EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL SKILLS TO INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN ELEMENTARY-AGED STUDENTS

Kate Grahek

Hamline University

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Hamline University

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Capstone Project Facilitator: Melissa Erickson
Content Expert: Kristin Reilly
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

When September comes, elementary-aged students eagerly return to school with the notion that they will be learning the core subjects: math, reading, writing. They know they will have gym, science, recess, and lunch. They will get to see their friends, make new ones, go on field trips and maybe even join a student organization. When the academics start to become challenging and peer relationships start to become more demanding, students need to develop positive social and emotional skills to handle different stressors, pressures, and conflicts. These skills will be carried with them throughout life.

As teachers, we spend close to nine months of the year with these students, trying our best each and every day to shape them into intelligent and successful humans. Along with teaching the core academics, it is our job to teach social skills such as conflict resolution and calming strategies to help our students navigate through life, beyond the walls of the school. I plan to investigate and find out how educators can successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall success. I believe there can be an impressive amount of overall achievement reached if students carry these basic social skills. My research question will be: How can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement? The research question will focus on students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade.
Chapter One Overview

This chapter will address the rationale for studying how educators can successfully teach social skills to elementary students to positively affect their overall achievement. First, my personal experiences and noticings will be addressed. I have a strong passion for this subject due to my background and past employment. Next, I will discuss the impact of the study and how it affects the students and those around them. Lastly, I will end the chapter with a summary and a preview of what is to come in chapter two.

Personal Experience

I started my teaching career as a special education teacher at an elementary school. Due to the shortage of special education teachers, I was offered a position to start right away, even though my degree was not in special education. I jumped right into the position without any prior knowledge of the students or any special education training. I was the Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) teacher for third, fourth and fifth graders. My class was made up of all boys that had been labeled EBD. The students in my classroom were your typical elementary-aged kids. However, it was when they became upset that their emotions would get the best of them. Within my first week at this new school, students were swearing, throwing furniture, and destroying every assignment that was given. I was defeated very early, often trying to keep in my tears until I left the building. I did not understand how students could have such emotions at that young of an age and how they did not have any strategies to deal with them.
Quickly, I realized that strongly pushing academics at these students was not the answer, as it only amplified their emotional outbursts. The students in my classroom were well-below grade level in all areas. This was not because they were not capable of the work, but because they had spent so much time getting kicked out of class, roaming the hallways upset, and being sent home due to suspension. They had missed hours upon hours of fundamental classroom instruction due to their emotions. The questions I kept asking myself were: how can teachers make time in their day to ensure all students are equipped with the proper social skills so that they can succeed? Which skills should educators focus on? If teachers spend the time to implement social skills strategies such as conflict resolution and calming strategies, will a student’s achievement level increase? In other words, by taking the time to teach, practice, and review social skills, can we help students become more successful throughout their lives? I quickly realized that these questions did not have simple answers. Each student is unique and comes from a different background than the next. It is through trial and error that teachers finally find a strategy that works for an individual. But how can general education teachers find the time to teach these necessary skills to all students when they barely have enough to teach what the state requires?

Although academics were a large part of their day, the students in this class needed more than that. I worked closely with the school social worker to develop ways of integrating social skills into the day. The students in the classroom had never been taught proper social skills, such as how to communicate with someone when they were upset or how to share items in the classroom. We worked tirelessly for two years, teaching the
students to breathe, take breaks and use their words to explain why they were upset. It felt as though we were moving through quicksand, never really making any gains with the students.

Throughout my time as the EBD teacher, I implemented different strategies for different students. I laminated “hallway break” passes that students could use when they were feeling anxious or upset. In the hallways, posters were displayed with ideas of movement breaks for the students, such as jumping jacks, wall push-ups, and belly breathing. While that worked for the independent and trustworthy students, it did not work for everyone.

One student, when feeling upset, would leave the classroom and roam the school. We implemented a plan with him so that whenever he was upset and felt like he needed to leave, he went to a chair outside of the office to calm down. After many months of this failing, he eventually made his way to the chair every time he was upset, taking the stress off of both him and the staff that had to find him. Over time, the incidents of him leaving the classroom decreased. As a teacher, sometimes we have to get creative and try things we may not think will work. Although some days felt as if this calming skill would never work, it proved to be successful over time. The student can now verbally express when he is upset and communicate that he is going to the chair outside of the office instead of throwing things, swearing, and storming out. Teaching social skills consistently with the students in my classroom turned out to be more helpful than I could have imagined and benefited them greatly.
Although my experience speaks greatly to the special education world, I have seen students in other classrooms during my teaching career that are not diagnosed with any disability and have a hard time implementing proper social skills. As a former substitute teacher, I found myself in different schools and varying grade-levels every day. It was without a doubt that I saw students without a disability struggle to communicate with his or her peers or use his or her words to express frustration. The simple fix for a lot of teachers is to tell them to “take a break” and reset themselves. While that may work for students that occasionally act silly or are not focused, more students need to be taught what to do during that break so that when they return to the group, they have the necessary skills to be successful and learn. As an elementary educator soon entering my own general education classroom, I realize all students can benefit from learning social skills. It is my goal to use research to show that teaching and implementing social skills can positively affect a student’s overall achievement.

Impact of the Study

By being aware of the relationship between teaching social skills and overall achievement, teachers can start to make changes in their classrooms. If we know that positive attitudes and behaviors come from implementing certain social skills, we can begin to add more strategies into our daily routines, such as in lesson plans and morning meetings.

Many students find comfort in the strategies, especially when they are reinforced over time. Although some students may not feel they need these skills, educators may be able to prove to the students that they help over time, such as collecting data on behavior
referrals or time out of class. In my classroom, I had a student with a high number of out-of-class referrals because his emotions would take over and, because he did not have the proper social skills, he would leave the classroom without permission. Typically, these emotional blow-ups would last anywhere from ten minutes to an hour, resulting in a lot of instruction time lost and a lot of items thrown and broken. Simply telling this student to stay in class and use his words to portray his feelings was not enough. At the beginning of each month, a staff member such as a behavior aid or myself would sit down with him and go over his referral data from the past month. He would then set a numerical goal for the next month to try and have fewer referrals. While some months this proved to be effective, it took time and consistency to show the student how social skills learned in class could help his referral data stay low. During our meetings, we could discuss incidents that had happened in the classroom. This was effective because the student was now calm and was able to process. We could reflect together on other ways the situation could have been handled and how, when faced with a similar scenario in the future, the student could respond that was appropriate. Students could have a higher amount of achievement in their everyday lives by simply practicing skills they will need for their lifetime. By understanding how to positively teach social skills in schools, improvements could be seen in all areas, including the classroom, lunchroom, recess, and more.

If the research shows that teaching social skills in the classroom increases a student’s overall success, the Department of Education may require more teachers to teach these skills. Parents and families could also use this research to practice at home
and carry those skills into their child’s life outside of school. Solid social skills are beneficial to students in all aspects of life — in school, in their personal lives, and in the days to come.

While some may argue on the best way to teach social skills to elementary-aged students, the majority of research suggests any implementation is necessary and beneficial. The most important part of this research study is that all students will benefit from it. Students learn from the world around them and pick up their social skills from the people they are with. By setting a good example and demonstrating positive ways of dealing with issues, we can influence their learning in this subject and encourage them to carry it forward through life.

**Going Forward**

The hope is that this research will show educators ways to effectively teach basic social skills to students in elementary school. Not only is it important for students to learn the skills, but it is crucial that they practice and implement these skills over time. Although teachers are busy and the list of demands only seems to grow, this research will highlight the importance and effect that teaching these social skills can have on a student’s overall achievement.

**Summary**

Social skills are crucial for the overall achievement of elementary students. Through my own experiences and observation of students around me, I have realized that social skills play a pivotal role in a student’s overall achievement. Encouraging educators to implement different strategies into the routines of students may impact their overall
success. Not only will it help teachers realize the importance and purpose, but the
research has the capability to show the Department of Education as well as the parents
and families of these students how important basic social skills can be. With thoroughly
investigation and research, I will answer the question: How can educators successfully
implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall
achievement?

Throughout the next chapter, a combination of sources will be used. The sources
will be used to dive deeper into the purpose of teaching social skills, which specific skills
are beneficial to teach, how educators can effectively teach the skills, and how multiple
parties benefit from the implementation of effective social skills instruction.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

To fully understand how effective social skill instruction from educators truly is, one must investigate and understand the purpose of teaching social skills to elementary-aged students. The first section of this chapter discusses the definition of social skills and the main purpose of teaching them to elementary-aged students to add to their overall achievement. The second section focuses on understanding the necessary skills that should be taught by educators to contribute to overall student achievement. Next, proper delivery methods and strategies for using social skills in the classroom are discussed. The final section focuses on the benefits of effective social skill instruction has on the community as a whole, including the students, teachers, and families. The comprehensive literature review will demonstrate how educators can successfully implement social skills in elementary schools to increase the students’ overall achievement which contributes to answering the following research question: How can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement?

Social Skills

Social skills can be described as the necessary abilities people need to interact adaptively in society (Lawson, 2003). We are constantly learning social norms and expectations in our everyday living. However, we were not born knowing how to positively interact with people around us or how to apply skills to add to our overall well-being. Research by Ashdown and Bernard (2012) suggested that 60% of children
enter school with the cognitive skills needed to succeed. However, only 40% of those students have the social-emotional skills to succeed in kindergarten because of their pre-schooling environment (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Many students enter school ready to learn and start the path to academic success, but without the proper social and emotional skills, a student may find themselves struggling in one or more areas. Years of research show how positive social skills and relationships are associated with a child’s overall achievement in the categories of behavior, emotions, and academics (Blair, 2002; Connell & Prinz, 2002; DeRosier, 2004; Eisenberg, Sadovsky, & Spinrad, 2005).

Therefore, the purpose of educators teaching social skills for a student’s overall achievement falls under a few main themes.

**Peer relationships.** Similar to adults, children have to be able to decide what they want from other people and to communicate those needs clearly (Rotheram, 2013). When students start school, they begin to form peer relationships from the start. They may share toys or converse during morning circle. They might have play dates outside of school or sit closely near a peer while they work. Peer interactions are happening constantly for students. Parlakian (2003) argued that when students have appropriate social skills, they begin to feel more confident and competent in developing those relationships, building friendships, and resolving conflicts with peers and adults. When students do not carry these skills while interacting with peers, it can lead to social withdrawal because students do not think they are worthy of being heard or cared for (Rotheram, 2013).

**Academic success.** Not only are peer relationships benefitted from proper social skill instruction by educators, but a student’s academic success is also positively affected.
Research by Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) and January, Casey, and Paulson (2011) suggested a student’s mastery of social skills is connected to a better school performance overall. DiPerna and Elliot (2002) stated that similar to peer relationships, when a student feels confident and competent in an area, such as academics, their academic achievement increases. When educators promote healthy social skill habits such as confidence and competence, students internalize those feelings and use them to make their lives better. Bernard (2004b) suggested that when students lack those skills, they are at a higher risk for academic difficulties. Bernard (2004b) went a step further to say students with low social-emotional competence have an overall lower reading achievement, as well as lower levels of organization and persistence. As students progress through school and the academics become more difficult, students can rely on social skills to help them through it if taught effectively by educators during elementary school. The ability to engage in certain social skills such as managing emotions, setting goals, making positive decisions, and maintaining positive relationships can be a strong predictor of a student’s future academic achievement (Wentzel, 1993).

**Overall well-being.** Along with improving peer relationship skills and academic success, implementing social skills during elementary school can benefit a student’s well-being which is linked to overall achievement. Social competence can be defined as a person’s ability to interact successfully with peers and adults (Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence, 2011). Children that perceive themselves as socially competent show fewer signs of depression (Ross, Shochet, & Bellair, 2010). On the contrary, other research suggested children that rate themselves as socially incompetent are more likely
to report more symptoms of depression as adolescents (Blechman, McEnroe, Carella, & Audette, 1986; Chan, 1997; Cole, Martin, Powers, & Truglio, 1996). Teaching young students confidence, persistence, organization, and emotional resilience, as well as social-emotional competence, lays the foundation for their achievement and well-being (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). The Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (2008) agreed that educators have the ability to lay the groundwork to provide students with these necessary skills and support young students when they are in and out of the classroom.

**Summary and going forward.** The effectiveness of teaching social skills to elementary-aged students contributes to their peer relationships, academic success, and overall well-being. The research confirms that the confidence and competence of a student contribute to their overall success. While researching the question *How can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement?* it is apparent that much of the research has focused on primary-aged students. The overall knowledge of the well-being of students going through the developmental stages of early adolescents (pre-middle school and early middle school) lacks research and curricula (Hall & DiPerna, 2017). Regardless of age, without intervention, children that struggle in social relationships often face an array of difficulties later on in life such as dropping out of school, drug abuse, depression, antisocial and behavior (Howes, 2000; Keane & Calkins, 2004; Ladd, 1990; Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow, & Poteat, 2000; Synder, 2001; Tremblay, Masse, Pagani, & Vitaro, 1996). The overall purpose for educators to successfully teach social skills goes beyond
helping a student for the present time. Educators are able to use their knowledge and past research to set students up for success for years to come.

**Necessary Skills for Student Achievement**

While the purpose of teaching social skills is clear, which social skills to implement is often broader. When discussing which social skills to teach in schools, there are two common themes: emotional skills and social development skills. All of these skills make up how a person functions in society. These skills are learned by children at a very young age and contribute to their academic and personal achievement. While the methods of how these skills are delivered will be discussed later, this section will cover the necessary skills to teach for student achievement.

**Emotional skills.** Emotional skills, sometimes referred to as social-emotional skills or soft skills, incorporate the understanding, experience, expression, recognition, and management of emotions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2019). Emotional skills are intrapersonal skills typically happening within one’s self. As students move through the primary grades, they are learning key emotional competencies such as self-regulation and positive peer relationships (Blair & Raver, 2015). Although we learn a lot of these emotional skills throughout life, such as self-regulating ourselves when upset, developing empathy for others, and self-reflection, many of these skills do need to be taught to young children. Rotherham (2013) discussed a program that is a cognitive behavioral model used to teach social skills that help students learn to assert themselves with others (p. 70). She went on to discuss how a child needs to be taught how to be aware of the emotions happening inside of his or her self.
(Rotherham, 2013, p. 70). Many programs, such as You Can Do It (YCDI), focuses on teaching confidence, organization, persistence with difficult tasks, and emotional resilience (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012, p. 397). Similarly, CASEL, or Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2019) focuses on five emotional skills that are important for all young children: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. All of these skills require a child to be aware and understand what is happening in their minds. As cited in Ashdown and Bernard (2012), researchers have come to the conclusion that young children need key emotional skills when they enter school, including self-confidence, the ability to develop positive peer relationships, concentration and persistence with hard tasks, an ability to communicate emotions in an effective way, and the ability to listen and give their attention to others (Shonkoff & Philips, 2000). Cognitive competencies like the ones listed above are important predictors of academic achievement (Diperna, Lei, Cheng, Hart, & Bellinger, 2018). In addition, children considered to be “at-risk” for academic difficulties demonstrated lower levels of confidence, persistence, and organization (Bernard, 2004b). Emotional skills such as these contribute to their overall achievement when taught effectively.

**Social development skills.** Similar to emotional skills, social development skills involve the knowledge, understanding, and appropriate skills to relate to others effectively and interact in positive ways with the people around them (Be You, 2019). These skills, which are more interpersonal, help students with daily interactions. People learn these skills throughout life, such as knowing it is polite to say “please” and “thank
you” or hold the door open for someone, but direct instruction is useful when students enter school. Students that have social inferential abilities, or the ability to notice someone else’s emotional state and imagine themselves in their position, have more positive social interactions (Rotherham, 2013). Social awareness, conflict resolution, and positive peer relationship building are all positive social development skills that, when taught effectively, can contribute to a student’s overall achievement.

**Summary and going forward.** Both emotional skills and social development skills are crucial to everyday life. Humans are at their best when they can control themselves and interact effectively in society. While these two groups of skills are extremely broad, it is clear that both should be taught when looking at which skills to teach elementary aged students. The two groups overlap and may build upon each other so it is important that educators find a balance between the two categories in order to increase student’s overall success.

**Delivery Methods and Strategies for Teaching Social Skills in the Classroom**

Not only do educators want to know the purpose behind effectively teaching social skills to students to increase their overall achievement and which skills to teach, but they also need to know how to use this information to deliver the social skills. There are several ways to effectively teach social skills to students and it depends on the educator’s personal preference and the students they are teaching.

**Physical movement.** Young children are supposed to learn through their play (Colliver & Fleer, 2016). Educating students through physical play is an effective social skills training strategy that allows students to be mobile in their natural setting of play
(Aljadeff-Abergel, Ayvazo, & Eldar, 2012). While the study by Aljadeff-Abergel et al. (2012) focused on students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), much of their research is applicable to students with and without disabilities. For instance, it is stated that young students that lack social skills need to be trained in an environment where he or she can use the targeted social skill (Aljadeff-Abergel et al., 2012). Inspired by Peter Arnold, the Educating Through Physical (EPT) model suggests that children learn about the world through playing and moving around (Arnold, 1988). When given a social skill, such as self-control, waiting, or responding to rules and routines, the EPT model teaches students through movement how to successfully handle and practice these skills (Aljadeff-Abergel et al., 2012). While it is mostly made for physical education and special education teachers, this kind of learning is great for students that have difficulties sitting still and present social deficits in a typical classroom learning environment that all educators can tie into their daily routines. All students like to wiggle and move, so incorporating social skills such as sharing, taking turns, and self-regulation are ideal in this situation.

**Through technology.** With the rise of technology in the world, it is becoming more common for people of all ages to engage with technology in some form. Children are no exception. Teaching social skills can be effective when technology is involved because many students know how to operate cell phones, computers, and tablets easily. One form of teaching social skills with technology is through video modeling (Haydon, Musti-Rao, McCune, Clouse, McCoy, Kalra, & Hawkins, 2017). Video modeling is a kind of video instruction that allows students the chance to watch a video of a model
performing the desired behavior over and over (Bidwell & Rehfeldt, 2004). There are two ways to teach social skills this way. The first is instruction through video prompting where the student watches a model perform the part of the task (Cihak, Fahrenkrog, Ayres, & Smith, 2010). The other variation is video self-modeling, where a student serves as the model (Haydon et al., 2017). Video modeling is portable, versatile, and requires minimal teacher assistance. In addition, it carries less of an embarrassing stigma for students, such as students with EBD, because it is all available on the technology device and can be completed just like any other assignment given (Haydon et al., 2017). Although teachers would need to be trained on how to properly set up the technology device, such as a tablet, it is mostly student-led. With that, students can conference with the teacher about specific skills that he or she wants to work on and go at their own pace. Social skills that could be used with video modeling could be but are not limited to, how to appropriately respond to situations, taking turns to listen and responding in a conversation, and how to resolve conflicts.

Another way to incorporate technology to effectively teach social skills to elementary-aged students to improve their overall achievement is through game-based learning. In-person social skills training can be expensive and take significant amounts of time, but with game-based learning, more students can benefit (Craig, Brown, Upright & DeRosier, 2016). In a study done by Craig et al. (2016), a program called Zoo U was introduced to children, an interactive online game for elementary-aged students that uses evidence-based social and emotional learning strategies in a videogame format. The program teaches age-appropriate skills to students and collects data on how they handle
various situations prompted during the game, making it ideal for Response to Intervention (RtI) data collection (Craig et al., 2016). *Zoo U* is not the only game-based social skill program out there, but it is an example of how an interactive, kid-friendly program can teach students through technology. With *Zoo U*, children reported feeling more satisfied and confident about their social relationships, showing that teaching social skills through technology has the potential to be something very positive for students (Craig et al., 2016). Technology is how many students learn in today’s educational world so incorporating a game-based strategy to deliver social skill training to students may increase motivation and engagement.

**Through literature.** While many classroom teachers and other educators may not have the availability to use physical activity or technology, there is the option of teaching social skills effectively through literature-based approaches. Teaching social skills through other core subjects, such as literature, has been a convenient and approachable way for teachers to teach social skills throughout the day (Womack, Marchant, & Borders, 2011). Because of limited time, teachers are often on a time-crunch to fit in math, reading, and writing. Not only is there limited time to teach these subjects, but there are always going to be interruptions to the schedules that educators do not have control over. Teaching social skills through core subjects is a way for teachers to ensure students are getting their academic needs met, as well as their social skills. Womack et al. (2011) stated that pull-out programs for students needing extra social skills time are not ideal because there can be a negative stigma attached to it and those students do not necessarily transfer those skills to the real world. With that, all students, regardless of
their background or needs, can benefit from social skill instruction. Teaching social skill instruction through read-alouds in the general education classroom is feasible for teachers because it is already happening in the classroom so a separate social skills time block is not needed. Womack and her colleagues also discussed that educators can determine which skills are most prominently needed for the given students and find literature that has those skills as a focus (Womack et al., 2011). Students can have open discussions and learn through characters in the books instead of hypothetical scenarios in other forms of delivery.

**Through curriculum.** Another way that educators can implement social skills instruction in an effective way to increase students’ overall achievement is through basic curriculum. There are many free social skills programs on the Internet, as well as programs available for schools to purchase. These programs, made ideally for classroom teachers, can also be used by other educators such as social workers and school psychologists. While the list of commonly used social-emotional programs is long, the majority of programs take anywhere from twenty to forty minutes per lesson (DiPerna et al., 2018). The issue is that teachers often skip these lessons to make time for the core subjects if time is tight. With that, consistency is crucial. With a program called Skillstreaming which targets four skills (listening, following directions, problem-solving, and knowing when to tell), it was found that the lack of a follow-up assessment around the six month and one year mark to verify that gains were being made and sustained by students was lacking (Sheridan, Donlon, Kuhn, MacDonald, Friedman & McGovern, 2011). This means that although curriculum-based programs are great and beneficial, a
main part of the success is consistency. Ashdown and Bernard (2012) stated that formal lessons with curriculum-based programs have positive results when they are taught daily over long periods of time. The greater the intensity and the longer the duration, the more positive outcomes (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Many researchers have found that by improving children’s levels of social-emotional competence through explicit instruction such as a curriculum-based program taught by teachers, it is very possible to improve students’ overall social-emotional well-being and academic achievement (Nelson, Westhues & MacLeod, 2003; Payton, Weissberg, Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Schellinger, & Pachan, 2008). Although time-consuming and difficult to keep consistent, educators and children can benefit from the use of explicit and direct instruction of social and emotional skills through curriculum lessons (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). No matter which way the skills are taught, the idea of being explicit, consistent, and intentional while teaching social skills is what matters. Although each program is unique in its own way in terms of which target skills they choose and the duration of each lesson, the programs typically use modeling, coaching, and reinforcement from the educator (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). These programs typically give real-life contexts and scenarios that are applicable to the students (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). First, the targeted social skill is named and explained explicitly. Next, the educator gives the reason the skill is useful. For example, an educator may say that the skill the class is discussing is self-control which is when a person can keep control of themselves. If we have self-control, then we will not hit our friends if we are upset. The students then role play a scenario or read a vignette about using self-control. The teacher gathers feedback from
the rest of the class and talks through how the self-control was demonstrated. After the discussion and some closure, some programs also give homework for students to reinforce the skill (Sheridan et al., 2011). It was found that the combined effects of teaching social skills through curriculum-based instruction are more helpful and stronger in the long run than the educators simply responding to a student's social and emotional needs in less structured ways (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). However, it is most important to note that consistency and intensity are required to see gains.

**Summary and going forward.** The four ways to teach social skills to students is only a brief snapshot. As technology grows and the need for social skill instruction increases, people are getting more creative in how students are learning. Regardless of how the skills are taught, educators that consistently push social skill instruction at elementary students will see a positive outcome and an increase in their achievement (Nelson et al., 2003). Moving forward, educators should take the time to get to know their audience and figure out which way of instruction best suits the students.

**Community Benefits**

As mentioned before, there are many individuals that benefit greatly from social skill instruction in elementary schools. It is apparent that the student clearly gains positivity. They are able to interact with peers and adults in more mature and strategic ways. They are also better able to communicate and get their needs met in an effective manner. However, students are not the only people that benefit from positive social skill instruction. Educators also have a lot to gain when social skills are implemented into the school day. They are able to spend less time managing behaviors and more time
educating. Families are also a group that can gain something from social skills being taught in schools. They are able to implement useful skills at home and in the community, creating a school-to-home connection for the student. In this section, more details about how these three groups benefit from proper social skill instruction are addressed.

**Students.** When discussing why educators should try and effectively teach students the necessary social skills to increase their overall achievement, it is clear that the students being taught are benefitting the most. Elementary-aged students are like sponges, soaking in all of the information they are taught from the moment they enter kindergarten. They apply this knowledge in their everyday lives and, with the help of experiences and relationships, grow as human beings. Although all students benefit in some way from social skill instruction, research highlights a few key groups that are affected by effective social skill instruction.

Students with learning disabilities often struggle with how to show social competence skills and how and when to use certain behaviors (Gresham, Sugai & Horner, 2001; Hepler, 1994; Nowicki, 2003). Students with learning disabilities who struggle socially, emotionally, and academically can benefit when educators at school take the time to incorporate social skills into their everyday teaching (Womack et al., 2011). Another group that benefits greatly is students with EBD and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Haydon et al., 2017). Students with disabilities often have trouble controlling their emotions, building and maintaining friendships, and staying on-task (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004; Koback, Little, Race, & Acosta, 2001; Nelson & Roberts, 2000). Research
suggests students with EBD have large deficits in the area of social competence, which is the main reason they are referred to special education (Gresham, Cook, Crews & Kern, 2004). Including effective social skill instruction and training into their everyday learning will lead to successful inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom (Haydon et al., 2016). Students that are considered “at-risk” for academic difficulties showed much lower levels of competence in social skills such as confidence, persistence, and organization (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). By incorporating social skills into their lives, they may receive the proper exposure to skills that will help them reach their overall achievement.

**Educators.** Not only do students benefit from effective social skill instruction, but educators do as well. Addressing students’ social and emotional development is not simply an extra task for teachers to try and fit in if possible; rather, it is a crucial part of learning that will help all students in school and for the rest of their lives (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2007). When students are actively participating in social skills lessons and applying them to their growth and development, their academic levels tend to increase, which in turn, benefits the educators (CASEL, 2019). Not only are academics affected, but the overall calmness and respect in the classroom increases (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). When students are getting along and under control, it makes the educators’ lives much easier. There is less behavior-management and more academic teaching happening. By making the time to fit in social skills instruction, whether it is through physical movement, technology, literature, or curriculum, it can increase the atmosphere in the classroom which is helpful to the educator at school.
Families. Students spend approximately 180 days in school. It is without question that they transfer skills they learn at school to their home life. By effectively teaching social skills at school, the hope is that students will bring them into their personal lives as well. As young as kindergarten, children are developing socially and emotionally at a rapid speed (Rimm-Kaufman & Pinata, 2000). Research suggests that students that have positive home-school relationship have optimal child development (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders & Simon, 1997; Knopf & Swick, 2007; Ryan, Adams, Gullota, Weissberg & Hampton, 1995) which may decrease the risk for problematic and tough adjustment when students start kindergarten (Iraka, Winn, Kingsley & Orthodoxou, 2011). Teaching social skills in an effective way may benefit the student greatly, but a real challenge is teaching the students in a way that they can use in the real world. Communication between the parents, family, and educator could help everyone, including the student, to better understand why the child is acting out and how to help (Iruka et al., 2011). In turn, the school and the families could work together to determine consequences and effective responses (Iruka et al., 2011). Whichever social skills are taught at school could then be carried out at home. Studies that reported that parents and teachers generally do not have high levels of communication about students, regardless of their age (Galinsky, Shinn, Phillips, Howes & Whitebook, 1992; Ghazini & Readdick, 1994). If families and educators communicated the targeted social skills students were learning in the classroom, there would be more consistency of positive behaviors (Iruka et al., 2011). Iruka and colleagues (2011) also found that teachers’ and parents’ ratings of their relationships with each other were linked to teachers’ and
parents’ ratings of a child’s social skills. When teachers stated they had strong relationships with parents and were able to communicate what was being taught in the classroom with families, they were more likely to rate the children in their classroom as more socially competent and less aggressive (Iruka et al., 2011). Just like any core subject, when families are involved with the student and are incorporating school learnings into their home lives, the students are much more influenced and able to apply ideas they have learned into their everyday lives.

**Summary and going forward.** It is easy to simply believe students benefit from social skills, but there is much more to it. Educators and families are equally benefitting, although maybe not as directly. The community as a whole is positively affected when the community members are able to use social skills effectively. With positive social skill instruction, educators and families may be able to work together to help students succeed even more in and out of the classroom.

**Summary**

This chapter began by discussing the purpose of educators teaching social skills to elementary-aged students as well as a definition of social skills. Behind every educator’s set goals is a strategic and meaningful purpose. The chapter discussed the necessary skills elementary-aged students should be taught and possess to increase their overall achievement. Next, the chapter discussed delivery strategies and methods in the classroom that educators can use. Lastly, the overall benefits that implementing social skill instruction has on the community, such as students, teachers, and families, was examined. All of these different parts work together to help answer the question: *How*
can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement?

In chapter three, the methods used to create a resource for educators is addressed. The chapter describes how teachers can access and utilize the resource and why it is beneficial for educators to use.
CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

After reviewing recent and relevant literature explaining the research question, *How can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement?*, I wanted to find a way to help educators in elementary schools with teaching social skills in a successful way to students. First, I wanted to explain why social skills are important to elementary-aged students and how they related to students’ overall achievement since social skills contribute to a healthy foundation for all students. Secondly, I wanted to provide the necessary skills that students needed to be successful. Next, my hope was to educate teachers and professionals in schools on how to deliver social skill instruction in a way that is meaningful and effective to students in kindergarten through fifth grade, the typical elementary grades. Lastly, I aimed to teach educators more about who benefits from effective social skill instruction. Just like students, adults also need to be informed about the purposes and benefits of what they are learning. In order to teach all of these topics to educators, I created a website for all educators in elementary schools.

Because of my strong passion for implementing social skills into the lives of elementary-aged students, I found this project to be especially important and relevant. As the research around teaching social skills to children continues, this chapter clearly explains the project and will leave the reader with a vivid idea of how to implement social skills in the school setting. Chapter three will discuss the project description, the
timeline of the project, the intended setting and audience, and research that supports the medium used. It will conclude with a preview of chapter four. The website serves as an effective tool for educators to use during professional development to increase their understanding of how social skills and how they affect a students’ overall achievement. At the end of the chapter, the reader will have a strong understanding of how and why this project is useful for educators.

**Project Description**

The website designed for educators brought together all of the elements needed to effectively teach social skills to students in elementary school. It was used as a learning tool for educators to implement during professional development. The website is for educators to access more information about social skills. The website was built on Wix, an easy-to-use website that helps with templates and layouts. Specifically, the topics on the website, shown as tabs on the top left of the webpage, cover the purpose of teaching social skills, the necessary skills to teach social skills, how to deliver social skills to students, and who benefits from the social skill instruction. It is one place that educators can go to gather all of this information with a simple click. There is also a spot for website visitors to contact me with thoughts, ideas, and questions.

**Research Support**

The classic way that teachers used to stand up in front of the class is changing at a rapid rate. Students now have tablets where they can access information on websites and apps. It is not hard to find research about web-based learning and how technology is making its way into the lives of students everywhere. However, there is not much
research on the effectiveness of educators learning through web-based learning like their students are doing. Because of today’s accessibility to the Internet, teachers are more likely to do a quick Google search and find their answer in a matter of seconds. The learning model is shifting for both students and educators from reading out of books to gathering information through technology (Elida, Nugroho, & Suyudi, 2012). While most young educators are used to this, there is a learning curve for the educators that have not always had easy access to the Internet. The goal of this project was to create a website for educators of all ages and skill levels. In addition, educators need proper training on how to use resources on the Internet. Research by Kao, Wu, and Tsai (2011) explained that educators need a certain amount of motivation to want to learn something in a new way.

Professional development is crucial to educators, as it evolves and improves their practices. However, many times teachers and other educators become frustrated with professional development because it is unsuccessful or requires a lot of invested time to see a difference (Kao et al., 2011). A project such as a website eliminates those issues. Educators can use the website at their own leisure to learn more about the subject. The website can also be projected to staff during professional development. In addition, screenshots of the website could be printed for educators to have as a hard copy. Educators can also narrow in on specific social skills that are applicable to their current students. All students are unique in their needs and this project offers an array of social skills that educators can work on with them. This project also demonstrates a cost-effective way to deliver information to educators. There is no need to purchase expensive curriculum or find storage for tangible resources.
However, web-based learning, such as a website or presentation, must be effective. It must have functional features, smooth navigation, and be visually pleasing to be efficient (Elida et al., 2012). There are many aspects to consider when designing effective professional development for educators. To develop a positive professional development experience, educators need to be engaged in learning that specifically focuses on the teaching and learning process instead of simply learning bits and pieces of educational trends. Positive results are almost unavoidable when educators understand the main focal point, review student data once a plan has been put into motion, and collaborate on ways to adjust and grow together (Schmoker, 2002).

Timeline

The timeline broke down how the website was created. The full website was up and running by July 2019. Because I was interested in getting the website out to the public, I used a commonly used website to help me build the website. For creating the website, I used the website Wix (“Wix”, 2019). This website helps people build their own website for people to visit. There were many steps to follow in order to create a website for the public. The first thing was to choose a template. The website walks the website creator through a series of questions, such as what the website will be used for, what features are important for the creator to have, and the color scheme desired. I chose a template that was simple yet attractive to viewers. I wanted the information to be clear and easy for website visitors. I went with a template that incorporated calming colors and easy-to-read fonts.
After choosing a template, I started to add in the content. The content started very basic. I started with the main four subtopics I wanted to have (a broad definition of social skills, the necessary skills to teach, how to effectively teach those skills, and any community benefits). Once I had a skeleton of the content, I started to add in more detail. I started by copy and pasting directly from the chapters above. Of course, a reader does not want too many words on a page. Once all the information for a subtopic was on a page, I went through and condensed the information to be more pleasing and less overwhelming. I did that for all four subtopics.

Once I had all of the proper information on the website, I started to customize the way it looked. This included changing font sizes and colors, moving tabs in different orders, and adding images. All images used on the website are courtesy of Wix (Wix, 2019). Having high-quality pictures can increase the audience’s understanding (Mayer, 2009). Once I felt like the website was appealing and ready to launch, I had colleagues read over the entire site to look for errors and clear up any confusion. The website includes a homepage that introduces the website and topic overall. It also includes four tabs with additional information. The tabs include the purpose of teaching social skills, the necessary skills for student achievement, different delivery methods and strategies for using social skills in the classroom, and community benefits of teaching social skills to elementary-aged students. There are many links that visitors can click on to bring them back to the main page or to one of the subtopic pages. I made sure that each page had a similar look and was aesthetically pleasing to readers. I underlined and bolded certain words and phrases so that they stick out to the reader. There are also two different spots
to contact me. In addition, I used citations throughout the website so that all research was properly acknowledged. Each reference is linked to the main references page. Lastly, I used a free domain (https://kgrahek02.wixsite.com/eledsocialskills) so that people can view the page on their browser. Overall, it took about a month to create the website to a satisfactory level.

**Setting and Audience**

I chose to use a website as my project because it is easily accessible for the public from anywhere with Internet access. This type of medium is commonly used and most people are familiar with how a websites works. Whether educators chose to use it for continual professional development or for Professional Learning Community (PLC) work, there is flexibility.

My target audience was educators in schools, specifically elementary schools. This included classroom teachers, social workers, specialist teachers, counselors, teaching assistants, English Language teachers, and so on. Each part of the website gives resources and information to help educators get a glimpse of successful implementation of social skills in elementary schools. It also gives educators quick ideas on skills to try with the students in front of them. Educators are busy, often cramming necessary tasks into his or her day. This website gave accessible information in an organized fashion.

There was no limit on the people that could benefit from the information in the presentation and on the website. Parents and families had access to the website. This was beneficial because they were able to read and learn more about effective social skills and how their child could benefit from implementing the skills at home and in the
community. It was also a way for families to understand the direction teachers are going and the ideas they may be bringing into their classrooms regarding social skills.

**Assessment of Project**

To measure the effectiveness of the website, I have implemented a spot to contact me with feedback, ideas, and/or questions. It is anonymous so that educators can give honest and anonymous feedback. With this, I am able to measure how educators view it, what can be changed or elaborated on, and how I can help educators more on the subject of teaching social skills to elementary students in order to increase their overall achievement.

**Conclusion**

The creation of a website for educators was the most accessible and efficient way of delivering information. Teachers and others in an elementary school setting have useful information regarding teaching social skills at the click of a button. There is a large amount of research out there regarding social skill implementation, and now educators can find a summarized version through the website. By creating this project, teachers can focus on professional development that is useful and manageable. With that, it is not extremely time-consuming, allowing educators more time with the students they work with. The four major subtopics were the foundation for the website and presentation that were both completed by August 2019. Making sure that students are effectively getting social skill instruction in grade school can positively affect their overall achievement.

**Chapter Four Preview**
The final chapter will serve as a conclusion for the capstone project. I am going to discuss the immense amount of knowledge I have gained throughout creating the project. I will explain the main themes of the research question, *How can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement?* Also, I am going to reference the literature review from chapter two as I discuss my final thoughts. I will address the limitations and implications of both the website and the presentation as a whole. The road of future research will also be discussed. Finally, I will explain how the results of successful implementation of social skills can increase elementary-aged students overall achievement.
CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Purpose of the Project

The first three chapters of this capstone, in addition to the capstone project, worked to answer the question: How can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement? Chapter four will consist of a brief summary of the literature review, a description of the finished project, limitations of the project, and my own personal learnings as a researcher, writer, and learner. The chapter will end by discussing steps moving forward and concluding thoughts.

The main purpose of this capstone project came after teaching social skills to students in the special education setting. I saw the extreme importance of proper implementation to best help students reach full potential. While my position allowed me to teach social skills on a daily basis, I knew other educators in the building did not have the time or resources to effectively do the same. The purpose of my project was to create a resource for educators to use to effectively teach social skills to the students they interact with every day. The final product is a website that can be used to explain how social skills are defined, which skills are important for students to have, how to teach the skills, and more information regarding who is affected by proper social skill instruction. I knew I wanted to create something that educators could use in multiple settings.

The purpose of designing a website was to provide information easily to educators of all technological skill levels in a cost-effective way. The website defines social skills,
why they are important, which skills are necessary to teach, and how to teach them. In addition, it explains who benefits from effective social skill implementation. All of this information is backed by research. There are both short and long term benefits to this website. While mainly created for educators, families can also access it since it is public. Educators can view it on their own time and at their own speed. It can also be used for professional development purposes. Educators will no longer have to search for information on social skills as all of it will now be in one central location. By implementing the information from the website, I look forward to observing how my implementation of social skills develops over time.

Summary of the Literature Review

When I first created my website and presentation, I used many pieces of the literature review to guide and shape the content. I reviewed countless journal articles focused on social skill development with young children. My goal of reviewing this type of research was to gain a better understanding of social skills with children altogether. This included how to take all sorts of definitions of social skills and create a basic explanation. After that, I was able to dive into which skills are important and how to teach them. It was obvious that children benefit from these skills, but I was curious who else benefited, such as educators, parents, and the community. Originally, I was going to focus on if social skills were beneficial. After speaking with colleagues, I decided that was an easy answer. The tougher question to answer was how to teach our students effectively so they can benefit the greatest amount.
The literature revealed how the proper and effective implementation of social skills can truly benefit a child in and out of the classroom. Although there were many parts of this topic, there were a few parts of the literature review that proved to be extremely important. First, Ashdown and Bernard (2012) stated that 60% of children enter school with the cognitive skills needed to succeed but only 40% of those students have the social-emotional skills to succeed in kindergarten because of their pre-schooling environment (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). This suggests that most students come to school for the first time ready to learn but have not been taught the proper social and emotional skills, causing them to struggle. With percentages that high, it is clear that many students are coming through the doors on the first day of school needing the assistance of educators and direct teaching of social-emotional skills.

Parlakian (2003) stated that when students have appropriate social skills, they begin to feel more confident and competent in developing those relationships, building friendships, and resolving conflicts with peers and adults (Parlakian, 2003). When thinking about how much time students spend in school and around their peers, having those necessary social skills can make a drastic difference in their everyday lives. Similarly, DiPerna and Elliot (2002) argued that when a student feels confident and competent in an area, such as academics, their academic achievement increases (DiPerna & Elliot, 2002). Social skills are a great benefit to both peer relationships and academic success based on this research.

Teaching young students confidence, persistence, organization, and emotional resilience, as well as social-emotional competence, lays the foundation for their
achievement and well-being (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Regardless of how the skills are taught, educators that consistently push social skill instruction at elementary students will see a positive outcome and an increase in their achievement (Nelson et al., 2003). These broad findings from multiple researchers suggest that social skill implementation is good for social, emotional, and academic reasons. Although there are many ways to teach the skills, this research suggests the basic idea that educators should make it a strong point to teach them in their classrooms.

**Project Description**

For my capstone project, I have created a website for elementary teachers to use in order to learn more about how social skill implementation is crucial to young students. The website includes multiple pages: Home, What Are Social Skills?, Necessary Skills, Delivery Methods and Strategies, Community Benefits, and References. First, the Home page gives the title of the capstone, which sums up the overarching question. It also gives a little blurb about what social skills are. Near the bottom are links to the other pages as well as a way to contact me. Visitors can either click one of the links near the bottom of the page to go to another page or go to the top right-hand corner to visit another page. The page titled What Are Social Skills? discusses a broad definition of social skills and dives deeper into how they are useful in peer relationships, academic success, and overall well-being. There is also a summary at the bottom of the page.

The page titled Necessary Skills discusses which skills are best for student achievement. There is information on emotional skills and social development skills.
Some terms are bolded so they catch the reader’s eye. Additionally, there is a summary at the bottom of the page.

Next, the page named Delivery Methods and Strategies discusses how teachers can teach the necessary skills. All learners are different and all educators have different teaching styles. This page provides ways educators can teach through physical movement, technology, literature, and curriculum. The summary at the bottom of the pages sums up the importance of this page.

The Community Benefits page discusses who is affected by social skills. This includes the students, parents and families, and educators. I wanted to include this page to show educators that this information, when taught effectively and consistently, can greatly benefit the student and those around him or her. It is important to capture that this entire subject goes beyond the walls of the classroom.

Lastly, the References page is there if visitors want to review original research. All the references are cited throughout the website, all linking to this References page. This is crucial because all researchers should be acknowledged and credited for their work. In addition, it provides visitors to explore and read more into the subject.

**Limitations of the Project**

As I completed my project, I found several roadblocks that I had to overcome. Originally, I was simply going to do a Google Slide presentation. However, I did not know how I would be able to get my information out to people without sharing a link with them. This posed a problem because I wanted vast amounts of people to view the
research and resources. After more thought, I decided a website would be able to reach a larger audience. It was important to me that many people were able to view this research.

Another limitation was that the website does not actively cultivate student or parent voices. While it is all research-based, there is not any sort of student or parent engagement. This project was created solely from my own teaching experiences and through reading literature on the subject. With more time and research, it would be effective to gain more insight from the students and their families about what works, what does not work, and their personal experiences.

Although I chose a website creator I was familiar with, there were still issues. I was able to easily change fonts and design the layout to fit my personal preferences. I decided to use the images provided by Wix to eliminate any copyright issues. However, I found that I had a hard time ensuring my images were diverse. I wanted to portray many races and cultures but found that challenging.

The final limitation presented itself as a personal internal battle I had with myself: what if teachers still do not use this information to improve their practices? Just because the information is at their fingertips does not mean they are going to feel inclined to use it in their professional lives. Some teachers may see the website and agree with the findings but still lack the proper time to implement it in their classroom. With limited professional development in many schools, some teachers and educators may not find the value in teaching social skills to improve the overall success of the students in their class. Teaching is a full-time job, often requiring hours of additional work once the students are gone. I did not want this work to be another task for educators.
Implications of the Project

In this section, I will address the implications of my project. I will discuss how my website directly links to my research question and will predict how the website will impact educators.

My research question is How can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement? The digital resource of a website was created to answer this question directly. By putting all of the research in one spot, educators would have an array of information to explore. They will then be able to pick and choose what is useful for their specific students. For example, if a student learns best through movement, they can use the research to explore how to teach social skills physically. All students are unique in their learning style and educators are the people to help them learn in the most effective way.

An implication of my website is that it will inform educators that teaching social skills effectively truly impacts students in so many aspects of their lives. Sometimes people assume students are walking through the front doors of elementary school knowing how to act in a social setting, but that may not be the case. Teachers are better able to assess their students and meet them where they are at to improve their social skills. Not only does that help the student, but in turn helps the educator, too.

Another implication of the website is that it will provide educators with a tool that they can use at their leisure. This can cut down professional development time. All educators are busy and trying to fit in so many things. The website is accessible from
anywhere with Internet access and was created in a way where there is a lot of information but not an overwhelming amount.

**Potential Future Research**

The topic of social skills in elementary school is one that is extremely broad and complex. Although a lot of research has been done on the subject, there are still many avenues of research possible. This could include more student-based research, meaning researchers could study actual students and gain their knowledge and feedback. Further research could also include how technology affects social skill development since technology is such a huge part of an elementary school in today’s world. Additional research could focus on determining what parents can do for students before they enter school to set them up for social and emotional success. Research could also be done on the most effective strategies classroom teachers can implement for their students. This may change from year to year depending on the students in the classroom. Research could be done over multiple years to explain certain trends and findings. There are many branches of potential future research that are possible.

**Personal Learning**

When choosing a topic to research, it was obvious to myself that I was going to choose something that dealt with social and emotional skills. This is where my passion lies. Although academics are beyond important, teaching students to become extraordinary, compassionate, emotionally-regulated humans are just as crucial. When I told others of my topic, the response I received typically had something to do with how there is such a need for social skills for children in today’s world. I did not want to just
talk about how it is needed. I wanted to take action and help educators implement and carry forward information that will help each individual student that walks through their door during the school year.

I thought carefully about creating a social skills program for students to use. However, when I thought more about it and did research, I realized there are a lot of great programs out there and different ways to teach them. The world did not need another program. Instead, I chose to focus on how to zero in on teaching social skills. I started with the basics— which social skills are most useful? How can educators teach the skills? Who is impacted by teaching social skills? And most importantly, why is this important? Many will agree that being compassionate, knowing how to share, and using manners are good traits to have. However, I believe many adults forget that those skills were once taught to us. For my project, I chose to return to the beginning and help educators lay the groundwork for proper social skill instruction.

I have learned an immense amount through this entire process. It has only strengthened my passion for teaching social skills to students. I learned the importance of proper social skills in my first teaching job. Although I was thrown headfirst into that position, I grew as an educator. Similarly, this project has helped me realize what is important to me as I start my career as a general education classroom teacher. I have realized that I want to share my passion with everyone, not only educators. I want to stress the importance of equipping children with the proper skills they need to be successful. I want to persuade those that think the upcoming generation is only interested in technology. I know that, when given the opportunity, all students are capable of
possessing proper social skills. I find it extremely humbling that, as an educator, I can have a part in helping students develop into good people.

**Moving Forward and Concluding Thoughts**

In conclusion, chapters one through three of this capstone, as well as the capstone project, work to answer the question: How can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement? Chapter one discussed my personal background and why this specific research question is important to me. Chapter two discussed the literature on this topic and dove deeper into the detailed aspects of the research question. Chapter two discussed the definition of social skills, the necessary skills for student achievement, the delivery methods and strategies for using social skills in the classroom, and community benefits of teaching social skills. Chapter three outlined the project I created, including the timeline, target audience, and supported research. Finally, chapter four discussed the purpose of the project, a summary of the literature used, a brief project description and limitations, and the author’s personal learning through it all.

While completing this capstone project over several months, I have grown immensely as a researcher, writer, and learner. I have broadened my knowledge on the subject of social skill implementation in elementary schools and have capitalized on opportunities to help others see the importance. This project has taught me more about what I find important in the world of education. It has given me the opportunity to think like a researcher and focus on what is important and relevant.
Looking into the future, I am excited to carry this knowledge into my own practice. I am looking forward to sharing my findings with other educators to hopefully improve their practices. My goal is to share my passion with others so they also see the importance of teaching young students proper social skills. My other hope is that educators use my review of literature and project to continue to help students succeed. After all, we spend nearly nine months with the students in our classroom. It is up to us to try our absolute best to influence and teach them how to be incredible people.
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APPENDIX A

Social Skills in Elementary School Website

https://kgrahek02.wixsite.com/eledsocialskills

Homepage
GET IN TOUCH

If you'd like to discuss social skills in elementary school, give feedback, or anything additional, please reach out:

loraand3@email.com

Name
Email
Phone
Address
Subject
Type your message here...
Submit

References

Non-textual information
WHAT ARE SOCIAL SKILLS?

Many have heard the phrase social skills, but what are they exactly? This question is broad and many researchers have varying definitions. Did you know 50% of children enter school with the cognitive skills needed to succeed but only 40% of those students have the social-emotional skills to succeed in kindergarten because of their pre-schooling environment? (Abidin and Bernard 2013)

SOCIAL SKILLS DEFINED

Social skills are the necessary abilities people need to interact adaptively in society (Kessen 2009).

We are constantly learning social norms and expectations in our everyday living. However, we were not born knowing how to positively interact with people around us or how to apply skills to add to our overall well-being.

Many students enter school ready to learn and start the path to academic success, but without the proper social and emotional skills, a student may find themselves struggling in one or more areas. Positive social skills and relationships are associated with a child's overall achievement in the categories of behavior, emotions, and academics. (Bak 2009; Connell & Biga 2009; Definition of Social Skills & Benefits 2009; Elementary, Secondary & Special 2009)

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Similar to adults, children have to be able to decide what they want from other people and to communicate those needs clearly (Blatman 2019).

When students start school, they begin to form peer relationships from the start. They may share toys or converse during morning circle, or have play dates outside of school or sit closely near a peer while they work. Peer interactions are happening constantly for students. (Blatman 2019) argued that when students have appropriate social skills, they begin to feel more confident and competent in developing those relationships, building friendships, and resolving conflicts with peers and adults. When students do not carry these skills while interacting with peers, it can lead to social withdrawal (Blatman 2019).
ACADEMIC SUCCESS

A student’s academic success is also positively affected by social skill instruction. Research suggests that a student’s mastery of social skills is connected to better school performance overall. 

Funder, Weisberg, Domnick, Taylor, and Schwartz (2011) found that when students feel confident and competent in an area, such as academics, their academic achievement increases.

When educators promote healthy social skill habits such as confidence and competence, students internalize these feelings and use them to make their lives better. Ensminger (2005) suggested that when students lack these skills, they are at a higher risk for academic difficulties. Students with low social-emotional competence have an overall lower reading achievement, as well as lower levels of organization and persistence.

As students progress through school and the academics become more difficult, students can rely on social skills to help them through it. The ability to engage in certain social skills such as managing emotions, setting goals, making positive decisions, and maintaining positive relationships can be a strong predictor of a student’s future academic achievement (Ensminger 2005).

OVERALL WELL-BEING


Teaching young students confidence, persistence, organization, and emotional resilience, as well as social-emotional competence, lays the foundation for their achievement and well-being (Gardner & Remert 2013).

Educators have the ability to lay the groundwork to provide students with these necessary skills and support young students when they are in and out of the classroom.

IN SUMMARY

The effectiveness of teaching social skills to elementary-aged students contributes to their overall academic success and overall well-being. The research confirms that confidence and competence of a student contribute to their overall success.

Regardless of age, without intervention, children that struggle in social relationships often face an array of difficulties later on in life such as dropping out of school, drug abuse, depression, antisocial behavior.

The overall purpose for educators to successfully teach social skills goes beyond helping a student for the present time. Educators are able to use this knowledge and pass research to students up for success 10 years to come.


Social Skills in Elementary School
NECESSARY SOCIAL SKILLS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

While the purpose of teaching social skills is to make more explicit which social skills to implement is often harder to decide. When discussing which social skills to teach in schools, there are two common themes: emotional skills and social development skills. These skills make up how a person functions in society and are learned by children at a very young age, contributing to their academic and personal achievement.

EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Emotional skills, sometimes referred to as social-emotional skills or soft skills, incorporate the understanding, experience, expression, recognition, and management of emotions. (Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2019)

Emotional skills are interpersonal skills typically happening within and self. As students move through the primary grades, they are learning key emotional competencies such as self-reflection and positive peer relationships. (Dweck, 2019) Although we learn a lot of these emotional skills throughout life, such as self-regulation and resilience when using, developing empathy for others, and self-reflection, many of these skills do not need to be taught to young, skillfully.

Many programs, such as the Core Competency Framework, focus on teaching confidence, organization, patience, ability with difficult tasks, and emotional awareness. (Phonics, 2017) Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2019) focuses on the emotional skills that are important for all children: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. All of these skills require children to be aware and articulate their emotional experiences in different ways.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

Similar to emotional skills; social development skills involve the knowledge, understanding, and appropriate skills to relate to others effectively and interact in positive ways with the people around them. (Dweck, 2019)

These skills help students with daily interactions. People learn these skills throughout life, such as learning to get up to say “please” and “thank you,” to hold the door open for someone, but direct instruction in social skills can occur at school.

Students that have social interaction skills, the ability to interact well with others, and imagine themselves in their place, are more positive social interactions. (Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2019) Social awareness, conflict resolution, and positive peer relationship building are all positive social development skills that, when taught effectively, can contribute to a student’s overall achievement.
Students that have social inferential abilities, or the ability to notice someone's emotional state and imagine themselves in their position, have more positive social interactions. (Roberts, 2018). Social awareness, conflict resolution, and positive peer relationship building are all positive social development skills that, when taught effectively, can contribute to a student's overall achievement.

IN SUMMARY

Both emotional skills and social development skills are crucial to everyday life. Humans are at their best when they can control themselves and interact effectively in society.

While these two groups of skills are separately valued, it is clear that both should be taught holistically. A person with tools to teach or learn about social and emotional skills will build upon each other so education should aim to find a balance between the two categories in order to increase students overall success.

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DELIVERY METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR 
TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

Not only do educators want to know the purpose behind effectively teaching social skills to students to increase their overall achievement and which skills to teach, but they also need to know how to use this information to deliver the social skills. There are several ways to effectively teach social skills to students and it revolves on the overall personal preference and the students' level, so we are teaching

THROUGH PHYSICAL MOVEMENT

Teaching students through physical activity is an effective social and emotional program for individuals who are reluctant in the classroom. While using other methods, the teacher needs to be patient with the class and allow for physical movement. A study measuring student interest in a program found that the students were more interested in a program that involved physical activity as part of the curriculum. Students who are more physically active tend to be more engaged in the classroom and complete more tasks.

THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

With the use of technology in the world, it is becoming more common for teachers of all ages to engage with technology in some form. Children are no exception. Teaching social skills through technology can be effective because many students know how to operate cell phones, computers, and tablets easily.

One form of teaching social skills with technology is through video modeling (Gibbons, 2002; Neshian, 2000). Video modeling is a kind of social instruction that allows students to learn by watching a video of a model performing the desired behavior or, as one study (Neshian, 2000),

There are two ways to teach social skills this way. First, a model through video prompting where the student watches a model perform the part of the task (Gibbons, 2002; Neshian, 2000). The other method is video self-modeling, where a student uses video modeling, which is a student versus the model (Neshian, 2000).

Video modeling is a portable, versatile, and requires minimal teacher assistance. In addition, it can be used as an intervention for students who are not comfortable with physical activity or who may not be motivated to participate. However, it requires the teacher to have access to a video recording device.

Although teachers should be trained in how to properly use the video modeling technique, such as a tablet, it is not mandatory. With that, students can collaborate with the teacher about specific skills that they want to work on and practice them at home. Social skills that can be modeled include problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, and communication skills. Students are then given specific feedback and guidance on how to improve their social skills.

Another way to incorporate technology is through game-based learning. In general, social skills training can be expensive and requires significant amounts of time, but with game-based learning, more students can benefit.

As an example, a program called (2013) was introduced to children, involving video games. For elementary-aged students that were already familiar with social and emotional learning activities in a robo grooming formal. The program teaches age-appropriate skills to students and collects data on how they handle various situations. Puppies work in a robo grooming formal setting, but it is an example of how to use the (2013) program to teach students through technology. With (2013), children acquire teaching more easily and can understand their social relationships, showing that teaching social skills through technology has the potential to be valuable to young children.

Technology is key in many students today's educational world on incorporating a game-based strategy to deliver social self-training to students may increase motivation and engagement.
THROUGH CURRICULUM

Another way that educators can implement social skills instruction is through the curriculum. There are many free social skills programs on the Internet, as well as others available for purchase.

While the most commonly used social-emotional programs are long, they are often taught at least once a week for up to forty minutes per session (Eby et al., 2012). The idea is that teachers often do activities that help students make time for the core subjects. If done right, this can be successful.

With programs such as Second Step, which targets skill building, following directions, problem solving, and knowing when to stop, it was found that the skill of following rules increased a lot in the first month and a year later. To verify that gains were made and sustained by students, a study led by Chicago’s Office of Juvenile Justice, MacArthur, and Plomin (2011) found that in the curriculum-based programs are critical in the development of children’s mental health.

Formal lessons with curriculum-based programs have positive results when they are taught only over long periods of time. The longer the intensity and the longer the duration, the more positive outcomes (Rubin & Barond, 2013).

Through time consuming and difficult to latch on, educators and children can benefit from the use of explicit and direct instruction of social, and emotional skills through curriculum lessons.

Each program is unique in its own way in a variety of which target skills they choose and the duration of skill lessons, the program typically uses modeling, coaching, and self-instruction from the educators. (Schunk & Pahol, 2007). These programs typically give skills and contexts and scenarios that are applications to the students to develop social (Gardner & Barnett, 2013). Typically, the targeted social skill is named and explained explicitly while the educator gives the reason the skill is useful. For example, an educator may say that the skill of asking for help is useful because a person can take control of themselves if we need support. Then the educator often role play a scenario or read a vignette about using self-control. The teacher garners feedback from the rest of the class and builds through the self-control was demonstrated. It was found that the combined efforts of teaching social skills through curriculum-based instruction are more helpful and effective. In the long run, the educators simply according to well-developed social and emotional skills in two structured ways (Whitaker & Barnett, 2013). However, it is important to note that consistency and intensity are required to see gains.

IN SUMMARY

The four ways to teach social skills to students is very a brief overview of the technology, the need for social skill instruction, and increasing in the number of creative how students are learning. Regardless of the tools, the teacher, educators that consistently teach social skill instruction will see a positive outcome as an increase in their achievement. Looking forward, educators should combine this to get follow-up training and figure out which way of instruction best suits the students.

No matter which way the skills are taught, the idea of being explicit, consistent, and intentional while teaching social skills is essential.
COMMUNITY BENEFITS

There are many practices that benefit greatly from social skill instruction in elementary schools, most notably the students. They are able to interact with peers and adults in more mature and strategic ways. They are better able to communicate and get their needs met in an effective manner. However, students are not the only people that benefit from positive social skill instruction. Educators also know a little gain in these social skills is implemented into the school day. They are also able to develop their own self-esteem and more effectively evaluate.

Families also gain something from social skills being taught in schools. They are able to transform useful skills at home and in the community, creating aohonhome connection for the student.

STUDENTS

When discussing why educators should be personally taught to students the necessary social skills to increase their overall achievement, it is clear that the students being taught are benefiting the most. Elementary aged students are like sponges, soaking in all of the information they are taught from the moment they enter kindergarten. They apply this knowledge in their everyday lives and, with the help of experiences and adventures, grow as further beings.

EDUCATORS

Teaching social skills improves the rate at which cooperation and social skills are understood. In part, learning in a social setting is necessary in order to make the social skills learned for the students to be transferred to other contexts. A strong social skills program is necessary for the development of cooperative learning. Social skills are transferred to other contexts and are maintained because they are necessary for the successful completion of tasks and are a part of socialization.

FAMILIES

Students learn, while a family, it is likely that the family members also learned from their home upbringing. Effective social skills are taught in the form of shadowing and role-playing. This creates a family atmosphere where students can learn and develop skills in a family environment.

When students are taught social skills, they are more likely to have a positive attitude towards learning and social skills are more likely to be used in other contexts. Social skills are also important for the development of cooperative learning. Social skills are transferred to other contexts and are maintained because they are necessary for the successful completion of tasks and are a part of socialization.
IN SUMMARY

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At the time of the data collection, the take-up was negligible in the Target school. The main reason for this small take-up was the lower rate of involvement in the activity. However, the rate of participation increased as the school continued to implement more strategies to encourage involvement. The main strategies included providing incentives for participation, creating a positive school environment, and offering additional support for students who needed it.