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## Ohio Student Social Skills Training Program is Very Successful

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### Abstract

This article reports on research conducted in the Parma City Schools by the Society for Prevention of Violence (SPV). Results indicate that when students participate in a leadership program, their violent behavior decreases at a statistically significant level.

### **Mission Statement**

*The Society for Prevention of Violence is dedicated to reducing the prevalence of violent acts and asocial behaviors of children and adults through education. It accomplishes this mission by teaching children and adults the use of the skills necessary to build their character, helping them acquire a strong value system, motivating them to develop their communication skills and to realize growth in interpersonal relationships. The Mission includes integration of social and academic skills to encourage those who use them to reach their full potential and contribute to our nation's society by being able to make decisions and solve problems through effective and appropriate means.*

### **About the Society for Prevention of Violence**

The Society for Prevention of Violence was established in 1983 as a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization shortly after the founders, Dr. Semi J. Begun and Ruth W. Begun, realized that Social Skills Training could be used as a tool to prevent violence, if taught in a systematic manner and by using a technique similar to that employed by mediators to resolve conflicts. The unique first lessons to teach social skills in this format were prepared and taught by the Society for Prevention of Violence in the year 1983 to elementary school children in one of Cleveland's Public City Schools. It was a great success and was followed by more and more schools deciding to include Social Skills Training into their teaching curricula for all grades. By 1990, over 100 schools utilized Social Skills Training in Greater Cleveland alone and many more throughout the nation. Ready-to-Use curricula lessons for teaching social skills to children at all grades from pre-K to 12 were finally published by Simon & Schuster, now Pearson, in 1995/1996. Ready-to-Use curricula lessons to teach Violence Prevention Skills using this same format and real life situations were published in 1998/1999 to provide an additional and more intense teaching course to prevent person-to-person violence and to achieve harmony and peaceful co-existence in schools, at homes and in communities.

The Society for Prevention of Violence was combined with The Begun Institute for the Study of Violence and Aggression, which had been founded in 1972 and was located originally at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio. This Institute gathered, studied and analyzed a multitude of information during the ensuing ten-year period. Symposia were held and involved numerous well-known presenters and participants from various career fields. Early on, the founders of the Institute, the same as those of the Society for Prevention of Violence, foresaw

already in 1972 the trend of increasing violence in our families and communities across the nation, and they chose to take a leadership role in pioneering an educational approach to alleviating aggressive and antisocial behavior.

During the next almost twenty-year period, through the determination of Ruth Begun, Executive Director first and then President of the Society for Prevention of Violence, and the experience of the highly knowledgeable staff of the Society, workshops with college credits, parent-training sessions, teacher staff in-services, Social Skills teachings (in and out of classrooms) to youngsters of all ages, collaborative projects with other organizations and in foreign countries were developed. The above mentioned Ready-to-Use Lessons and Activities curricula for comprehensive Social Skills and Violence Prevention Skills Training for all grades from Pre-K to 12 were refined. These curricula are published and available for use. The Society's educational approach was and continues to be one of the few PROACTIVE resources that are available to change violent behaviors, in contrast to most other means, which reflect our nation's almost complete reliance on REACTIVE tools when dealing with problems of violence.

### **Recent Research Findings**

The Society for Prevention of Violence and Ashland University partnered on a 2010-2011 research study to examine the effectiveness of the SPV Student Social Skills Training Program initiated in Parma City - specifically, in three middle schools.

A self-developed SPV Assessment instrument assessed leadership. The SPV instrument has excellent psychometric properties; for example, the given factor structure assesses: disruptive behaviors; classroom habits; social behaviors; emotional behaviors; leadership; and violent behavior.

When examining the relationship between Leadership and Violent behavior, a significant negative correlation is apparent. Hence, as leadership qualities increase, violent behaviors decrease. For clarification, the SPV program resulted in a statistically significant difference between leadership scores in the fall vs. June. Leadership ability improved and the tendency for violent behavior reduced significantly.

The evaluation found four key components of leadership development for students, they were: helping other students who are having trouble in class; good team player; initiates positive interactions in class; and caring/compassionate to feelings of others. These components of leadership are inherent within the SPV program.

When evaluating the qualitative statements given by principals, teachers and students, there is overwhelming support for the SPV program and philosophy. Likewise, all quantitative data support the positive influence of the SPV program. This is an interesting finding given the initial low scores on disruptive behaviors within the Parma system. The SPV program was not dealing with an extreme environment, one making it easier to find significant impact. By participating in the SPV program, Parma still managed to secure positive outcomes.

### Questions and Scoring System

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Please use the following chart to rate each student on the behaviors listed:

1 = never    2 = occasionally    3 = frequently    4 = daily

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1. Dislikes classmates
2. Difficult time following rules
3. Gets angry when provoked
4. Teases, bullies classmates
5. Breaks classroom rules
6. Loses temper, yells during conflict
7. Stubborn nature
8. Fighter
9. Takes others supplies, etc.
10. Difficult time telling the truth
11. Hits and harms others
12. Handles disagreements poorly
13. Hard time calming down after conflict
14. Easily irritated or loses focus with some tasks (reading, math, etc.)
15. Loses temper during conflict
16. Weekly outbursts in class
17. Not easily distracted
18. Hard worker
19. Pays attention to directions

20. Organized in class
  21. Concentrates on tasks
  22. Focused on learning
  23. Helps other students who are having trouble in class
  24. Good team player
  25. Initiates positive interactions in class
  26. Caring and compassionate to feelings of others
  27. Talks to you about problems
  28. Classmates like him/her
  29. Works well with others
  30. Good listener
  31. Gives compliments to others
  32. Comes to school with a lot of problems
  33. Very quiet and introverted in classroom
  34. Parent involvement to help student
  35. Participates in extracurricular activities
  36. Candidate for leadership club
  37. Grade Point Average (4, 3, 2, 1)
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Note. Items 1-16 represent disruptive behaviors; 17 – 22 classroom habits; 23- 31 social behaviors; and 32 – 33 emotional behaviors. Items 34, 35 and 36 were related to only candidate for leadership club; hence, were not included in specific program evaluation. Also, some areas were reversed scored to assess program success; for example, disruptive behaviors (1 – 16) and emotional behaviors (32 – 33). Item 37 GPA was eliminated from all analysis – participating programs did not have this information easily available. In factor analysis: items 23, 24, 25, and 26 significantly related to Leadership. Whereas, items 3, 4, 8, 12 and 15 were significantly related to violent behavior.

## OVERALL GOAL EVALUATION

(Survey Assessment)

AREA	GOAL
Dislikes classmates	ACHIEVED
Difficult time following rules	ACHIEVED
Gets angry when provoked	ACHIEVED
Teases, bullies classmates	ACHIEVED
Breaks classroom rules	ACHIEVED
Loses temper, yells during conflict	ACHIEVED
Stubborn nature	NOT ACH
Fighter	ACHIEVED
Takes others supplies	ACHIEVED
Difficult time telling the truth	ACHIEVED
Hits and harms others	ACHIEVED
Handles disagreements poorly	ACHIEVED
Hard time calming down after conflict	NOT ACH
Easily irritated or loses focus with some tasks	ACHIEVED
Loses temper during conflict	ACHIEVED
Weekly outbursts in class	ACHIEVED
Not easily distracted	ACHIEVED
Hard worker	ACHIEVED
Pays attention to directions	ACHIEVED
Organized in class	ACHIEVED
Concentrates on tasks	ACHIEVED
Focused on learning	ACHIEVED
Helps other students having trouble in class	ACHIEVED
Good team player	ACHIEVED
Initiates positive interactions in class	ACHIEVED
Caring and compassionate to feelings of others	ACHIEVED

Talks to you about problems	<b>ACHIEVED</b>
Classmates like him/her	<b>ACHIEVED</b>
Works well with others	<b>ACHIEVED</b>
Good listener	<b>ACHIEVED</b>
Gives compliments to others	<b>ACHIEVED</b>
Comes to school with a lot of problems	<b>ACHIEVED</b>
Very quiet and introverted in classroom	<b>ACHIEVED</b>

Note. The probability of getting 31 out of 33 areas in the predicted goal direction (one-tail P value is  $< 0.0001$ ); hence, overall the SPV program is addressing targeted areas of intervention. Three items were eliminated from the analysis because of both conceptual and empirical concerns generated from the factor analysis. These items were: Parent involvement to help student; Participates in extracurricular activities; and, Candidate for leadership club. These items did not load on any recognized area of intervention; however, parent involvement to help student and participating in extracurricular activities was positively related to being considered a club candidate for leadership.

When all the data gathered are analyzed, the following measureable outcomes for 2010-2011 are noted:

- **70%** of the staff will agree on the staff satisfaction survey that the SPV student social skills program increased instructional time in the classroom. (**School 1 - 79%, School 2 - 50%, School 3 - 63%**)
- **70%** of the staff will rate the SPV involvement in the building as very supportive on the teacher satisfaction survey. (**School 1 - 81%, School 2 - 83%, School 3 - 84%**)
- **5%** student social skills assessment growth on the pre/post teacher rating forms. (**Improvement in 31 of 33 social skills**)



- 10% reduction in serious incidents and office referrals compared to 2009-2010.  
(School 1 – 39%, School 2 – 14.4%, School 3 – 9.7%)
- 3% improvement on the grades 6-8 test scores on reading and math subtests over 2009-2010.

## FINDINGS

### DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

SCHOOL	FALL	JUNE	GOAL
School 1	1.233	1.217	ACHIEVED
School 2	1.32	1.305	ACHIEVED
School 3	1.353	1.337	ACHIEVED

Note. Data findings report that scores were *lower* in June than in the fall; hence, collectively all three schools decreased disruptive behaviors. However, the difference between fall and June were not statistically significant, but trending toward the directional goal.

### CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

SCHOOL	FALL	JUNE	GOAL
School 1	3.064	3.086	ACHIEVED
School 2	3.029	3.048	ACHIEVED
School 3	2.888	2.909	ACHIEVED

Note. Data findings report that scores were *Higher* in June than in the fall; hence, collectively all three schools increased positive classroom habits. However, the difference between fall and June were not statistically significant, but trending toward the directional goal.

## SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

SCHOOL	FALL	JUNE	GOAL
School 1	2.661	2.73	ACHIEVED
School 2	2.303	2.37	ACHIEVED
School 3	2.496	2.56	ACHIEVED

Note. Data findings report that scores were *Higher* in June than in the fall; hence, collectively all three schools increased positive social behavior. The difference between fall and June scores were statistically significant ( $df = 1, 3005$ );  $F = 6.709$ ;  $p = .01$ ;  $\alpha = .10$ ) and trending toward the directional goal.

## EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR

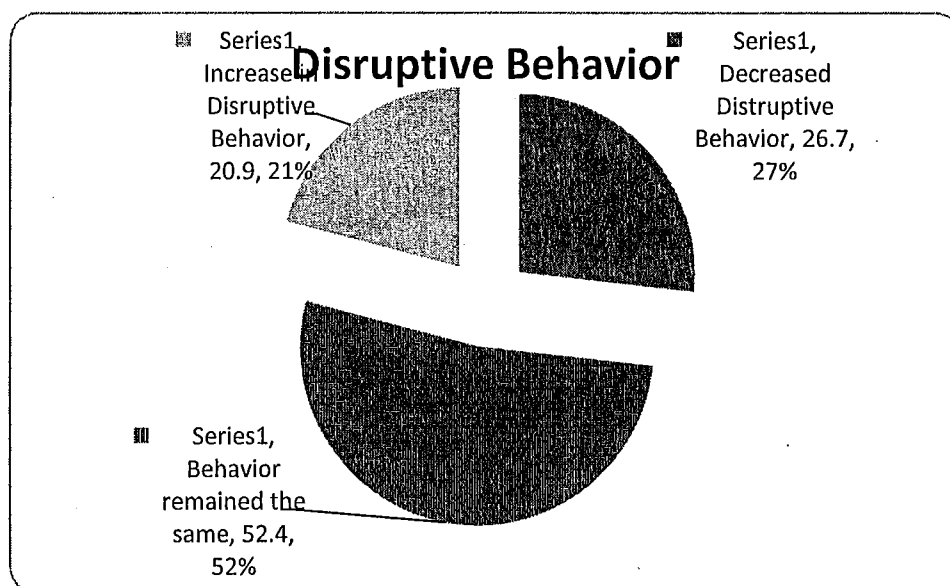
SCHOOL	FALL	JUNE	GOAL
School 1	1.801	1.755	ACHIEVED
School 2	1.793	1.748	ACHIEVED
School 3	1.862	1.816	ACHIEVED

Note. Data findings report that scores were *Lower* in June than in the fall; hence, collectively all three schools decreased negative emotional behavior. The difference between fall and June scores were statistically significant ( $df = 1, 3038$ );  $F = 3.368$ ;  $p = .06$ ;  $\alpha = .10$ ) and trending toward the directional goal.

### Graph Breakdown of Target Behaviors

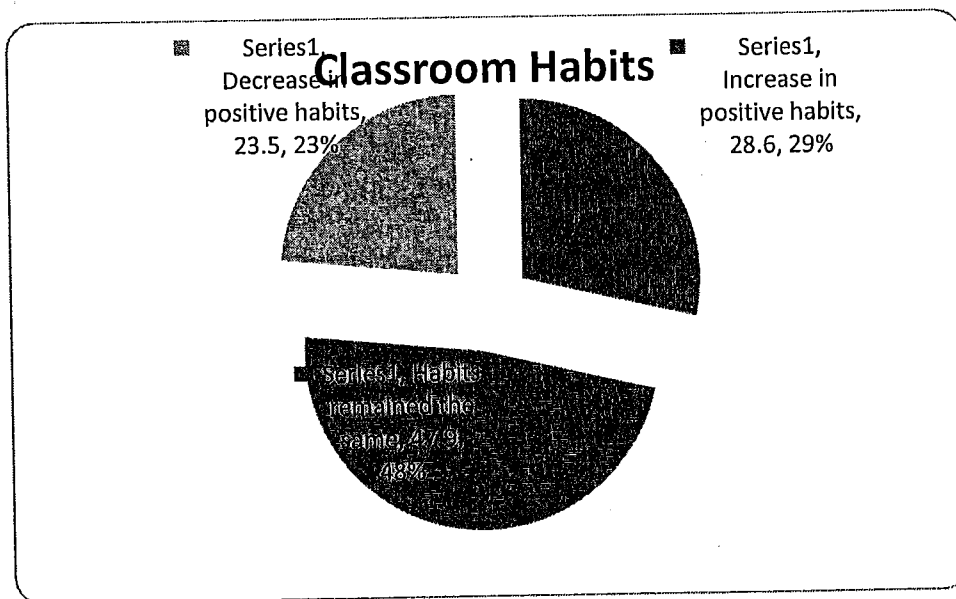


Note. Improvement recorded in 31 of the 33 target behaviors.

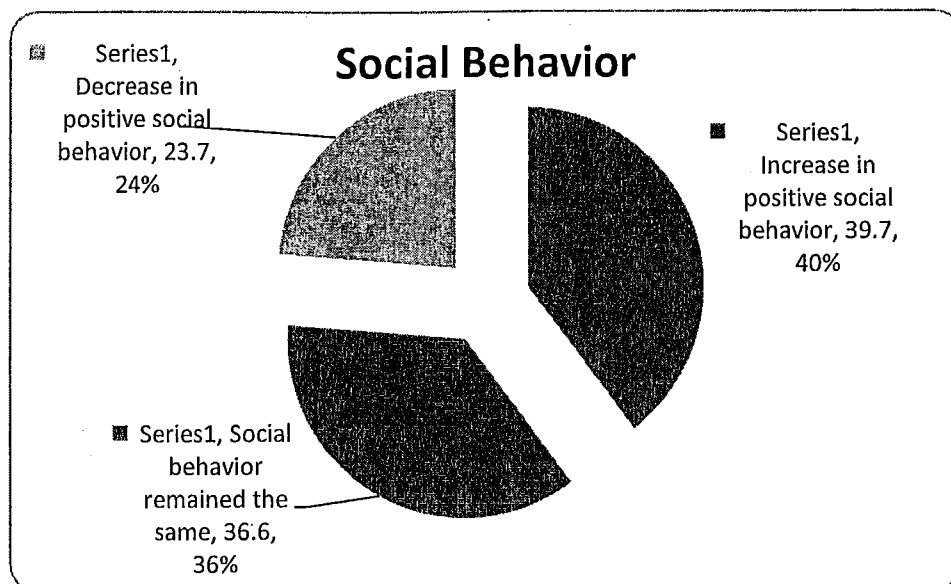


Note. Seventy-Nine percent (79.1) of the participants remained stable or decreased their disruptive behavior.

**Graph Breakdown of Target Behaviors**  
**(Continued)**

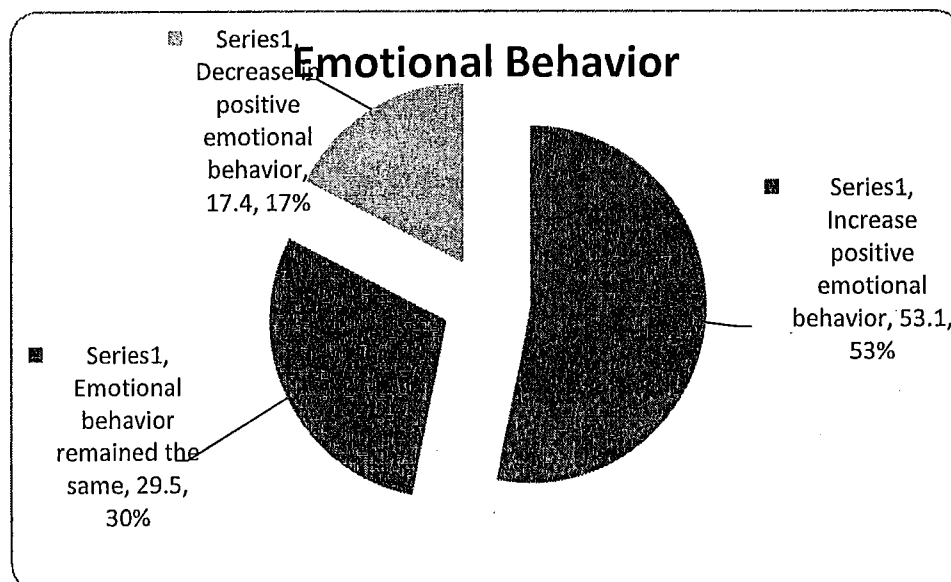


Note. Seventy-six percent (76.5) of the participants remained stable or increased their positive habits.



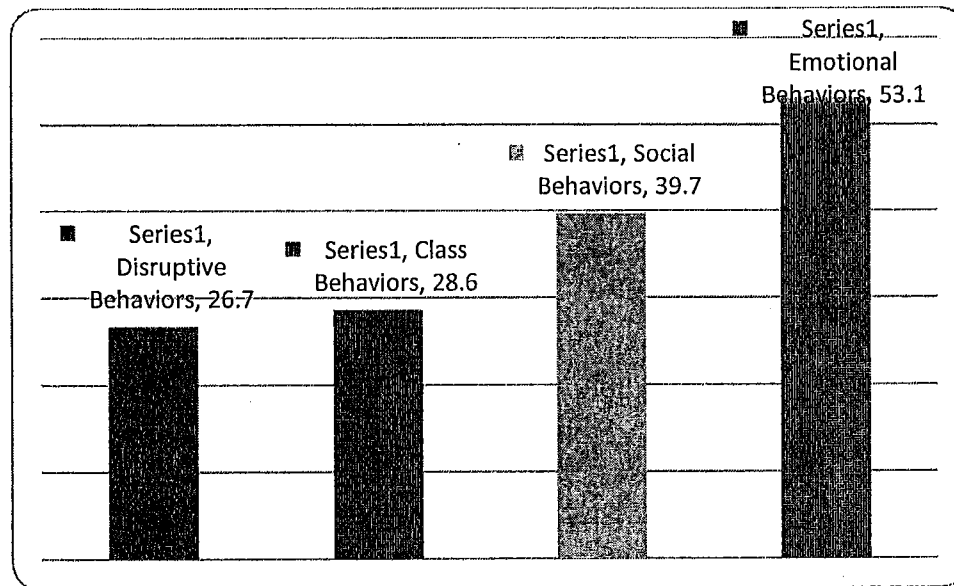
Note. Seventy-six percent (76.3) of the participants remained stable or increased positive social behavior.

### Graph Breakdown of Target Behaviors (Continued)



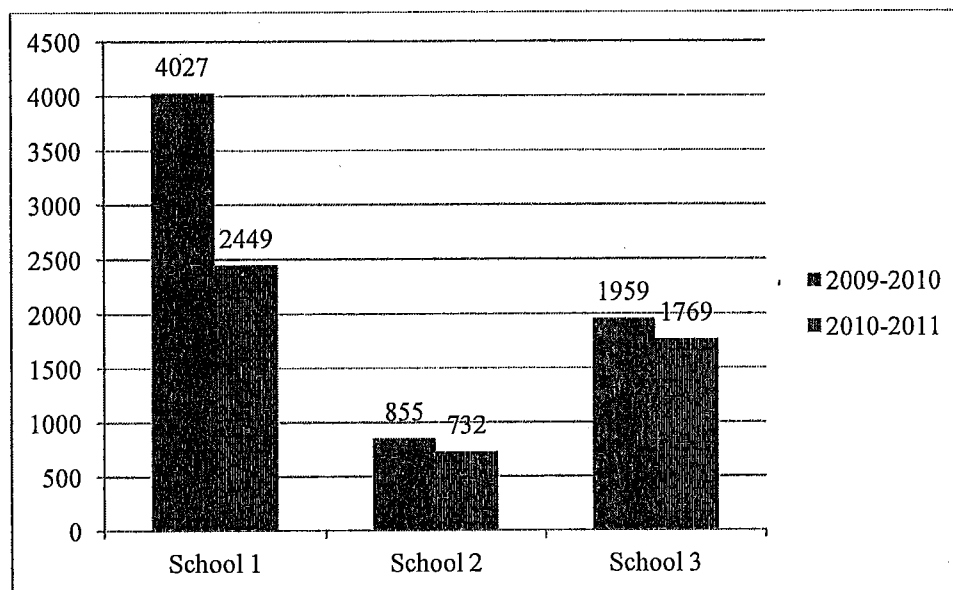
Note. Eighty- two percent (82.6) of the participants remained stable or increased positive emotional behavior.

#### Percentage Improvement: Target Behaviors



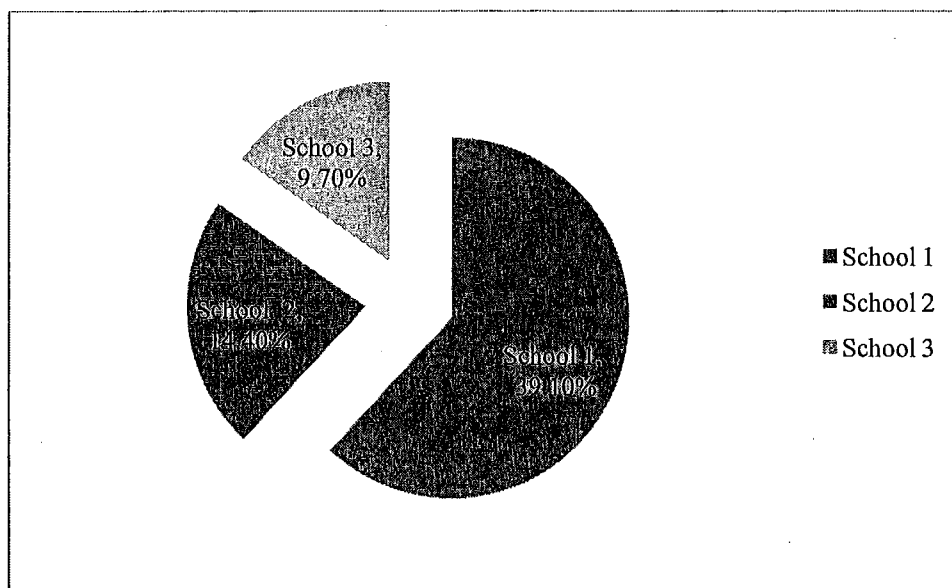
Note. Overall average of improvement was 37.02%.

#### Incident Report Chart: A Comparison



Note. All school systems recorded a decrease in incident reports.

### Decreased Incident Reports: By Program



Note. School 1 had 39.1% incident decrease; School 2 a 14.4 decrease; and, School 3 a 9.7% decrease.

### Greatest Improvement Noted: Disruptive Behaviors

1. Easily irritated or loses focus with some tasks (reading, math, etc.)
2. Breaks classroom rules
3. Loses temper, yells during conflict

**Greatest Improvement Noted: Classroom Habits**

1. Pays attention to directions
2. Organized in class
3. Not easily distracted

**Greatest Improvement Noted: Social Behaviors**

1. Helps other students who are having trouble in class
2. Initiates positive interactions in class
3. Talks to you about problems

**Characteristics related to being selected for Leadership Club (listed in rank order)**

1. Initiates positive interactions in class
2. Caring and compassionate to feelings of others
3. Helps other students who are having trouble in class
4. Good team player
5. Works well with others
6. Gives compliments to others
7. Classmates like him/her



<b>8<sup>th</sup> GRADE</b>	Reading 2010	Reading 2011	+/-	Math 2010	Math 2011	+/-
<b>School 1</b>	80.1	86.3	<b>+6.2</b>	75.8	78.9	<b>+3.1</b>
<b>School 2</b>	86.3	92.5	<b>+6.2</b>	76.2	87.7	<b>+11.5</b>
<b>School 3</b>	76.5	82.7	<b>+6.2</b>	70.5	72.0	<b>+1.5</b>

<b>7<sup>th</sup> GRADE</b>	Reading 2010	Reading 2011	+/-	Math 2010	Math 2011	+/-
<b>School 1</b>	80.6	78.1	<b>-2.5</b>	71.8	77.0	<b>+5.2</b>
<b>School 2</b>	88.4	89.9	<b>+1.5</b>	82.5	79.3	<b>-3.2</b>
<b>School 3</b>	78.8	79.3	<b>+0.5</b>	68.1	72.6	<b>+4.5</b>

The SPV believes that these results speak for themselves, and that program continuation and expansion are justified.

#### Reference

McKnight, O., & Sikula, J. (2010). Society for Prevention of Violence Program Evaluation 2010.

Ashland, Ohio: Ashland University.

More extensive information about the SPV and this Social Skills Training Program is available from the SPV Executive Director, David Volosin, at 216-591-1876, or [spvmail@att.net](mailto:spvmail@att.net), or at the website – [spvohio.org](http://spvohio.org).