Ohio Student Social Skills Training Program is Very Successful

David Volosin
Oscar T McKnight, Ashland University
John Sikula, Ashland University
Ohio Student Social Skills Training Program Is Very Successful

David Volosin, M.Ed.
Executive Director
Society for Prevention of Violence
4645 Richmond Road
Warrensville Heights, OH 44128
Phone 216-591-1876
spvmail@att.net

Oscar McKnight, Ph.D.
Director of Psychological Counseling Services
Ashland University
401 College Avenue
Ashland, OH 44805
Phone 419-289-5065
omcknigh@ashland.edu

John Sikula, Ph.D.
Center Director
Cleveland Center of Ashland University
4645 Richmond Road
Warrensville Heights, OH 44128
Phone 261-292-1100
jsikula@ashland.edu

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

Please use the following chart to rate each student on the behaviors listed:
1 = never  2 = occasionally  3 = frequently  4 = daily

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)

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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes classmates</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult time following rules</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets angry when provoked</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teases, bullies classmates</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaks classroom rules</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loses temper, yells during conflict</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stubborn nature</td>
<td>NOT ACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighter</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes others supplies</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult time telling the truth</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hits and harms others</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handles disagreements poorly</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard time calming down after conflict</td>
<td>NOT ACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily irritated or loses focus with some tasks</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loses temper during conflict</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly outbursts in class</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not easily distracted</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard worker</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays attention to directions</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized in class</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrates on tasks</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on learning</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps other students having trouble in class</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good team player</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiates positive interactions in class</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring and compassionate to feelings of others</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Talks to you about problems | ACHIEVED
Classmates like him/her | ACHIEVED
Works well with others | ACHIEVED
Good listener | ACHIEVED
Gives compliments to others | ACHIEVED
Comes to school with a lot of problems | ACHIEVED
Very quiet and introverted in classroom | ACHIEVED

**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>JUNE</th>
<th>GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>1.233</td>
<td>1.217</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.305</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>1.353</td>
<td>1.337</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>JUNE</th>
<th>GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>3.064</td>
<td>3.086</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>3.029</td>
<td>3.048</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>2.888</td>
<td>2.909</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>JUNE</th>
<th>GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>2.661</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>2.303</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>2.496</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>JUNE</th>
<th>GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>1.801</td>
<td>1.755</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>1.793</td>
<td>1.748</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>1.862</td>
<td>1.816</td>
<td>ACHIEVED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
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.
Note. Eighty-tw0 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Reading 2010</th>
<th>Reading 2011</th>
<th>+/-</th>
<th>Math 2010</th>
<th>Math 2011</th>
<th>+/-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>+6.2</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>+3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>.92.5</td>
<td>+6.2</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>+11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>+6.2</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>+1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Reading 2010</th>
<th>Reading 2011</th>
<th>+/-</th>
<th>Math 2010</th>
<th>Math 2011</th>
<th>+/-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>+5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>+1.5</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>-3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>+0.5</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>+4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Reference
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, or at the website – spvohio.org.