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The Impact of Assertive Classroom Discipline on Social Skills

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by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family and Dr. Balzano who have helped and supported me throughout this year. Thank you for all that you have done.

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of Assertive Classroom Discipline on student social skills. The researcher focused on a general education fourth grade classroom that consisted of 16 students in an urban school district. Student self-perceptions and records of student behavior served as the primary data of the research study. The data was collected using a pre and post survey, cumulative student records and teacher observation. Findings indicated that the research showed validity when student perceptions from pre and post surveys were compared with records of student behavior. Findings indicated that 69 % of the class improved their social behavior, 19 % of students remained to have good social skills during previous and current year and 12 % of students did not display any growth in social behavior.

There were three instruments used for data collection: a pre/post-survey questionnaire, records of student behavior and teacher observation. Findings indicated that 69 % of the class improved their social behavior, 19 % of students remained to have good social skills during previous and current year and 12 % of students did not display any growth in social behavior. Results indicated that 88 % of the students were attentive, 75 % of the students ignored name calling, 69 % of the students showed courtesy, 88 % reacted with a non-violent behavior, 75 % of the students showed active listening, 18 % did not participate in gossip, 88 % did not exaggerate accidental encounters and 75 % of the students were helpful to their peers.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Assertive Discipline is a philosophy of classroom management that sets specific strategies to help teachers deal constructively with student misbehavior while maintaining a positive and productive learning environment (Canter, 2001). As teachers, we want our students to become responsible and self-disciplined in the development of appropriate behaviors. The Canter's classroom discipline plan encourages responsible behavior and raises self-esteem (Canter & Canter, 2001). In Assertive Discipline the teacher devises a system that includes rewards, reinforcers and consequences. Canter states that the key to Assertive Discipline is generous praise, clear expectations, and consistent follow-through. We want to continuously praise and reinforce the positive behaviors of our students. The success of this method helps each student deal with social skills and interactions that are satisfying and meaningful. According to Canter (1978), teachers who are trained in Assertive Classroom Discipline will see an 80 percent reduction in classroom disruption, will send fewer students to the principal's office, and will have a calm, positive classroom climate that will be conducive to teaching and learning. Also, the teacher will have more success in dealing with parents of students who struggle with social skills (Hill, 1990).

The Canter approach seems ideal and many schools in North America have adopted Assertive Discipline (Curwin & Mendler, 1999). However, the Canter model has been criticized for being rigid and reactive instead of proactive (Curwin & Mendler, 1999). Critics hold that Assertive Discipline is an authoritarian discipline system that

forces students into acceptance of the rules of the teacher with parents further being forced into compliance. The researcher has found that at times circumstances require teachers and administrators to give parents and students a push into compliance for the child to attain the goal of self-discipline. As a teacher who has a special interest in classroom management, it is imperative to determine the impact that Assertive Discipline has on student behaviors in the classroom.

Research Question

The research question is: How does Assertive Classroom Discipline Impact Social Skills?

Rationale

The purpose and importance for conducting this research is to present evidence of how Assertive Discipline impacts social skills in the classroom environment. The researcher will identify behavior problems and allow lesson plans to reflect the Assertive Discipline technique to be used in the remediation process. The education system is based on students achieving good social and self-discipline skills. For a teacher, discipline, social relationships and adaptive skills are major aspects of the classroom. The researcher's classroom consists of students from low-income areas. Most of these students need a structured social environment, and the researcher is hopeful that the Assertive Discipline Program will provide that structure. Teaching good social skills can sometimes be a challenge.

During four years of teaching, the researcher has experienced many students who desperately need good social skills. These students have a tendency to imitate negative behaviors that promote an inappropriate image and set limitations on their social

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potential. To meet the challenge and create a more positive atmosphere, the Assertive Discipline program was chosen. A positive management program will increase positive social skills. Students will learn how to communicate with each other and improve their social and behavioral skills. Proper communication skills based on etiquette and respect for self and others will show students the benefits of having good social skills.

Before implementing the Assertive Discipline method, the researcher's interest was to learn more about how it impacts social skills. The researcher wanted to become empowered to assist students who are in dire need of structure and positive reinforcement. The researcher's goals are to build confidence by demonstrating to students the benefits of having good social skills. The researcher will use techniques of modeling, role-playing, group projects and oral discussions from the survey questionnaire. The researcher hopes to lay the foundation for life-long changes within the students, building their confidence and helping them to recognize the benefits of having good social skills.

Definition of Term

Assertive Classroom Discipline - structured, systematic approach designed to assist educators in running an organized, teacher in charge classroom environment. There are a few clearly stated classroom rules that give firm, clear, concise directions to students who are in need of outside control. Assertive teachers build positive, trusting relationships with their students and teach appropriate classroom behavior (via direct instruction: describing, modeling, practicing, reviewing, encouraging and rewarding) to those who do not show it at present.

Think Tank – a room that students are sent to when they are misbehaving in class.

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Study Approach

The review of literature will focus on Assertive Discipline and other similar discipline models. The study will be conducted using a pre/post survey questionnaire (see Appendix A and B) of several scenarios that deal with social skills that require student response. The pre/post survey questionnaire will be compared to previous and current records of student behavior. Also, teacher observation will be included to gather evidence of student social skills development. The survey will be used to determine whether the Assertive Discipline model utilized by the researcher has a positive impact on students' current social skills.

Chapter II

REVIEW of LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of literature on Assertive Classroom Discipline is a key component to successfully educating students. As students come from diverse family situations, this can bring challenges regarding what is socially appropriate in the classroom. Therefore, this review of literature on Assertive Discipline will investigate how this method can be implemented in the classroom to promote positive behavior.

Monitoring and Rewarding Good Behaviors

Canter and Canter (2001) emphasize providing appropriate feedback and reinforcement for good behavior. It is the belief of the Canters' that teachers have the right to make the determination of what is best for the students in terms of behavior and expect compliance from the students. Assertive teachers are those who react confidently and quickly in situations that require behavior management. These teachers have a few clearly stated classroom rules and give firm, clear, concise directions to students who are in need (Carey, 2007). We need to develop a rapport with our students in order to gain their confidence and trust. "A good teacher should be able to handle all social skills on her own and within the confines the classroom" (Canter, 1979, p. 6).

The Assertive Discipline approach evolves from behavior modification theory. When you help a student reason his/her way towards better behavior now, you are giving the student a valuable tool for a similar situation in the future (Carlson, 2003). Assertive Discipline is a behavioral approach to classroom discipline that is characterized by the firm and direct interaction between the teacher and student. In this approach, the teachers

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manipulate reinforcers, punishers, and consequences as tools to allow students to use their own problem solving skills (Jones & Jones, 1995; Carey, 2007).

Assertive Discipline is a Behavioral Approach

In behavior management, Assertive Discipline includes various positive reinforcers such as praise, stickers, and free time in promoting compliance and on-task behavior from students (Donnellan, La Vigna, Negri-Shoultz, & Fassbender, 1988; Carey, 2007). Furthermore, the teachers in the Assertive Discipline classroom use some form of penalty, such as reprimands, demerit points, or time out to reduce undesirable behavior (Martin & Pear, 1992; Carey, 2007). The approach was developed by Canter and Canter (1976) with a program in which the teacher assumes the responsibility for management of students' behavior. However, research of the effectiveness of this approach has provided inconclusive findings and has been called unsophisticated (Behnshoff, Poidevant, & Cashwell, 1994; Carey, 2007). There are positive and negative aspects of Assertive Discipline. The positive aspects include: the positives and negatives of discipline, systematic operation, clear and concise expectations and positive self-esteem. This approach encourages teachers to set out consequences that are directly affected by the action. Those who are opposed to Assertive Discipline point out that concentrating on consequences other than education does not always promote compassion, and tends to be more reactive than proactive.

According to Canter (1989) teachers have often found themselves using a smorgasbord approach to managing the behavior of their students – a little bit of Glasser, Gordon, and Canter. Gordon's Teacher Effectiveness Training (TET) (as cited in Canter, 1989) was to resolve problems by using strategies that are neither authoritarian nor

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submissive. Glasser's Reality Therapy (as cited in Canter, 1989) was based on the assumption that behavior was the result of choices, and that inappropriate and disruptive behavior was derived from poor choices made by students. Canter's Assertive Discipline, stated that it's the right of the teacher to define and enforce standards for student behavior that permitted instruction to be carried out (Emmer, 1986). The lack of ability to manage student behaviors was one of the key reasons why both beginning teachers and veteran teachers were dropping out of education (Canter, 1989).

Research studies by Wang, Haertel and Walberg (as cited in Morris, 1986) over the past 50 years have revealed that classroom management had a direct affect on student learning. One of the factors, as cited by Kohn (1996), was that teacher remedies for discipline problems could be grouped into large categories: reactive discipline, and proactive discipline. Reactive discipline was the process whereby a teacher reacted when a discipline problem occurred by deciding what to do on the spot and how to handle the discipline problem. This process was used by teachers in the public school system. The problem with this approach was that teacher had no plans on how to handle problems and eventually created inconsistencies that eventually would undermine their authority (Kohn, 1996). Proactive discipline was a systematic approach that was predicated on the necessity for forethought, anticipation, preparation, and consistency with regard to the behaviors of the teacher and the consequences of the students' misbehavior (Kohn, 1996).

Tasks of Assertive Discipline in the Classroom

Weinstein, Curran, and Tomilson-Clark (2003) utilize six tasks that result in classroom management that is more related to cultural styles of management. The tasks are:

(1) Creating a physical setting that supports social and academic goals,
(2) Establishing behavior expectations,
(3) Communicating in culturally consistent ways with students,
(4) Developing a classroom environment that is caring,
(5) Working with families to insure a community within the classroom, and
(6) Using appropriate interventions to assist students with behavior difficulties (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomilson-Clark, 2003; Collier, 2006, p. 12).

These six steps are especially vital when dealing with multi-ethnicities. Teachers must be willing to learn about cultures other than their own in order to create an environment that includes these six steps. Some teachers tend to make negative assumptions when dealing with ethnicities outside of their own. The researcher will make a concerted effort to learn as much as possible about the diverse cultures of the students.

Application of the Assertive Discipline Approach

Assertive Discipline is easy to apply in any classroom environment. It is a system that adapts well for quick alternatives to discipline. It can be applied successfully by using the following steps:

First, successful use of Assertive Discipline in the classroom includes never tolerating an excuse for bad behavior, except perhaps in the case of a biologically based misbehavior. Second, the teacher must make decisions as to which rules will be established in the classroom. The teacher should select five or six rules and make them very clear to students. Third, the teacher must decide the negative consequences the

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student will receive for breaking rules. Fourth, the teacher must determine positive consequences for appropriate behavior of students. Fifth, the teacher should have a meeting to inform the students of the discipline program and state why the rules are necessary. The rules should be listed along with the negative and positive consequences. The teacher must become skillful at using the Assertive Discipline techniques, such as dialogue or direct discourse with the student concerning their behavior, as well as, developing the ability to recognize and provide response to behavior that demands immediate attention. The teacher should also become skillful at using the "positive repetitions technique" which is a way of repeating rules, so that students understand what they need to do. "Proximity control" is also a necessary skill (Canter & Canter, 2001). This technique is initiated when the teacher makes a move toward the student that is misbehaving. An example of this is inviting the student to conference with the teacher (Canter & Canter, 2001). Finally, the teacher should always recognize and reward the students' positive classroom behavior.

Key Concepts about Assertive Discipline

The key concepts behind the Assertive Discipline approach are:

Key One: The teacher must insist and expect responsible behavior from students;

Key Two: The teacher must maintain adequate classroom discipline;

Key Three: Students and teachers need to exhibit respect, it must be reciprocated equally. (Canter & Canter, 2007 p. 2)

Often teachers ask why their classroom management system is not working. The biggest issue with behavior is respect, if respect is not equally distributed between student and teacher, desired behavior would be a chore.

The Assertive Discipline model is inclusive of the concept of corrective discipline through a positive behavioral management in a democratic and cooperative environment (Canter & Canter, 2001). Positive consequences were found by the Canters to be more of a factor in determining how the student would prefer to exhibit good behavior in order to receive the rewards promised by the teacher. This would lower the fear of negative consequences that were set out for exhibiting bad behavior. Review of the literature has also revealed that it is critical that the teacher develop positive relationships with students.

Implementation of the Assertive Discipline Model

Assertive Discipline is not difficult to implement and is effective on a general basis. It provides students who are misbehaving with the right type of attention for exhibiting good behavior. When parents are involved with cooperation and discipline techniques, unproductive behaviors have been shown to lessen.

Benefits of the Assertive Discipline style are:

- It allows an open line of communication,

- It enables the teacher to use class time more effectively,

- It improves behavior at home and school,

- It serves to prevent discipline problems from occurring when students have a concrete understanding of consequences for breaking classroom rules,

- It builds character and integrity in students, and

- It helps students be better prepared for the future (Canter & Canter, 2001).

Within the Rochester City School District, the responsibilities of the classroom teacher are to:

1) Maintain a climate of mutual respect and dignity, which will strengthen students' self-concept and promote confidence to learn.

2) Conduct themselves as positive role models for students.

3) Demonstrate interest in teaching and concern for student achievement.

4) Be prepared to teach, or to assist a teacher.

5) Enforce rules in a fair and consistent manner. (Rochester City School District Code of Conduct, 2005/2006, p. 9).

The responsibilities of students in the classroom are to:

1) Take part in all district activities on an equal basis regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex gender identity and expression, sexual orientation or disability.

2) Present their version of the relevant events to school personnel authorized to impose a disciplinary penalty in connection with the position of the penalty.

3) Access school rules and, when necessary, receive and explanation of those rules from school personnel.

4) Exert all reasonable efforts to provide a safe, orderly and generally courteous school environment. (Rochester City School District Code of Conduct, 2005/2006, p. 8).

The responsibilities that are listed affect the needs of each student. These responsibilities and needs of students can be most effectively met through use of Assertive Discipline in which the teacher clearly communicates the expectations to

the students and consistently follows-up with appropriate actions, but never violates the rights or best interests of the students (Canter, 2007, p. 3).

The work of Usha McNab entitled, The *Individual and the Whole Class,* states that the teacher needs to work on creating a positive classroom environment that promotes positive behavior that empowers and builds self-esteem. Problems should be seen as interesting puzzles to be solved. Planned "ignoring" of some provocative behavior, linked with positive attention is useful (McNab, 2007). In fact, this part of Assertive Discipline is where the clear rules, rewards, and consequences are known to all. This enables the teacher to manage behavior in the classroom without lowering the children's self-esteem or making it personal (McNab, 2007). Children recently confirmed the benefits of this approach when they described how this approach had improved school discipline (McNab, 2007).

In the work entitled *Developing Logical Consequences* (Shindler, 2007), the author mentions that an essential part of a well functioning system of social skills is the set of logical and related consequences for student behavior. Consequences act to create boundaries and clarity of expectations (Shindler, 2007). In his work, Shindler compares consequences with punishment and states that: "In a punishment condition, the pain and discomfort inflicted on the punished is always calculated by an external agent, the punisher" (Shindler, 2007, p. 2). With consequences, the cost or benefit is determined by natural laws, where as with punishment, the price is determined artificially. Consequences are understood to redirect behavior. Punishments are typically reactive (Shindler, 2007). Figure 1 compares consequences and punishments.

Figure 1

Consequences vs. Punishments

Consequences	Punishments
Intend to teach lessons	Intend to give discomfort
Foster internal locus of control	Foster external locus of control
Are proactive	Are reactive
Are logical and related	Are unrelated and personal
Work in the long-term	Work in the short term
Promote responsibility	Can promote obedience (but more likely will turn into resentment)

Source: (Shindler, 2007, p. 3)

The following is an example of a common school-wide policy chart listing the levels of consequences for each incident of misbehavior. In Assertive Discipline there is often a fine line between consequences and punishments. Students will often look at a consequence as punishment. As teachers, we must be willing to use appropriate consequences that clearly distinguish the difference.

Figure 2

Common School-wide Policy Chart Depicting Levels of Consequences for Misbehavior.

Misbehavior	Consequences
1st offense	Warning
2nd offense	Time out or no recess
3rd offense	Detention and/or contacting parents

Source: (Shindler, 2007, p. 5)

Effective consequences are proactively built into the social contract as common school policies before they are implemented (Shindler, 2007). The reason for consequences already being implemented in the social contract is to insure that the consequence will not be reactionary. If a consequence is reactionary it can become a punishment.

Increasing and Ascending Levels of Consequences for Each Behavior Problem

Shindler additionally states that it only makes good sense "to have an increasingly more powerful series of consequences for a particular behavioral problem. If the behavioral problem is minor and it is infrequent, a small consequence may be all that is necessary" (Shindler, 2007, p. 7). If it is a prevalent or a persistent problem for a student, more significant consequences may be necessary to help enforce the need for more responsible and pronounced choices (Shindler, 2007). The following is a list of ascending consequences:

1st Offense   The student turns to a classmate to talk while the teacher is talking. *Consequence-* The teacher stops talking and says, "I need attention from everyone." This consequence is simple, and effective. It does not take a lot of time or energy to get the message across.

2nd Offense   The teacher notices that students are talking when they are supposed to be directing their attention to the student who is speaking. *Consequence-* The teacher allows the disruptive students to plan a strategy to make sure they are able to pay attention when attention is required.

3rd Offense   The second offense is repeated. *Consequence-* The student is asked by the teacher to move to another Designated seat.

4th Offense   The second offense is repeated again in the new location. *Consequence-* Conference with the teacher after school resulting in a written contract (Shindler, 2007, p. 7).

The following table lists the possible consequences for the student's offensive behaviors.

Figure 3

Scenarios for Consequences for Student's Offensive Behavior

Behavioral Problem	Related Consequences
Problem lining up	Practicing lining up
Tapping pencils on the desks	Have students put pencils down while listening
Group can not refrain from conflict that leads to poor performance.	**Cooperative Learning** 1st **intervention** – make sure students understand the task that needs to be completed. 2nd **intervention** – show students how to complete assignment individually. 3rd **intervention**– students have to complete assignment individually.
Turning in a late assignment	Receive partial credit
Frequent talking out of turn	Lose privilege to speak, Problem-solve solutions to rectify situations, and Lose privileges to take part in an activity.

Source: (Shindler, 2007, p. 2)

Shindler clearly states appropriate consequences as a guideline for teachers. These guidelines assist in the implementation of Assertive Discipline managed classrooms.

The primary focus of Assertive Discipline is establishing a positive relationship with students. When students know that you value their ideas, respect, and care for them as well as their cultures, there is higher probability of good behavior.

Conclusion

The literature provided evidence that classroom management is an important aspect in controlling student behavior. If students are familiar with the expectations of the teacher, the consequences of misbehaving and there is consistency in the enforcement of the rules, then discipline problems should decline. Social relationships are apart of everyday life that must be nurtured in order to grow. Teachers are responsible for educating the whole child, which includes helping students develop positive relationships

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with peers and adults. Teachers can promote positive relationships within the classroom by demonstrating care and concern for the students. Students can learn how to establish life-long positive relationships with parents, teachers, and peers through appropriate modeling and instruction. Assertive Discipline has been shown to be an effective technique for improving urban children's social skills, leading to a more productive and positive classroom environment.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The researcher is planning to study how Assertive Classroom Discipline impacts social skills in the classroom environment. The research is being conducted to determine if students' social skills can be improved using Assertive Discipline. In reviewing the literature the researcher found that Assertive Discipline was effective in improving urban childrens' social skills. Students from the urban setting struggle with practicing social skills and demonstrating self-discipline. The researcher's goal is to determine if Assertive Discipline can help students develop the necessary social skills and self-discipline to be successful, as well as provide classroom teachers with a valuable tool to assist them in managing their classrooms.

Statement of Question

How does Assertive Classroom Discipline impact social skills?

Subjects

The researcher is a fourth grade teacher in an urban school district in western New York. The school consists of 78 % African Americans, 18 % Hispanics, 3 % Caucasian and 1 % Asians that are predominately from low-income families.

The classroom in which the research was conducted was a general education, fourth grade class. There were sixteen students participating, eight were males and eight were females. Of the sixteen students 19 % of the students were Hispanic and 81 % of the 16 students were African American.

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Research Design

The following steps were used in the research design. The researcher completed the research training course required by SUNY College at Brockport and provided a proposal to the Internal Review Board (IRB) for Research with human subjects. A thesis proposal was submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development at SUNY College at Brockport. An introduction and a literature review was submitted which included background information relative to the impact of assertive discipline on social skills in the classroom. Consent forms were approved from the school administrator, parents, and students (See Appendices H, I and J). All students returned approved consent forms from parents. Therefore, data was collected on all sixteen students.

Following the consent from the administrator, parents, students, and approval (See Appendix H, I and J) from IRB, the data on behavior was collected over a period of two weeks. Data was collected from three sources: pre/post-survey anonymous questionnaire, behavioral records from student cumulative files and teacher observation questionnaire. Behavioral records included referrals, suspension notices and the use of Think Tank (See Appendix E, F and G). The referrals are written reports that were filled out by teachers to have the student removed from the classroom and sent to an administrator. Suspension forms were used to send children home for one to five days as a last resort of correcting behavioral social skills. The Think Tank is a place where teachers send their children to think about their behavior and may hold students back from such things as field trips; it is very similar to a time out room. When a teacher

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sends a child to the Think Tank, a behavioral form (see Appendix F) must be filled out to explain the incident that occurred.

The pre/post survey questionnaire was given to students asking them to record their behavior from the previous year. This was anonymous. The post-survey questionnaire was given two weeks later for students to answer the same questions based on their perception of behavior in the current year. The survey was used to compare student social skills from previous year to current year. Students' perception from previous and current year was compared to student cumulative behavior records to determine if there was a change in social skills.

The researcher incorporated Assertive Classroom Discipline in her classroom by stating and teaching the expectations from the beginning of the school year. The researcher consistently modeled the behavior that is desired from the students. A few clear written rules are drawn up in the form of a contract and also posted around the room. The parents and students have to sign the contract, making all parties involved accountable. Once rules have been set, the teacher can make non-verbal gestures that support verbal statements. For example: a student is talking and the teacher is on the phone talking to a parent, but can not hear due to the level of the student's voice, the teacher gives the student a firm look, and he/she immediately stops talking.

The pre-questionnaire survey (See Appendix A) was administered to students the first week of April. This data asked for students' perception of their behavior prior to entering the researcher's classroom. The pre-questionnaire survey consisted of eight scenarios that required students to describe how they would react in a given situation.

After two weeks had past, the post-survey questionnaire was administered. In the post-survey (See Appendix B), each question indicated the time as being in the current year and consisted of the same questions as in pre-survey.

Pre/Post Survey

The pre/post survey consisted of eight questions that were based on previous school year for pre-survey questions and post-survey for current school year. Pre/post surveys were used to obtain students' perception of behavior based on previous school and current school year. Student Responses were analyzed and compiled using a data table (See Table 1).

Table 1 shows the format for the data that was collected from pre/post survey. Question numbers were listed from 1 to 8 in the left column (See Appendix A and B); the middle column was based on the pre-survey questions (See Appendix A) that consisted of responses from students based on the previous school year. The responses were separated into two sub columns, one column for positive responses and the second column for negative responses. The last column was based on post-survey questions (See Appendix B) that were based on students' behavior for the current school year. Students' responses were separated into two sub-columns, one being positive and the other being negative. Results will be recorded using percentage and placed in positive and negative sub columns for pre/post survey questions according to students' response (See Table 1).

Table 1

Pre/Post Survey Questionnaire

Question Number	Pre-Survey Positive (+)	Pre-Survey Negative (-)	Post-Survey Positive (+)	Post-Survey Negative (-)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

Note: Questions for Pre/Post Survey (See Appendix A and B)

Cumulative Student Records

Cumulative student records were used to compare behavior from previous school year to current school year. Student behavior records consisted of referrals (See Appendix F) for students that were removed from the classroom and sent to the principal's office, Think Tank forms (See Appendix E) for students that were sent to a room for misconduct and suspensions (See Appendix G) for students that had exhausted all choices and had been removed from the school for one to five days.

Table 2 shows the format for collecting cumulative student records from previous school year and current school year. Cumulative student records were recorded based on the amount of referrals, the use of the Think Tank and the number of times students were

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suspended. Percentages were based on all 16 students. Data was analyzed and recorded using percentages.

Table 2

Cumulative Student Records

Cumulative Behavioral Record	Referrals	Think Tank	Suspensions
Previous Year 2005 – 2006			
Current Year 2006-2007			

Teacher Observation

The researcher observed students interaction to further support student perceptions and behavioral records. The researcher's observations was based on student reaction when encountering active listening, ignoring negativism, being respectful to peers and teacher, violence and being helpful. Data was compiled and recorded (See Table 3).

Table 3 shows the format for the data collected from teacher observations. The observations were categorized into 8 questions that were based on student interaction in the classroom. Questions 1 to 8 were put into the first column. The other three columns were divided by often, sometimes and minimal. Often was based on how often they used that social skill based on all 8 questions. Sometimes was based on how much they used all social skills. Minimal column was based on the smallest amount of time spent on a particular social skill.

Table 3

Teacher Observation

Observation Questions	Often	Sometimes	Minimal
Were students attentive when the teacher was conducting a lesson?			
Did students ignore name-calling?			
Were students quiet when the teacher was on the telephone?			
Did students react violently when hit by another student?			
Were students actively listening when a classmate was speaking?			
Did students participate when their peers began to talk negatively about another student?			
Did students exaggerate when another student accidentally hit him/her?			
Were students helpful when a classmate didn't understand a lesson?			

Data Analysis

The data in these three tables will be compared. Students' perception will be compared to cumulative student records from previous and current school year. Teacher observation will be compared to both student perception and cumulative student records to further support this study.

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of Assertive Discipline on students' social skills in the classroom. Students' perception of their social behavior prior to entering the researcher's classroom and after approximately eight months in the researcher's classroom was examined. In addition data on student behavior was collected from student cumulative records and researcher observation.

Student Perception Survey

There was a pre-survey for the prior school year and a post-survey for current school year consisting of eight questions each. Pre/post surveys were based on students' perception of their social behavior for the previous and current school year. Based on the percentages of students responding positively and negatively for the pre/post survey there was a change in student behavior. For questions 1 and 4 there was not a large difference in positive or negative responses when compared to previous and current school year. The researcher thought that it was interesting because question 1 dealt with being positive and polite, while question 4 dealt with being violent. Pre/post survey question 1 had a difference of 6 % in the positive area, while question 4 had a 6 % difference in the negative area. Question 2 for the pre and post survey questions had a reversal: pre-survey had 37 % positive and 63 % negative, while the post-survey had 63 % positive and 37 % negative. Question 5 for the pre-survey was split down the middle 50 % for positive and 50 % for negative, while the post-survey had a 100 % positive. Questions 3, 6, 7, and 8 were positive for the post survey. Results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Pre/Post Survey Questionnaire

Question Number	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Positive (+)	Negative (-)	Positive (+)	Negative (-)
1	94 %	6 %	100 %	0 %
2	37 %	63 %	63 %	37 %
3	25 %	75 %	100 %	0 %
4	19 %	81 %	25 %	75 %
5	50 %	50 %	100 %	0 %
6	37 %	63 %	75 %	25 %
7	6 %	94 %	62 %	38 %
8	12 %	88 %	94 %	6 %

Note: Questions for Pre/Post Survey (See Appendix A and B)

Graph 1

Pre/Post Survey Questionnaire Results
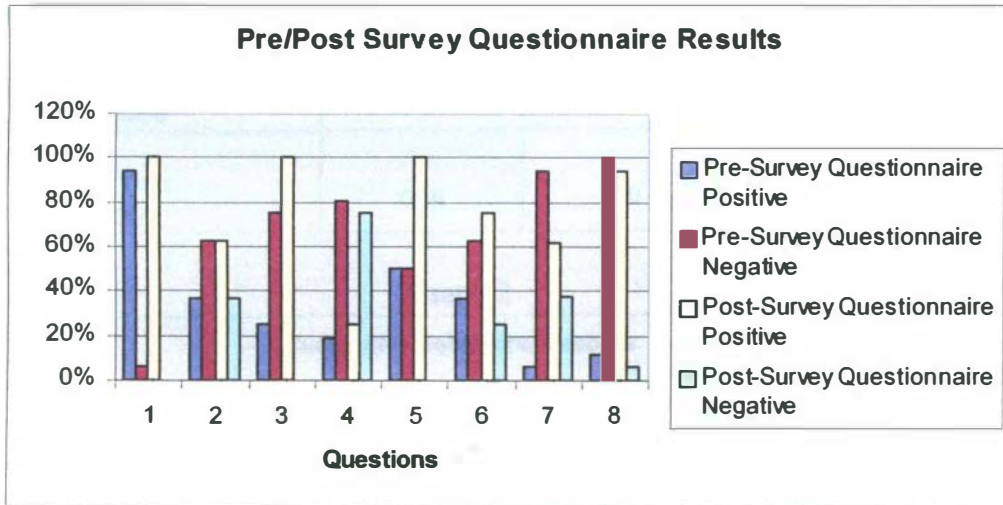
Cumulative Student Records

The cumulative student records were used as a basis to compare students' perception of behavior and past behavior. Cumulative student records were based on how many referrals, Think Tank forms, and suspensions were issued during the previous school year. Results were compared with current year. Students went from 19 % suspensions from the previous year to no suspensions for the current year. For referrals, student records went from 31 % for the previous year to 6 % for the current year. Students that displayed negative behavior from previous and current years were indicated by referrals, suspension notices and Think Tank forms. Forty-four percent of the 16 students did not have referrals, suspension notices or were sent to the Think Tank. Percentages have been calculated based on students' permanent files from previous year to current year. Results have been summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
Cumulative Student Records

Cumulative Behavioral Record	Referrals	Think Tank	Suspensions
Previous Year 2005 – 2006	31 %	6 %	19 %
Current Year 2006-2007	6 %	0 %	0%

Graph 2

Cumulative Behavioral Records
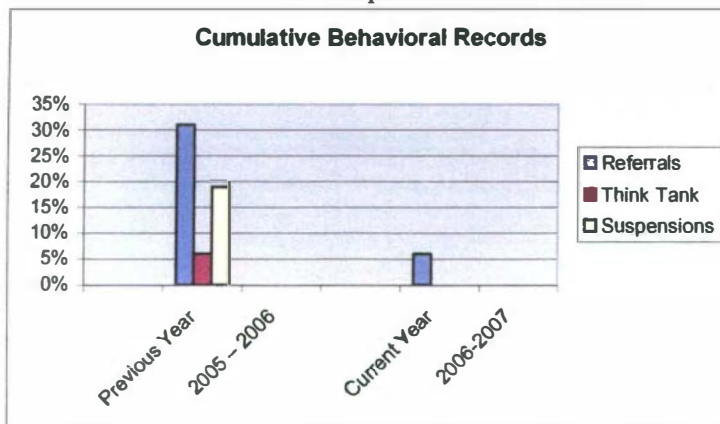
Teacher Observation

Observations were conducted for a two-week period. Data from anecdotal notes were categorized into eight questions (See Appendix D) that were based on similar social skills as the pre/post survey questions. The data recorded focused on the social skills used in the classroom. The social skills that were observed included attentiveness, when to ignore, active listening, the use of violent behavior, gossip, exaggerated behavior and being contributive. Questions 1 and 5 were both similar, requiring students be attentive, results were 88 % and 75 % in the often area. Students were often respectful in this area. For questions 4 and 7, in order for the answer to have a positive outcome the minimal column percent had to be 55 % or higher. Questions 4 and 7 both dealt with a form of assault whether it was innocent are intentional. In the minimal column, questions 4 and 7 had 88 %, therefore both questions had positive outcomes. Question 6 had 44 % in the sometimes column which concluded that students continue to have negative social skills when dealing with gossip. Questions 2, 3 and 8 all had positive outcomes based on their percentages in the often column. Question 2 had 75 %, question 3 had 69 % and question 8 had 75 %. Results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Teacher Observation

Observation Questions	Often	Sometimes	Minimal
Were students attentive when the teacher was conducting a lesson?	88 %	6 %	6 %
Did students ignore name-calling?	75 %	13 %	12 %
Were students quiet when the teacher was on the telephone?	69 %	13 %	18 %
Did students react violently when hit by another student?	6 %	6 %	88 %
Were students actively listening when a classmate was speaking?	75 %	19 %	6 %
Did students participate when their peers began to talk negatively about another student?	38 %	44 %	18 %
Did students exaggerate when another student accidentally hit him/her?	6 %	6 %	88 %
Were students helpful when a classmate didn't understand the lesson?	75 %	13 %	12 %

Graph 3

Teacher Observation
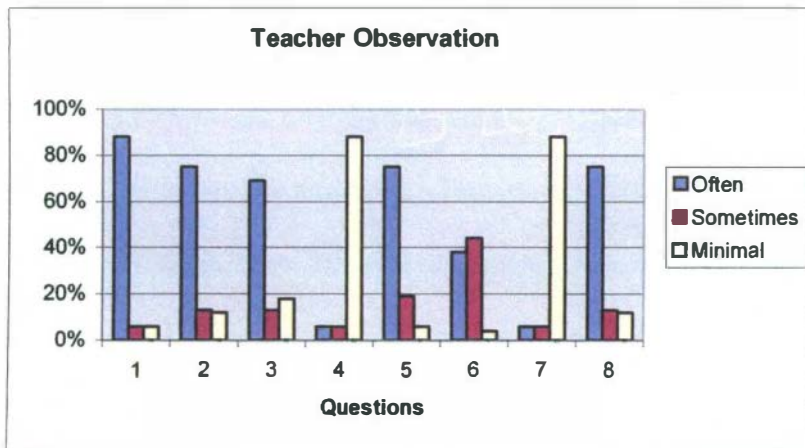
Summary

Overall there was a change in positive attitudes towards social skills. Assertive Classroom Discipline has been successful in schools all around the country (Curwin & Mendler, 1999). Helping students improve social skills also improves behavior and academic skills. In our society, there are many obstacles that our children face daily. Many of these obstacles can be avoided when we teach our youth to develop the proper social skills. The researcher believes that she could make a difference in the lives of children by using Assertive Discipline to help them grow socially and academically. The researcher thinks this style of discipline gives children hope, and helps them to believe in themselves. The need to address ever increasing discipline problems in our schools has led educators to desperately seek acceptable classroom management systems. The Assertive Discipline Program is a method of discipline that caters to the needs of the whole child, and eliminates much of the frustrations and stress on educators and parents.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Overall, the data supported the findings in the review of literature that Assertive Classroom Discipline has a positive impact on student social skills. The researcher incorporated Assertive Classroom Discipline in her classroom by stating and teaching the expectations in the beginning of the year. The researcher modeled the behavior that is desired from the students. The researcher set few clear written rules that are drawn up in the form of a contract (See Appendix C) along with being posted around the room. The parents and students had to sign the contract, causing all parties involved to be accountable. The researcher modeled the behavior in order that it would be reciprocated by the students. Once rules were set, the researcher could make non-verbal gestures that supported verbal statements. An example: a student is talking and the teacher is on the phone talking to a parent, but can not hear due to the level of the student's voice, the teacher gives the student a firm look, and he/she immediately stops talking.

In all the surveys presented, an overwhelming majority of the students made a positive change in their social skills. The student responses demonstrated that most students had been involved in similar situations. This made it easier for them to respond with enthusiasm to the questions. The survey questionnaire was used as a tool to determine the extent in which their negative or positive social skills had changed. There were 12 % of the 16 students remain to show poor social skills, 69 % of the 16 students showed an improvement in social skills and 19 % of the 16 students maintained good social skills from previous/current year.

Assertive Discipline is a form of discipline that requires accountability and consequences. Some students refuse to be accountable or accept the consequences of their behavior. In the Assertive Discipline Program the teacher, parent and student are held accountable.

It is also important to look at this style of teaching from the student's point of view; to weigh the strengths and weakness from their perspective. It is important because many of our students have never been exposed to social skills teaching. Administrators need to mandate the teaching of social skills along with academics in lesson plans. Many problems that occur in our schools today are caused by this deficiency. Not every teacher is concerned about assisting with improving children's social skills. In order to make their jobs less stressful and have successful classroom management, teachers' must provide students with the necessary social skills to enhance positive behaviors and improve academics. Some teachers never take time to know their students. If teachers want students to have good positive social skills and show respect for others they must establish concerned relationships with their students. Students tend to want to have good social skills when they encounter teachers that show genuine concern.

Though the teacher is responsible for executing the Assertive Classroom Discipline Program, the changes in the behavior of students are prevalent. It is from their responses that Assertive Classroom Discipline impacts social skills. It is a powerful style of classroom management that develops positive life-long changes. In comparing the data from the pre and post survey questionnaire to the cumulative files, there was a positive change. Assertive Classroom Discipline prepares students to be successful in and outside of the classroom. It gives them a sense of integrity and concern about doing the

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right thing. They are proud of their accomplishments and want to help their peers to improve their social skills.

The findings of this study indicated that there was an improvement in student social skills. The evidence has been indicated using student percentiles in comparison with student surveys and permanent school records. Results were further validated using teacher observation questions. When students, parents and teacher sign a contract students are more willing to follow procedure. There is a collective effort of all parties involved. The students also knew exactly what was expected of them and what they could expect from their teacher.

Limitations

Since this study was dealing with students in only one-fourth grade classroom, the results cannot be generalized to any other population. The results are only a reflection of this classroom. This style of discipline has been used in the researcher's classroom for the last four years, and it has been successful in the use of good social skills.

Recommendations and Further Research

It is in the researcher's opinion that the success of this style of Assertive Classroom discipline can be a positive influence on administrators, students, teachers, and parents when properly administered. A collective effort by teachers, parents, and students are required for the program to be successful. Therefore the researcher plans to continue to implement this style of discipline to maintain a positive learning environment and enhance the learning potential of each student.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Pre-Student Survey Questionnaire – Social Skills

1. Scenario: Before you were in Mrs. Jordan's class, if your teacher was teaching a lesson and your classmate started to talk, what would you do?

2. Scenario: Before you were in Mrs. Jordan's class, if a student called you dumb, what would you do?

3. Scenario: Before you were in Mrs. Jordan's class, if your teacher was talking to an adult and you wanted to ask a question, what would you do?

4. Scenario: Before you were in Mrs. Jordan's class, if a student hit you, what would you do?

5. Scenario: Before you were in Mrs. Jordan's class, if a classmate was in author's chair and your friends started to say bad things about the presentation, what would you do?

6. Scenario: Before you were in Mrs. Jordan's class, if your best friend were laughing at another student's clothes, what would you do?

7. Scenario: Before you were in Mrs. Jordan's class, if a student accidentally knocks you down and doesn't say they are sorry, what would you do?

8. Scenario: Before you were in Mrs. Jordan's class, if a classmate doesn't understand the work, and you think it is easy, what would you do?

Appendix B

Post-Student Survey Questionnaire – Social Skills

1. Scenario: If Mrs. Jordan is teaching a lesson and your classmate starts to talk, what would you do?

2. Scenario: In Mrs. Jordan's class, if a student calls you dumb, what would you do?

3. Scenario: If Mrs. Jordan was talking to an adult and you wanted to ask a question, what would you do?

4. Scenario: In Mrs. Jordan's class, if a student hit you, what would you do?

5. Scenario: In Mrs. Jordan's class, if one of your classmates was in author's chair and your friends started to say bad things about the presentation, what would you do?

6. Scenario: In Mrs. Jordan's class, if your best friend were laughing at another student's clothes, what would you do?

7. Scenario: In Mrs. Jordan's class, if a student accidentally knocks you down and doesn't say they are sorry, what would you do?

8. Scenario: In Mrs. Jordan's class, if a classmate doesn't understand the work, and you think it is easy, what would you do?

Classroom Discipline Contract

Dear Parent,

I am delighted that _____ is in my class this year. With your encouragement, your child will be a part of many exciting and rewarding experiences this year.

Since lifelong success depends in part on learning to make responsible choices, I have developed a classroom discipline contract that affords every student guidance in making good decisions about their behavior and thus an opportunity to learn in a positive, nurturing classroom environment. Your child deserves the most positive educational climate possible for growth, and I know that together we will make a difference in this process. Below is an outline of our classroom discipline plan.

Rules: 1. Respect other at all times.

2. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.

3. Follow directions.

4. No swearing or teasing.

To encourage students to follow these classroom rules, I will recognize and support appropriate behavior, as well as send "good news" notes home and make positive phone calls home. However, if a student chooses to break a rule, the following steps will be taken:

First time a student breaks a rule: Reminder

Second time: 5 minutes working away from group

Third time: 10 minutes working away from group

Fourth time: Call parents

Fifth time: Send student to the Think Tank

Be assured that my goal is to work with your to ensure the success of your child this year. Please read this classroom discipline contract with your child, then sign and return form below. (L. & M. Canter 2001)

Sincerely,

I have read the discipline contract and have discussed it with my child.
Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____
Student Signature: _____ Date _____
Comments: _____

Appendix D

Teacher Observation Question

1. Were students attentive when the teacher was conducting a lesson?

2. Did the students ignore name-calling?

3. Were students quiet when the teacher was on the telephone?

4. Did students react violently when hit by another student?

5. Were students actively listening when a classmate was speaking?

6. Did students participate when their peers began to talk negatively concerning other students?

7. Did students exaggerate when another student accidentally hit him/her?

8. Were students helpful when a classmate didn't understand the lesson?

THINK TANK FORM School Name ADDRESS TELEPHONE	STUDENT	DATE	
	GRADE	DATE OF INCIDENT	
	TEACHER	TIME OF INCIDENT	

NOTICE TO PARENTS
The purpose of this report is to inform you of a disciplinary incident involving the student.

REASON (s):

☐ FAILURE TO OBSERVE SCHOOL RULES   ☐ ANNOYING TO CLASSMATES   ☐ RESTLESS/INATTENTIVE

☐ DESTRUCTIVE TO SCHOOL PROPERTY   ☐ HITTING ANOTHER STUDENT   ☐ EXCESSIVE TALKING

☐ RUNNING IN THE CLASSROOM   ☐ RUDE/DISCOURTEOUS   ☐ LATE TO CLASS

☐ DISRESPECTFUL TO ADULTS   ☐ OTHER _____

ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION (S):

☐ HELD CONFERENCE w/STUDENT   ☐ CHANGED STUDENT'S SEAT   ☐ REMOVED STUDENT FROM CLASSROOM

☐ DETAINED STUDENT FROM FIELD TRIP   ☐ TELEPHONED PARENT   ☐ PARENT CONFERENCE REQUESTED

_____

If a (√) is entered in this box, Parent please sign & return _____

Appendix F

REFERRAL FORM **School Name** ADDRESS TELEPHONE	STUDENT	DATE	
	GRADE	DATE OF INCIDENT	
	TEACHER	TIME OF INCIDENT	

NOTICE TO PARENTS

1. The purpose of this notice is to inform you of a disciplinary incident involving the student.
2. Please note the action taken by the teacher and the corrective action initiated today.

REASON (s):

☐ FAILURE TO OBSERVE SCHOOL RULES   ☐ ANNOYING TO CLASSMATES   ☐ RESTLESS/INATTENTIVE

☐ DESTRUCTIVE TO SCHOOL PROPERTY   ☐ ASSAULT   ☐ EXCESSIVE TALKING

☐ RUNNING IN THE CLASSROOM   ☐ RUDE/DISCOURTEOUS   ☐ LEFT GROUNDS WITHOUT PERMISSION

☐ DISRESPECTFUL TO ADULTS   ☐ OTHER _____

ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION (S):

☐ HELD CONFERENCE w/STUDENT   ☐ CHANGED STUDENT'S SEAT   ☐ REMOVED STUDENT FROM CLASSROOM

☐ DETAINED STUDENT FROM FIELD TRIP   ☐ TELEPHONED PARENT   ☐ PARENT CONFERENCE REQUESTED

If a (√) is entered in this box, Parent please sign & return _____

Appendix G

SUSPENSION FORM **School Name** ADDRESS TELEPHONE	STUDENT	DATE	**LOCATION**
	GRADE	DATE OF INCIDENT	
	TEACHER	TIME OF INCIDENT	

The purpose of this notice is to inform you of a disciplinary incident involving the student.

REASON (s) FOR SUSPENSION:
_____
_____

Previous incidents involving the student: _____

Corrective Efforts Prior to Suspension: _____

Teacher's Signature: _____ *Date:* _____

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION TAKEN:
_____
_____

Administrative Signature: _____ *Date:* _____

Appendix H

To: Institutional Review Board
SUNY Brockport

I have read and approve the research study entitled, "How does assertive discipline effect social relationships in the classroom?" by Kimkena Obey-Jordan and give consent for the study to be conducted at Rochester City School Number 6.

_____

Signature   Date

_____

Title of person signing

Dear Student,

As part of my research project for my master's program at SUNY College at Brockport this year, I will be observing your social skills before and after you entered my class. You will be given a survey of questions pertaining to specific social skills before you entered my class to the present. The data will be collected and information will be noted. The survey is an attempt to see if your social skills have improved or not.

The survey will be given and collected by another staff member as I leave the class. The survey will be given to me a sealed envelope. The survey will be completely anonymous. Your name will not be revealed from the data. The object of making it anonymous is to get your true feelings.

I am asking your permission to participate in this study. If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and return the form below. I am very appreciative of your support.

My contact information, as well as my advisor's contact information, is included below if you would like to discuss more detail of the study.

Mrs. Kimkena Obey-Jordan	Dr. Betsy Balzano
Dag Hamarskjold School #6	SUNY Brockport College
Phone: (585) 546-7780 ext. 2050	(585) 395-5549

I have read this letter and I agree to be included in Mrs. Jordan's research on Assertive Discipline effecting social relationships.

Student Signature   Date

_____   _____

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As part of my research project for my master's program at SUNY College at Brockport this year, I will be observing student social skills based on my classroom management style, Assertive Discipline. Students will be given a survey of questions pertaining to specific social skills before they entered my class to the present. The survey will be administered and collected by another staff member. The data will be collected and information will be used to compare social skills this year to last year's student records. The survey is an attempt to see if student's social skills improved or not since they have been in my class.

Another staff member will administer the survey as I leave the room. The staff member will collect the surveys and place them in a sealed envelope. The results will be given to me. The survey will be completely anonymous. No child's name will be revealed from the data. The object of making it anonymous is to get the child's true feelings.

I am asking your permission to use your child answers to conduct this study. If you agree to let your child participate in this study, please sign and return the form below. I am very appreciative of your support.

My contact information, as well as my advisor's contact information, is included below if you would like to discuss more detail of the study.

Mrs. Kimkena Obey-Jordan   Dr. Betsy Balzano
Dag Hamarskjold School #6   SUNY Brockport College
Phone: (585) 546-7780 ext. 2050   (585) 395-5549

I have read this letter and I agree to let my child's work be included in Mrs. Jordan's research on Assertive Discipline effecting social skills.

Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

_____   _____