stuck onto each finger. Our goal was to use the glove at the first two or three sessions, then be able to just hold up our hand (like a "high-five) to bring the students back on track when needed. We completed the group by having the students color and label their own "Show Me Five" Hand.

Overall, the group went well and most of the students were enthusiastic. In the beginning, there were about three students who would not interact with Wally, but as the group went on and the other students were involved, they also joined in.

The students seemed to understand the reward system quickly and we found it useful. There were very little questions about the sticks in the cups, hence it was not distracting for the students and worked as intended. We were able to see the positive effects on the entire group. For instance, the students who were interacting positively with Wally were given a stick and their behavior was verbally labeled to them and the group. Gradually, all of the students joined in participating as they saw how to earn sticks. At the end of the session, the sticks were counted and traded in for prizes, anywhere from one to three prizes depending on the amount of sticks earned. They all earned at least one prize, most of them more than one. There was some disorganization at the end of group around counting their sticks and choosing their prizes. We discussed the

need for enlisting the assistance of the para-professional in the room during this time. Laura or I would take each student one at a time to count his or her sticks, another would then supervise as they chose prizes, and the third would supervise the students who were done or still waiting. We had received feedback from parents earlier that they would like to know how many prizes their child earned. Katie's parents, in particular, wanted to know exactly what prizes she chose. Kaite had a history of stealing and her parents tended to take away any of her belongings from which they did not know the source In response to this, we chose to write the chosen prizes on each student's parent note (see Appendices D through S for copies of parent notes).

Brady was extremely enthusiastic and interacted in all aspects. He seemed to particularly enjoy Wally and would look directly at him, asking him questions as if he were another student. Brady is developmentally immature, so this was not surprising.

Nate made some negative comments at first, even about Wally. However, as Wally talked, Nate joined in as Brady did with total interaction with Wally. Nate wanted to ask Wally questions, such as "What is your favorite sport?" Even though Nate is 13, he has an IQ in the mild mental retardation range, so his interaction was also not surprising.

Fran had some negative comments about Wally in the beginning. She would turn away and say, "I'm not talking to a puppet." She also told the other students that they were "stupid" for talking to a puppet. However, the reward system seemed to work well for this. Students who were participating and

positive earned sticks and she did not. Students also earned sticks for ignoring her comments and behavior. About 20 minutes into the group, she had stopped her comments and would interact. She would still roll her eyes, but had at least stopped being distracting to the others.

Travis, being one of the higher-functioning students did not treat Wally as Brady and Nate did, but seemed to be "playing along" with it and interacted. He was positive and enthusiastic throughout the session.

Group 1, Session 2 – Identifying Feelings

Goal/Skill: Students should be able to identify some basic feelings (i.e. happy, sad, mad). They should be able to define these feelings in words as well as identify them visually

We started this session by reviewing the Show Me Five rules. The students did well remembering the rules. We then practiced a relaxation exercise. The students were familiar with this technique since it is used frequently in their groups at YALE, so this was a reminder of relaxation for them.

The next step was for Wally to introduce the first skill of Identifying Feelings. Wally wore a detective hat and used a magnifying glass to demonstrate that we are all "detectives" whose job it is to find the "clues" to identifying feelings. We discussed what those clues are (i.e. facial expressions, body language, words). We also helped the students begin a list of feelings. They were able to list several different emotions. We wrote each one down or had the students write them, then they were displayed. The students then watched a few brief video clips of children displaying different emotions. Laura

and I were unsure about how the videos would be received, but were surprised by their enthusiasm and positive reaction to them. Wally assisted with discussion between each video to identify the clues and label the feelings. We pointed out that each child could have more that one feeling.

Our closing activity was a game that the students played. They each had a turn to draw from a pile of "faces" (different facial expressions – looked like Wally's face), label the feeling and discuss a time when they had that feeling.

Overall, the group went well. Fran, Benjamin, and Joe had more positive attitudes this time, although Fran still did not participate. Brady, Nate and Travis were very positive and interactive. We noticed that Travis was doing, what we call "Jr. Staffing." He was very assertive and at times, would try to direct the other students. We still gave him rewards because we wanted the students to see that positive behavior was rewarded, but agreed that if it continued, we would talk with Travis and he would not earn as many sticks while engaging in his "bossy" behavior.

The reward system worked well again. This time, we had Pam, the para-professional in the room assist us during the time that students counted sticks and picked out prizes. This made a significant difference in the efficiency of this system.

Group 1, Session 3 – Identifying Feelings

Goals: Students should increase their knowledge of feelings by expanding their vocabulary of feelings words (identify more complex feelings) and identifying children with different feelings. One of the objectives is to help the students understand that there can be multiple feelings occurring at the same time and

that feelings can be interpreted differently by different people. They should also start to be able compare the feelings learned to their own situations and feelings.

In this session, we expanded on feelings. The students added to their list of feelings and we helped them identify more complex feelings. We were pleasantly surprised at the number of different and complex emotions they were able to identify (see Appendix F). We also sent copies home to parents. We ended up spending more time on this activity than planned, but agreed that it was necessary and useful.

The students played a game called "Why-Because." We read situations where a child was having a certain feeling, then they were asked to come up with reasons why the child may be feeling that way. We then reviewed more vignettes as in the last session, and again pointed out that the children could have more than one emotion and different people can interpret that child differently. This was easy to do because each student often had different ideas about the same vignette.

The final activity was to have the students write and draw in their Feelings Book (not included in Appendices). They were asked to write about or draw something representing a time they had the feeling listed on each page of the book. This activity worked well because the students could work individually while we removed them one at time to get their rewards. There was less disruptive behavior and more patience. Again, it was helpful to use Pam to assist students individually if they had questions or needed assistance.

Overall, the session went well again. Laura and I both felt that we were struggling with balancing the instruction of the group while also trying to observe,

praise, and reward the positive behaviors. We agreed that we would try harder to take turns with the sticks and to work on praising the students specifically (naming them and their behavior instead of just putting the stick in the cup).

Nate appeared more irritable than usual this time. He made some negative comments and was acting defiantly. However, as he was ignored by us as group leaders, the students also ignored him. They were rewarded with sticks, and gradually Nate stopped his behaviors and participated positively. Fran still did not participate, however, she was quiet and respectful by listening and giving eye contact to others. We rewarded her and thanked her for this. The rest of the students were positive and participating, even Benjamin was more positive. Laura and I discussed some concerns about Joe. He seemed to be very concrete in his thinking. For instance, some of the feelings that he listed were "test" and "compressed." We encouraged him to expand on these ideas by asking him questions such as, "How do you *feel* when you have a test." He had difficulty expressing himself and seemed frustrated that we did not understand.

Group 1, Session 4 – Defining Feelings

Goals: The students should be able to define the feelings (that they listed in the previous sessions) in more detail. They should also be able to identify feelings in hypothetical situations.

We reviewed some of the discussion about feelings, then introduced Molly, another puppet, and also Wally's sister. She helped the students go through their list of feelings and define them more clearly, especially by giving examples of when that feeling might occur.

The students played a game called Pass the Hat (see Appendix G). We had written down different situations on separate pieces of paper, had them in a hat for the students to pass around and draw. They were asked to read the situation, identify how that person might be feeling and why. This activity went well for most. Benjamin refused to participate at first, then after encouragement, drew a sheet and had difficulty reading it. He became frustrated and ripped up the paper. We were persistent and had the students help him read it and come up with some answers. He accepted our help and was able to calm down and participate.

These activities took longer than planned, so we moved our next activity, Body Tracing, to the session 5.

Apart from Benjamin's frustrations, the group went well. Nate and Brady were a little argumentative with each other, but the other students were able to ignore them. With our encouragement, Fran participated a little this time and was more positive. Katie did well also with more participation and attentiveness.

After reviewing our tapes, Laura and I realized that we needed more practice to improve our skills with using the puppets. We needed to open their mouths wider and have better timing with our words and their mouths. We both took puppets home with us and practiced.

Group 1, Session 5 - More Defining Feelings

Goals: Students should be able to continue the skill of identifying feelings in more complex situations (i.e. multiple feelings happening in a situation). Students should also begin to identify mimic feelings of others as well as gain more insight into their own feelings.

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We reviewed our discussions about feelings, then brought out Wally again to go through vignettes. These video clips were more advanced, more complex situations. Students were reminded to look for clues and to identify feelings of more than one child.

We then played a game of "Charades." Laura and I had cut out pictures from magazines of different people with different expressions on their faces. The students were asked to draw one out of a bag, then mimic the expression to the rest of group. The group had to guess what the emotion was. It seemed that many of the students found this challenging. Some struggled with being able to identify the emotion on the picture, other could identify it, but had difficulty mimicking it. The students stayed positive for the most part and were willing to accept our assistance and encouragement. We were surprised to see that the students were very positive and encouraging of each other. They were supporting each other without our suggestion of it. They seemed to understand that it was a struggle for everyone. This was a good sign that they were able to recognize feelings in themselves and transfer it to others. Laura and I agreed that we would use this activity again, so the students could get more comfortable with the skill.

In the next activity, students were given a large sheet of paper and asked to help each other trace their body outline onto the paper. We then gave them crayons and asked them to color the parts of their body where they felt different emotions (i.e. blue for sad, red for angry, orange for excited, yellow for anxious or scared, and green for relaxed). There was some disorganization around this

activity. They were excited to get started and had difficulty listening to the

directions, hence they required much of our individual assistance to complete the

project. This was the first activity where the students were more physically

involved and actually moved out of their seats, so we were not discouraged or

surprised by the disruptiveness of the group and it worked out well in the end due

to assistance from Pam in the classroom. Fran did very well and joined in right

away with this activity. She even asked for a black crayon for depression and

colored most of her body, especially her head, black and blue.

Group 1, Session 6 - Learning to Problem Solve

Goals: Students should understand the first step of problem solving, identifying
the problem and how the feelings identification skills apply to this. Students
should begin to learn the second step which is identifying solutions to the
problem.

In this session, after evaluation of the first unit, we began the second unit

of Problem Solving. We used Wally and some colored and laminated cue cards

to begin learning the first steps: knowing by your feelings that you have a

problem, identifying the problem and starting to think of solutions to your

problem. We also used vignettes again so the students could practice identifying

a problem and coming up with solutions.

We then played a game called "Accident Detection" where the students

each read a situation and were asked to identify whether it was an accident or

intentional (see Appendix I). Some of the situations we intentionally wrote to be

either way (i.e. stepped on the cat's tail).

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The students were given an opportunity to continue work on their Feelings Book as a closing activity.

Overall, the group was quiet for this session, not a lot of enthusiasm or distraction, but they did participate. Joe and Nate were both absent – the first time we had more than one student absent at a time. There was some negativity at first. Benjamin sat down, but refused to participate and when he did, he was short with his responses. He refused to read until everyone else had a turn. Fran also started out by walking around the room, refusing to participate, but as she was ignored, then rewarded for each step she took in joining us, she eventually sat down and even participated in the end. During this session, we also worked more with Travis on his tendency to dominate the group and direct others. We ignored some of his comments and rewarded students who also ignored him. We gave Travis sticks when he was respectful to others. He improved toward the end of the session. We also saw Katie gaining some confidence – she participated and even spoke out to encourage Benjamin appropriately when he was struggling.

Group 1, Session 7 - Problem-Solving

Goals: Students will continue to understand how to generate solution ideas and start to learn how identify which solution to use.

In this session, we continued with the Solutions steps. We used Wally and Molly to help the students practice. We had Wally and Molly start arguing over sharing something, then had the students help them come up with solutions.

We then demonstrated Wally and Molly using the solution – used one that didn't work, then one that did.

We used vignettes again with discussion with Wally and Molly. The students continued to practice finding solutions. We continued to use the laminated picture cards as visual aids. We pulled each one out as the students identified each solution.

We then used the same faces that we used in Session 2 to incorporate feelings and problem solving. A problem-solving situation was read aloud by Laura and I (see Appendix J). At different points in the story, we would stop and ask a student to pick out a face that would identify how different characters were feeling and possible solutions.

As a closing activity and to keep the students occupied while they took turns counting sticks and receiving prizes, we had each student complete a maze for Wally and Molly. We discussed how a maze is like solving a problem. There is more than one path to take, and you may need to try different ways until you find the one that works.

Overall, the group was very positive. We were pleased with how well they continued to seem to enjoy the vignettes and get involved. They all seemed to enjoy the interaction between the puppets and all were willing to give their input to them. They also all completed the maze. Some of them even asked for more mazes to take home.

Katie still continued to be very quiet, but respectful to others. Benjamin joined group a little late, due to transportation problems from his other school.

He seemed to take time to transition – was unwilling to participate at first, but joined in during the videos. Nate was very positive, gave some thoughtful answers and input. Brady was positive as usual, but we had difficulty with keeping him on track. He tended to want to sit very close to us and to the cups and is increasingly distracted by the sticks and the cups. He wants to touch them and make sure to tell us every time he thinks he needs a stick. Laura and I discussed and agreed to have him sit on the opposite side of the circle next time. Fran was absent today.

Group 1, Session 8 - Learning Consequences to Solutions

Goals: Students should begin to understand the next step in problem solving which is identifying the consequences of each solution.

We introduced the next step in Problem Solving which is identifying consequences to each solution. As we were getting into more complex learning and having higher expectations of the students, we wanted to continue to keep the environment positive and fun so we started out by bringing out Wally and having him tell some jokes before he introduced the consequence step. We defined consequences and discussed how they help us to determine whether or not the solution chosen is a good one.

This time, we gave the students their own reduced-size set of solution cards (see Appendix K). We watched more vignettes regarding solutions and consequences and the students were allowed to use their cards to come up with

answers when they needed to. We also talked about how the cards could be used in the classroom, group room, or lunchroom when a problem arose during their day.

The discussions and vignettes took more time than planned and we did not have time for the game. However, Laura and I agreed that the discussions had appeared useful. The students were interactive, asked questions and had many responses. It seemed that they were needing the time to hear the information repeated and to process the information. We also spent more time this session with redirecting. Brady and Nate were quite talkative and Brady had worked his way closer to the cups – despite our seating him further away. Nate made several negative comments, however ceased after a few minutes when he was ignored by us and by peers. Fran did not participate at all. She placed her chair outside the circle and said nothing despite our encouragement. However, she did have her chair, body and eyes turning toward the group and listened respectfully. She earned a few sticks for that, and I talked with her after the group. I reminded her how she can earn all of the prizes and asked her what prizes she would like to work towards. Laura and I agreed that we would buy the items she was looking for to give her more incentive. With our work with using the ignoring and the rewards, Travis had improved in his dominating.

Group 1, Session 9 - Defining Solutions

Goals: Students should gain more experience in implementing the skills taught up to this point.

At this point, during our debriefing, Laura and I recognized two concerns. The first was that the students had not participated in any true role-play activities. While there had been discussions around specific situations, they hadn't actually practiced saying the words used in solutions. Secondly, we observed that they had the skills to identify many situations, but not to discuss or practice how they would be implemented. For instance, do they understand what it looks like to trade or share, or do they know effective words to communicate to adults when they need their interventions?

To address both of these concerns, we agreed to put more detail into this session about defining the solutions. We decided to break down each solution on the cards, have a group discussion around it, then have two students chose an example and role play it. We started out by demonstrating. I pretended to be using the computer. Laura role-played that she wanted a turn on the computer. We acted out some arguing, then worked out a solution to set a time and take turns. This activity worked well. Some of the students such as Travis and Brady were enthusiastic to participate and "act." Others such as Katie, Fran and Benjamin refused at first, but after encouragement, did participate and did well.

We also completed our first evaluation process with the students for the Feelings Unit. These activities took longer than planned, but appeared successful, so we felt confident in canceling the next activity, another "Pass the Hat" game which included situations on solution identification. We agreed to use it in another session.

We also sent a homework activity with the students and took time in group to explain it as well as explain the reward if they completed and returned it. (See Appendix L for homework within the parent note)

Group 1, Session 10 – Problem-Solving - Choosing the Best Solution and Evaluating

Goals: Students should understand the final steps of problem solving and to begin to put all of the steps together (identify as well as practice in hypothetical situations).

In this session we introduced the last two steps of Problem-Solving; choosing the best solution, then evaluating the solution used (How did it work?). We used Will, an African-American puppet. The students appeared to enjoy him and were attentive. We reminded them of the consequences they had learned and how to use them to determine the best choice for a solution and to evaluate whether or not the solution was effective.

We (and Will) also used the cue cards to review all of the steps of problem-solving and how to put them together. The students also practiced by playing another Pass the Hat game, this time using different solutions drawn out of a hat (see Appendix M). We realized that many of the students struggled with putting all of the steps together, even with the cue cards right in front of them. Also, when asked to come up with a problem of their own to work on, they rarely chose a conflict with another person. Instead, they would choose a problem such as skateboarding on the ice and getting hurt. This reiterates their need for the group and our need to review the material again.

Nate was absent today because his grandfather had died. Laura and I discussed whether or not to address his feelings next time he returns to group. We decided to let Nate determine that. Most of the students were positive, willing to give participate. Benjamin started out with a good attitude, but appeared to become frustrated that he wasn't called on every time he had his hand raised. He refused to participate from that point on. I discussed it with him after the group.

Group 1, Session 11 - Review of Feelings and Problem-Solving

Goals: Review and continued practice with using all of the steps together

This was a review session. We went through the cue cards first, as a reminder, then left the cards displayed for the students to use as we practiced.

We first used case examples and had the students go through the steps. This was successful and all of the students were participating, some needing more encouragement than others (Fran, Katie and Benjamin).

We then played a game called "Sequence." Each of the problem-solving steps were put onto smaller, laminated cards. Each student was given a card, then we asked them to use teamwork and communicating to figure out the order of the steps. In our planning, Laura and I thought this would be a simple and fun review. However, we were surprised to see all of the students struggling. They argued among each other, didn't take their time to think and simply shouted out answers, and some even refused to show their card by the end of the group (Travis and Benjamin). With much guidance from Laura and I, they were able to

complete the task successfully. When completed, we asked them to discuss the game and why it had seemed to be a difficult experience for them. They were unable to give us much feedback at that point. Our understanding of the students is that they do not like to discuss things that were frustrating for them.

Most of the students had returned their homework from two sessions ago, some even turned it in the next day at YALE, so we chose to send home another homework sheet, this time a review of all the steps (see Appendix N).

SUMMARY OF GROUP ONE

Overall, I felt that the first group went well. There were a few struggles, some that we were able to overcome and some that we continue to work on. I was also able to observe the progress and limitations of individual students as well as the group as a whole, their progress and process. I will also comment on my learning.

The goals of Group One were to teach the children to identify multiple feelings, then to recognize problems based on their feelings and learn appropriate ways to solve problems. The students were very successful at naming feelings and defining them. The skills taught in this first group started out in a simple, more concrete manner. The students were quite skilled at naming a variety of feelings, some feelings quite complex. This surprised us slightly. As the difficulty in the skill levels increased, I observed more distracting behaviors from the students and some lack of enthusiasm in participating. For instance, when asked to name feelings and discuss situations, the students were positive

and did well. As we advanced and asked them to actually demonstrate feelings and tie all of the discussion together, there was more resistance to participation. This was expected though as part of the learning process, particularly for these students who struggle with these skills more than most children. They struggled more when asked to identify feelings on an actual face or to act them out. Perhaps this was due to their lack of insight into their own feelings and feeling uncomfortable about their own negative feelings. If the group we to be replicated perhaps it would be beneficial to spend more time practicing acting out the feelings as well as incorporating more activities that helped them look at their own feelings (i.e. the Body Tracing game where they identified feelings in themselves, their Feelings Book where they drew pictures of times that had certain feelings). We continued to reiterate feelings and discussed them throughout the next group as they related to the topics. For instance, when discussing anger in the next unit, we had talked about different types and levels of angry feelings as well as ways to calm down and have more positive feelings. I feel that the goal of The Problem Solving unit was not completely met. The students did well with each step, but when asked to put all of the steps together into a situation, they often struggled. These skills are more complex and perhaps more time is needed, particularly with this particular population of children.

I observed that the puppets were received positively by the students and seemed to be effective. The theory from the literature was that children could relate to puppets and find a connection with them. Laura and I agreed to

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continue to use them as often as we could. We agreed to try to include one or more of them in some part of each session.

I had been slightly skeptical about the use of the vignettes as a teaching tool. With the student's age, I was concerned that they would view the videos as too simple. However, I was pleasantly surprised to observe how they were attentive and enthusiastic to view them. In discussion with Laura, we agreed that perhaps the students liked learning social skills with the attention focused on other students rather than themselves. They may have also felt some validation that other children struggle with the same feelings that they do. Whatever the reason, we agreed to continue to use them as one of the teaching tools.

We had some concerns in some of the sessions with students following directions and staying organized. We were able to discuss these with each other and to make changes that were effective. For instance, we learned how to give more simple directions for some of the hands-on activities and to provide more structure and supervision during these times (i.e. the Body Tracing activity).

There were some observations about the group process and students interactions as well. Since the students already knew each other and had worked in groups together, some of the beginning stages of building trust and relationships was already built. However, I still noticed a sense of unease about each other and some testing of each other. As each session progress, there appeared to be more ease. There seemed to be an increased comfort level that showed in the amount of participation from some of the less assertive children.

Also, because the students already knew each other, they also already knew each other's weaknesses and used them right from the beginning. I noticed as the group went on, there seemed to be more trust among the children. They were more supportive of each other and encouraged positive behavior out of each other. I believe that the activities and the techniques we used helped support this behavior. For instance, we ignored the negative behavior and were enthusiastic about their positive behavior and followed up with the rewards. The students were not only learning this system, but were using it among each other. Laura and I were both pleased with how well the students caught onto the reward system with the sticks and how quickly the system could make a change in an individual's behavior and also affect the whole group. By dealing directly with a student's negative behavior and drawing attention to that student may have created an atmosphere that actually encouraged that negative behavior. For instance, our attention to Fran's negative comments about the puppets may have actually caused her to continue since she was receiving our attention. The other students may have been discouraged by their efforts for which they were *not* receiving attention. By ignoring Fran and rewarding the students who were participating, the behavior decreased and the other students were not distracted. The reward system worked as planned and the students used it appropriately, even more quickly than we had anticipated.

I was able to make observations of individual students as well. I saw improvement in Fran's attitude and participation. We worked hard to find reasons to praise and reward her as well as to ignore her negative behavior.

Even though Katie continued to need a tremendous amount of encouragement to participate and respond, I could see that she was starting to feel more comfortable. She was holding her head up more, needed a few less verbal prompts and even raised her hand on her own a few times. Similarly, Benjamin was often not willing to participate, but displayed more behaviors in opposition to participation rather than just withdrawing as Katie did. He had increasingly more times of positive participation however as the group progressed, again due to our encouragement of him. In my observation, Travis was clearly the most assertive in the group. He had more skills than the other students and dominated the discussions at times. Laura and I tried to make sure that students were called on equally and that Travis was ignored at times when he became too "bossy" or arrogant. The other students did not complain about him, but I feel, may have participated less when Travis was there. Brady was usually extremely enthusiastic in his participation. This was good, but at times he needed to be asked to move back or settled down as he lost track of his boundaries. Knowing Brady, this is common for him and something that is continuously worked on.

In my learning, I was beginning to feel more comfortable with the puppets and my interactions with the students. Watching the sessions on the videotapes was helpful. I was able to see what I could do differently as well as what worked work that I tried to replicate. The debriefing time with Laura, the co-facilitator was especially critical for me. I believe that we helped each other by sharing and comparing our observations. We were able to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the sessions and determine whether to make changes or

additions to the next sessions. We were able to modify the session throughout

our planning process. I did not view the changes as a problem, but rather an

important and a positive aspect of the group. The preliminary planning we had

done was intended to be a guideline to follow. I feel that the changes were due

to our learning and were improvements to the group.

Group 2
Group 2, Session 1 – Controlling Anger – Learning Steps

Goals: Students will learn the steps of anger control, then practice through
visualization.

We started this session with the evaluation of the Problem-Solving unit.

Benjamin and Fran needed encouragement, but eventually participated along

with all of the others.   The students gave us good feedback on new prizes we

could use.

Students were introduced to Tiny Turtle in this session. Tiny narrated a

story as we showed cue cards to visualize the steps taken in anger management.

The steps are 1. Recognize that something made you angry, 2. STOP what you

are doing, 3. Take 3 deep breaths, 4. Retreat into your "shell", and 5. Come out

of shell and try it again (see Appendix O for notes sent home).   All of the

students appeared to be listening intently to Tiny.

We focused on the idea of stopping and relaxing and used a relaxation

tape and turtle visualization story. They all seemed to be getting involved in this

exercise where, while listening to music and words, they were to visualize

relaxing in the sun as a turtle. Brady, Joe, and Nate even used there body's to

act as a turtle which was not stated, but appropriate to the activity. We then had

the students work together to color one large stop sign shape that was then

displayed on a wall in the front of the classroom as a reminder. There was a

minimal amount of arguing (less than we expected) over space and technique as

they participated in this activity.

Group 2, Session 2 - Controlling Anger – Practicing Steps

Goals: Students will have hands-on practice with the anger control steps and
practice with one step in particular – learning how to cope with negative
comments from others.

In this session, after a review of the steps with Tiny, students had an

opportunity to practice the steps by using a large fleece turtle shell. The idea

was to get them to physically go through the steps, actually go into a shell and

practice taking deep breaths, then being able to come out and tell themselves

they would try again. I started by physically going through the steps while Laura

stated them aloud. All of the students were willing to try this exercise. They also

seemed to understand these steps more easily than the problem-solving steps.

In the final activity, we used the fleece turtle shell again. This time we had

the students think of positive and negative comments that had been made to

them in the past. Laura and I wrote the positive comments on paper that was

sticky and the negative comments on paper that had no adhesive and placed

them on the shell. When we were done, we stood up and shook the turtle shell

so that all of the negative comments fell off. We had the students read them

again and discussed how to let the negative "slide off of you" like off of a shell

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and to let the positive ones stick with you. Again, they all seemed to get involved easily in this activity and were positive. Fran even participated more than usual and was attentive. However, as she counted her sticks, she became angry. She had earned 2 out of the 3 prizes and was very close to the third. She thought that she should have earned 3 and told me that she thought I was removing sticks from her cup intentionally. She refused to accept any of her prizes at first, then I convinced her to pick them out. Laura and I talked to her later about the reward system and how it works. There were also other issues at hand (difficulties at home and upcoming testing today at school).

Katie was absent today. Also Nate was not in the group due to a negative start to group. Nate was upset over the seating and wanted someone to move. When that student did not respond immediately, Nate became verbally aggressive and threw an object across the room. He was asked by other staff to leave the room with them and he did not return. After group, Laura, Nate's teacher and I talked with him. We knew that he was having difficulty with another teacher and also that he was angry with that particular student already.

Despite the difficulties with Nate and Fran, the group went very well. Due to technical problems, this session was not videotaped, which is unfortunate. I feel that often I can learn more from reviewing what went right rather than always trying to fix what went wrong. In discussion, Laura and I agreed that this activity was more concrete and the steps were simple and involved less decision-making than the problem-solving steps.

Group 2, Session 3 – Controlling Anger – Ways to Calm Down

Goals: Review anger control steps with a focus on the step of calming down. The students should be able to list ideas of their own with guidance from the group leaders.

For a review, Wally joined the group in this session, along with Tiny, and talked about how he used the Anger Control steps to stay calm.

We then focused on the next step, calming down. We had the students practice deep breathing again, then worked on "brainstorming" ideas about calming down. We used large posters and divided the answers into three categories: When, Where and How. We talked with the students about what they would use as their turtle shell in different situations – at home, school and in the community. The ideas they presented were impressive to us (see Appendix Q). Nate had some negative comments, but accepted redirection well and did well overall. Katie was very quiet, needed a lot of prompting to participate. Everyone else was positive and appropriate. Fran showed much improvement again with her attitude and participation and earned 3 prizes this time.

We concluded with a tic-tac-toe worksheet that was designed to identify positive and negative ways to handle anger (see Appendix Q). The students worked well independently. Nate expressed frustration at having a written task, but accepted individual assistance from Pam.

This was also the first day that Joe had to leave early. He had earned increased time in his transition to his home school. Joe was there for the first 15 minutes of review and was also eating his lunch at the same time. He was very

appropriate in eating and participating at the same time without being distracting

and also exiting the group without distracting the other students.

Group 2, Session 4 – Controlling Anger – Practice

Goals: Help the students understand the difference in dealing with angry feelings appropriately versus destructively through a story and activity.

We continued with more practice of anger control. For the first activity,

students were each given a balloon and instructions. Pam read a book titled

Alexander's Terrible, Horrible, No-Good Day, a story about a boy who keeps

facing obstacles and challenges as his day goes on. At each challenge, the

students were to blow one small puff of air into their balloon, then hold it. The

story continues and Alexander starts finding ways to deal with his challenges and

stay calm. With each of these, the students let a small amount of air out until it is

limp again. The ideas was to demonstrate how anger can get out of control and

eventually "explode" unless you find ways to calm down. The activity was difficult

for some of the students to follow. Nate and Brady had the most trouble

following the story and continued to blow up their balloon and let the air out

repeatedly. Fran and Katie followed the directions well and were rewarded.

However, there was much distraction and students seemed not to notice who

was earning sticks. They stated that they enjoyed the activity however, and were

able to verbalize the message.

We also played the Sequence game again, this time with the Anger

Control steps. We used a board with Velcro on it to stick the cards to and chose

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Fran to hold the board since she had done the best in the previous activity. She seemed genuinely pleased and continued to do well the rest of the session.

We concluded with giving the students the opportunity to work on their Feelings Book again. They all participated well.

Group 2, Session 5 – Controlling Anger – Games

Goals:

At this point, there were no more specific skills to be taught, however, we felt that these students, in particular, needed practice with anger control, so we chose to continue to practice with some activities and games.

We started with an activity that focused on anger control, but included all the skills taught up to this point. We used the laminated faces previously used and a large, colored picture of a thermometer. The students were asked to 1. pick a face, 2. describe the feeling, 3. place in on the thermometer as to where they thought the feeling fit (i.e. extreme anger at the top), 4. Give an example of a time they felt that way, and 5. Describe a way to calm down from that emotion. They did well with this activity and were able to follow the steps and give appropriate responses.

The next activity was a fishing game using magnetic fish and fishing pole. Each fish had a piece of paper with a problem written on it. The students "fished" for one fish, and were asked to come up with a solution and an anger control step to use for that problem.

For the most part, the students appeared to be enjoying the group. Fran in particular was positive and patient. She participated and listened to others. She even offered appropriate verbal assistance to her peers for the first time in the group. Katie was more positive and appeared more confident in her answers. Benjamin started out well, but became frustrated with taking turns during the fishing game and refused to participate. Nate was reportedly already having a difficult morning. He was argumentative, made many negative comments and his solutions usually involved violence. He was able to provide more positive answers, with our assistance though. Brady has improved since we have moved his seating. This was the second session without Travis (he has moved out of town). Laura and I observed a different dynamic in the group without him. Others have improved in their participation and there seems to be less tension and competition for the "right" answer.

Group 2, Session 6 – Friendship Skills – Helping and Sharing
Goals:

The session started with an evaluation of the Anger Control Unit. The students appeared comfortable with the method and they all willingly gave responses and addition feedback at times.

We introduced Dina Dinosaur to help introduce the next unit – Friendship skills. She reviewed all of the skills that will be taught. The students seemed more interested in Dina than any other puppet. Even Fran, who usually ridiculed the puppets, was quiet and attentive.

We focused on the skills of helping and sharing. We defined them and asked the students to give examples. We also began a poster with a list of qualities of a friend.

We closed with an activity that began to incorporate the skills. The students were divided into teams and asked to look through magazines, choose ONE picture that they all agreed on, glue it to a poster and decorate. We intentionally gave them limited supplies of scissors, glue and markers to force them to share. The was some arguing, but the task was accomplished in the end without much assistance from the facilitators. Nate and Brady worked well together. Fran, Katie and Brady argued. Katie also displayed some lying and manipulating and became verbally aggressive when confronted. This was common behavior for her at school, but the first we had seen of it in this group. We let the students work out their conflicts without much intervention to let them practice the problem solving skills they had been learning.

We were starting to see more challenging behaviors this sessionsas we were asking the students to work together, showing the need for skills and practice in this area.

Group 2, Session 7 – Friendship Skills – Teamwork

Goals: Increase the complexity of the activity to challenge the students and continue to increase their skill level. The specific skill focus is on teamwork and all of the skills that accompany teamwork (sharing, taking turns, cooperating, supporting each other).

In this session, we introduced the concept of teamwork and defined the qualities needed for successful teamwork – sharing, taking turns, working hard, helping each other, cooperating and following the same rules.

We used an activity to practice teamwork. The students were divided into two teams and the teams were separated from each other by sight. Each team had a bag of identical Lego blocks. One team was asked to build something together then give verbal instructions to the other team to build the same thing. Katie was paired up with Nate and was having a difficult day. She kept her head down, withdrawn and refused to participate at all. Nate was obviously frustrated with her, but was able to remain calm and listen to the directions from the other team. Brady and Fran built well together, but had difficulty describing the objects. Brady's limited cognitive skills made his instructions very difficult to understand. Fran would try to take over and fix the confusion. Nate was confused and frustrated, but remained patient and eventually constructed something close to the other team's. We then had the teams switch responsibilities. Katie still refused to participate. Nate did very well with describing his object to the other team. Fran and Brady continued to argue and complain that the other person was wrong. However, in the end, they built the identical item. We ended with a discussion of the activity. We tried to focus on the positive skills the students used rather than focus on their difficulties. In planning, Laura and I knew that this would be a challenging activity and, despite their struggles, felt that they did well and learned from it. We agreed to try another teamwork activity in another session.

Group 2, Session 8

I made a mistake in the session number, so there actually was no session

8. I kept the number the same to avoid confusion with correspondence with

video tapes of the session and the materials that were included in each session.

Group 2, Session 9 – Friendship Skills – Listening and Talking

Goals: In order to help the students transfer their skills learned, expand the
concept of teamwork, particularly to their home environment. Students also will
learn specific skills such as listening and talking as friendship skills.

We reviewed teamwork, including the activity they did last session with the

Legos. We also talked about teamwork at home and how a family also operates

as a team.

Through discussion as a group, we reviewed and added to the poster of

Friendship Skills. Wally and Molly then introduced Listening and Talking skills.

We had a new student, Blake join the group. He was a new student to the

school, so it was necessary for him to participate in the group. To help support

this situation, we used a puppet to discuss a parallel issue. Molly talked about a

problem she had – she was going to a new school and wanted help with

introducing herself. The students gave her suggestions. Wally demonstrated

good listening skills by eye contact, letting Molly talk, responding appropriately.

We then stopped Wally and Molly and asked the students to identify and discuss

the listening and talking skills they observed Wally and Molly displaying. Each

student was asked to role-play introductions with another student.

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We also practiced giving compliments with the Compliment Game. Students were given a soft item to toss to someone. That person in turn was to give them a compliment. We also realized that the students needed assistance and practice in saying, "Thank You" to a compliment. We discussed and practiced good eye contact, body language, and tone of voice. The students showed improvement throughout the game.

Overall, the students were positive and willing to participate. Nate had mostly negative comments and had difficulty giving and receiving compliments. He would turn his compliments into positive ones, but only with our prompting.

We assigned another homework activity (See Appendix S) which was to think about their family as a team, to plan something to do together and then actually do it. We gave suggestions and asked them to return to group in one week prepared to discuss the activity their family engaged in and how they planned it together.

Group 2, Session 10 – Friendship Skills – Praising and Apologizing

Goals: Introduce praising and apologizing skills to expand their friendships skills. Use discussion, then games for actual practice of the skills.

We reviewed all of the friendship skills covered so far, using the picture cue cards again. We then introduced Praising and Apologizing by discussion with the students about how they feel when negative comments are made to them and how they feel when positive comments are made. We discussed what it means to praise someone and what specific words to use.

The focus was also on apologizing. We discussed the importance of the words, "I'm Sorry", when to use an apology, and how to make it sincere. We pulled in the solution cards from the problem-solving unit and reminded them that praising and apologizing were also solutions to conflicts.

We played a game called 20 Questions that incorporated some of the friendship skills learned. The students were asked to draw an item out of a bag and keep it hidden. The other students asked "yes" and "no" questions until they identified the object. The students needed redirection to find yes and no questions and had some difficulty, but for the most part seemed to enjoy the game. They played appropriately, took turns and were supportive of one another. Laura and I simply watched them play and commented on each positive friendship skill displayed.

In this session, Katie was much more interactive, however, when it was her turn, she lied a few times to try to get her turn to last longer. The students were aware and commented, but stayed positive with her. Nate was very negative today with his comments and attitude. He became more upbeat when he played the game however.

Group 2, Session 11 – Review of all Skills

Goals: Provide an overall view of all of the skills taught in the group. Use different techniques including discussion, visual aids and games.

This was the final session before graduation, so we reviewed all of the steps and practiced them.

We started by asking the students about their homework assignment – their family activity. They all had something to report and were positive, except Fran. She was having a difficult day and reported that her family "never did anything together." We tried to prompt her with ideas, but she had a negative response for everything we presented.

We reviewed the steps using the cue cards and discussion, then practiced by going through scenarios in a book. Students each took a turn reading a scenario, going through the steps of identifying the feelings, the problem and possible solutions. They could ask for assistance from the group if needed. These activities took the entire session. Overall, they did well with the skills and the steps. They struggled with identifying the problem-solving steps again, but were able to use them well in the practice activity.

We concluded with giving them the opportunity to complete their Feelings Book.

The students were not enthusiastic today. Some of them even stated that they were "bored." We realized that the material was all review and there were no "fun" activities. Fran was particularly negative throughout the group. She refused to read a scenario at first and only did when Laura sat by her and assisted her. In talking with staff after the group, I learned that Fran had been in a negative mood already due to some other factors. There had been discussion in the last few session to help remind students that the group would be ending soon. The behavior fit with the termination phase of groups.

<u>Group 2, Session 12 – Graduation</u>

Goals: The students should understand the termination of the group and leave with positive and proud feelings by being presented with some final "fun" and ceremonial activities. This includes awards, presentations, food and an enjoyable activity.

Graduation session consisted of eating and games as well as presentation of diplomas and pictures.

We started the session by eating pizza and listening to music. We then called students up to the front of the group one at a time to present them with a diploma that was signed by all the facilitators and laminated. We also gave each of them a carnation and an opportunity for a Polaroid picture with puppet/staff/student of their choice. Most of them chose to include all of the facilitators and the puppets. Others also included the other students.

We ended the group by playing Bingo made out of all of the cue cards (steps, solutions, etc.) Most of the students appeared to be enjoying themselves. Katie needed individual assistance during the entire game and at times, would lie to try to win, then become upset when confronted.

Overall, the group went well. The students seemed most pleased by the pictures. Nate and Brady reported that they would like to continue the group or go through it again.

<u>SUMMARY OF GROUP 2</u>

As with the first group, I was able to see progress as well as some limitations, but overall, the group seemed to be a positive and effective

experience for the students. There were a few changes in the group dynamics as two students left and a new one joined the group. I was also able to make some observations for changes that I would make to the group if I were to facilitate it again.

As this second group progressed, I observed that the students gained some confidence and were willing to participate more and more positively. There were still difficulties with more complex activities, but overall, those who were quiet or negative made improvements in their participation. In addition, Travis, the more dominant, assertive group member left the group (due to moving away) and I observed others becoming more comfortable and assertive in his absence. As we observed this, Laura and I realized that we could have made more of an effort in the first group to curtail his dominance. By the end of this group, Fran has improved her participation tremendously. She had started at the beginning of the first group by physically sitting outside the circle, and ended this second group by independently participating and showing some enthusiasm. I believe this was due to the increased comfort among the students that we had encouraged by our positive praise and reward through the sessions. The students' understanding and empathy may have increased also as we encouraged mutual aid among the group members.

Joe also was not in the group for the last few sessions because he was doing well and had increased his time transitioning to his home school. We were pleased to see that Joe was able to be in the session for the first 10 minutes, participate while he ate his lunch, then leave the group with very minimal

distraction to the group. The students did not seem affected much by his leaving. Joe was rewarded for his positive participation in this different arrangement. The students were also praised for their ability to maintain focus during this transition time. This was possibly due to their trust in the group, the facilitators and the routine.

Also, a student new to the school, Blake, joined the group about midway through the second group. Blake had a higher skill level, much like Travis, and was integrated easily into the group. He quickly picked up on the rules, the reward system and the skills. He differed from Travis, however, in that he was not as assertive, and the other students appeared to feel comfortable with him and participated as they had been. Again, I feel that their comfort and trust in the group process allowed them to accept a new member without disruption.

There were some more challenges in the second group as we taught more complex skills. If a skill or an activity was a challenge or the students were asked to incorporate several skills in one activity we saw more arguing and negativity. This was expected because it was typical coping behavior for these students and was a necessary part of the learning process. We continued to deal with these issues by enforcing the reward system that proved to be effective. We also modified the reward system by making it more difficult for students to earn sticks. In other words, they were given sticks at less frequent intervals. They had appeared to learn the appropriate behaviors and we increased our expectations of them. At first, the students who almost always earned the maximum amount of prizes were disappointed, but they were able to learn from it and increase their

skills.

By the end of the second group, it was clear to Laura and I that the students were still struggling with the problem solving skills and the friendship skills. The anger management session that involved Tiny Turtle, the use of the turtle shell and several hands-on interactive pieces, was clearly more popular among the students and they were able to clearly identify and demonstrate the steps and the skills. The problem solving skills were something that we referred back to with almost every new skill learned. The students seemed to struggle with remembering all the steps. In review, Laura and I realized that the problem-solving unit needed to be reviewed. Perhaps there could be some changes or make the unit longer.

The friendship skills unit started out simply and students appeared to enjoy discussion. However, as we asked them to discuss and demonstrate the skills of teamwork and "being a good friend", I observed more resistance to activities, more complaining, and less positive participation. In discussion, Laura and I agreed that this is an area that these students particularly struggle with. Many of them don't have any friends outside of school and very little positive contact with peers in school. We agreed to continue to use a variety of activities to teach these skills as there was clearly a great need in this area.

When looking at facilitating the group again, I would make some changes. For instance, the Problem Solving unit would include at least two more sessions based on the students lack of retention of the skills. I would also include more role-play activities rather than discussion. The students appeared to become

"bored" toward the end of group two and would possibly benefit from more practice of the skills rather than discussion. Another explanation could be explained the termination phase of group. The students were aware that the group would be ending soon and were making their own adjustments to that. Even though the students would continue to work together as a classroom and in their usual group therapy, this group was unique to their schedule and required a transition as it ended. I would also include at least two to four more sessions of the friendship skills, particularly the teamwork skills. I would also try to find some videos to demonstrate friendship skills. The videos used in the Incredible Years curriculum were of children of a much younger age and did not seem like they would be effective for this population. As facilitators, we also could try demonstrating it ourselves through a role-play. I believe that having the students' view what teamwork looks like, then actually demonstrating or practicing it themselves would be effective. The example in this group that was most prominent for me is the Lego activity. We had asked students to divide into two groups. One group was to build an object with the given Lego pieces, then verbally describe the object in order to get the other group to build the identical object. The students struggled with this activity. They became upset, argued, and needed much encouragement from us as facilitators to complete the activity. However, we allowed them to work out their problems and to struggle without giving them assistance. In the end, they completed the task and did very well, however, were not able to see their success due to their frustrations. I would

include more of this type of activity in hopes that the students would eventually

begin to see how to work together and to be proud of their final success.

Chapter Four:
EVALUATION

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

The goal of the social skills group was to provide the students with a positive experience to participate in, to give them additional tools to help them cope and function with their social and emotional deficits, and to decrease the anti-social, negative behaviors by replacing them with some more positive, socially acceptable behaviors at school and at home.

Evaluation of the group occurred in four different areas: parent input, school staff input, student input and review of student data.

Prior to the group, the parents completed a survey, the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory, Parent Rating Form. The parents were then asked to complete the same evaluation at the end of the group. In addition, they were asked more open-ended, input questions to gain feedback about the group (see Appendix B).

I also ask the classroom teacher, the therapist, and the classroom paraprofessional to complete the same evaluation, the Sutter-Eyberg Student Behavior Inventory-Revised, Teacher Rating Form. In other words, each student had three evaluations, one from each staff who worked with them.

The Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI) is a widely implemented parent rating scale used to measure disruptive and conduct problem behaviors in children age 2 to 17. The 36 items in the ECBI are parallel the symptoms of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Conduct Disorder (CD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity

Disorder (ADHD) (Burns & Patterson 2000, Burns and Patterson 1991). Parents rate how often each behavior occurs on a 7-point frequency of occurrence scale. The scale ranges from never (1) to always (7). Parents also indicate whether the behavior is currently a problem on a yes-no problem identification scale. There is also a teacher rating scale that uses the same format. Both ECBI scales have been found to have evidence for validity by showing significant differences between conduct-problem children and normal children (Boggs, et. al. 1990). Treatment outcome studies have shown the ECBI to be a sensitive measure of change in conduct problem behaviors (Boggs, et. al. 1990). In addition, the concurrent validity of the ECBI scales with another well-established parent-report scale was demonstrated by high correlations with the Child Behavior Checklist, a scale for children between the ages of 4 and 16 years (Boggs, et. al. 1990).

Throughout the group, after each unit, the students were asked to rate each activity. Even though these students are older, all of them have difficulty with academics, especially in reading and writing. The YALE staff and I agreed that we did not want to ask them to complete anything written as this often causes anxiety and frustration. We wanted the experience to be positive so we could measure their thoughts and feelings more accurately. Thus, I prepared a simple visual evaluation form with three faces, one positive, one neutral, and one negative. We reviewed each of the activities done in the group one by one and asked the students to circle or point to the face that best described their feelings about that activity (see Appendix A).

In addition to the pre and post-tests administered to the students, school staff and parents, I looked measurable data collected by the school staff on the specific behaviors and goals of the individual students both before and after the group. The section, "Recording" in Chapter Two described the point system within the school and the documentation of incidents. I reviewed the students' data for seven weeks of the school year prior to the social skills group and again after the completion of the group and noted any changes, positive or negative. I reviewed data on the student's behavior throughout the day at YALE in the following ways:

1. Therapeutic treatment goals - these are already set up at YALE and measured by percentages. I compared percentages by weekly averages (daily percentages averaged each week) and put them into a graph.

2. Daily points earned at YALE – points are transferred into daily percentages. For example, the students can receive a possible total of 81 points per day. A student who earns 40 points for the day had a 50% day. I converted these to weekly average percentages and put into a graph.

3. Number of time-outs (times sent out of class or group for disruptive behavior) – counted and graphed by weeks.

4. Number of restraints (being physically held by staff for safety to themselves and others) – counted and graphed by weeks.

5. Number of physical aggressions – counted and graphed by weeks.

PARENT and SCHOOL STAFF EVALUATIONS

To further evaluate student's behavior and progress information was gathered from parents and school staff including the therapist, teacher, and paraprofessional. Parents were given the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI) both before and after the group. School staff were administered the teacher version of the ECBI. I also developed an open-ended questionnaire for the parents to complete (see Attachment B). I administered this questionnaire by phoning the parents. Discussion follows on the results of the parent ECBI, parent questionnaires, and the teacher forms of the ECBI.

Since there were only five students with complete data (one moved away, one parent did not complete the survey), the results of the ECBI cannot be used to draw any significant overall results. However, the information can be reviewed for discussion about the group. I will discuss whether or not parents and school personnel reported any increase or decrease in unwanted behaviors. There is also discussion included about which students were at clinical levels of behavior before and after the group. Some observations about individual student's data will also be reviewed.

Note: one of the parents did not complete the post-group evaluations. The parent was difficult to reach.

Parent ECBI

The parent ECBI measures negative and problematic behaviors in a child's home as observed by the parent. The behaviors are listed and parents are asked

to rate each one at a score of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning that the behavior never happens and 7 meaning that it is always happening.

According to the ECBI Professional Manual, 1999, a T-Score of 60 or above implies that the subject is at a clinical level of conduct problems and disruptive behavior. A clinical level implies that a child has severe conduct problems to the point of needed professional intervention and treatment. Prior to the group, 5 out of 6 of the children were rated by their parents at clinical levels. Post-group, only 2 were rated at the clinical level. All but one of the parents scored improvements (meaning a decrease in the quantity and/or intensity) in their child's behavior from the pre- to the post-test. The mean score on the pretests was 69 and the mean score on the posttests was 62, a slight improvement, but not significant. This was consistent with the qualitative data from the parents in the next section where the parents reported increased skills in their children, but still had difficulty with their behavior.

Individually, there were some observations. Fran was the one student who showed a lack of improvement, in fact increased her negative behavior from pre- to post-group. Her parent reported increased concerns about Fran's mental health, particularly depressive symptoms. Fran was in fact, hospitalized for aggression and suicidal ideation at the end of March, just a few weeks after completion of the group. Some environmental and medication factors were theorized by parents and professionals as factors in Fran's recent decline in mood and stability.

Brady and Joe, as scored by parents, made the most improvement, Brady from 76.00 to 59.00 and Joe from 66.00 to 50.00. A decrease in the score means

a decrease in problematic behaviors at home. Katie and Benjamin's improvement was smaller at only 2 and 3 points respectively. Benjamin was the student who was *not* scored at a clinical level by his parent on the pretest.

Parent Questionnaires

I included an open-ended questionnaire for parents to be able to get more detailed feedback about the children's behavior and to obtain opinions about the group itself. I also realized that the ECBI only measures negative behavior, so I included questions in which parents had the opportunity to discuss their child's strengths and improvements (see Appendix B).

Overall, the parent response was positive and there were several reports of improvement in children's behavior. All of the parents, even the two who reported no change in their child's behavior, expressed that the group was a positive experience and that they would like their child to repeat the group or for the group to continue in some way.

In response to the questions regarding improvement, most of the parents had specific comments such as statements that their child was better able to "work things out", was less reactive, handled sibling conflicts better, was calmer and less angry, was able to chose to discuss feelings and situations rather that act aggressively, had a more positive attitude, had more respect for self and others, and seemed able to understand their own frustrations as well as those of others. Two of the parents, the parents of Fran and Brady, reported no change in their child's behavior, which was consistent with the data on student behavior at school.

However, both of these parents reported that their child was demonstrating the ability to discuss the skills learned, but perhaps needed more practice.

All of the parents, including Fran's and Brady's reported that their child discussed some aspect of the group at home. Several reported that the children mentioned the prizes, games and puppets in a positive way. Benjamin complained to his mother that he thought he was "tool old" for the puppets. Katie and Benjamin's parents reported that the children were enthusiastic about the homework and made sure that it was completed. Several of the children (even Fran) reportedly discussed topics and skills they had learned in the group.

My feedback from parents during the evaluation after the group was that they all found the written information helpful in understanding what their child was learning. Some of them also stated that they were able to use the information in their own learning and/or to help their child continue to learn and practice the skills in their home environment. During the group, I had doubts about how well received the written communication was, but was astonished to learn how much the material was used by the parents. I believe that this was a critical part of the group and would not only continue, but also expand on the amount of material sent home. The literature reviewed points to parental involvement as a key component of a child's progress and learning in therapeutic areas (Handwerk & Marshall 1998, Osher & Hanley 2001). All of the parents surveyed reported that the parent notes and information sent home with their child was helpful in some way. Overall comments showed that parents found it helpful to understand what was happening in the group. I was also surprised, but pleased to hear reports that all of the

parents read and used the information send home. (I had underestimated the functioning level and interest of the parents). They expressed that they felt the parenting tips were helpful and were able to use the information in discussions with their children. Specifically mentioned were the skills of praise, rewards, problem solving and patience ("being able to stop and think"). Most of the parents mentioned that they would be able to continue to work on these skills. Fran's mother reported that her house was "too chaotic" to work on these skills.

Parents reported that none of the students had any significant changes in medication or other environmental changes during this scoring period. The parents expressed that they were pleased with their child's increased knowledge, and in some cases, improved behavior. Two of the parents mentioned that they were not sure whether the improvement was due to the group itself or the overall program at YALE.

SCHOOL STAFF EVALUATIONS

The teacher ECBI works in the same format as the parent evaluation. The difference is that the questions are formed to measure specific school behaviors and do not include questions about behavior at meals, bedtimes, and with siblings. There are more questions focused on peer-relations, on-task behavior and compliance with instruction. There were three evaluators for each student: the classroom teacher, paraprofessional and therapist.

As with the parent evaluations, I will discuss clinical levels of the students, overall scores and observations and individual observations. Five out of the six

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students were scored at a clinical level on both pre- and posttests. Joe was the one who did not score at a clinical level, however, Benjamin was the student who was *not* scored at a clinical level by parents. This is consistent with my qualitative data from parents and school personnel. Joe has been more successful at school in the last few months, but has not shown much improvement at home. Benjamin, on the other hand, has had few concerns in his home, however, struggles with academics and peer relationships.

When looking at average scores (from all three raters), from pre- to post-group, four of the six students had decreased scores, meaning decrease in negative behaviors, in other words, they had improved. The changes were not considered significant however, ranging from 1 to 3 points difference. Consistent with the parent scores, Fran was the one student whose score increased, implying an increase in negative behaviors. Katie's average scores remained the same. When comparing this information to the data on the student's behaviors (actual number of time-outs, etc.), the improvement as perceived by the school personnel was not as significant as the decrease in the number of restraints, aggressions, and time-outs. In other words, there was significant improvement in the extreme behaviors, however the school staff reported only minimal improvement in the daily behaviors that they struggled with. In talking with the staff, it was clear that they had noticed improvement in extreme behavior that required physical interventions, however, as staff still struggled enough on a regular basis with disruptive and conduct behaviors that they had trouble seeing the improvement. In other words,

the classroom staff and therapists still dealt with annoying and troublesome behavior regularly.

I did not have a formal qualitative evaluation for the school staff and in hindsight would have included a questionnaire similar to the parent questionnaire. I did however, complete informal discussions with each of them. I asked questions about each student's improvement or lack of improvement in certain areas. I also asked their opinions of the group and the content. They all agreed the content was useful and that it would be beneficial to continue the group in some way. They also agreed that their involvement in the group in some way would make the experience more universal and help the students carry over the skills they learned in group into the classroom. The elementary staff who were involved reported that their involvement was helpful. The middle school staff who were not involved reported that it would have been helpful to know and understand more about the group at the minimum.

Since this was a small sample, I was also able to make some observations about each school staff person and their scores of the students. For instance, the elementary therapist (Ms. D) and the middle school teacher (Mr. L.) tended to rate the students at a higher level than their colleagues did. Overall, the rest of the staff who completed evaluations rated the students relatively similar. A possible explanation may be that the personal styles of Ms. D and Mr. L. tend to be more rigid, therefore, they see the student's behavior as more problematic than the other staff views the same behavior.

In my informal discussions with school personnel, I was able to make a conclusion that it is critical for the school staff to be involved in the facilitation of the group in some way. The elementary staff consisted of Laura (the therapist), Wendy (the classroom teacher) and Pam (the classroom paraprofessional). As stated throughout the session descriptions, all had roles in the group. Laura, as the co-facilitator of the group was involved in all aspects. Wendy assisted in the planning at times and both Wendy and Pam assisted with the almost all of the sessions of the group. All three reported that they were able to continue to work on the skills throughout the day in the classroom and other areas. They also reported that they were able to see improvements in the students' abilities to understand the skills and then were able to assist them in using the skills. On the other hand, Nate and Brady came from the middle school classroom. The personnel in that room were not involved in the group in any way and were not aware of the skills taught. There was some improvement in Nate and Brady's behavior however the staff were not able to identify specific skills from the group demonstrated by the students. I realized that, at a minimum, I should have given the middle school staff the handouts that were sent home to the parents. I believe it would be important to include them in some part of the planning, discussion, or debriefing process as well as some training on the curriculum.

Student Evaluations

According to Toseland & Rivas 1995, feedback from group members is essential to allow their satisfactions and dissatisfactions to be expressed, to help

leaders improve their skills and to assess effectiveness of the group. Information gathered can also be shared and used for future groups. Since this was also the first group of this type facilitated in this setting, I wanted the students to be able to tell us what they enjoyed and found useful in the group and what they didn't. With the young age and lower developmental level of these particular students, I wanted to design an evaluation for them that was simple and not time consuming. I received input from Laura, my co-facilitator, since she knew the students well. We decided to simply ask the students to rate each of the activities and tools used in group. Since we had limited time for each session, we chose to have the students complete the evaluations after each of the four units (Identifying Feelings, Problem Solving, Anger Control and Friendship Skills).

I originally designed an evaluation form with three colorful characters depicting positive, neutral, and negative emotions (See Appendix A). I chose this because, for most of the students, written work is often a source of frustration, and I wanted them to be able to evaluate honestly, without interference. As we asked the students, in their regular group format, about each item, they could circle one of the characters. However, shortly into the first evaluation, it was clear that the students preferred to just tell us or show us their answer. Some of the students pointed to one of the characters, others would give a "thumbs up" for positive, "thumbs down" for negative or a "tipping" of their finger to show a neutral reaction. By the end of the evaluation of the second unit, we had completely eliminated the paper form with the characters, and the students used the hand gestures. This

method seemed more efficient and the students were cooperative or easily prompted to respond in this physical manner.

Since all of our activities and teaching tools involved visual aids or prompts, asking the students each evaluation question worked well. We were able to remind the students of the activity by showing them the actual game or visual aid we used and verbally reminding them of the technique used and the skill learned. With each activity we asked the students to rate it based on how well they enjoyed it and how helpful they thought it was in interpreting and learning the skill. In retrospect, I might have had them rate those two questions separately to determine if there was a difference between what they just "liked" and what they thought was actually useful. On the other hand, at their age and skill level, being able to state that an activity helped them learn even though they may have been challenged by it may have been beyond their ability.

The following pages show the data collected from these student evaluations. The data is broken down by each unit and shows each activity as well as each student's response. Following each section is discussion about the interpretations of this data, interpretation of each individual's responses as well as the popularity, or lack of it, on certain activities. Concluding this section is my interpretation regarding how this may affect future group planning.

Table 1 A
Student Evaluations of FEELINGS UNIT (in Group 1) - 8 Activities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Brady	8	0	0
Joe	8	0	0
Travis	8	0	0
Benjamin	8	0	0
Katie	5		3 (Feelings Book, Charades, and Tracing)
Nate	1 (Tracing Body)	6	1 (Videos)
Fran	0	6	2 (Charades and Tracing

This seemed to be consistent with attitudes and participation in group (i.e. Brady,

Joe, and Travis participate enthusiastically while Fran was unwilling to even join

the group and did not participate). One exception to this is Nate. In group he

seemed to be enjoying the activities, but chose only one positive response. This is

consistent with what we see from Nate's behavior outside of group. He tends to

speak negatively of most things associated with school.

Table 1B
Student Evaluations of Feelings Unit – Individual Activities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Show Me Five	5	2	0
Naming Feelings	5	2	0
Wally/Molly	5	2	0
Videos	5	1	1
Tracing Body	5	0	1
Feelings Book	4	3	0
Pass the Hat	4	3	0
Charades	4	2	1

The Videos, Pass the Hat, Tracing and Coloring Body and Feelings, and Charades seemed to be the most challenging activities and was reflected in their responses. These activities required more complex thinking and also forced participation. The activities at the top of the list that had a more positive response involved listening and watching some active props as well as discussion that was purely voluntary. We were surprisingly pleased with the positive response to the videos. We had concerns that the content of the videos were geared toward younger children and they would possibly complain about that, however this did not occur at all.

Table 2A
Student Evaluations of Problem Solving Unit (in Group 2) – 10 Activities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Brady	10	0	0
Benjamin	10	0	0
Travis	8	2 (Pass Hat, Cases)	0
Joe	8	1 (Homework)	1 (Solution cards)
Nate	5	5	0
Katie	3	6	1 (Homework)
Fran	0	7	3 (Videos, Problem-Solv cards, Wally/Molly)

The responses continue to be consistent with attitudes in group. Fran and Katie did not like the activities that required them to participate or that required any work other than listening. Fran however, has improved in joining the group and listening more respectfully.

Table 2B
Student Evaluations of Problem Solving Unit – Individual Activities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Sequence Game	6	1 (Fran)	0
Faces Game	5	1 (one student absent)	
Pass the Hat	4	3	0
Cases	4	3	0
Videos	4	2	1
Problem-Solv cards	4	2	1
Solution cards	4	2	1
Wally/Molly/Will	4	2	1
Homework	4	2	1
Prizes	6	1 (Fran)	0

Not surprisingly, the prizes were popular. Fran was not happy with the prizes, but she gave us some feedback on what she would like. She is also the one who has not earned many prizes (usually none or just one). Surprisingly, the Sequence Game was scored highly. During this game, the students had difficulty and there was arguing and lying among each other. Perhaps they were pleased that they had accomplished the difficult task in the end. This time, the more interactive activities were rated more positively. The group may be getting more comfortable with each other and willing to participate. The instructional activities and the homework were the least popular. Also, a few of the students are either not comfortable with the puppets, or not comfortable admitting that they enjoyed them.

Table 3A
Student Evaluations of ANGER CONTOL UNIT (in Group 2) - 10 Activities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Brady	10	0	0
Benjamin	9	1	
Nate	5	3 (absent twice)	0
Joe	3	0	0 (only there for first 3 groups)
Katie	2	8	0
Fran	0	7	3

Travis moved and no longer attends YALE. Joe was there for three sessions, then increased his transition time to his mainstream school. He was there for the first few minutes of discussion and review in each session, but not for any of the activities.

Based on her scores, Fran's attitude about the group appears to be the same. However, she has participated more and is more positive in the group. This was a shorter unit, but consisted of many interactive activities, which Katie has found difficult. Brady and Benjamin continue to be positive and Nate, just as he performs in group, is inconsistent.

Table 3B
Student Evaluations of Anger Control Unit (in Group 2)– Individual Activities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Book and Balloon	5	1	0
Sequence Game	5	1	0
Tic-Tac-Toe wksht	3	2	0
Fishing Game	3	2	0
Thermometer Game	3	1	1
Tiny Turtle	2	3	0
Post-its on Turtleshell	2	2	0 (one absent)
List ways to calm	2	4	0
Using Turtle Shell	2	1	1 (one absent)
Anger Control cards	2	2	1

Note: The only negative scores were from Fran.

Most of these activities were active. Again the more instructional activities were the least popular (using the cards and discussions). The Book/Balloon and the Sequence game, the most popular, were activities where the students each had something in their hands to use. These were also the activities that we had the most difficulties keeping students on track and listening.

Table 4A
Student Evaluations of FRIENDSHIPS SKILLS UNIT (in Group 2) - 8 Activities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Brady	8	0	0
Benjamin	4	1	1 (absent twice)
Nate	4	3	1
Katie	0	6	1 (absent once)
Fran	1	1	3 (absent 3 times)

During the time that we taught this unit, Katie was without her medication and was having more difficulty in all areas of school and socializing. Fran was absent quite a bit, but was much more positive in the last few sessions.

The positive scores were not as high for this unit. In discussion, Laura and I felt that the students appeared to be losing interest in the group. We had some new activities, but the routine, the puppets and the interactions were the same. Some of the students verbalized that they were "bored." We also decided that the friendships skills taught in this unit forced them to work more as a team and to interact more with each other without guidance from adults. These are also skills that have been difficult for them in general and part of the reason why they are in this school program. Part of their lack of interest may have been due to the challenges we were asking them to face.

Table 4B
Student Evaluations of Problem Solving Unit – Individual Activities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Meeting Dina	3	1	0
Books with Cases	3	1	0
Homework(teamwork)	3	2	0
Skills Cards	3	1	1
20 Questions	2	2	0
Helping Molly	1	3	0
Teamwork w/Legos	1	1	2

Although meeting Dina Dinosaur (puppet) was popular, talking with Molly was not. Perhaps it was because they were asked to interact with Molly and help her with friendship skills, while they only listened to Dina. Also, in my past experience with this group, Dina has been the most popular puppet, however, in the curriculum, does not have a significant role. Perhaps the curriculum could be modified to include her in more of the dialogue. The teamwork activity with the Legos was

very challenging and the students argued and became angry during the activity. It is not surprising that they scored that activity low. They verbalized that they felt that it was "hard," that they "did all of the work," and that they felt others in their group tried to control the activity.

SUMMARY OF STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Overall, most of the activities and teaching tools were met with positive responses. My observation during the sessions was that the students were generally enjoying themselves and gaining some skills. The students who were not always positive, namely Fran and Katie, have extreme issues with group participation and being positive in general and I did see improvement in this throughout the group. Also, they are the only two girls in a group of very outspoken boys. Perhaps some gender issues played a role. The students' responses outside of group also showed me that they enjoyed the group. Since I was not a regular staff member at the school and would only be there on certain days, when the students saw me, they seemed to brighten and ask me, "Do we have group today?" When I was there for other reasons and would respond with, "No, not today," they seemed genuinely disappointed. Based on my past experience with groups and schools, often students are excited for a group because it means that they are excused from class. However, this was not the case in this situation, since we always facilitated the group at their regular social skills group time anyway and the entire class participated in the group.

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I would also like to comment on the student's response to the reward system. The data shows that the prizes were the most popular part of the group, which reinforces the use and effectiveness of the system. I also asked the student their thoughts on the use of the sticks as reinforcers toward the rewards. All but one of the students reported that they thought it was a good system and could not think of anything to change. One student told us that she thought the use of stickers on a sheet of paper, one sheet for each student, would be more effective. She stated that she could more easily see how many she had earned. I have observed this sticker chart system used in other groups and had discussed it prior to the group with Laura. However, it takes a third person to carry out this system and we wanted to be able to give to rewards ourselves.

DATA ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Data collected on student behavior included the following: progress on treatment or therapeutic goals based on daily percentages, weekly average of percentage of points earned on behavior programming sheets, number of time-outs, number of physical restraints and number of physical aggressions. The following section includes a displayed the student behavior data and a discussion of the interpretation of data on each student as well as overall impressions of changes in the students' behavior.

TREATMENT/THERAPEUTIC GOALS

Each student attending the YALE Day Treatment School has a set of

therapeutic goals developed by a team of staff, clinical professionals, and parents.

These goals are intended to help the students improve their emotional and

behavioral well-being and to improve their coping and social skills. Since these are

also goals of the group, I thought this was important data to review.

For each student, I evaluated a 10-week section of time (Sept. 22nd to Nov.

25th), prior to the start of the group. I then looked at 7-week section of time that

included the last two weeks of the group as well as five weeks after its conclusion

(Jan. 26th to March 19th). The students' goals are tabulated daily, and I compared

an overall average percentages of pre- and post-group.

Table 5
Percentage of Students' Therapeutic Goal Achievement Pre and Post Group

BRADY	PRE	POST
Goal 1. Follow directions and complete tasks	57%	62%
Goal 2. Appropriate physical boundaries	81%	78%

NATE	PRE	POST
Goal 1. Discuss mood	40%	100%
Goal 2. No physical or verbal aggressions	68%	78%
Goal 3. Accept redirection	64%	80%
Goal 4. Discuss how he can be a friend	20%	100%

FRAN		PRE	POST
Goal 1.	Follow directions with only one reminder	79%	83.5%
Goal 2.	Remain on task	78%	83%
Goal 3.	Discuss mood in group	80%	100%
Goal 4.	Discuss adjustment to family/coping tech	90%	100%
Goal 5.	Respond to redirection	80%	86%

KATIE		PRE	POST
Goal 1.	Follow directions with one prompt	66%	76%
Goal 2.	Remain on task	59%	74%
Goal 3.	Discuss mood in group	40%	60%
Goal 4.	Make self-affirmations	40%	60%
Goal 5.	Discuss how behaviors interfere with functioning	37%	57%

BENJAMIN		PRE	POST
Goal 1.	If frustrated, will try self-calming/distracting techniques	85%	88%
Goal 2.	Practice new coping skill	50%	28%
Goal 3.	Make self-affirmations	20%	71%
Goal 4.	Accept academic help when it is offered	89%	93%

JOE		PRE	POST
Goal 1.	Discuss mood	70%	72%
Goal 2.	Remain on task	85%	89%
Goal 3.	Identify and discuss a painful feeling from the past or present	80%	43%

Regarding goal #3: Joe was at his mainstream school most of the day, was only at YALE for two hours of academic time and no therapeutic times, therefore did not have as much opportunity to discuss emotions.

All of the students made improvements in their percentages of goals achieved, particularly with the goals where they were required to discuss their feelings and moods and practice coping skills. Accepting help from staff and refraining from physical aggressions were also goals that students improved on. These goals were also specific objectives of the group, so it was expected that there be improvement in these areas. Following directions, completing work and remaining on task were student goals where I saw less improvement showing me that the students may continue to struggle in these areas despite interventions.

WEEKLY AVERAGE OF DAILY POINTS EARNED and NUMBER OF BEHAVIORS

Every hour of every day at the YALE school, students have the opportunity to earn up to nine points, a total of 81 points per day on a full school day. To earn nine points, the students must receive a point for each of the following areas in each class or group time:

Starting the Task
Staying on Task
Completing Working
Staying in Area
Respecting Property
Respecting Peers
Respecting Staff
Not Disruptive to Others
Not Disruptive to the Activity

Much of their progression through the YALE program is dependent on these percentages. For instance, once a student has received 90% or above on their daily points, the school professional team begins a discussion about transitioning that student back to their "home" school or mainstream school. I thought it would

be useful to compare the percentages of points earned before and after the group.

A baseline data was collected before the group from July 14th to September 26th –

a total of 7 weeks. Data was collected again toward the end of the group and after

the group was completed from Jan. 26th to March 12th – a total of seven weeks.

The following is a display of each student's pre- and post-percentages. I have also

included the number of physical aggression, restraints and time-out. A restraint

implies that the student was putting themselves and/or others in physical danger

and needed to be physically held by one or more staff members. A time-out is

defined as a student being asked to leave the classroom due to disruptive

behavior. In reviewing the data, ideally, the percentage of points should increase

and the number of time-outs, restraints and physical aggressions should decrease

from Pre to Post-Group.

Table 6
Weekly Average of Daily Points and Overall Number of Behaviors Pre and
Post Group

BRADY	PRE	POST
Percentage of points earned	78%	87%
Number of physical aggressions	4	0
Number of restraints	1	0
Number of time-outs	29	10

NATE	PRE	POST
Percentage of points earned	81%	90%
Number of physical aggressions	4	2
Number of restraints	4	0
Number of time-outs	14	5

KATIE	PRE	POST
Percentage of points earned	80%	79%
Number of physical aggressions	11	5
Number of restraints	8	0
Number of time-outs	30	18

FRAN	PRE	POST
Percentage of points earned	77%	82%
Number of physical aggressions	3	3
Number of restraints	0	2
Number of time-outs	10	16

JOE	PRE	POST
Percentage of points earned	98%	99%
Number of physical aggressions	0	0
Number of restraints	0	0
Number of time-outs	0	0

BENJAMIN	PRE	POST
Percentage of points earned	89%	94%
Number of physical aggressions	6	2
Number of restraints	2	0
Number of time-outs	13	3

Overall there was improvement in the students' percentage of points earned, some of the improvements were small and Katie decreased by one percentage. This is consistent with the evaluations from the teaching staff and my discussions with them. They reported improvement in skills level, but still found the students to display some disrespectful and disruptive behaviors. While the school staff agreed that the behaviors were less severe, they were still happening frequently. Nevertheless, I was still impressed with the improvement in the

students' attempts, as reported by the school staff, to use some of the skills learned and that the behaviors were slightly less intense. I feel that the group had some impact, but that the students have shown that they need continued instruction and practice in many social skills areas.

More significant were the decreases in the number of extreme and aggressive behaviors. There were dramatic drops in most of the numbers. A possible explanation is the students were learning enough skills to control their most aggressive behavior more consistently. The group may not be the sole factor in the change. The fact that the students are in a small setting where they receive more attention and more therapeutic support is most likely the main contributor. I believe, however, that the specific skills learned in the group were a contributing factor. In the student evaluations and my observations, it was clear to me that the unit on anger management was received the most positively by the student. In this unit, the focus was on helping students to "go into their shell." We used "Tiny Turtle" (a puppet), a large fleece turtle shell for the students to practice with and several interactive games and visualization techniques. The success of the anger management unit shows me the need to incorporate the same techniques in the other units more often.

One exception to the dramatic change was Joe who had scores of zero at the start of the group. In other words, he was not displaying any aggression or any type of behavior that required a time-out prior to the start of the group. Another exception was Fran, who behaviors increased. Fran's numbers are consistent with

the parent and school personnel reports stating that she was having increased difficulty with depression and negative behavior.

In conclusion, I believe that, based on the evaluations, the overall goals of the group were achieved. The first goal was to give the children some necessary tools needed to help them cope in their daily lives with other individuals and the frustrations they face due to their SED issues. All of the students demonstrated that they had increased knowledge and ability to display the social skills taught in the group, particularly when it came to controlling anger. The second goal was to help decrease the students' negative, destructive behaviors by replacing them with more positive social skills. I believe that the reports from those in their home and school environments and that data itself on the number of aggressive behaviors demonstrated that this goal was achieved. The students did not improve to the extent that they had none of the antisocial behaviors, but the behaviors did decrease, some of them significantly.

Chapter Five:
IMPLICATIONS and CONCLUSION

<u>DISCUSSION OF RESULTS</u>

Based on the data collected from students, school personnel and parents, there were clearly positive outcomes to participation in the group. Based on the responses of all those involved, I feel confident to state that the group was a positive experience for the students and those involved in their lives. There was very little feedback on improvements for the group, only that it continues for a longer period of time.

There was also some decrease in the students' negative behaviors, particularly the extreme aggressions. Whether or not the group was a factor in this change is difficult to determine. However, this was not the sole purpose of the group. The purpose was to provide the students with skills they needed to help them deal with frustrations in more positive ways. How they used these skills in their daily situations was more in their control. I did not expect to make significant changes in the students' behavior, but intended to give them one more "set of tools" to draw from as they cope with their mental health and other concerns. I believe this was achieved at some level with each student. My observations and those of others were that the students gained skills were able to learn and often demonstrate new coping skills.

Overall, the students demonstrated in group the ability to discuss some of the skills and to use them in hypothetical situations. When reviewing at the end of the group, we realized that some of the skills were more difficult than others, particularly the problem solving steps. This was the longest unit, however, in

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review, the students still struggled with even identifying the steps in the right order. Whether this was due to some of their cognitive disabilities or if the skills are difficult for any child was hard to determine. However, it seemed that more time spent on this area would be beneficial. Laura and I also observed that the Friendship Skills unit was the least popular among the students. They struggled the most with the practical activities in the unit and complained the most. Perhaps the group was getting redundant at this point and they were losing interest, or perhaps these were the most difficult and abstract skills. Our experience with these particular students is that when they find something too difficult or challenging, they find ways to avoid it.

Individually, there were some differences among the students. I would like to comment on Fran first. There appeared to be some inconsistency with my observations of her in group and her behavior outside of group. Fran was the student who made the most significant and positive change in her participation from beginning to end. in the beginning, she refused to participate. Not only did she not join in verbally, but would physically place herself outside the group. Her participation increased in small, gradual steps. At first, she only stood outside the circle or walked around the classroom. She made negative comments about the group, particularly about the puppets. Her first step was to discontinue the negative comments and to sit in a chair (still set outside the circle of the group). Her next step was to include herself in the circle, still sitting in a chair. Gradually she would participate verbally and then eventually physically in the activities. During the last few sessions, Fran was one of the most positive students who

voluntarily participated. I believe that our system of positive reinforcement and being able to ignore the negative behavior was a significant factor. Particularly important was the ability of the other students to also ignore her negative behavior (which we accomplished by also reinforcing them). Despite these positive changes, her mood and behavior outside the group was beginning to decline. By the time I completed the post-group data collection, Fran was having extreme difficulties and was even hospitalized in a children's psychiatric unit. There were other medical and environmental factors affecting her that may be an explanation for why the data does not fit her behavior in the group itself.

Joe was the student who showed the least amount of change in his behavior from start to finish. However, he was also the student who was performing well even at the start of the group. He was transitioning back to his home school, in fact left the group toward the end to attend additional classes at his home school. Currently he will attend summer school and will be at his home school full-time in the fall. Joe's progress was in place, so it would be difficult to determine how much effect the group skills had on his behavior. However, he demonstrated increased knowledge within the group.

Katie was the student in group who appeared to be making very little progress. She remained quiet most of the time and toward the last few sessions there was some difficulty with her behavior (lying, manipulating and negative comments to peers). However, outside of the group there were significant improvements in her behavior, particularly the aggression and severe acting out.

The rest of the students displayed progress in group as well as outside the group at more minimal levels. My observations in group were that the students were participating, learning and seemed to have an increased understanding of the concepts.

My concerns were for how well these skills carried over into the classroom and other environments. While there was some positive change, I feel that a better observation could be made and better result would ensue if the group were to continue for a longer period of time and if there would be more involvement with parents and more training and participation with the classroom staff. The Incredible Years Program has a parent-training component and a classroom teacher program based on their research that parent and teacher involvement in children's interventions produced better results in improvement in behavior (Webster-Stratton, et. al. 1997, Webster-Stratton & Taylor 2001, Webster-Stratton, 2003). The Incredible Years curriculum was also designed for a child of average intelligence. Although we modified the group to fit the needs of the students in this setting, perhaps because of some cognitive delays, these students needed more repetition and more practical, "hands-on" work with the skills. Overall, the project showed some positive result and gave facilitators some guidelines toward implementing another group with new students or a repeat or continued group for the current students.

DISCUSSION OF GROUP AND LITERATURE REVIEW

I found that my observations of the group were consistent with the literature reviewed for several reasons including the need for the intervention, the need for collaborations with parents and other providers and the effectiveness of interventions implemented in a school setting.

The need for intervention is strong for children with Severe Emotional Disturbance and without it, the children have difficulty making changes on their own (Armstrong, et. al. 2003, Frick 2001). Intervention for preschool and early school-age children is found to be the most successful at long-term effectiveness (Osher & Hanley 2001, Webster-Stratton 2002). The children involved in the group implemented for this practicum were older elementary age, however, were determined to benefit based on their developmental, social and emotional delays. Despite that, I still felt there were struggles based on their age. Their patterns of behavior were well established and, I believe, needed more intervention than the scope of this practicum project allowed. Earlier intervention, I observed, would be critical. I was able, however, to observe small changes that point to the effectiveness of the group and the need for the skills taught. The students lacked in many social skills areas, even simple tasks such as taking turns, introducing themselves to a friend, and being able to solve a simple problem.

The intervention is also most effective when facilitated in a natural environment such as a school where the children have opportunity first hand to practice the skills taught in the group and to be observed by adults who understood and could reinforce the concepts. (Frick 2001, Schectman 2002,

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Sheridan & Dee 1996). I also observed that continuation of the teaching and practice of social skills is critical. If the intervention stopped outside of the group, their success would be more limited. Parents who were involved and talked to their children about the skills and teachers who reinforced the techniques in the classroom were able to help make the students more successful in their control of their negative behavior and their interactions with other students. The research also pointed out that group interventions were most effective when combined with other interventions, particularly parental involvement (Handwerk & Marshal 1998, McEvoy & Welker 2000, Osher & Hanley 2001, Webster-Stratton et. al 1997) and school involvement (Handwerk & Marshall 1998, McEvoy & Welker 2000, Musser, et. al. 2001). McEvoy & Welker 2000 address the need to look at academic skill deficits and social skill deficits as interrelated elements of an intervention strategy for children. I was able to incorporate some parent involvement by sending written materials home and having the students take work home to be done with their parents and family. Based on my evaluations with the parents at the end of the group, I observed that they were utilizing the material and would have benefited from even more material and contact. I also observed how important it was to incorporate teacher involvement. The elementary students made more progress as the classroom staff were able to use the techniques in their daily interaction with the students and reference the skills learned.

I also learned the importance of the group process and creating mutual aid among the group members. Not only is it important to find creative ways to teach

concepts and to facilitate practice, but it is critical to find ways to incorporate group work. This was done by encouraging the students to work together, to support each other during times of frustration and to share their ideas, learning and struggles with each other. The hope was that, by learning from each other and relying less on the facilitators, they would be able to transfer those skills to environments outside of the group. In other words, would learn to use their social skills to fulfill their needs.

IMPLICATIONS

➢ **Group success and support**

The students involved in the group were already displaying severe anti-social behavior and are at risk for this to continue unless there is intervention. As the data showed, most of the students have displayed at least some improvement in their behavior, particularly in their ability to discuss their feelings. The students reported that they enjoyed the group and the parents had positive responses as well. The support of the school administration and staff as well as community backing for this program is yet another positive aspect. The trial of this social skills group in a day treatment school setting has been successful and should be offered to future students.

➤ **Students' needs for continued service**

      Even though most of the students exhibited improvement in their skills and interactions, some displayed only minimal improvement and one actually decreased in her positive behavior.   My observation in group was that material presented to the students was not natural to them and they struggled with the instruction as well as the practice at times. As facilitators, we saw room for more improvement. In addition, the administrative resources backing the program have expressed their interest in continuing the group, whether there are new students or not. Discussion will need to occur on the implementation of a continued group. For instance, the curriculum would either need to be expanded or the program would need to be repeated with some different and/or additional materials and activities.

➤ **Need for continued ecological perspective**

      Even though the group outcomes were successful and the responses were positive, the students still have needs that need to be addressed. The social skills group was or is just one piece of the children's progress toward their goals of reintegration into the mainstream schools and healthy relationships with family, peers and others in the community. Continued school supports, parent involvement, continued practice of skills and other therapeutic interventions are still essential components of these children's lives.

➤ **Supervision and support for group facilitators**

Co-facilitation was found to be essential for this group. In addition, review feedback from supporters outside the group would have supplemented the discussion even further. For instance, the Incredible Years program required that, in order to continue the integrity of the program, the group leaders participate in weekly "fidelity" meetings consisting of administrators, community mental health professionals, and other professions who have been training in the Incredible Years program. The purpose is to discuss and evaluate the strengths and limitations of the group being facilitated and make necessary additions, changes or suggestions. Even though this particular group was modified to fit the population, curriculum and components of the Incredible Years program were followed. The additional support from a fidelity group would have given us, as facilitators, even more confidence in our direction and services.

➢ Contribution of social work to the education system

An important aspect of this practicum is to be aware of the contribution of social work theory and practice to the educational setting. Teachers and educators are trained to teach groups of children as a whole, to ensure that they are learning and developing as expected. The role I had as a social worker, was viewing the children individually, focusing on their strengths and using those strengths to help them progress. I also learned from the education staff. I learned about the planning and facilitating aspect of teaching skills to a group. I feel that they were also able to learn and be able to implement some social work

values such as focusing on the positive behaviors and aspects of children rather than on discipline and compliance.

INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING

I feel that completing the Dina Dinosaur group was a positive experience for me and I was able to gain skills and confidence in working with children with severe emotional disorders and in facilitating a group. There are several specific skills I have learned and several different ways in which I learned them.

First of all, I have realized the need for intensive planning and organization when facilitating a children's group. I have learned how active children can be, thus requiring active leadership and structure in order for the group to run smoothly. The children in this group in particular, due to mental health issues, often have a short span of attention, therefore, several different activities as well as different methods of instruction were needed. This required a large amount of work prior to the group to create activities and to design and construct materials and visual aids that were colorful and interesting to the students. I also learned that we were much more successful when we over-planned, in other words had more activities planned than we actually had time for. Even though, at times, I felt rushed when there were many lessons and activities to get through, the students appeared to remain interested and focused when we followed at their pace. For instance, some activities took longer than planned due to a higher interest from the students. Other activities took less time than expected. The

more prepared I was, the more calm I felt as a leader and I feel, the more calm the students seemed and the more efficient the group was.

In addition to good organization, I found that flexibility is a key characteristic needed in a children's group leader. As I mentioned, the group seemed to function more effectively when we, as leaders, followed the pace of the children. This meant that we often needed to adjust our schedule or often eliminate some planned activities. This was difficult for me at first due to my personal style of needing to be organized. At first I was easily flustered when the group ran off-schedule or there was a distraction. However, I soon realized to remember that I was dealing with children and that this was a natural part of the group. I learned to plan a flexible group schedule and move activities to another session if needed.

The skill I found extremely important but also extremely challenging is the ability to continue to lead an activity or instruct, while also observing the needs of the group as a whole and the needs of the individual children. Laura and I commented on several occasions that this group would not be able to function as it did with only one facilitator. This was especially true with the reward system in place. As the group continued, Laura and I learned to work together, to take turns presenting and giving out the rewards and compliments. Reviewing the videotapes of the groups and discussions with Laura helped me understand and learn to balance teaching and dealing with behaviors or children's reactions. During the first few sessions, after talking with Laura or reviewing a tape, I would be surprised to realize a reaction or behavior from a student or between students

that I had not been aware of. Now that the group is completed, I can reflect and realize that I sharpened my skills of being able to lead and observe concurrently.

Another skill I feel I improved in was the ability to use the reward system as intended. Ignoring a negative behavior can often be very difficult. My natural reaction was to turn to that student and redirect them. However, the more I used the technique of turning attention to those who are acting appropriately, the easier the skill became. Again reviewing the tapes to watch myself and discussing my concerns with my co-facilitator was effective in this learning process.

I also learned that operating a child-size puppet takes practice. While we were not required to be ventriloquists, the skill of moving the puppet's head and mouth to make it look realistic is not easy. In addition, I tried to change my voice slightly for effects and keeping the interest of the children. Trying to incorporate these techniques while also trying to remember the lesson and the dialogue is challenging. I have observed other group leaders and feel that while I have increased my puppeteer skills, I still have much room for improvement

In addition to the actual first-hand practice, the tools that I felt were the most effective in my learning process were the use of the videotapes and observing my co-facilitator and debriefing with her.

I have facilitated parent groups in the past and am accustomed to being videotaped and not only watching myself, but also having supervisors and others watch and critique me. It is still not easy for me to watch myself. However, I have seen the benefit of the learning and it outweighs my feelings of discomfort.

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First of all, I was able to observe myself with the puppet and make changes. For instance, I noticed that I held the head of the puppet up too high so the puppet appeared to be looking up rather than at the children and I was able to adjust this. I was also able to see that I needed practice with coordinating the puppet's mouth with my words. I could see that I needed to also move the puppets head and hands more often to make it look more realistic.

Secondly I was able to hear my words and tone of voice. After viewing the first sessions I observed and felt that I needed to talk louder and with a more positive tone of voice with more inflection. I feel that I was able to work on these and improve.

The third use of the videotapes was having the opportunity to observe the children without needing to concentrate on leading the group. I was able to observe reaction from the students and interactions between students that I missed during the actual group. I feel that this helped us in our planning and prevention of future behaviors that we did not want. Watching the tapes also helped me realize what I was missing during the session and sharpened my observation skills. For instance, often in the tape I realized that a student was distracting other students in a subtle way that we did not observe in the group. I saw that I had missed opportunities to reward some students for ignoring negative behavior of others and that I needed to pay closer attention to that student. Another example is a student who was particularly quiet. In watching the tapes, I observed that this student was starting to raise his hand more often, yet we continued to call on other students more frequently. This student became

visibly frustrated and stopped raising his hand. We were able to change our response to this student and encourage his participation more often. There were many similar observations that I was able to make, regarding individual students and their reactions. Trying to facilitate the group and carry out the reward system consumed more of our attention than we realized and we were able to continue to discuss this and adjust our attention accordingly while also learning how to balance facilitation and observation more effectively.

In Laura, I felt that I had a co-facilitator with skills and confidence in working with children and I was grateful to not only have her assistance, but to be able to learn from her. I observed her in the group and on the video tapes and was impressed with the way she instructed as well as the way she handled interaction with the students. I found myself trying new techniques and skills that were based on these observations. For instance, she is able to appear calm, even when a child is disruptive or the group is distracted. Her calm demeanor and firm, but positive words were usually effective in reengaging the children.

Much of my learning also came from outside the actual implementation of the group. The planning and debriefing was crucial. Laura had excellent insight into the students – their developmental level and their individual needs that made the planning and organization more appropriate to this specific group. She was able to tell me which activities she felt were below their developmental age and had creative ideas for our own activities.

The debriefing process with Laura was also critical in my learning as well in the success of the group. We seemed to complement each other in our styles

as well as our skills. For instance, in our discussions of observations, we often noticed different aspects of the group dynamics and were able to combine our observations for a more complete evaluation. Another example of our coordination was in our skills. Laura had more experience, interest and skills in making the materials (i.e. designing, drawing, coloring activities) where I was lacking in this area and could learn from her. I had more experience with the Incredible Years curriculum and could help guide her through it as we planned.

I feel that in this particular type of group, co-facilitation is essential for three main reasons. First, the students in the group have high levels of distractibility, and at times, lack impulse control, requiring facilitator's attention to be directed in multiple areas at the same time. With more than one facilitator, negative behaviors can be dealt with while the other facilitator continues to instruct or guide the group. The mental health concerns among the students also cause the members of this group to be particularly negative and to get frustrated easily. Even with the small number of members in this group, their high needs require the supervision and guidance to stay focused in the group and to avoid getting others distracted as well.   Secondly, as stated earlier, a tremendous amount of planning and preparation goes into this program. My belief is that having only one facilitator limits the creativity, ideas, and observations that make the group successful. Thirdly, I have seen the need for even more review and feedback from other professionals to maintain the integrity of the group. The high needs of these particular group members, causes us as facilitators to continuously review and revise our plans to adjust to the needs of the group. I

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found that this is difficult at times, and ideas and feedback from others who work with children with mental health issues was critical for me.

Most importantly, I felt a need to provide an effective group for the children. The group was not the only answer to these children's problems, however, my intent was not to solve all of their problems. My goal was to provide a positive experience for the students and to give them some more "tools" to use in their steps toward achieving their goals. Based on the data I collected and my observations, I feel this was accomplished.

Overall, I feel I have gained confidence in group facilitation. Knowing the material and having presented it first-hand was an important part of this. I was also able to see which techniques and activities were effective and which were not. This would assist in planning the next group. The practice I have gained as well as the assistance of the video tapes as a learning tool and my co-facilitator as a teacher, has also given me the confidence to feel positive about the group experience. I feel encouraged and even excited to facilitate another group next year at the school. Three of the students will be in middle school next year and two will be returning full-time to their mainstream schools, which means there will be new students in the elementary room next year.

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APPENDIX A

Student Evaluation Form
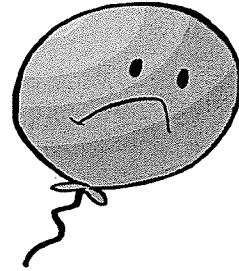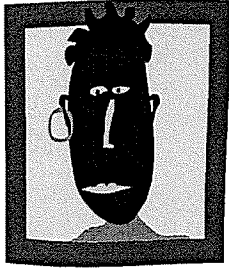
Circle how you felt about_____
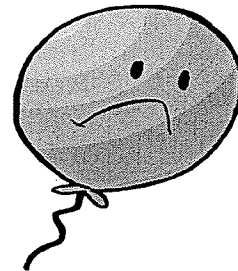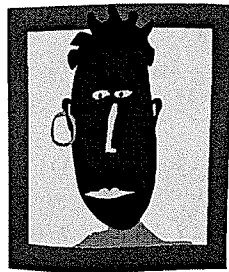
Circle how you felt about _____

APPENDIX   B

Parent Questionnaire

Dina Dinosaur School at YALE
Post-Group Parent Questionnaire

1. Since Joe started the group at the end of November, what types of changes have you noticed in his behavior at home, if any?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What did Joe discuss at home in regards to the group? (Did he talk about the group? Was it positive or negative? What parts did she talk about?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. How helpful were the parent notes and other written materials sent home? (Were they easy to read? Could you understand the home activities? Did you find any of it helpful? If so, how and how did you use it? If not, why? Did Joe cooperate with the home activities?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Overall, do you think this was a positive experience for Joe and your family? Would you recommend that the group be continued? If not, please explain.

_____

_____

_____

5. Do you feel you could continue to work on the learned skills with Joe? If so, how would you do this? If not, why?

_____

_____

_____

6. Do you think the skills learned in group helped Joe improve his behaviors at school? In the community with friends and others? If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

7. Other comments

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C

Parent Consent Form

10/29/03

Dear [parent]:

We are interested in facilitating a social skills group for elementary/middle school age children at YALE Day Treatment school and would like your child to participate. The group would be taught two days per week during the regularly scheduled social skills group with Laura Dusso. Laura Dusso and I will be facilitating. I am a licensed social worker with Children's Mental Health Resource Center. This group is part of my work toward my Masters in Social Work. Data on the students' behavior will be used for my research, however, no names will be used.

The children will be working on skills such as identifying feelings, understanding their own feelings as well as those of others, problem solving skills, anger management, and friendship skills. These are skills they work on regularly with the YALE program, however, this particular group is based on the curriculum of the Incredible Years Dina Dinosaur group, a widely researched program and proven to impact children's behaviors in a positive way. We will use videos and puppets to assist with instruction. Wally and Molly are the puppets' names – you may be hearing about them! We will also be sending home notes about topics and skills covered in group and tips to help work on them at home.

I will also be asking you to complete an evaluation on your child before the group starts, then again after the group ends in March. I will be contacting you by phone to discuss this.

If you agree, please sign the following:

I agree to have [child] participate in the Dina Dinosaur social skills group at YALE. I understand that the group will be videotaped, but the focus will be on the group facilitators and the tapes will only be viewed by the facilitators and their supervisors.

Signed _____   Date: _____

If you have questions, please contact me at 287-1524.

Thank you,

Tena Buell, LSW
Children's Mental Health Resource Center

Appendix D

Group 1, Session 1 Materials
- Show Me Five
- Parent Note

Ears Open

Mouth Closed

Eyes on Teacher

Hands in Lap

Criss-cross Applesauce
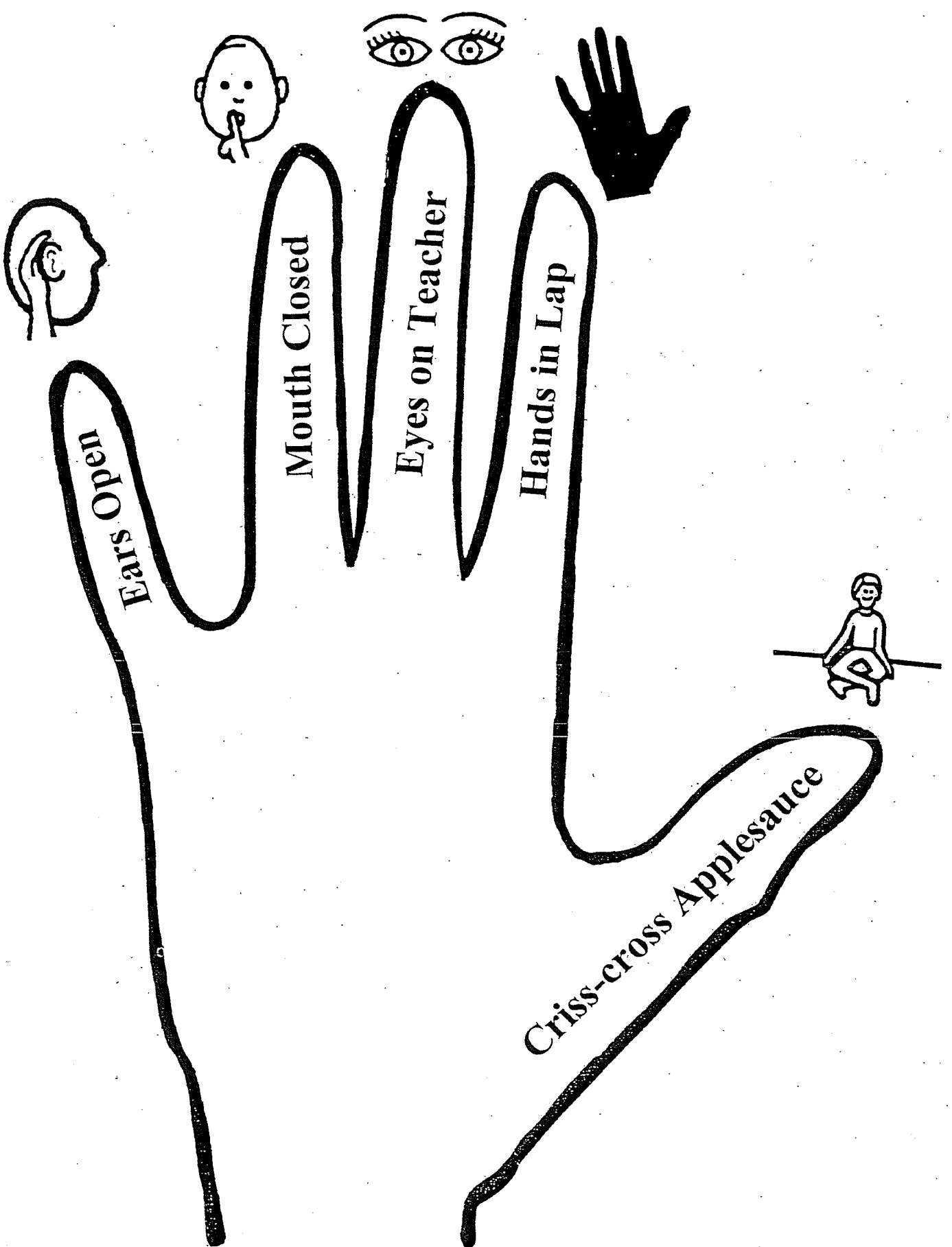
SHOW ME FIVE

Name: _____
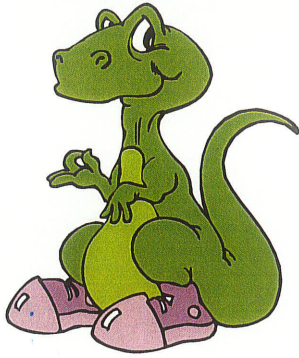
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session One: Introduction

In our first session, we introduced the students to Wally (puppet), discussed group rules ("Show Me Five"), and explained the group reward system. The students receive colored Popsicle sticks, one for each positive behavior that group leaders observe. At the end of the group, students can turn in their sticks for prizes. They can chose from a variety of prizes – toys, food, pencils, pens, and coupons for extra points or computer time. (Food prizes consist of bottled water, crackers, ramen noodles – no candy).

Home Activity: Please ask your child to explain the "Show Me Five" rule, have them show you the hand they made. Each finger stands for a rule: Ears Open, Mouth Closed, Eyes on Teacher, Hands Still, Sitting Still.

Number of Popsicle Sticks
earned in this session

_____

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

_____
_____
_____

Comments_____
_____
_____
_____

Using Rewards at Home

Rewards are used in Dinosaur School and at YALE regularly. Home is also a place for rewards – to help decrease negative behaviors and replace them with positive ones. They do not need to be costly or time consuming (for example, they can earn: extra TV time, playing a game with a parent, etc. – be creative!)

Social Rewards:

- Verbal praise, approval, smiles, hugs, hi-fives, etc.

- Use these as much as possible when you see the behavior you would *like* to see. **Pay** less attention **to the behaviors you do NOT want to see.**

Tangible Rewards:

- Something concrete such as a treat, toy, extra priviledge

1. Build a system, plan ahead for ways to earn the reward
2. OR use them as a surprise when behavior has been good (be sure to tell them *exactly* what they did, not just, "You were good."

- Remember, a reward is NOT a bribe!! The difference is that a BRIBE is given BEFORE the requested behavior, a REWARD can be discussed before, but given AFTER the positive behavior.

***** REMEMBER: USE SOCIAL REWARDS ALONG WITH THE TANGIBLE!

Appendix E

Group 1, Session 2
- Parent Notes
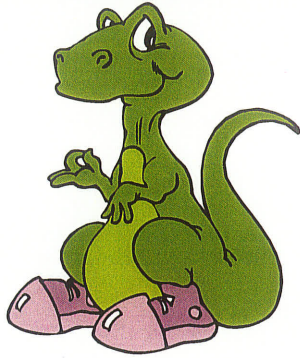
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session Two: Introduction to Identifying Feelings

In this session, we reviewed the "Show Me Five" rules, then practiced relaxation techniques (breathing slowly, learning to recognize tension). We then identified some basic feelings and ways to recognize them. We played a game about feelings. Some students were asked to talk about times that they felt a certain feeling.

Home Activity: Ask your child to name the feelings that we discussed (happy, sad, angry). As you see people (TV, pictures or in real life), discuss with your child, how that person may be feeling and ways to come to that conclusion (facial expression, body language, words, etc.).

Number of Popsicle Sticks
earned in this session

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Comments_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix F

Group 1, Session 3 Materials
- Feelings List
- Parent Note
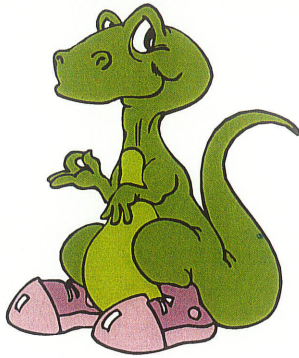
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session Three: Identifying Feelings

In this session, we identifyied some more complex feelings and started discussions about different reasons why people have different feelings. The students practiced this by playing the "why because" game and discussions about video clips of different children. We also discussed situations where people can have different feelings about the same situation (trying to get them to see other's perspectives).

Home Activity: Continue discussion about different feelings. In addition to *happy, mad, and sad* , be sure to talk about feelings such as *frustrated, pleased, anxious, proud, etc.* Talk with your child about times they have had different feelings and why. Another exercise is to ask your child what makes them happy (or any other feeling) and share with them what makes you happy as well.

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Comments_____

_____

_____

_____

These are the feelings the students
came up with (these are their words)

Jealous	Enraged
Tired	Guilty
Excited	Lonely
Embarrassed	Stressed Out
Sad	Nervous
Happy	Proud
Scared	
Lovestruck	
Afraid	
Surprised	
Disappointed	
Crazy	
Sick	
Tense	
Mad	
Upset	
Unhappy	
Angry	
Depressed	
Furious	
Frustrated	
Worried	
Confused	

Appendix G

Group 1, Session 4 Materials
- Pass the Hat
- Parent Notes
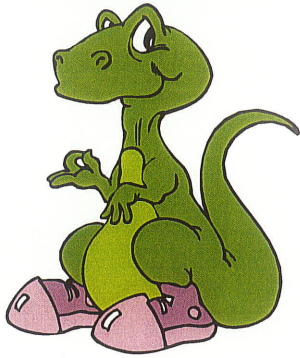
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session Four: Defining Feelings

In this session, the students met Molly, Wally's sister.   With Molly, they *defined* some of the feelings words they have identified. We also did some activities where the students had opportunity to practice more complex situations. In the final activity, students were asked to trace their body on a large sheet of paper and use different colors to identify feelings in different parts of their body.

Home Activity: We would like you to continue to talk about feelings with your child as they naturally occur – at meals, reactions to sibling's behaviors, reactions to different situations, etc. Ask your child to label their feelings and discuss what caused them to have that feeling.

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Comments_____

_____

_____

_____

Pass the Hat - Feelings

Someone throws an eraser at another student and you get in trouble for it.

You're looking for a ball to play with an no one will share one with you.

Someone budges in line in front of you.

Everyone has started an assignment and you don't understand the directions.

You want to talk to you mom or dad, but they seem too busy.

The teacher asks a question, you know the answer, but the teacher calls on someone else.

Some is being mean on the bus.

Your brother or sister gets into your things.

You've done something good around the house but your family doesn't notice.

Appendix H

Group 1, Session 5 Materials
- Parent Note
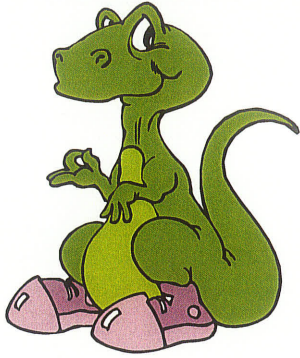
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session Five: More Defining Feelings

In this session we explored more about identifying and defining feelings. The students watched videos of other kids and tried to guess what they were feeling and why. They played a game of charades that involved guessing feeling faces. In the final activity, the students helped each other trace their bodies on large sheets of paper, then color in areas with different colors representing different feelings.

Home Activity: We would like you to continue to talk about feelings with your child as they naturally occur – at meals, reactions to sibling's behaviors, reactions to different situations, etc. Ask your child to label their feelings and discuss what caused them to have that feeling.

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

_____

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

_____
_____
_____

Comments_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix I

Group 1, Session 6 Materials
  - Accident Detection
  - Parent Notes
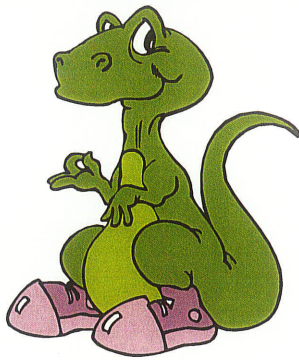
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session Six: Learning to Problem Solve

In this session we talked about how to know when you have a problem (by your feelings) and began to talk about the first steps to solving a problem (thinking of as many different solutions as you can). The students watched videos of children having a problem and were asked to identify different solutions. We also played a game where the students had opportunities to look at different situations and discuss whether they were an accident or were done on purpose.

Home Activity: Many problems and conflicts arise when people have different feelings about the same situation. Whenever you notice two children or adults having different feelings about the same event, point it out to your child, and discuss with them the reasons why there are different feelings and that it is OK.

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

_____

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

_____

_____

_____

Comments_____

_____

_____

_____

Using Problem-Solving Techniques
To Avoid Conflicts

It is very important for children to learn how to solve problems without hitting, arguing, grabbing, yelling, or other unacceptable strategies to get what they want.

The first step in teaching children to problem-solve is to ask them to thing of possible solutions to a problem. Reasons why this is important:

1. Eventually, children will internalize this process so they can do it on their own.
2. Children need to learn assertive verbal skills – a way to tell people what they want instead of using other negative strategies.

Children can learn problem-solving best by *modeling* (you as adults demonstrating good skills (remaining calming, thinking through solutions in a constructive way, being respecful as you verbalize your thoughts, feelings and ideas.)

Accident Detection

Not watching when you grab a basketball, and picking up your friend's ball instead.

Throwing a ball that hits another child in the chest.

Pulling the cat's tail.

Hiding the candy your sister bought with her allowance.

Hitting a friend because he hit you.

Not looking when you reach across the table and spilling your brother's milk.

Calling another child names.

Sitting at your seat with your feet out and someone trips over them.

Forgetting to wish your friend happy birthday.

Appendix J

Group 1, Session 7 Materials
- Wally's Story
- Parent Note
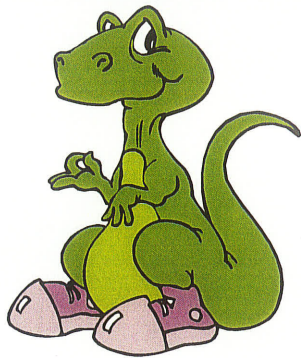
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session Seven: Problem-Solving

In this session we learned the next step to problem-solving – coming up with "alternative solutions" to situations. We used different activities and games to help the students practice coming up with as many solutions to different problems as they could. We also played a game that continues to allow for practice with identifying feelings.

Home Activity: As a problem arises for your child, guide them in thinking of lots of different ways to solve the problem. In other words, "brainstorm" lots of ideas. At this point, try not to worry too much about whether or not it is a good solution, just come up with as many as they can. (If a solution is inappropriate, you can discuss what the *consequence* of using such a solution would be.)

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

_____

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

_____

_____

_____

Comments_____
_____
_____
_____

Wally was Having a Rough Day

1. It all started when a boy in his class called him a monkey face. Look for the mouth that shows how Wally felt.
2. At lunch nobody wanted him to sit at his or her table. Look for the mouth that shows how Wally felt to be left out;
3. When Wally finished his lunch, he walked by the fifth grade table and accidentally knocked over Mark's mild. The fifth grader said, "Hey kid! Get over here! I want to talk to you!" Look for the mouth that shows how Wally felt when he was the bigger, angry boy.
4. Wally told himself to calm down. "I need to take three deep breaths," he said. Look for the mouth that shows Wally taking a deep breath.
5. Wally told the boy that he didn't mean to spill his milk and said that he was sorry. Then he said that he'd help wipe it up. Mark, the fifth grader, thought that this was really friendly of Wally and asked Wally if he wanted to play tag with him and his friends. Look for the mouth that shows how Wally felt now.
6. Wally's friend, Jose, came over to play with Wally, but saw that Wally was already playing with the fifth graders. Look for the mouth that shows how Jose felt.

Appendix K

Group 1, Session 8 Materials
- Solution Cards
- Parent Note
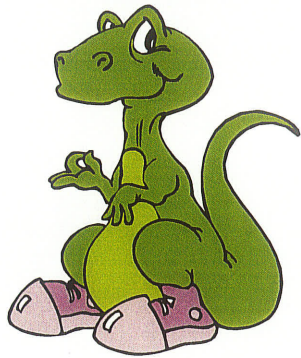
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session Eight: Learning Consequences of Solutions

In this session we learned the next step to problem-solving – determining what the **consequences** of our different solutions are. We asked the students to decide whether or not the solution and consequence are "good" by asking, "Is it **safe** to myself and others?" and "Is it **fair** to myself and others?"

Home Activity: As a problem arises for your child, guide them in thinking of lots of different ways to solve the problem. Work through each solution by asking the above questions.

For example…………………………..

PROBLEM: It's mine, It's mine!

Parent: What's the problem? What happened?
Child: He took my bike and it's mine!
Parent: You're pretty angry about him taking your bike, aren't you? [acknowledges feelings]
Child: Yes, I'm going to get him and push him down!
Parent: That's one solution to the problem – and what do you think would happen if you did that?
Child: He would get mad and I would probably get in trouble.
Parent: Yes, so you would both end up being mad, and maybe even hurt. Can you think of a different solution to the problem?

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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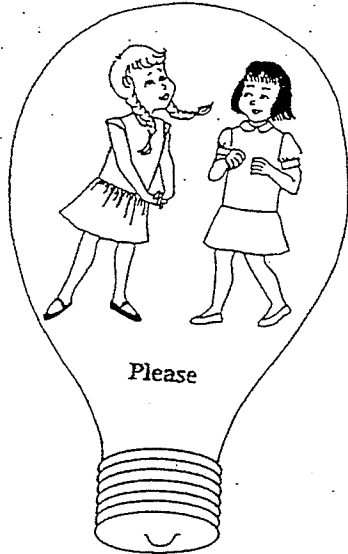
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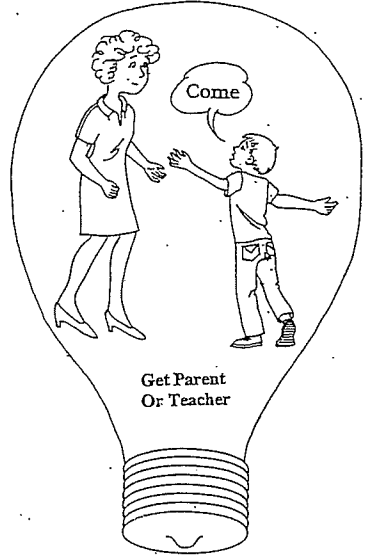
Get Parent
Or Teacher

Come
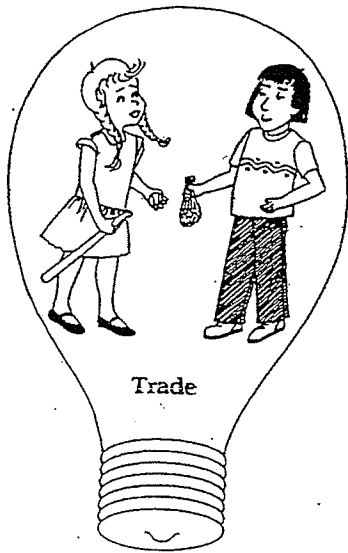
Trade
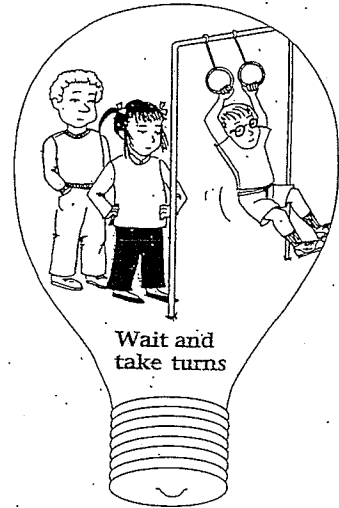
Wait and
take turns

Give

Ignore

Problem-Solving
Solutions

Share

Hug
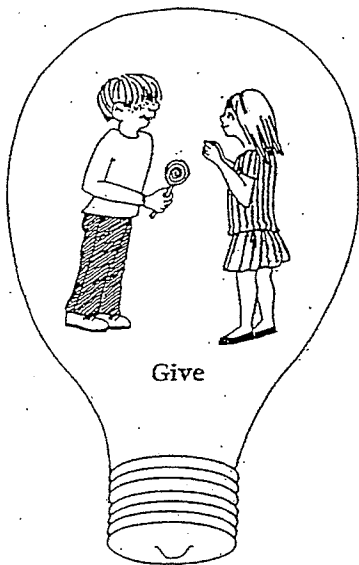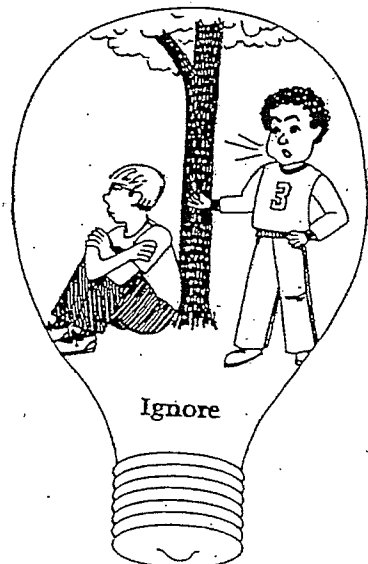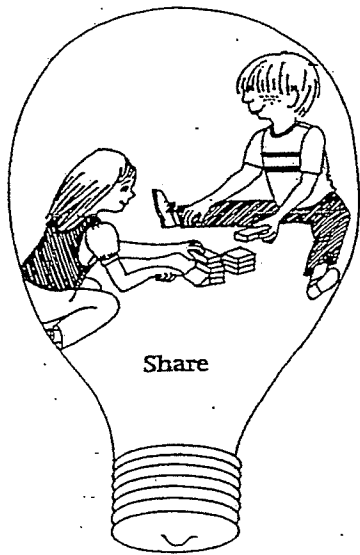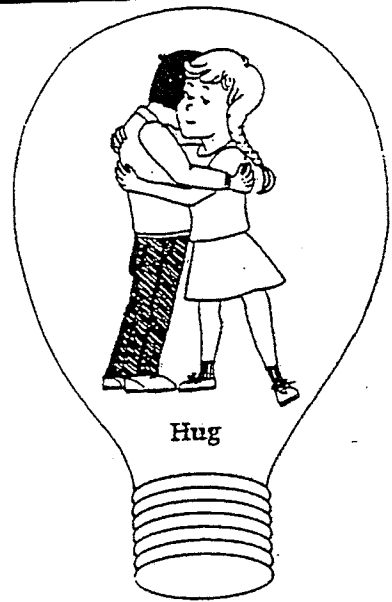
Don't

Don't
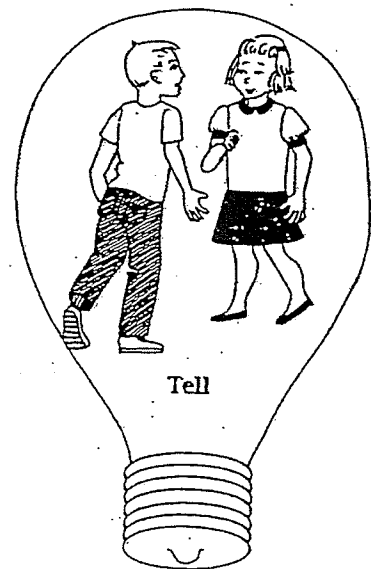
Tell

Problem-Solving
Solutions

Appendix L

Group 1, Session 9 Materials
- Parent Note with homework
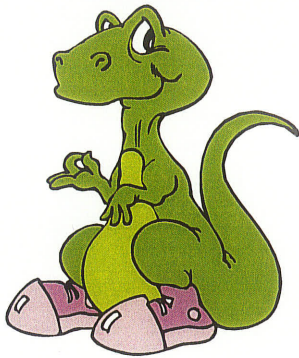
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

In this session we defined and practiced the **solutions** that the students have identified (i.e. defined what it means to **ignore** another student's negative behavior and practiced **ignoring** in a role play). We also practiced the problem-solving steps in a game.

Home Activity: Continue to work on the Problem-Solving Steps:
1. What is the problem?
2. What is a solution?
3. What are some other solutions?
4. What are the consequences of the solutions?
    1. Is it safe?
    2. Is it fair?
    3. Does it lead to good feelings?

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

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Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Comments_____

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Appendix M

Group 1, Session 10 Materials
- Pass the Hat
- Parent Note

Pass the Hat

A friend comes to you and wants to know what to do when he is teased.

What is a solution?

How do you know when you have a problem?

What is a consequence?

What questions can you ask yourself to decide if your solution will have a "good" consequence?

Someone took your basketball without asking. What are some solutions?

Your are sitting next to someone who keeps bothering you by touching your hair and poking you.

The other kids are playing ball and you want to join them. What are some solutions?

You are presenting your project in front of the class and one of your friends starts making faces at you. What are some solutions?

You ask your friend to play a game with you and he says he doesn't like that game.

You ask your friend who is bothering you to stop, but he still continues. What will you do next?

You wait patiently to get a turn with the computer, but another student is taking too long.

Your mom is asking you to set the table and your favorite TV show is on.
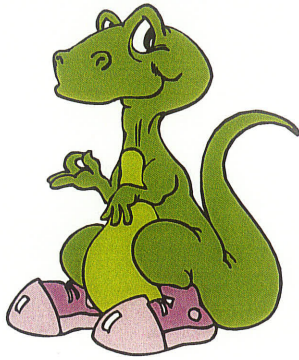
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session Ten: Problem Solving – Steps 5 & 6, Choosing A Solution, Evaluating

In this session we introduced the last two steps of problem solving: choosing the best solution and evaluating the consequence. To choose the best solution, students must ask:

1. Is the solution fair?
2. Is the solution safe?
3. Does the solution lead to good feelings?

Students must then carry out their solution and evaluate it by looking at the consequences and listening to their feelings and those of others. If the consequences were negative, they must go back, look at the solutions again and try another solution.

We practiced all of the problem solving steps through games where the students were given hypothetical situations to solve as a group and individually.

Wednesday is our last session of this first group: Identifying Feelings and Problem Solving. Next week we start a new group learning Anger Control and Social Skills. We should finish by the end of February.

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

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Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Comments_____

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Appendix N

Group 1, Session 11 Materials
- Homework
- Parent Note
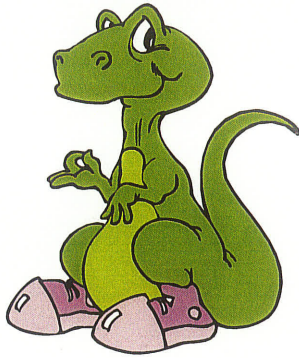
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Session Eleven: Review of Problem-Solving Steps

This was our last session of Group 1. We reviewed all of the problem solving steps and practiced them with hypothetical situations. We played a couple of games that also reinforce the steps.

Home Activity:
Continue to work on the Problem-Solving Steps:
1. What is the problem?
2. What is a solution?
3. What are some other solutions?
4. What are the consequences of the solutions?
    1. Is it safe?
    2. Is it fair?
    3. Does it lead to good feelings?
5. Chose the best solution, then carry it out.
6. Evaluate the results: Was it a good solution or not?

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

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Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Comments_____

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EXAMPLE OF A PROBLEM. USE PROBLEM SOLVING STEPS.

Problem: Suppose your (sister/brother/friend) wrecks something important to you

Step One: What is the problem for you? What are you feeling?

Step Two: What is a solution?

Step Three: What are some other solutions?
    (Brainstorm on several different ideas)

Step Four: What are the consequences of these possible solutions?
      Ask: Is it fair? Is it safe? Does is lead to good feelings?
Example 1: Solution is to yell at the person. Comsequence is that you are now both upset and maybe even getting in trouble. (Not safe or fair)

Step Five: Chose the BEST solution and carry it out.

Step Six: Evaluation the plan. How did it work? Was it a good solution? If not, go back to Steps 3 & 4 to chose another solution.

Appendix O

Group 2, Session 1 Materials
- Parent Notes
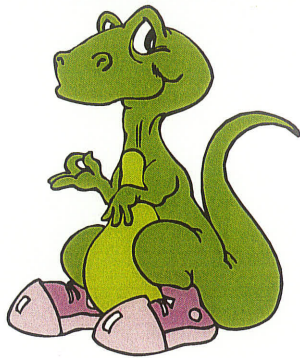
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2

Session One: Controlling Anger

The students met "Tiny" Turtle today and learned about the steps to controlling anger. SEE ATTACHED SHEET!! The first step they practiced today is to STOP (stop themselves/freeze). Then they have time to think, calm down, "withdraw in shell" to relax, then to try the situation again. We used a visualization technique and also an actual physical prop to practice going in a shell.

Home Activity: Review attached sheet with your child.

Number of Popsicle Sticks
earned in this session

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Dinosaur School Notes to Parents
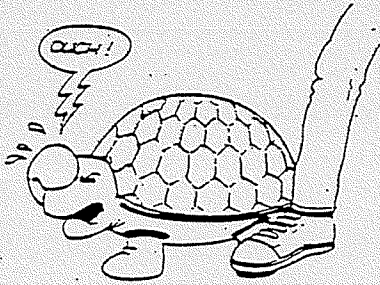
Something upsetting happens
(for example: you get accidentally kicked)
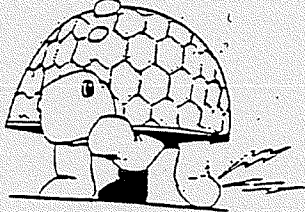
BEFORE you DO anything, STOP!!
- Stop yourself, freeze yourself
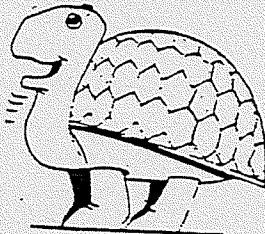
Take a slow breath.
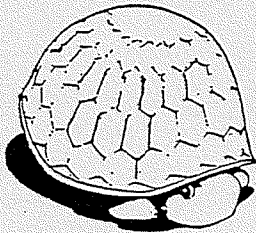
Withdraw into your shell
- go to a place in your mind where you can start to calm down (take deep breaths, think about something positive, tell yourself it's not that bad, etc.) (we will be coming up with lots of ways to calm
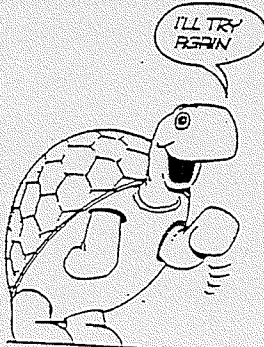
Tell yourself you can try it again
- you CAN react in a safe way to the situation

Appendix P

Group 2, Session 2 Materials
- Parent Note

Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2
Session Two: Controlling Anger

Today the students practiced "going into their shell" by literally going under a fleece turtle shell. The idea is to get them to shut out their surroundings for a moment so that they can calm down when angry. They also had an opportunity to make negative comments that slide off of the shell and positive ones that stick to the shell to help learn how to not let negative things bother them.

Home Activity: When a situation occurs where your child becomes angry, use that time to remind them to STOP, then to take a couple of deep breaths, and find a way to "go into their shell" to calm down. We will work more on calming techniques next time.

Number of Popsicle Sticks
earned in this session

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Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Comments_____
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Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2
Session Two: Controlling Anger

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Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

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Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Comments_____
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Appendix Q

Group 2, Session 3 Materials
  - Tic Tac Toe
  - List of Ways to Calm Down
  - Parent Note

9. Tic Tac Toe

Put an X in any box that describes a positive way to handle your anger. Put an O in any box that describes a negative way to handle your anger. See if you get Tic Tac Toe (all X's or all O's across, down or diagonal).

Gossip about the person making you angry.	Throw something at the person who makes you angry.	Walk away and return when you cool down.
Express in words how you feel.	Imagine a relaxing place like a beach or forest.	Hit a pillow.
Think of positive things about yourself and others.	Tell others not to play with the person at whom you are angry.	Never speak to the person again.

WAYS TO CALM DOWN

WHEN:

you get mad
you are confused
people call you names
people call your mom names
you are scared or afraid
you get hit
you get frustrated
things change that you don't like
someone is too close to you
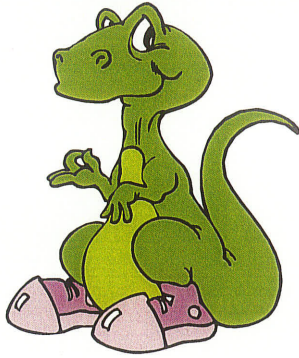you are in certain sports like Judo

WHERE:

your room
the bathroom
to the TV in the living room
to your treehouse, fort or clubhouse
outside to run or play
away from the area
to the hallway
shut out in you mind

HOW:

Count to 10
Play video game
Read a book

Let it Go/Ignore/Forget
Focus on School work
Yoga
Think about things you like

Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2
Session Three: Controlling Anger - Ways to Stay Calm

Today students listed different ways to calm down. They came up with their own ideas and we gave suggestions to generate a list (attached). They also each completed a tic-tac-toe worksheet to help remember the ways to calm down.

Home Activity: When a situation occurs where your child becomes angry, use that time to remind them to STOP, then to take a couple of deep breaths, and find a way to "go into their shell" to calm down. Use the attached worksheet to help them remember ways to calm down.

Number of Popsicle Sticks
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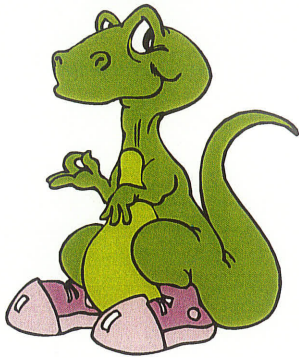
Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Appendix R

Group 2, Sessions 4,5, and 7 Materials
- Parent Notes

Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2
Session Four: Controlling Anger

The students today used a balloon as a visual while they listened to a story about a boy who was having a bad day. The purpose was to demonstrate, with the balloon, how anger can build up and what happens to it when you calm down – or when you don't. The students also practiced the anger control steps again by using a team game.

Home Activity: Ask your child about the story read today and the balloon! Talk with them about different ways they can recongnize their anger and specific ways to try to calm down. Add to the list sent home last time if you want to.
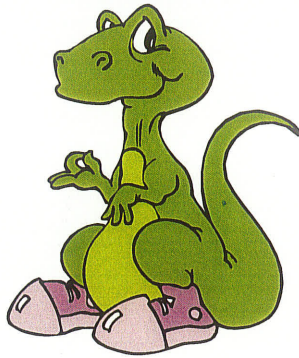

Number of Popsicle Sticks   Prizes Earned in this Session
 earned in this session   (out of possible 3 prizes)

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Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2
Session Five: Controlling Anger

Today was a "fun" day. Instead of learning a new skill, the students today participated in two different games/activities that helped them review all of the skills that we have learned so far: Identifying Feelings, Solving Problems and Controlling Anger.

Home Activity: Review the previous notes sent home home about the steps to the skills learned. If you need more copies of any of the sessions and notes sent home PLEASE let us know and we would be happy to send them!

Number of Popsicle Sticks
earned in this session

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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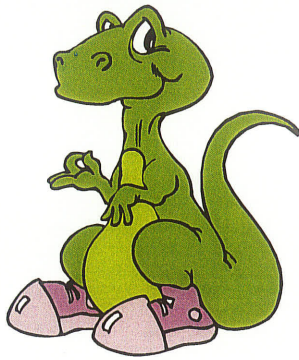
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Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2
Session Seven: Friendship Skills

Last week we started to introduce the next and final unit: Friendship skills. Last week the students met Dina Dinosaur and talked about what it means to be a friend. We specifically covered the skills Helping and Sharing. This week and over the next couple of weeks we will focus on teamwork and the skills needed for teamwork: sharing, taking turns, working hard, helping each other, cooperating, and following the same rules.

Home Activity: Reinforce your child when you see them cooperating with others (friends, other family members). Tell them exactly what you saw and what you liked about their behavior. Your praise is important to them and goes much further than you probably realize!

Number of Popsicle Sticks
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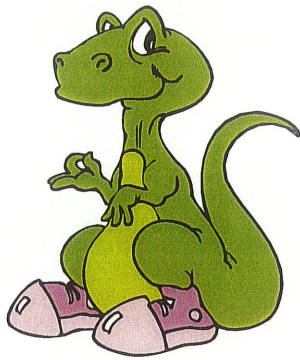
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(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Appendix S

Group 2, Session 9 Materials
- Parent Notes
- Homework

Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2
Session Nine: Friendship Skills

Today we reviewed the team work activity the students did last week with the Legos. We also talked about Teamwork at HOME and what that means. The students also discussed other friendship skills such as Listening and Talking with friends. They practiced introducing themselves in a new situation and practiced giving compliments to peers (a difficult task for anyone).

Home Activity: When asking your child to complete a task at home, remind them about the teamwork concept. Compliment your child when you see them using any of the friendship skills listed on the attached sheet, 25 Qualities of a Good Friend. Also see attached HOMEWORK sheet. Students will be asked to report verbally next Mon. (Feb. 23rd).

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

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Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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25 QUALITIES
OF A GOOD FRIEND

A good friend is:

1. Kind.

2. Respectful.

3. Understanding.

4. Helpful.

5. Someone who doesn't judge me.

6. Honest.

7. A good listener.

8. Someone who is around when I need him or her.

9. Playful.

10. Fun to be with.

11. Trustworthy.

12. Supportive.

13. Encouraging.

14. Giving.

15. Someone who knows what I'm feeling.

16. Willing to work with me.

17. Someone who has a good sense of humor.

18. Thoughtful.

19. Someone I can talk to.

20. Patient.

21. Tolerant.

22. Comfortable to be around.

23. Loyal.

24. Loving.

25. A wonderful and important part of my life.

Homwork for Dinosaur School
Assigned Wed., Feb. 18
Due Mon. Feb. 23

We have been learning a lot about teamwork lately. It is a challenge for anyone (even adults!) to work together as a team.

We would like you to think about your family as a "team." Your assignment is to do something together as a team. You will need to discuss with all the team members and agree on an activity. We have listed some ideas, but you may have your own. Your job is to report back to the group next Mon. Please look at the following information to report:

1. What activity did you chose? How did you agreed on that as a team?
2. How did your activity go? (Was it fun? Were there problems? If there were, how did you resolve them? How did it work well? Did you use the skills we've learned?: *Listening, Asking Questions, Sharing, Helping?*

Here are some ideas to do as a "team" (your whole family):

Cook a meal together
Go bowling
Play a board game
Play an active game
Go out to eat

Go shopping
Clean the house together (or any chore)

Appendix T

Group 2, Session 10 and 11 Materials
- Parent Note
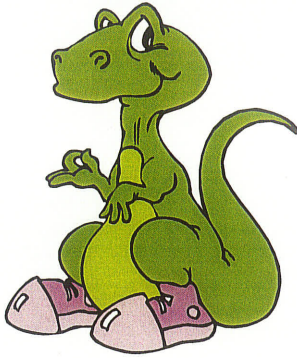
Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2
Session Ten: Friendship Skills

Today we worked on two more Friendships Skills: Praising and Apologizing. We also played a game called 20 Questions to help the students work on skills such as Teamwork, Asking questions, Sharing, Helping, and Listening.

Home Activity: Compliment your child when you see them using any of the friendship skills listed on the sheet attached yesterday, 25 Qualities of a Good Friend. Also, don't forget the homework activity for Monday. (Was sent home yesterday)

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

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Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Comments_____
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Dinosaur School

Notes to Parents

Group 2

Session Eleven: LAST SESSION!!   Review

Time has gone fast. Today was our last session. We went through a review of all the skills learned: Identifying Feelings, Problem-Solving, Anger Control and Friendship Skills. The students were able to also practice these skills by working through different scenarios in a book.

We feel that all the students have worked hard and gained new skills. We appreciate your continued support of your child in their efforts to have more positive behaviors. Remember that one of the most effects ways you can help is to PRAISE your child for any positive behavior you see. Remember to praise them at the time of the behavior, be SPECIFIC, and SINCERE.

On Wednesday: GRADUATION CEREMONY!

Number of Popsicle Sticks
 earned in this session

Prizes Earned in this Session
(out of possible 3 prizes)

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Comments_____

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