EXAMINING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE:
TIER 2 BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN AND
HISPANIC STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A Project

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Graduate & Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

EXAMINING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND SCHOOL-TO- PRISON PIPELINE: TIER 2 BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Current discipline measures used in schools for African American and Hispanic students continue to be problematic, as there is an over-representation of these students in exclusionary discipline. The purpose of this project is to provide school psychologists, administrators, and teachers with current research and resources useful in empowering teaching staff to work with African American and Hispanic students, as well as assist African American and Hispanic students feel connected to school by helping them refine their social, emotional, coping, and communication skills.

The purpose of this group curriculum is two fold. First, the curriculum will provide information to teachers and administrators about African American and Hispanic students including: communication styles, the over-representation of African Americans and Hispanics in exclusionary discipline, background factors, and possible problems and solutions while working with these students. Those who attend the first session of the curriculum are expected to gain insight into the over-representation of African Americans.
and Hispanic students in exclusionary discipline, understand their own biases when working with African American and Hispanic students, and obtain information and resources to work more effectively with African American and Hispanic students to decrease out of class exclusionary discipline. Secondly, the group curriculum will teach African American and Hispanic students coping skills, help them to manage their behavior, improve their communication skills, and understand their strengths. Students who attend the group counseling sessions are expected to be able to manage their behavior appropriately in school, feel more connected to the school setting, and decrease their out of class time due to discipline.

The prepared project is a group curriculum designed for school psychologists, administrators, and teachers. Materials provided as a support to the curriculum include a group curriculum and activities and handouts related to each session of the curriculum. This presentation was designed so that it can be implemented by any school psychologist or school counselor.

____________________________________, Committee Chair
Melissa Holland, Ph.D.

____________________________________
Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Collaboration

The authors of this project, LaShante Smith and Crystal Courtright, who are graduate students in the School Psychology Program at California State University, Sacramento, collaborated on all aspects of this project. The responsibilities of the project included: reading and incorporating research; writing; editing; sharing ideas; and creating a group curriculum.

Background

Schools are responsible for providing students with an education that will prepare them for the future. Some scholars say that schools are not only responsible for the education of children, but schools should be a place where students develop cognitively, emotionally, and socially. As such, the school system plays a major role in a child’s development. Over the years, the school system has experienced a shift in the demographic makeup of students in the United States. By 2020, ethnic minorities will comprise the majority of the United States’ school system enrollment (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). Historically, minority students have received unequal access to education unlike their non-minority peers. They have had inadequate instruction, poor school facilities and access to fewer resources (Oakes, 2003; Esposito, 1999). While minority students have suffered academically, they have also been discriminated against for behavior issues. Currently, research indicates that minority students, specifically African American and Hispanic students, are more often referred to
receive school discipline than their non-minority peers for similar offenses (Skiba et al., 2011). Disciplinary procedures are often exclusionary; minority students are expelled, suspended, or referred out of the classroom. Time out of the classroom leads to minority students falling further academically behind their peers, thus widening what is referred to as the “achievement gap,” defined as the difference between the academic performance of minority groups of students and their non minority peers (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

**Purpose of the Project**

The goal of this project is to explore the history of the problem of disproportionately identifying minorities for disciplinary measures, offer insight into cultural factors that exacerbate the achievement gap, and provide information on the school-to-prison pipeline. This goal will be met by utilizing a group curriculum designed for working with minority students. The objective of this curriculum is to empower teachers with knowledge and skills to work with minority students, and for minority students to feel empowered and build upon their communication and coping skills, as well as monitor and manage their own behavior. The purpose of the first session is to educate teachers on the diverse needs, backgrounds, and communication styles of minority students. In addition, teachers will examine their own biases and learn helpful strategies to work with minority students. Sessions two through nine are designed to build upon minority students’ strengths, coping skills, communication skills, and conflict resolution abilities to help them utilize better behavior at school. By using the curriculum, the goal is to decrease classroom exclusionary practices (i.e., suspensions,
office referrals, etc.) as teachers and students work together to create a mutually
beneficial school experience. As part of the group counseling sessions, the curriculum
includes simple handouts to be sent out weekly to parents/caregivers and teachers to keep
them informed of the skills their child/student is learning. It is hoped that the skills
learned in group will be reinforced in the home and school setting, in addition to the
group counseling sessions. As part of the curriculum, students will also participate in a
check in-check out intervention. Check in-check out allows students to set daily goals
for behavior and receive feedback from teachers at each class period on how they are
doing on that goal. Through check in-check out, students have the opportunity to learn
to monitor their own behavior as well as obtain positive attention from school staff.

Defining Critical Terms

Before examining the related literature, key terms of “ethnic minority groups,”
“whites,” and “disproportionality” are defined.

Ethnic Minority Groups. Ethnic minority groups are comprised of: American Indian or
Alaska Native, Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The current project will focus on African
American and Hispanic student populations. Hispanic is defined as “a person of Cuban,
Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin,
regardless of race” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Blacks or
African Americans are defined as “people having origins in any of the Black racial
groups of Africa.” The Black or African American population includes people who
marked their race(s) as “Black, African American, or Negro or reported entries such as
African American; Sub-Saharan African (e.g., Kenyan and Nigerian); or Afro-Caribbean such as Haitian and Jamaican” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.p, 2013).

**Whites.** Whites are defined as “people having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.p., 2013).

**Disproportionality.** Disproportionality refers to when a specific group is identified at higher rate than the population average. A relative risk ratio of greater than 1.5 indicates that there is an overrepresentation (Pearson, n.d).

**Limitations**

The authors have recognized several limitations of this project. Given that the authors will not run or implement the curriculum in schools, the clinical effectiveness or practicality of the curriculum is unknown at this time. Therefore, it can only be assumed that this curriculum will have a positive impact on the student group for whom it is intended. In addition, the curriculum is designed for professionals who have knowledge and skills in working with the African American and Hispanic populations. Further, depending on the school make-up, it may be difficult to get participants that match the population for whom the curriculum is designed.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

African American and Hispanic students have historically been found to be subject to biased disciplinary actions in school. Consequences of these biased disciplinary practices include: an increase rate of drop-outs for minority students, low academic achievement, and a pathway to the criminal justice system via a disconnect from school (Darensbourg, Perez & Blake, 2010).

In the literature review that follows, topics relevant to understanding the achievement gap between minority students and non minority students include: current research on contributions to the achievement gap and how they impact minority students; disproportionality among racial groups in exclusionary discipline, positive behavior intervention strategies (PBIS) and effectiveness with minority students; understanding of the school-to-prison pipeline; and, a research based curriculum based on modified PBIS strategies.

History of Discrimination

Discrimination in education has a long history in the United States. In 1896, the United States Supreme Court decided that African American and White students should have their own school facilities in a key court case known as Plessy v. Ferguson. The court case reasoned and decided that having separate school facilities would be considered “separate but equal” (Noblit & Mendez, 2008, p. 2). In 1954, Brown v. the Board of Education challenged Plessy v. Ferguson in an effort to end segregation in public schools. The United States Supreme Court declared that having separate schools
for African American and White students was unconstitutional (Noblit & Mendez, 2008). George Noblit and Jason Mendez (2008) examined the repercussions of Brown vs. Board of Education. For years, Noblit and Mendez noted, many schools simply ignored the fact that they were supposed to desegregate schools. When it became apparent that schools would be forced to comply, schools continued to fall back on the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling of 1896. School districts argued that desegregation had to occur in a way that would keep White students in the school system. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 threatened a loss of funding if schools did not desegregate, and it was under this threat that schools eventually complied (Franklin, 2005).

Even with schools being “officially” desegregated, racial discrimination continued to occur. In the 1970s, two landmark cases challenged using psycho-educational testing to place minority students in special education. In 1970, a young Spanish-speaking student named Diana was placed into special education based on psycho-educational testing conducted in English. The Diana v. State Board of Education court case determined that a student couldn’t be identified as intellectually disabled based on IQ tests that are administered in English. Testing must be conducted in the students’ first language and in English, or non-verbal IQ tests must be used (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002). In 1971, five African American children were placed in Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) classes by the San Francisco Unified School District. In the Larry P. v. Riles case (1979), parents sued the school district because their children had been inappropriately classified and placed into the EMR classes based on tests that allegedly reported intelligence. One of the African American students who was
inappropriately classified as EMR was first tested by a White school psychologist, and scored a 59 on the Wechsler Intelligence Test for Children (WISC). An African American school psychologist retested the same student and he scored a 94 (Thomas, 2012). Schools were subsequently prohibited from using IQ tests to place students in EMR or equivalent.

In 2001, Congress passed George Bush’s education initiative, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB provides federal funding for schools, and is the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which began in 1965 (Braden & Schroeder, 2004). NCLB’s emphasis was to improve education for students of color, students living in poverty, students who are learning the English language and for students with disabilities by providing increased accountability and responsibility for providing quality education. Preliminary testing data indicated that students of color, poverty, and with disabilities were scoring significantly below their White peers. NCLB intended to improve student learning which statewide test scores would measure. Schools that received low test scores would be required to improve their teaching practices. Low achieving schools also faced being put into “program improvement,” where they would be required to raise students’ test scores or face fines or school closures. Schools that had 40% of students below the poverty line would be entitled to receive Title 1 funding, which would allow them to make program improvements and offer more intervention services (Braden & Schroeder, 2004).

However, NCLB had unintended consequences. Schools began to focus on testing rather than teaching. Schools narrowed their curriculums to teach to what would
be on the test. In addition, schools that were placed into “program improvement” found it difficult to find and retain quality teachers, and most of the schools in “program improvement” were schools in poverty stricken areas that had few resources; many were schools serving minority students (Gee & Orfield, 2006). An article from the Civil Rights Project at UCLA concluded that NCLB has not successfully indicated a significant rise in achievement for minority students (Gee, 2006). The article suggested that while many promises had been made to low-income schools and to minority students or students with special needs, the monetary resources had not come through. The problems that were faced prior to NCLB were still present, and now schools had to meet NCLB’s exceptionally high standards without extra resources.

**Disproportionality of Minorities Identified in Exclusionary Practices**

As the student population shifts, teachers report that they are being faced with a variety of challenging student behaviors. As a result, teachers express frustrations of not being able to teach effectively because of the increased challenges that these behaviors pose, many of which require disciplinary measures. Schools are desperate to find disciplinary procedures that promote positive behavior, decrease challenging behaviors and engage students in their learning. Currently, as a means to preserve order, as well as safety in the school environment, many schools use exclusion as their primary disciplinary method. Exclusionary discipline often includes being sent out of the classroom, office referrals, and suspension (Arcia, 2006). When examining patterns of office discipline referrals in elementary and middle school it was discovered that African American students are 2.19 times more likely in elementary school to be referred to the
office for problem behaviors, and 3.78 times more likely in middle school to be referred to the office for problem behaviors than their White peers (Skiba, et al., 2011). Nearly half of African American boys are suspended in middle school, and, as these students age, they are more likely to experience harsher forms of discipline (Fenning & Rose, 2007). It was also reported that that African American and Latino students are more likely to receive expulsion or out of school consequences for the same problem behavior exhibited by their White peers. With the increasing number of culturally diverse students in schools, teachers are more likely to punish student behaviors that are incompatible with the conventional cultural standards.

When students are not in school because of suspensions, they are not being exposed to the academic curriculum that their peers are exposed to, creating an achievement gap between students. Research indicates that an estimated 5% of Whites drop out of high school, versus 8% of Blacks and 15% of Latinos (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). Despite many court ordered mandates and laws (Brown vs. Board of Education, 1954; Diana v. Board of Education, 1970; Larry P. v. Riles, 1979; No Child Left Behind, 2001) mandating that discrimination is not to be tolerated in the public school system, discrimination continues to be a disappointing part of the public education system, especially in behavior disciplinary strategies.

Achievement Gap

The achievement gap is defined as the gap that exists academically between White and minority students. While the achievement gap has been researched for years, there are many factors contributing to it, and research has yet to find a single cause for
the gap. The achievement gap is not a single event, but is an ongoing continuum that starts when a minority student first begins school (Williams, 2011). Historically, White students have been shown to perform significantly better than their minority counterparts. Research regarding poor and ethnically diverse students from differing racial backgrounds demonstrates a correlation with lower IQ’s, cognitive deficits, and sub-average academic proficiency (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994, Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010; Reeves, 2003). These disadvantaged minority students have higher rates of identified specific learning disabilities and intellectual developmental delays, lower high school graduation rates, and they are less likely to enroll in college, thus continuing the cycle of poverty into adulthood (Flanagan & Harrison, 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Factors such as poverty, parental involvement, school attendance, and environmental make-up have been well documented as contributing to and perpetuating the low academic performance of disadvantaged students (Smith, 2006; Beatty, 2013). The failure of impoverished and minority students has come to be the expected norm in the academic community. Educators often consider these students as “doomed from the start” or hopeless causes, and they, therefore, give up taking responsibility and accountability for having any influence over their students’ failures and low academic performance.

Despite the fact that there may be no single cause for the gap, it is important for interventions to be implemented in schools to help close the achievement gap (Williams, 2011). Student behavior and its related consequences has been found to be one
component in the achievement gap. (Kinsler, 2011). As such, schools tend to direct their attention to negative student behavior in order to design interventions that will create a conducive instructional environment. When schools focus on these tactics to help alleviate the achievement gap, adult attention is then focused on managing, and more often punishing, student behavior rather than being focused on increased instructional time. According to research, 58% of formal instructional time is lost due to problem behavior. In addition, research has found that in a typical school day, youth are only engaged and successful for 17%, or one hour, of the total 6 hour instructional period. Further, students with behavioral problems only receive 30% of academic learning time from teachers in a school day as a direct consequence of being sent out of the classroom via a teacher referral or other disciplinary method (Benner, Kutash, Nelson, & Fisher, 2013). One research study suggests that one of the strongest predictors of achievement is the amount of time spent learning. When students are sent out of class, suspended, or expelled, valuable instructional time is lost (Stavenjord, 2012). In addition, “A state’s suspension ranking was negatively related to its National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) achievement ranking in mathematics, writing, and reading… in short, higher rates of exclusionary discipline are correlated with lower achievement rates” (Stavenjord, 2012, pg. 8).

**School-to-Prison Pipeline**

Harsh disciplinary practices that are a result of not understanding students and their backgrounds contribute to what is known as the “school-to-prison pipeline.” Students who are repeatedly exposed to suspension and law enforcement in the school
setting lose vital academic instruction time and eventually become disengaged with the curriculum in the classroom. Such punitive practices are known risk factors for students to become engaged in delinquent behavior, arrest, and later incarceration. While schools remain the safest place for youth, school disciplinary practices have resulted in a systematic system of pushing students from schools into the prison system (Gonzalez, 2012). The “school-to-prison pipeline” term was coined to describe the increasing amount of minority students who receive exclusionary disciplinary practices in school and who eventually move into the justice system. While schools remain one of the safest places for students, the punitive disciplinary methods used mimic the criminal and juvenile justice system. These exclusionary practices correlate with the involvement of African Americans in the criminal justice system as they age. This connection of discipline with incarceration further defines the “school to prison pipeline” (Darensbourg, 2010). A study in Texas followed 1 million secondary students for 6 years; results showed that when students are suspended or expelled as a means of discipline, the likelihood that they will become involved in the juvenile justice system increases significantly (Stavenjord, 2012). Specifically, the study highlighted that African American students and those with specific educational disabilities were disproportionately disciplined for discretionary actions (Stavenjord, 2012). However, questions still remain regarding why these students were disciplined at higher rates than their White counterparts. Arguments arose regarding that minority students, particularly male, tend to misbehave at a higher rate than White students. However, actual research on student misbehavior with regards to race and disciplinary practices has found no
evidence that African-American over-representation in discipline is due to actual higher rates of misbehavior (Stavenjord, 2012).

In sum, reorganization of behavioral management in schools must be examined in order to meet the needs of students from non-dominant cultural groups. As a means to reduce the number of students who become involved in the criminal justice system, as well reduce the use of negative punitive disciplinary measures, schools began implementing restorative justice.

**Restorative Justice**

Restorative justice is an approach that has been implemented in the justice system, and has steadily increased in popularity in the school systems as a way to repair harm done to relationships (Hopkins, 2002). Recently, some schools have turned toward a restorative justice framework as a means to implement new disciplinary procedures. Restorative justice is a verbal process that requires interpersonal communicative skills. Research has found that high-risk adolescents often have difficulties in communicating their needs; as a result, negative behavior can be used as their form of communication (Snow, 2013).

Restorative justice is a change from exclusionary forms of discipline in that it is geared toward respectful acknowledgement and repair of relationships that have occurred through the actions of one party towards another. Restorative justice is

…an approach to discipline that engages all parties in a balanced practice that brings together all people impacted by an issue or behavior; it allows students,
teachers, families, schools, and communities to resolve conflict, promote academic achievement, and address school safety. (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 1)

Further, the restorative justice approach is designed to hold the wrongdoer accountable, while balancing the needs of the victim and the community (Pavelka, 2013). Restorative justice involves support from the whole school community, including: administrators, teachers, school staff, school resource officers, and community based organizations. As such, a community is formed where the student is supported in making responsible decisions and where students are held responsible for negative behavior.

The process of restorative justice includes bringing together all stakeholders in the room and allowing them to have their say about what has happened (Braithwaite, 2002). Everyone who has been wronged by the offense has the opportunity to come together, share about how they have been affected by the offense, describe how they are currently feeling about it, and how best to repair the harm that has been done (Hopkins, 2002). This is a voluntary process for all individuals involved, which is an important part of the process as it keeps intact individual’s free will (Hopkins, 2002). By keeping the process voluntary, it creates a group of individuals who are taking responsibility and are more likely to be motivated to go through with the restoration process (Latimer, Dowden & Muise, 2005). Equally important to the restorative justice process is the “circle process,” defined as having a skilled facilitator lead a group discussion towards restoration (Hopkins, 2002).
Restorative justice differs from the traditional disciplinary approach taken in schools. Hopkins (2002) identifies that in restorative justice, “misbehavior is viewed primarily as an offense against human relationships, and secondarily as a violation of the school rule” (p. 145). By encouraging students to look at misbehavior as an offense against others and helping them to remedy the offense successfully, Hopkins (2002) outlines the following benefits for students: building, maintaining, and repairing relationships; developing relational skills in themselves and with other students; and developing conflict resolution skills.

**Cultural Differences and Factors**

To create an effective discipline system in schools, it is necessary to understand the population that the school will serve. For the purpose of this project, the authors are exploring the culture of African American and Hispanic students. Many African American and Hispanic students are exposed to cultural factors that are unique to them, including poverty, gang affiliation, lack of health care resources, lack of parental education, violence, and a lack of resources and support systems (American Psychological Association, 2013; American Psychological Association, 2008). In addition, students from high poverty schools have fewer educational resources, such as low quality teacher instruction, high principal and teacher turnover rates, smaller dilapidated school facilities, and lower academic expectations from school personnel (Esposito, 1999; Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010). These factors influence the students’ ability to learn and demonstrate conventional behavior in the classroom (Mathur & Nelson, 2013).
Behavioral Expectations

Many minority students demonstrate behaviors in the classroom that are appropriate for their lives outside of school, but pose a problem in the school setting, such as physical aggression/fighting, verbal altercations, and carrying a weapon (Clubb, et al., 2001). In a study on exclusionary discipline practices, it was found that White students are referred to the office significantly more frequently for objective offenses (e.g., smoking, vandalism, leaving without permission, and obscene language). In direct contrast, African-American students are referred more often for subjective behavior, such as: disrespect, excessive noise, and threats. These students, therefore, are given consequences directly contingent upon the judgment of the person referring. On a national level, students of color who face discipline for the first time are typically given harsher punishments, which include out-of-school suspension (vs. in-school suspension), at a rate higher than White students (Stavenjord, 2012). A study conducted by Wright and Fitzpatrick (2006) examined risk factors and protective factors that contribute to African American students aggressive behaviors. The researchers found that three variables were significant for predicting fighting in the school setting. One significant variable explored was parental abuse in the home, suggesting that modeling demonstrated by parents had an effect on students’ learned aggressive behaviors. Another variable explored was lowered academic achievement, evidencing that students with lowered academic achievement (low grades) were associated with increased fighting. The last variable in predicting fighting in the school setting was found to be
gang affiliation. Students who reported being affiliated with a gang had a significant association with fighting behaviors in the school setting. Two factors were associated with decreased fighting in the school setting. One of these factors was parental involvement. Students who had parents who were involved in checking in on them at home and at the school had a significant decrease in fighting. The second factor that demonstrated a significant decrease in fighting was students feeling happy and connected at school (Wright & Fitzpatrick, 2006).

**Teacher Expectations**

Besides cultural factors, numerous studies have found that teachers have a tremendous impact on students’ perceptions of school. Studies have shown that teachers sometimes misinterpret minority students’ behavior in one setting that is culturally or contextually appropriate in another. These misinterpretations, such as misunderstanding a tone of voice from a student or comments made by a student, lead students from the non-dominant culture to suffer both academically and socially (Gregory et al., 2010). Many times, the misinterpretations are combined with poorly defined expectations of students, lack of disciplinary consistency, and the use of punitive practices. However, research indicates that many of the misinterpretations between teachers and students stem from a lack of training in classroom management with culturally diverse learners (Harlin, Sirota & Bailey, 2009). African American and Hispanic students are more likely to engage in disruptive classroom behavior. However, these students are not provided with community and familial supports outside the classroom, thereby contributing to the disruptive behaviors. It is, therefore, increasingly important for schools to provide
support and interventions to ensure them success in school and in life (Mathur & Nelson 2013). Unfortunately, many at-risk African American and Hispanic students attend schools with low adult expectations and interventions that fail to engage their interests or provide effective support. Research has indicated that teachers’ expectations of students can be influenced by students’ social class or ethnicity (Eccles, et al., 1993). Often, African American and Hispanic students need support but do not receive it or perceive its availability from school staff (Coggshall, Osher, & Colombi, 2013; Osher, et al., 2012)

### School Climate

School climate has been shown to have an impact on students. Students who feel connected to their environment participate more, which leads to higher school achievement (Basch, 2011). Research suggests that increasing feelings of school connectedness will result in reducing violence and aggression in schools (Basch, 2011). Increasing feelings of school connectedness occurs best within an evidence-based comprehensive system that addresses physical safety, students’ social and emotional well being, provides outlets for physical exertion, and involves parents and the community (Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, 2013). To help change the overall school climate and increase feelings of school connectedness, educators must be able to engage and challenge their students with learning and behavioral interventions that are culturally competent. These interventions must be built upon the student’s strengths and be perceived by the student as being relevant to their future (National Education Association, 2005).
**Other factors**

Other factors, as reported by the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2011), provide more insight into aggressiveness exhibited by minority students. Per self report measures, minority students had their property stolen or deliberately damaged on school property more so than White students (24% of White students versus 27.3% of African American students and 30.7% of Hispanic students). African American and Hispanic students also engaged in underage drinking, and 21.8% of African American and 25.2% of Hispanic students reported drinking alcohol for the first time before age 13 years (other than a few sips) versus 18.1% of White students. In addition, minority students engaged in sexual behaviors at young ages, with 13.9% of African Americans and 7.1% of Hispanic students reporting that they had sexual intercourse for the first time before the age of 13, versus 3.9% of White students.

Additional data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2011) indicated that 39% of African American students and 38% of Hispanic students report that they were involved in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey, versus 29% of White students. Nine percent (9%) of Hispanic students and 8.9% of African American students reported that they were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times (for example, a gun, knife, or club one during the 12 months before the survey). Only 6.1% of White students reported that they were threatened or injured at school.
Positive Behavior Interventions

In an attempt to create a system to address behavior and disciplinary problems in the school setting and support educators, many schools across the nation have adopted Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). School wide PBIS were developed in the early 1980’s, and are currently being implemented in over 18,000 schools across the nation (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). PBIS was created to address students’ social and emotional needs to help prepare them to learn. This system of behavior supports has proven invaluable for helping set clear expectations for behavior and providing reinforcement for positive behaviors that are exhibited by students. PBIS programs are not pre-packaged; instead, they are designed to allow flexibility in implementation to meet the individual needs of a school.

Data Collection

Data is collected systematically to measure the effectiveness of the PBIS system. Traditional measures of the effectiveness of PBIS occur at many levels, including: student level data (test scores, DPR data, percent change data (behavior), rates of engagement), classroom data (test scores by grade, normative engagement, class climate), school level data (PBIS implementation scores, test scores, ODRs, attendance/absence, suspensions/expulsions, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) scores, school climate/safety data, time-saved measures, perception data about safety, climate and student behavior), district level data (test scores, ODRs, attendance/absence, suspensions/expulsions, AYP, school climate/safety data, time-saved measures), and state/ national level data (implementation scores, suspensions/expulsions, AYP, attendance, school climate/safety
data, state performance measures on targeted initiatives, such as students with IEPs relative to educational environment (EE) or least restrictive environment (LRE)) (Upreti, Liaupsin & Koonce, 2010).

In all, PBIS emphasizes universal screening of all students, continuous progress monitoring, data-based decision making, and evidence-based interventions and practices. (Sugai, et al., 2000). PBIS implementation in the classroom has been associated with decreased exclusions in elementary school and in high schools (Horner, Sugai & Anderson, 2010).

**Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports- Current Interventions**

PBIS includes a three-tiered response to intervention framework. This framework includes primary, secondary, and tertiary intervention levels. Primary intervention, also known as Tier 1, involves all students and adults within the school. Primary intervention is implemented across all school and school-related settings. The primary goal of Tier 1 interventions is to create a positive atmosphere and school culture where behaviors are explicitly taught and reinforced for all students; in this tier, adults respond in a consistent manner to problem behaviors. Tier 1 supports are intended to address the needs of 80% of the school body (Sugai, 2012). Tier 1 interventions typically include: explicit teaching of school rules and expectations in classroom lessons; posters explaining appropriate behavior in the classroom and on campus; and school wide presentations of behavior expectations and consequences (Sugai, 2012). With the clear expectations of behavior, staff is able to reinforce appropriate behavior and provide consequences for inappropriate behavior.
Secondary interventions, also known as Tier 2, are intended to support students who have learning, behavior, or other history that puts them at risk for engaging in more serious behavior. These interventions are intended for 15% of the student population (Bohanon, et al., 2012). Tier 2 interventions target the students who do not respond to universal school wide interventions, and are designed to focus on students who are not yet in need of one-on-one behavior interventions. Tier 2 interventions typically include interventions such as: small group counseling, daily check in’s with staff combined with daily progress monitoring, and/ or self monitoring of behavior (Cheney, et al., 2010; Mitchell, Stormant & Gage, 2011).

Tertiary interventions, also known as Tier 3, focuses on students who need more intensive individualized support (Freeman, et al., 2006). This tier is intended for students who are not responding to Tier 1 or Tier 2 interventions, which is approximately 5% of the student population. Interventions at this tier are highly individualized, and often include interventions such as: individualized services for the student, functional behavior analysis, and wraparound services (Scott & Eber, 2003).

**Positive Behavior Supports and Minority Students**

When schools use PBIS, exclusions decrease; however, White students appear to benefit most, while African American and Hispanic students remain overrepresented in exclusionary practices (Fleming & Rose, 2007). While PBIS has shown promise for improving school climates and reducing the number of referrals, there has been limited research on PBIS’s effectiveness with African American and Hispanic students. Currently, no data was found regarding African American and Hispanic students’
perceptions of the effectiveness of PBIS, including their perceptions of the helpfulness of PBIS and its’ effects on inclusion within the schools.

Research has shown that behavioral supports cannot be applied without attention to culture and context (Becker & Luthar, 2002). Teachers, principals and other school-based personnel play a vital role in stopping the pipeline from school to prison. Through the interactions between students and school staff, educators can exacerbate the impact of external factors (i.e., poverty, discrimination, trauma, etc.) that can lead to learning and behavioral problems (Coggshall, Osher, & Colombi, 2013). Given the research on the over-identification of African American and Hispanic students, and the widening achievement gap, the need to determine effective strategies for working with African American and Hispanic students is urgent. There is a lack of experimental research that test strategies, including restorative justice, for improving behavioral outcomes for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Research is needed to guide practitioners, policy makers, and educational personnel on this important topic (Mathur, 2013).

**Tier 2 Interventions and the Present Project**

This project will investigate the current literature on cultural and environmental factors that impact minority students, and will create a new group curriculum to be used with minority students deemed at-risk for exclusionary disciplinary measures in the schools, or who experience high levels of disciplinary practices. Minority students are disciplined at an almost 2:1 ratio as their non-minority peer(s), which leads to out of class time and widening of the “achievement gap.” As part of the present project, the authors
seek to design a curriculum to be used in group counseling as a Tier 2 intervention to work with minority students. Currently, while there is a wealth of research regarding PBIS and its effectiveness, there is a surprising lack of research about its effectiveness with minority students. Even in schools that implement PBIS, there is still an over-identification of minority students in exclusionary disciplinary practices. As part of the curriculum, teacher education and cultural awareness will be addressed. That is, the first session of the curriculum will be geared toward teachers working with African American and Hispanic students. The session will orient educators to the curriculum and will include: outlining the challenges minority students face and their subsequent needs as a result of these challenges; the achievement gap and exclusionary discipline; alternative options for the teachers to react to the students’ challenging behavior; and a synopsis of the group curriculum sessions. Cultural sensitivity and an examination of biases will also be addressed. It is hoped that through teacher education, teachers will be empowered to gain an understanding of their students. It is the hope of the authors to help to create an academic environment wherein African American and Hispanic students feel more connected to their school environment, and to academia as a whole.

Utilizing group counseling will allow students to share information and learn from one another. The group curriculum will be sensitive to the current issues that many minority students face, which include: poverty, exposure to violence in the community, unequal access to resources, and teacher perceptions of students. The curriculum will focus on helping students increase in resiliency, develop strengths, problem solve, increase empowerment, build self-esteem, and utilize communication and relationship
skills from restorative justice models. Since many minority students feel alienated and distant from school staff due to teacher misperceptions and attitudes, restorative justice holds promise for developing and repairing relationships, thus possibly increasing feelings of school connectedness for minority students. The authors intend to create this curriculum for implementation in group counseling sessions in the school setting to create the most change in office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. The ultimate goal of the curriculum would be to help reduce or eliminate exclusionary disciplinary practices by utilizing a proactive approach. It is also hoped that the curriculum will help to keep students in class and more focused in the academic environment, thus improving overall academic performance for African American and Hispanic students.

**Conclusion**

As the United States population continues to grow and diversify, behavior interventions to work with minority students are essential, especially given the higher drop out rate and school-to-prison pipeline for these students. Schools need to have systems in place that will allow them to work with all children to increase retention and decrease exclusionary practice. Further, with the push for more positive behavior supports, Tier 2 evidence based structured interventions are highly needed. By way of this curriculum, it is the authors’ hope that schools will be provided with the necessary skills to work with African American and Hispanic students to further help eliminate the high disproportionality of exclusionary discipline that currently exist and to assist these students in reaching their full potential.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research

In researching this project and developing this curriculum, several techniques were used. The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and EBSCO host databases were the two primary search engines used for peer-reviewed journal articles. Key words that were used for the search included “minority students,” “African American students,” “Hispanic students,” and “Positive Behavior Intervention Supports.” These key words were combined with other terms including: school-to-prison pipeline, restorative justice, inequality, interventions, and achievement gap. Research articles cited within specific articles were further examined. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) website was also searched for information regarding positive behavior intervention supports, position statements on discipline, and tier-2 intervention and supports. The Center for Disease Control and dictionaries were used to look up specific definitions.

Development of the Curriculum

The curriculum was developed to work with African-American and Hispanic students in secondary schools, utilizing a tier-2 group counseling approach. The key points of the literature review will be utilized within the group counseling sessions. The curriculum will begin with a teacher/staff session to address concerns in dealing with these populations. The curriculum is designed to be completed in eight weeks through the use of group sessions and individualized check-in, as needed. Group counseling
sessions will be 45 minutes in length once a week. Students will be referred by teachers and school staff, and will be interviewed individually prior to starting in the group to ensure that they are appropriate candidates for inclusion, interested and invested. The primary purposes of the group will be to: empower teachers with skills to work with African American and Hispanic students; assist African American and Hispanic students in developing communication skills; build on African American and Hispanic students’ strengths and resiliency; help the students manage stressors in life and community; establish coping skills; monitor grades and academic progress; connect students to school community; and build home-school relationship. A brief overview of the curriculum was presented to fellow school psychology graduate students and faculty members to solicit feedback. The curriculum will include all needed resources in the appendices.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

The information obtained during the literature review was used to create a Tier 2 counseling curriculum to be used with minority students (specifically African American and Hispanic) within a Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) framework. This curriculum is intended to be used with minority students who are not responding to Tier 1 interventions. The authors acknowledge that not all schools are implementing PBIS, and for that reason the curriculum can also be used as a standalone intervention for schools. This curriculum consists of nine sessions. The first session is designed solely for teachers, and is approximately one and a half hours. Sessions two through nine of the curriculum are approximately forty-five minutes to one hour in length and are for the students only. The curriculum materials contained in this research project are included in the appendices. This group curriculum is designed to be implemented by any trained school psychologist or counselor.

Curriculum Objectives

The primary purpose of this curriculum is to help reduce the disproportionate number of office referrals, suspensions, and exclusionary discipline currently present for minority students through teacher training and skill building opportunities for minority students. The goal of the group curriculum is to align current research with current practices in schools. During the first session of the group curriculum, teachers and administrators will be provided information through interactive discussion, lecture, small group discussion, and informational handouts. In the subsequent group curriculum
sessions, students will participate in forty-five minute to one hour group counseling sessions that will include group discussion, interactive activities, and opportunities to address and target their own behavior.

The group curriculum, including teacher training materials, are contained in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

**Discussion**

Considering the limited research on positive behavior interventions with minority students, it is understandable that there are few resources or curriculums available to assist minority students with developing skills and strategies to help them stay in class. This curriculum addresses evidence-based strategies for teachers to use while working with minority students, in addition to evidence-based strategies for counselors and school psychologists to use while working with minority students. It is clear that more research needs to be done on the effectiveness of PBIS with minority students in reducing exclusionary discipline. The authors of this project hope to implement this curriculum in the future, collect data, and add to the research base of effective interventions available for minority students.

**Recommendations**

This project provides a convenient and comprehensive curriculum for professionals, namely school psychologists and counselors, who are interested in assisting teaching staff in developing multi-cultural skills, as well as helping minority students develop skills that will assist them in school. The presenter of the curriculum should take time to review the curriculum and appropriately prepare for each session.
The first session, in particular, which is designed only for teaching staff, requires the presenter to pass out resource materials one week prior to the training. The presenter will also find it helpful to collaborate with administration about setting up the training close to the time when school year begins to maximize effectiveness of the training and curriculum.

Further collaboration with other professionals knowledgeable about working with minority students within a PBIS model is encouraged. While the curriculum is designed to be comprehensive, the presenter may need to adapt or modify the content of the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of the students and staff for whom it is designed.

**Conclusion**

As the United States population continues to grow and diversify behavior interventions to work with minority students are essential, especially given the higher drop out rate and school-to-prison pipeline for these students. Schools need to have systems in place that will allow them to work with all children to increase retention and decrease exclusionary practice. Further, with the push for more positive behavior supports, Tier 2 evidence based structured interventions are highly needed. By way of this curriculum, it is the authors’ hope that schools will be provided with the necessary skills to work with African American and Hispanic students to further help eliminate the high disproportionality of exclusionary discipline that currently exist and to assist these students in reaching their full potential.
Appendix A

Steps-to-Success Academy
Curriculum Guidelines

Participants:
The school psychologist will provide teachers with information about the Steps-to Success Academy. The counseling group and referral forms to identify students who could benefit from this group will be sent ahead of time. The group is designed for secondary (middle or high school) aged minority students, specifically Hispanic and African American students, who exhibit challenging behaviors in the classroom and have not responded to Tier 1 interventions, or to school-wide behavioral practices. The group should have no more than 10 participants. The group can consist of both male and female students.

Format:
The curriculum is designed to be a nine-week curriculum. The first week of the group will be specifically for teaching staff only. Students will not be invited to the first session. The remaining eight sessions will be for students only. The group will meet once a week for eight weeks. The group should be conducted in a room small enough to facilitate a close and intimate group experience. The room also needs to be large enough to accommodate movement and physical activities. Each session will last for 45 minutes-1 hour, with the exception of the teacher training which is approximately 1.5 hours. The time and date of the sessions will be arranged to minimize the amount of missed class time and formal instruction. Participation in the group will be voluntary, but encouraged. Rapport building will be critical to the group, so creating a safe and warm setting will be of utmost importance for facilitator. Weekly sessions will consist of a discussion, an activity, and a closing ritual. Discussion questions will encourage students to examine their communication styles, strengths, goals, and coping skills. Weekly activities are designed to facilitate the discovery of strengths, provide students opportunities to learn ways to communicate with others, encourage school connectedness, develop coping skills to manage life stressors, and to learn effective ways to behave in the school environment.

Screening:
The process of referral will include a combination of teacher, administration, and counselor referrals followed by individual screenings. Staff will be given referral forms (Appendix B1) and the group facilitators will conduct screenings by interviewing potential group participants individually. During the individual screenings, the group facilitator will explain the purpose of the group, group expectations, and how the group will be conducted. Screening allows for the group facilitator to determine if the student would benefit from group counseling, and to see if the student would work well with others. The group facilitator will determine if the student is better suited for individual counseling. Screening will also involve consulting with other members of school staff as well as the student’s parent or guardian.
Parent/ Guardian Permission:
A letter of permission (Appendix B2) will be sent home to students who are potential participants in the group. The letter explains the purpose of the Steps-to-Success Academy, general topics to be discussed, and dates of the sessions. The letter will also discuss confidentiality and include information about the group facilitators. The purpose of the letter is two fold; it will allow for students to be a part of the group, and will also ask permission from parents to monitor students’ grades, attendance, and disciplinary actions as a way to monitor effectiveness of the group.

Check in- Check out:
Each student who participates in the Steps-to-Success Academy will be placed in a structured check-in/check-out (CICO) intervention. The CICO is designed to help students become better managers of their behavior. In order to assist the student, a CICO intervention form will be used to remind and support their efforts in meeting school-wide expectations (the form will also be included in Appendices B.7-B.10 of the curriculum).

Student Responsibilities:
- Check-in with an office staff member every morning between 8:00 and 8:25 AM to go over your daily goals.
- Bring the progress report to class and have your teacher fill it out throughout the day at each designated time period
- Check-out with your coordinator after school every day AND bring your progress report with you for review.
- Have your daily report card signed every night by your parent/guardian.

Parent Responsibilities:
- Review the contract with your child and sign it.
- Discuss the goals with your child and support them in their efforts.
- Sign the report card nightly.
- Accept the evaluations of the teacher(s) and staff participating.
- Reward your child as he/she meets their goals.

Teacher Responsibilities:
- Evaluate the student’s progress toward meeting their goals on the progress report.
- Provide the student with positive and constructive feedback throughout the day.

Coordinator Responsibilities:
- Facilitate Check-in/Check-out.
- Provide student with positive and constructive feedback.
- Inform the student ahead of time if you are going to be absent.
- Track student progress.
For Teachers Only

Cultural Awareness

Meeting Objective:
Orient teachers and administrators to the Steps-to-Success curriculum and the desired outcomes; encourage teachers to utilize the training materials that will be provided weekly to them in their classes; and, encourage open communication between students, school psychologists, and administration to build school connectedness. The goal of this group is to gain teacher buy-in and build rapport with teachers and administration, as well as help teachers understand their own biases. The group meeting will be approximately 1 hour, 30 minutes.

It is important to note that a separate activity in which teachers will be asked to participate (Appendix B7) will be sent to teachers prior to the start of the teacher session. During this session, teachers will reflect on the activity as a group.

Ice breaker: 2 Truths and a Lie (cultural style)
*This group will accommodate no more than 10 teachers at a time. Groups may be broken up into 2 separate sections in order to accommodate all teachers.

Purpose: To allow teachers to feel comfortable in discussing culture and getting to know one another.

Time Frame: 15 minutes

Group leaders and teachers sit in a circle. Pass out half sheets of paper and writing instrument.

1. The group leader gives the following instructions:
Today we are going to play a game that helps us to get to know each other a little better, and give us the opportunity to learn more about each other, as well as our individual cultures. For the purpose of this activity, you may identify “culture” in the way that you wish to. That is, you can use your own definition of culture. We will go around in a circle, and first say our name, and the subject we teach, a little bit about ourselves, and then we will say two truths about our culture and one lie. You can choose to create your own lie or choose to say a lie that you may have heard. Since we are all adults, you can choose to make this game as challenging as you would like so that we can get everyone to really think. The group then decides which one of your statements is the lie. You will then be able to state which statement is a lie and which are the truth. You will have a few
minutes to think of your two truths and lie, and feel free to write them down on a piece of paper.

2. One of the group facilitators shares their name, information about themselves, and their two truths and a lie.
3. After teachers have all shared, the group leader volunteers to go around and recall all of the teacher’s names, information about themselves, and the lie about their specific culture. This will also give the teachers a second chance to hear and remember the information that was previously presented.
4. Allow willing teachers to comment on anything they learned or found interesting during the activity.

**Activity:** Cultural Awareness Overview

**Materials:** None

**Time Frame:** 5 minutes

**Instructions**

1. Begin by stating the following statement or something similar,

   *The purpose of today’s session is to discuss the topic of cultural awareness and how culture pertains to relating to individual students. It is my hope that by the end of this session, you will have the tools you need to work with your African American and Hispanic students, as well as the other students in your classrooms. Today we will be reviewing best practices in working with African American and Hispanic students and we will overview the tools and information that we provided to you in your teacher mailbox. I hope that these tools will help you to work with these students in a way that is culturally sensitive. I will also quickly overview the “school-to-prison pipeline” and the “achievement gap.”*

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   Throughout the session, your feedback is welcomed, and questions can be asked at any time. Please note that this is intended to be a group discussion, so you may add your comments in at anytime. This year, we will also be implementing a Tier-2 intervention, entitled “Steps-to-Success Academy.” The Academy is geared toward African American and Hispanic students who are presenting with externalizing behaviors in the classroom, or for African American or Hispanic students who you feel are disconnected from the school environment and/or the curriculum. I will explain the details of the group at a later date.

   However, it is my hope that today’s session will help you to work with any students that may need additional help. With that said, in about 4 weeks, I will ask for your feedback regarding any students who may not be responding appropriately in the classroom environment. While I will attempt to see all of the students, I will begin by addressing those students with the highest need. I will pass out referral forms for the Steps-to-Success Academy, and those students who are not seen immediately will hopefully be included in future groups. The Steps-to-Success Academy will be set up as a small group (10 students max) format, and I will address issues that our students face. There will be
weekly discussion topics and teachers will receive weekly emails or handouts on the skills being addressed in the group. More information will be forthcoming once I begin implementation of group. For now, I will begin and start our topic of cultural awareness. Please note that these are general guidelines. Not every student will be the same; it is important for us to recognize and appreciate the differences within cultural groups. Again, this training is intended to give more tools that can assist you in the classroom.

The first step to cultural awareness is to understand what culture is and to examine our own biases surrounding the topic of culture. To begin, we will start with an activity to address this.

**Examining Your Own Biases**

**Materials:** Handouts in Appendix B7 and B8

**Time Frame:** 10 minutes

**Instructions**
(Before the session, teachers were provided with a handout on biases and were asked to voluntarily participate in an online activity that uncovers hidden biases.)

1. State the following:

   *A bias can be defined as prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.*

   Each of you has a sheet of paper. On that sheet of paper, you should write anything you may have heard about a certain culture that you believe to be true. Please remember that this is a safe environment and our goal is to understand our biases so that we can overcome them. You do not have to put your name on the paper and you are welcome to share at the end, if you’d like. If not, papers should be turned into this box, so that I can get a sense of the biases inside of the room. Before we do that, we will discuss the " Implicit Association Tests" (IAT) (Appendix B7) activities that you were encouraged to visit and participate in online. Please share with the larger group your experience with the activities.

2. Group facilitator will then discuss the IAT activity that teachers were encouraged to participate in online. Teachers will be asked about their surprises and responses to the activities. Facilitator should ask for people to explain their "scores" and anything surprising about the activity. This should be a time for teachers to express their feelings and participation should be encouraged.

3. Facilitator will pass out: Examining Your Own Biases sheet. Teachers will have 5 minutes to write.
4. After everyone has written on his or her sheets of paper, paper should be turned into a box that will be passed around the group. Facilitator will review out loud some of the biases written on the sheets.

5. Teachers will then be allowed to process what they have just heard and comments will be welcomed.

6. Facilitator will say,

*Now that we have examined our biases, we will discuss different ways of working with our students in our classrooms, while keeping our biases in mind.*

Reflection Question
1. What was it like to write your biases on a sheet of paper?
2. Did anything surprise you?
3. Do you think it was beneficial to identify your biases? Why or Why not?
4. Will this information be useful for you when teaching students? Why or Why not?
5. How can you benefit from learning about your biases?

6. Overall, what was this experience like for you?

**Effective Communication Styles with African American and Hispanic cultures**

**Materials:** Whiteboard and/or posterboard and writing utensil

**Time Frame:** 15 minutes

Teachers will have the opportunity to ask questions. Facilitator will summarize best practices in communication styles by sharing the below information or something similar on a white board or poster board.

**Summary of Effective Communication with African American Students and Families:**
- Direct eye contact
- Direct speaking and interactive communication.
- Communication with school staff is often guarded and defensive due to generational negative experiences of segregation, racism, and discrimination.
- Students and parents may be apprehensive to share and/or disclose information to White staff members due to mistrust.
- Students or parents may be intimidated when speaking to educational staff.

**Summary of Effective Communication with Hispanic Students and Families:**
- By 2011, nearly one out of every six living in the United States will be of Hispanic/ Latino origin (cdc.gov, n.d.).
• Establish collectivism and unity within the classroom.
• Eye contact can be considered threatening.
• Latino families often rely heavily on one another as part of a support network for mental health support. They also rely on their community, which would include clergy, primary physicians, or traditional healers.
• Latino families are respectful of authority and are often formal with people that they do not know.
• Many Latinos prefer to be addressed by their title and last name and will reciprocate this type of addressing.
• Many Latinos use body language as a form of interaction; for example, a handshake is considered a respectful gesture and should be included in meetings with the family.

The facilitator may wish to share the national association of school psychologists (NASP) website for more resources and information.

Material Adapted from:
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/hispanic_latinos_insight.pdf,
http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/mocq374latino_families.aspx,

Facilitator will solicit feedback and will ask the following questions:
1. Did anyone learn something new about communication styles?
2. How can this information help you in your classroom?
3. How can this information help us to work with our students?
4. Is there anything else that someone would like to add about communication?

The group should be allowed to take a 10-minute break. Immediately following the break, the topic of empathy will be addressed.

Empathy Activity
Purpose: To introduce the concept of empathy and why it is essential to have when working with students in the classroom.

Materials:
Several shoe cut-outs (on each shoe cut-out write the following words on the front: Poor, Rich, Boy with no father, Girl who takes care of siblings, Homeless, Physically Disabled, Old, Young with no parents, Sick, From a Different Country, Different Religion, African American living in poverty, Hispanic living in poverty), tape, shoe cut-outs
Poster board with the words, “Stop, Breathe, Listen, Respond” on it.

**Time Frame:** 15 minutes

**Instructions:**

1. Begin by introducing empathy. Ask teachers if they can give a definition or an example of empathy.
2. The following can be used as an example:
   
   *Empathy is the ability to identify how someone else is feeling, putting yourself in that person’s shoes, and feeling how they feel. The second component of empathy is how you respond: what can you say and do to meet their needs?*

3. Ask for several volunteers.
4. Each volunteer will get a single “shoe.” Ask them to walk around the room with the cut-out taped to their own shoe. As they walk, ask the participants to imagine living as described on the cut-out. The participant should walk around for about a minute, thinking about how this person might feel, and what their life is like. After one to two minutes, have each person switch cut-outs with someone else. Repeat this 3 times so that each participant has had 3 different shoes.
5. Bring the participants back into a circle. Going around the circle, have each person share his or her thoughts on their last shoe. If another person had that same shoe at some point, and would like to share their thoughts, encourage them to do so.
6. Reflect for the group:
   
   *It’s wonderful that you’ve all been able to understand what it’s like to be in another person’s shoes.*

**Reflection Questions:**

1. How does empathy look in the classroom?
2. Who makes up your classroom (ethnicity, background, environment, etc.)?
3. How do we empathize with our students?
4. Does anyone have examples of using empathy in the classroom? What worked and what didn’t work?
5. What might we do to be sure we understand what they are feeling?
6. Is there a particular group that we have talked about today that you’ve had personal experience with? If so, please share.
7. Will understanding empathy help you in your classrooms? Why or why not?
School-Connectedness
(adapted from: http://cecp.air.org/download/MCMonographFINAL.pdf)

**Materials**: none (instructions in session)

**Time Frame**: 10 minutes

Facilitator will state the following:

_We are going to talk about some other strategies that research has indicated have a high correlation with school success. One of the strategies is increasing school connectedness. School connectedness is creating a culture where students feel like they “belong” in the schools. The following traits impact a students’ feelings of school connectedness, and are highly predictive of success in school. This information always pertains to the school-to-prison pipeline; that is, it is vital that students feel connected to the school culture and environment. Without this connection, students may act-out through externalizing behaviors that may lead to disciplinary action. Disciplinary action further exacerbates the school connectedness. The traits are as follows:_

1. Having a sense of belonging and being a part of a school
2. Liking school
3. Perceiving that teachers are supporting and caring
4. Having good friends within school
5. Being engaged in their own current and future academic progress
6. Believing that discipline is fair and effective
7. Participating in extra curricular activities

_Say,_

_Research indicates that the following strategies can increase school connectedness feelings for students:_

1. Implement high standards and expectations, and provide academic support to all students.
2. Apply fair and consistent disciplinary policies that are collectively agreed upon and fairly enforced.
3. Create trusting relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators and families.
4. Foster high parent/family expectations for school performance and school completion
5. Ensure that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult in school

Reflection Questions
1. How can we encourage this with our students within our classrooms?
2. What do you already do to help with this?
**Activity:** Role Play  
**Materials:** none  
**Time Frame:** 10 minutes

1. Facilitator should ask for 2 volunteers at a time to come to the front. Each volunteer will be told to act out the role of the teacher or the student. The following scenarios will be given. The rest of the group can be “consultants” and help the teacher with ideas for how to intervene.

*An African-American student comes late into your class, and proceeds to sing while finding his/her seat. Upon sitting down, the student does not engage in the required activity but instead jokes with peers and tries to get the attention of other students. How might you approach this student, utilizing all of the skills we have discussed?*

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*You are doing an activity in class on the board. You ask one of your Hispanic students to come up to the board and solve the problem. He looks down and says that he doesn’t know how to do it. You know that this student is perfectly capable. What might be another strategy to get him to demonstrate his work that doesn’t involve him coming up to the board by himself? Please act out this situation.*

Reflection Questions:
1. What seemed to work in the scenarios?
2. Can you share a scenario that was similar that you have experienced in your classes?
3. Do you think any of the skills you learned today helped you to look at the situation in a different manner? Why or why not?

At the conclusion of the activity, the facilitator will state,

*I hope that you were able to learn more about the students you are working with and also valuable skills that work well with all students. As stated previously, the Steps-to-Success Academy will be geared toward African American and Hispanic students who are having a difficult time adjusting to classroom expectations and to the school environment. These students will have an opportunity to learn vital lessons that will help them to generalize their skills to the classroom environment. Just as today, lessons with the students will focus on key concepts such as: empathy, communication skills, and many others. Students will be placed on weekly-monitoring sheets so that you know how they are progressing in group. In addition, weekly emails or handouts containing information about the lessons we worked on will be provided to teachers and parents. During this process, it is my hope that we will be able to communicate often for the success of our students. I will be available after this session for any other questions you may have. Thank you for your participation today.*
Meeting Objective:
Students will get to know each other, work together with the group facilitators to develop group guidelines, and begin to understand the purpose and goals of the group.

Ice breaker: Two truths and a lie
Purpose: To get students to know one another’s names, and build a fun and engaging group climate.
Materials: none
Time Frame: 10 minutes

Instructions:
1. Group leaders and students sit in a circle. Pass out half sheets of paper and writing instrument.
2. The group leader gives the following instructions:
   *Today we are going to play a game that helps us to get to know each other a little better, and give us the opportunity to learn each other’s names. We will go around in a circle, and say our name, a little bit about ourselves, then give two truths about ourselves, and one lie. The group then decides which one of your statements is the lie. The truths and a lie need to be appropriate to discuss in this group. You will have a few minutes to think of your two truths and lie, and feel free to write them down on a piece of paper.*
3. One of the group facilitators shares his/her name, information about him/herself, and two truths and a lie first.
4. After students have all shared, one of the group facilitators volunteers to go around and recall all of the students’ names. This will also give the students a second chance to hear and remember the names.
5. Ask the students, “Who thinks that they can remember everyone’s names in the group?”
6. Allow willing students to try to remember their fellow students’ names, and admire their efforts.

After the ice-breaker, the group will then be transitioned into an activity.
**Introduction of Group**

**Materials:** pre/post test (B16), writing material, large piece of paper or white board

**Time Frame:** 10 minutes

The group leader will explain the purpose of the group as follows:

*The goal of our time together is to identify and develop our strengths, develop and expand on our communication skills, set goals, and learn ways to effectively use our time in school, while learning how to manage the stressors in our lives.*

Ask the students,

*What would you like to accomplish as a part of our time together?*

Write down the students’ goals on the board, and keep them for future sessions.

Introduce pre-test, and explain that that we will be completing this as a way to understand where the group members currently see themselves. Emphasize that this will be kept completely confidential, and there are no right or wrong answers.

**Establishing Group Guidelines**

**Materials:** White board or large paper and pens

**Time Frame:** 10 minutes

Instructions:
1. Share with the students that as a group they will be developing some group guidelines.
2. Explain to the students that every group needs guidelines so that everyone has the chance to share and feel heard.
3. If the group leaders are of a different cultural background than the students in the group, then a discussion about differences in culture should be addressed. Allow and encourage students and group facilitators the opportunity to ask respectful clarifying questions about each others’ cultures throughout the sessions as needed.
4. Group facilitators should model an appropriate versus inappropriate way to ask clarifying questions about others’ cultures.
5. Ask the group what guidelines they would like to develop. Give the group a chance to decide on guidelines, and add in any missing important guidelines. It is important to phrase guidelines positively.

**Possible Group Guidelines:**
- Be respectful to everyone, including yourself
- Listen carefully when others speak
- Use appropriate language
- What we talk about is confidential, and should be kept within the group.
- Respectfully ask about others cultures with the purpose being to learn more about them, not judge them.
6. Limit guidelines to four or five, and write them on the board or on the large paper. These guidelines will need to be posted at every group meeting, and referenced when necessary. **Be certain the guideline of confidentiality is always listed.**

**Activity: Straw Tower**

**Purpose:** to continue to build group cohesion, and reinforce the idea that the group is there to support one another as they grow.

**Materials:** Drinking straws (15-20 per group), paperclips (10 per group), rubber bands (4 per group) packaged in bags, Popsicle sticks with students’ and facilitators’ names written on them, cup to hold popsicle sticks

**Time Frame:** 15 minutes

Instructions:
1. Break students into groups of three to four. If there are 5 or fewer students in the group, have the whole group work together to build the tower.
2. Explain to the students that they will have 5 minutes to work together to build the tallest building that they can out of the materials provided.
3. They can ONLY use the materials provided.
4. Hand out the bags of materials.
5. Time the students for five minutes.
6. While the students are working, walk around and admire if students are working together, focusing on the task at hand, or using creativity.
7. After five minutes is up, determine who built the highest tower.

Reflection questions:
Engage the students in a discussion. Be sure to point out the effectiveness of teamwork and how each student played a role in helping to accomplish the task. Ask the students:

1. How is teamwork important?
2. What was the role you played? What did you do?
3. How did you know how to do that?
4. How do you use teamwork in the classroom, or with your friends? Is it easy for you to use teamwork? Is it difficult?
Check-In/Check-Out

1. Explain the purpose of the check-in/check-out forms in Appendices B4, B10, and B11 (students should have already turned in permission forms). If not, parent contact should be made and students are required to bring back permission forms for participation in check-in/check-out (CICO).

2. Work on establishing goals for the students on their CICO forms. Goals should be a maximum of 4. Facilitator may assist student in coming up with goals.

3. Explain to the group that since the group only sees each other once a week, the facilitators miss out on how the rest of the week is going. As facilitators, we are interested in how the students are doing, and would love for them to check in and check out every day with school staff (staff to be decided by the school psychologist and administration prior to the group starting).

4. The purpose of the check in-check out is to give students a chance to monitor and reflect how their day went. They will set their own daily goals with support from their check in-check out person. The goals can change weekly, if needed.

5. CICO forms must be completed everyday; that is, students must check in with a staff member and check out with a staff member. A parent signature is also encouraged on the form. Each week, the student will earn an incentive for CICO completion and for 80% or more progress on goals.

6. Students will “graduate” from CICO after 6 successful weeks of 80% or more.

Location change for following week:
Let students know that the following week they will be meeting in the computer lab if there is access. If not, there are alternate activities available for facilitators.
Session 2
Discovering our strengths

Meeting Objective:
To help students identify their strengths as a means to increase resiliency. Address how strengths benefit not only ourselves, but also culture, which can include family, church, school, neighborhood, community, etc.

Location:
If possible, the group should meet in a computer lab for this session to take the VIA strengths assessment. The lab should be set up in advance by the facilitators to the VIA strengths assessment website to streamline the process. Each student will need their own computer which will be set up on the VIA strengths assessment page in advance (alternative strengths based activity available if there is not access to a computer lab).

Icebreaker: People Bingo
Purpose: To build community in the group by having students learn more about each other in a fun and non-invasive manner.
Materials: People Bingo card, Writing utensils, Half sheet of paper
Time Frame: 5 minutes

Instructions:
1. Hand out the People Bingo cards to the students.
2. Explain to the students that they will have 5 minutes to try to fill out their card completely by having other students sign their name on one of the boxes that pertains to them. Each person can only sign 2 boxes.
3. Encourage the students to mingle with one another.
4. Afterwards, allow a few students to share some things that they discovered about the other students that they didn’t know before.

Opening story: The Story of the Elephant in the Circus
Purpose: To encourage students to not believe the limitations that may have been placed on them, and to instead break free of such limitations.
Materials: Story of Elephant (included in text of instructions)
Time Frame: 5 minutes
Instructions:
1. Explain to the students that you are going to read them a story about an elephant at the circus, and that you want them to think about the limitations that the elephant faces and why.

*I once went to a circus and saw a huge elephant tied to a small pole with a rope, just standing there. I asked the elephant trainer, so I asked him why is the elephant so obedient and doesn’t try to break through the rope since it is obviously so much stronger than the rope? The elephant trainer explained that when the elephant was very young, it was tied with the same size rope. Naturally, the baby elephant did not like being restrained by the rope, but at that time, the rope was too big for it to break free from. So the elephant eventually gave up. Later on, when it was bigger and older, the elephant still believed that it could not escape from the rope, and so it remained standing in the same place where it was tied, despite the fact that it could easily escape.*

Reflection questions:

1. What happened to the elephant? Why didn’t he try to escape?
2. Has anyone ever had a situation in life where they were told that they couldn’t do something, and as a result they didn’t even try? How did you handle that?
3. What was the outcome of this story? What can we take away from it?

**Activity:** Complete VIA Strengths assessment at [www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)

**Materials:** computers with Internet access (one for every student)

**Time Frame:** from 20-35 minutes, depending on speed of student

Instructions:
1. Explain to the students that everyone has personal strengths.
2. Ask them what “personal strengths” means to them. If necessary, assist students with defining strengths.
3. Explain to them that today they will be taking a strengths assessment to learn more about what strengths each of them possess.
4. Explain that every person is different and that we were each made with different strengths that we have.
5. Tell the students that in the following session we will review the results of the VIA Strengths Assessment, but at this meeting we will concentrate on completing the assessment. Let them know that if they have any questions, or something doesn’t make sense, they can raise their hand and a facilitator will help them.

6. On the computer screen, the students will need to fill out their information, which includes name, date of birth, and email address. They will then need to create a user name and password. Have the students write their name on a half sheet of paper, and write their user name and password. The facilitator will keep this information, and will ensure confidentiality of the information.

7. Complete the VIA Strengths Assessment.

8. Have students print out the copy of their strengths assessment, and the facilitator will keep it until the following week.

Check-In/Check-Out

1. Ask the group to get out their check in- check out forms.

2. Ask students how the lesson can be applied to their check-in/check-out sheets and to their overall goals.

3. Ask the students:

   How was the week? Who would like to share about something that happened this week, good or bad? How can we continue toward our goals?

4. Complete and review form with each student individually. If group is held at end of day and end of week, collect forms. If not, return forms to students to keep until end of week.
Alternate Activity: What are our strengths?

Purpose: To allow students to analyze and think about their strengths without the use of a computer

Materials: Strengths cards- Pre-cut out by facilitator (Appendix B3)
          “MY Strengths and Goals” template (B4)
          Whiteboard
          Writing Utensil

Time Frame: 25 minutes

Instructions:
1. Lay out strengths cards on the table.
2. Read the strengths on the cards out loud to the students.
3. Encourage the students to go around the room, look at the strengths cards and write the strengths that they see in themselves on their templates.
4. Facilitators can go around the room and assist students in identifying their strengths. Encourage the students that they can use strengths that are not listed on the cards as well.
5. Have the students fill out only the top part of the paper, and let them know that the rest of the form will be filled out the following week.
6. Once students have identified their own strengths, tell them, We all have strengths, but we all have areas that we want to develop as well. Now, we are going to take a few minutes to write down areas that we want to work on developing into strengths. Take a few minutes to write down areas that you want to develop.
7. Collect the students’ strengths sheets.
8. Over the week, ask the students to incorporate their strengths into a song or poem. Have them bring the song to share next week for group. Alternatively, students can work together in pairs in the session to create a song or poem, using an extra 10 minutes of the session time to do so (this may be preferred if there is concern around homework compliance).

Check-In/Check-Out
1. Ask the group to get out their check in- check out forms.
2. Ask students how the lesson can be applied to their check-in/check-out sheets and to their overall goals.
3. Ask the students: How was the week? Who would like to share about something that happened this week, good or bad? How can we continue toward our goals?
4. Complete and review form with each student individually. If group is held at end of day and end of week, collect forms. If not, return forms to students to keep until end of week.
Session 3
Understanding Our Strengths

Meeting Objective:
To analyze the results of the VIA strengths assessment completed in the session prior, or to set goals.

Icebreaker: Deep breathing techniques

Purpose: To teach students how to manage and cope with stressful situations (adapted from: Murray, M. & Pizzorno, J., 1998, p. 182)

Time Frame: 10 minutes

Instructions:
1. Ask the students if they have ever felt stressed or tense. Encourage them to share answers.
2. Ask the students how they handled the stress. Marvel over appropriate stress relieving techniques.
3. Ask students what did not work for them when it came to relieving stress.
4. Ask the students if they know how stress can affect the body. If needed, elaborate on their responses (stress can make you feel sick to your stomach/ give you a headache; cause you to lose sleep; make you feel tense; make you feel hot or sweaty; etc.).
5. Explain that today they are going to learn a five-minute technique to help combat stress. This technique can be used anytime, anywhere and will always be with them.
6. With the group sitting in a circle, the facilitator will say in a soft, calm voice:
   - Get comfortable in your seats.
   - Place both feet on the ground, slightly apart from each other.
   - Place one hand on your stomach, and one hand on your chest (demonstrate). You can close your eyes at any time.
   - Take a breath through your nose, and let it out through your mouth.
   - Focus on your breathing. Notice which hand is raising and falling with each breath you take.
   - Gently exhale most of the air out of your lungs.
   - Slowly breathe in through your nose, as you count to four, silently in your mind. Fill your stomach with air, and as you do, push your hand out with your breath.
   - As you breathe in, imagine the warmed air flowing in. Imagine this warmth flowing over all parts of your body.
   - Pause for one second, then slowly let the air out through your mouth as you count to six, silently in your mind. As you breathe out, your hand
should move in towards your body- as if your hand is pushing all of the air out of your stomach, all the way out your mouth. Good.

• As the air flows out, imagine all of your worries and stress leaving your body.

• Continue to breathe in through your nose as you count to four, filling your stomach with air. Feel your hand rise with each breath. Hold your breath in for four seconds. Push the air out of your stomach with your hand, out through your mouth, as you count to six. Feel your body relaxing.

Reflection Questions:
1. How do you feel after doing the deep breathing techniques?
2. Do you feel more relaxed? More tense?
3. Are your thoughts any different?
4. How can you use deep breathing in the future?

Activity: Analyzing VIA strengths assessment

Materials: Printed out copies of each students VIA Strengths assessment from the week prior


VIA strengths assessment from week prior, VIA interpretation manual

Time Frame: 15 minutes

Instructions:
1. With the students sitting in a group, explain:
   Today we are going to go over our top strengths as measured by the VIA strengths assessment.

2. Remind students:
   We all have strengths, and not every one of us will have the same strengths. We are all gifted differently, and no strength is better than another strength.

3. Pass out each student’s VIA strengths assessment.

4. Encourage the students to take a few minutes to look over their results.

5. Ask: Do any of your strengths surprise you? Do you agree with the results? Do you disagree with them? How can you see yourself using these strengths in every day life?


7. The facilitator should share a few of his/her top strengths, and how he/she uses them daily.
8. Have students pair off and share their strengths with one another. Ask them to imagine how they could use their strengths personally, at school, with friends, and in the community.
9. Give students 10 minutes to share strengths, and then ask for volunteers to share out how they think that they can use their strengths personally, at school, with friends, and in the community.
10. Thank the students for their participation, and allow them to keep the VIA strengths assessment.

Check-In/Check-Out
1. Ask the group to get out their check in- check out forms.
2. Ask students how the lesson can be applied to their check-in/check-out sheets and to their overall goals.
3. Ask the students:
   a. *How was the week? Who would like to share about something that happened this week, good or bad? How can we continue toward our goals?*
4. Complete and review form with each student individually. If group is held at end of day and end of week, collect forms. If not, return forms to students to keep until end of week.
Alternate Activity: Goal Setting
Materials: Goal Setting Sheet (Appendix B5)
Time Frame: 15 minutes

1. Say, “This week, we are going to work on developing goals using the strengths that you have found in yourselves.”
2. Ask the students “Did anyone create a song or a poem that they had come up with the week prior? Would anyone like to share?” Admire their efforts. If no one had thought of a song or poem, ask the students if anyone would like to share any of the strengths that they identified in themselves.
3. Pass out the students’ strengths sheets to them.
4. Ask the students, “Why is it important to set goals?” Help students brainstorm why it is important to set goals.
5. Ask the students, “Who has set a goal before and met it? Who has set a goal and didn’t meet it? What happened with the goal you did set? What happened with the goal that didn’t work out?”
6. Tell the students, “We are going to spend some time looking at how we can set some goals to develop other strengths. Our goals need to be SMART—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely.” (Appendix B5 for more information on SMART goals)
7. Tell the students, “Looking at what strengths you would like to develop, lets set some goals.” The facilitator should share a goal of what strength he/she would like to develop, and walk through the action steps of how to get there.
8. Explain to the students, “When looking at setting goals, it helps to look a realistic big goal, then break down that goal for how to get there. For example, some of you may wish to develop the strength of being a good student. One short term goal to becoming a good student could be attending all of my classes. Another short term goal could be to turn in all of my homework. When we complete our short term goals, they will help lead us to completing our big goal.”
9. Emphasize to the students that developing and reaching goals will help the students in their futures.
10. Encourage students to keep track of their goals, and check in with themselves to see if they are making progress towards their goals.
11. Assist students with setting realistic goals, and encourage the students to keep their goals where they can see them daily.

Check-In/Check-Out
1. Ask the group to get out their check-in/check-out forms.
2. Ask students how the lesson can be applied to their check-in/check-out sheets and to their overall goals.
3. Ask the students:
   a. *How was the week? Who would like to share about something that happened this week, good or bad? How can we continue toward our goals?*

4. Complete and review form with each student individually. If group is held at end of day and end of week, collect forms. If not, return forms to students to keep until end of week.
Session 4
Coping Skills

Meeting Objective
To identify ways to deal with school and life stressors. To address how students can deal with different situations without losing “self-control.” By the end of the session, students will have a list of coping skills and will demonstrate understanding of the skills through a role-play.

Purpose: To introduce the concept of coping skills in an interactive way that will enable students to think about their actions and responses.
Materials: Prizes/Incentives (one per group member), One pair of dice, Timer
Time Frame: 15 minutes

Instructions:
Explain to the students the following:
As we know, we cannot control everything that happens in our lives. Some things may happen at school or at home that may be too much to handle, or are out of our control. When these things happen, we may become easily upset or angry; we may also act out, as a means of gaining attention. Today we will learn how we feel when situations like this happen and skills we can use when things do not go our way. We will look to use our own resources to handle the situations that seem unfair to us. By the end of today’s group, each of you will be able to identify skills that you can use, and can begin practicing these skills.

1. Before beginning the activity, have students form a circle and place the gift items in the middle of the circle.
2. Tell students that the game will have two rounds (do not explain the second round until the first round is completed).
3. For the first round, have students take turns rolling the die. When a student rolls a double (same number on both dice), the student gets to select a prize from the middle. The die are passed to the next student if a double is not rolled.
4. Everyone in the group continues to roll dice for 5 minutes (or longer depending on availability of prizes), or until all prizes are retrieved from the middle pile.
5. After 5 minutes, facilitator will retrieve the die and announce to the students that round 2 will begin.
6. For this round, students who roll a double can pick a prize from the middle pile or take a prize (if prizes are present) from the remaining prizes or from someone who already won a prize.
7. This process continues until group facilitator decides to end (or after a set time limit).
8. Have students keep their prizes while reflection questions take place.
Reflection Questions
1. What was this game like for you?
2. When have you experienced a situation in school where something did not go your way?
3. How did you handle this?
4. How do you think you may have acted if you rolled doubles every time?
5. What would life be like if you could predict the outcomes to situations?
6. How do you know when are becoming angry?

**Depending on student responses, follow-up questions can be asked. **

Explain to the students that the skills they used in the game can be used in real life situations and in school. Tell the students to notice situations during the next week where they will have to use their coping skills to control their responses. Identify any student who did not receive a prize and acknowledge them for their cooperation in the game. Reward these student(s) with a prize.

**Activity: Coping Skills**

**Purpose:** To identify current coping skills and to learn new skills that can be used in environment.

**Materials:** List of coping skills handouts (Appendix B12 and B13)

**Time Frame:** 15 minutes

Instructions:
1. The facilitator asks students the following question, *How many of you have made a decision today?* (Students will then have the opportunity to talk about any decision they have made throughout the day.)
2. Facilitator will then acknowledge that experiencing stress when making decisions is part of everyday life. Stress is OK because it can give you a sense of responsibility. Facilitator will state the following or something similar: *A sense of responsibility is an awareness of the things that we do that we have control of; we have to understand that some things we do may cause more stress than others because we know that we are in control of the situations. The stress that comes from decision-making allows us to understand that our decisions directly impact us in both good and bad ways. Stress is harmful when we do not know how to monitor it. When this happens, it may impact the effectiveness of our coping skills. Some decisions that are made in school and at home take little thought, such as what to wear, or what to eat for lunch. Other decisions require more thought, such as, ‘saying no’ when you know it may upset someone, or fighting because you don’t want to seem like a wimp. Every decision has a cost.”*

3. Students will then be asked about any decisions that have had a cost, and how they coped with the stress caused by the cost.
4. The facilitator will pass out the “Coping Skills Sheet (Appendix B12).” Students will be asked to respond to how they would approach the situation. Facilitator will write down student responses on the white board or large paper tablet.

5. At the conclusion, students will identify positive coping skills and negative coping skills. Ask the students to review the negative coping skills and to think of a better way to handle the situation.

6. Leaders will then ask students to complete the coping skills handout. Each student will be asked to role-play each situation, using specific skills. The group facilitator will give feedback, based on the student’s performance.

7. Students will be asked if they would like to volunteer and give a scenario, in which another student must role play.

Reflection questions:
1. How can you remember to use more positive coping skills?
2. Is there any situation in which a positive coping skill cannot be used? Explain.
3. What kind of support do you need in using positive coping skills?

After students have answered, the facilitator will remind students that they should begin to practice coping skills on a daily basis.

Students will be allowed to take their coping skills sheet with them. On the back on the sheet, positive coping skills will be written and students will be told to refer to them. Students will also be told to think of the coping skills they use so that they may share them at a later time.

Check-In/Check-Out
1. Ask the group to get out their check in- check out forms.
2. Ask students how the lesson can be applied to their check-in/check-out sheets and to their overall goals.
3. Ask the students:
   How was the week? Who would like to share about something that happened this week, good or bad? How can we continue toward our goals?
4. Complete and review form with each student individually. If group is held at end of day and end of week, collect forms. If not, return forms to students to keep until end of week.
Session 5
Communication Across Settings

Meeting Objective:
Students will learn how to use effective communication skills at home and at school. Students will be able to identify the “effective” and “ineffective” ways of communication. Students will discuss the different types of communication they might use in different situations and environments. It introduces the idea that language/communication varies by context – and that it is important to understand that what might be acceptable and expected in one setting may not be appropriate in another.

Activity: Flipping the Switch (adapted from dol.gov)
Purpose: To help students recognize effective communication skills in different settings.
Materials: Flipping the Switch Handout (Appendix B14)
Time Frame: 15 minutes

Instructions:
1. Ask students to describe or demonstrate how they communicate with their friends. Then ask how they communicate with family members. Finally, ask how they are likely to communicate with their teachers.

2. Discuss the differences and similarities in the participants’ responses. Ask the group:
   - Why is each situation different?
   - What are the expectations of each listener?
   - What would happen if you greeted your friends in the way you greeted a teacher?
   - What would happen if you greeted a teacher the same way you greet your friends?

3. Facilitator will then explain the following:
Knowing how to communicate with people in the right context for a given situation is an important skill, as there are often unspoken rules and standards that are expected. For example, it’s common practice in the professional world to shake hands with people when meeting, rather than offering a high-five or a hug. We might use slang with our friends when talking about what happened at school or at a party, but we would usually use different words and expressions when telling our parents or teachers the same information.

4. Facilitator will pass out “Flipping the Switch” activity handout (Appendix B14). Students will be asked to discuss and “act-out” the different ways one might
communicate with different groups. Remind students to use BOTH verbal language (what we say and how we say it; i.e., tone of voice) and non-verbal language (facial expressions, behavior, body language, etc.) to demonstrate each scenario.

5. After students have completed the activity, the scenarios should be reviewed again. During the second review, the facilitator should “flip a light-switch” and call out the particular person or group the student should communicate with (i.e., teacher, friend, family). When the “lights switch,” students should instantly change the communication style based on the person being communicated with. After, the facilitator gathers the group for a discussion. Discuss the reflection questions with students, encouraging an honest dialogue.

Reflection Questions:
1. When the group changes, does the message change?
   a. Why or why not?
2. What are some examples of communication (both verbal and non-verbal) that you should always try to practice when communicating with a teacher or staff member at school?
3. How would your friends react to you if you communicated with them in the same way you would to a teacher or professional?

4. We all communicate differently with different people in our lives. Does the way you communicate (or say things) affect how others perceive you? Explain.

5. The facilitator should discuss the below information:
   *We build great relationships by learning to become great communicators. This is not always an easy task as we sometimes may experience barriers to communication especially in school. There are some barriers (things that block) effective communication in school. I will tell you eight barriers to communication and I want you to think about ways these barriers can be lessened or eliminated for successful communication. Some barriers that we commonly face are: physical, perceptual, emotional, cultural, language, gender, interpersonal, or generational.*

6. Write these barriers on the board or a large piece of paper. Discuss each barrier and allow students to express how these barriers may have affected their communication skills in school or at home. The facilitator may wish to emphasize the importance of non-verbal communication skills, as young people often overlook these skills. Ask if they can give an example of non-verbal communication cues specific to their culture. Discuss how we communicate without using any words at all, including how eye contact, tone of voice, and body language can all factor in.
Check-In/Check-Out

1. Ask the group to get out their check in- check out forms.
2. Ask students how the lesson can be applied to their check-in/check-out sheets and to their overall goals.
3. Ask the students:
   How was the week? Who would like to share about something that happened this week, good or bad? How can we continue toward our goals?
4. Complete and review form with each student individually. If group is held at end of day and end of week, collect forms. If not, return forms to students to keep until end of week.
Session 6
Restorative Circle 1

Meeting Objective:
Students will be introduced to the restorative circle process. Students will learn how their actions may affect others around them. In the circle, all issues facing the students since starting the “Steps-to-Success Academy” will be addressed. Students will also learn the importance of self-care and positive affirmations.

Icebreaker: I Can (adapted from: Larsen, L., 1999, CD 2)

Purpose: To allow students to think positively about themselves and to learn ways they can care for themselves, when others are unavailable to assist them.

Materials: Small coffee cans, or soup cans with labels peeled off (one for every student) Colored construction paper (enough to cover all cans), Tape, Colored markers, List of positive affirmations and list of self-care tips (located at end of session 7) pre-cut in small strips, and put into small sandwich baggies for each student.

Time Frame: 15 minutes

Instructions

1. Explain to the students the following:
   *We can’t control the things that happen to us, but we can control our response to them. Sometimes how we think about things that happen can make the negative feelings and stress we experience worse. Choosing to think positively about situations, learning to take care of yourself, and believing that you CAN, will reduce the harmful effects of stress, and will help you achieve your goals to create the life you want.*

2. Distribute the “baggies” full of the pre-cut self-affirmations, along with a can, to each student.

3. Explain to the students the following:
   *These will be your I-Cans. You will cover your I-Can with construction paper, and write a BIG letter “I” on it. If you want, you can write, “Success comes in cans!” We will be filling our I-Cans with positive affirmations and self-care tips (ways we can take care of ourselves). An affirmation is a strong positive statement. You can use affirmations to support your goals. Affirmations are a way of choosing to think positively about situations, yourself, and your life to change the outcome. Take out the pieces of paper that are in your baggies. Find some self-care tips and affirmations written*
on them. Call out the ones you like most and say whether you think it’s a self-care tip, or affirmation. You will be filling your I-Cans with these strips of paper.

4. As they call out self-care tips, and positive affirmations, write the self-care tips and positive affirmations in separate columns. There should be one column for self-care tips, and one column for the positive affirmations.

5. Ask the following questions regarding self-care tips. As the students answer the following questions, write the self-care tips in the self-care column.

• What are some things that you do that make you feel good/happy?
• What are some positive things you have done in the past when you were upset that made you feel better?
• Does anyone have any other ideas of ways they can take care of themselves when they are feeling stressed, or upset?

6. Let the students know that after they have finished decorating their cans, they will put all the strips of paper in them.

Reflection Questions
1. Where can you keep your I-Can?
2. In what ways can you use your I-Can?
3. How will you know when to use your I-Can?
4. How can you use the affirmations and self-care tips in your I-Can?
5. How can you add to your I-Can?
6. What will you add to your I-Can?
7. How will you know what to add to your I-Can?

Activity: Restorative Justice Circle (adapted from healthiersf.org/restorativepractices)

Purpose: This circle gives students an opportunity to name the things that are bothering them. When they do so, they find they are not alone. Teachers are sometimes surprised to learn that the things they are frustrated by are also a source of distress to students...even those who misbehave. This activity provides a foundation for restorative discussions in future circles.

Materials: Talking Piece (to be used in circle), Paper or whiteboard

Time Frame: 15 minutes

Instructions:

Students will develop a list (by writing or verbal expression) of things that affect them or
other students in negative ways. Students will have an open and honest discussion of the issues affecting their classroom functioning.

1. Move into a circle and invite students to set up the center of the circle.

2. Introduce the talking piece (it is an object that helps to keep order in the group.) The leader will hold the object in the air and introduce it as the talking piece. It should be stated that whoever has the talking piece has permission to talk. If a member does not have the talking piece, the students must respect others and wait their turn. Passing the talking piece around the circle ask, “What is an example of a time when something someone did affected the feelings of others around them? Don’t use names.” Allow students to discuss specific moments or times.

3. State the following:

A ripple is what happens when you drop a pebble into a pond of water. Long after the pebble has settled to the bottom, it still sends out a series of rings that reach to the edges of the pond. Every action we take also sends out ripples into our lives. People are affected in different ways, depending upon what type of ripple we are sending out. What are some examples?

4. Allow students to share examples. Then state,

Let’s make a list of things people do that send ripples out into our classroom and school. Ask students to recall particular events that may have resulted in disciplinary action or a broken relationship between others. Allow students to recall any specific life events that have shaped who they are today.

It’s a good idea to write the list on a large piece of paper so you can save it and refer to it in the next meeting.

5. Ask the students to help you divide the list into ripple effects they like and ripple effects they don’t like.

Note to facilitator: “This can be a lively activity and some strong feelings may emerge. Let students know that they will be working with this list in the next circle to begin discussing how they are affected by some of the behaviors, and to begin examining how the events have impacted their lives and functioning at school. The circles will provide an opportunity to begin working toward making things better. Explain to students that in future circles they will be invited to discuss the issues that affect them in greater detail to hopefully begin to eliminate some of the disruptive or maladaptive school behaviors. If most students have been engaged and are sharing openly, invite them to share the one thing from the list made during today’s discussion that seemed most relevant to their personal experience in school. If students are not sharing openly yet, ask them for a less risky checkout question; two or three words about the circle experience is appropriate.
(healththiersf.org/restorativepractices).”

Check-In/Check-Out
1. Ask the group to get out their check in- check out forms.
2. Ask students how the lesson can be applied to their check-in/check-out sheets and to their overall goals.
3. Ask the students:
   How was the week? Who would like to share about something that happened this week, good or bad? How can we continue toward our goals?
4. Complete and review form with each student individually. If group is held at end of day and end of week, collect forms. If not, return forms to students to keep until end of week.
Meeting Objective:
This circle will directly engage students in using restorative questions and working in circles to discuss and begin to resolve conflicts and problems. It is helpful to repeat this kind of circle for two or three (or more) circles, so that all students have an opportunity to participate and several issues can be discussed. Students will be informed that they can return to this method again and again if needed in the future by requesting a circle. Students will use also use Restorative Questions to discuss issues affecting the classroom. Students will experience a fishbowl circle format and will gain experience with asking restorative questions.

Activity: Restorative Circle (adapted from healthiersf.org/restorativepractices)
Purpose: To continue to introduce and teach students restorative practices to help them in the school setting.
Materials: Rules (established in 1st session) posted on wall, list of issues that the students identified in previous circle (posted), chairs, talking piece, Restorative Questions (Appendix B15)

Time Frame: 30 minutes

Instructions
1. Ask students for suggestions for a check-in question. Choose one (or combine a couple). Use the talking piece. Students should be allowed to come up with their own question that they may have for the group.
2. Read from the posted list of issues (identified by the class in the previous circle), asking about each issue, “How many students are bothered by this?” Invite the students to notice which issues have the most response.
3. Choose one of the issues and ask students to think of a specific event or circumstance wherein they have been affected by the issue. Ask them to raise their hands when they have thought of something.

Move into Fishbowl setting
1. Ask for two volunteers who are willing to tell their stories of when and how they were affected by the selected issue, without using names or identifying the people who were involved. When you have volunteers, move your chair into the circle and have the volunteers also move their chairs in, so together you form a small inner circle of two people (and yourself) inside the larger circle of students. During this circle, you will not need a talking piece. The restorative questions should be displayed on a large poster board. Restorative questions are located in Appendix.

State the following:

(to student volunteers in the inner circle) Each one of you will get to answer the restorative questions that you see on the posters and to tell about the incident or situation you have in mind. You will have the opportunity to ask the group for ideas if you wish.

(to students observers) This type of circle is called ‘fishbowl.’ The students who are not in the inner circle, and instead in the fishbowl, have an important role. Not only will you help hold a positive space for problem-solving, because of the distance you have from the circle you will likely see things differently, and, therefore, you may have ideas that are not obvious to the people in the circle. It’s important for each of you to listen carefully. If you have something you would like to contribute, you can raise your hand. The student who is the focus (answering the questions) will decide if he or she wants to call on you.

2. Ask who wants to go first of the 2 students in the inner circle. The facilitator will ask the student who decides to go first the restorative questions in the same order they appear on the poster. Important: be obvious about looking at the poster and reading the questions exactly as they appear. It is very important to model asking the questions (and perhaps a few prompts) in a neutral tone without embellishments so students don’t get the idea that the person asking the questions is trying to act as a counselor, mediator, or problem solver. Ask the student volunteer to proceed in asking the questions.
The illustration shows a fishbowl setting. Group should be formatted in the same way; picture shows three students in center; however, only two students should be in center, along with the group facilitator.

3. Watch for opportunities to involve the other students in the center fishbowl. Include students in the outer circle, particularly if the volunteer seems stuck. Let them ask for ideas and call on people who have their hands raised. When their sharing seems complete, ask volunteer 1, “Do you feel complete for now?” Explain to the student that in order to feel complete, they would have explained the situation in entirety and how the situation has affected them. The facilitator may also want to ask the student to include any other details relevant to the event so that they may feel that the event is “out in the open” and ready to be discussed. If the answer is no, the facilitator should ask the student what more is needed to say or what should be discussed so that the circle has the complete details of the situation and its effect on the student. This creates an opportunity to resolve anything that still needs attention.

4. The facilitator will turn to volunteer 1 (who answered the questions), and will say *You will ask the questions now.*
The facilitator focus will be on coaching the student who is asking the questions, while volunteer 1 will focus on the student who is responding (volunteer 2).

5. The facilitator will coach and encourage volunteer 1 as necessary to ask volunteer 2 the restorative questions, in the same order they appear on the poster. Important: encourage volunteer 1 to read the questions from the poster, exactly as they appear. If necessary, you can add prompts. Continue to watch for opportunities to involve the other students in the outer circle, particularly if the student who is sharing seems stuck. Let volunteer 2 ask for ideas from the circle and call on people who have their hands raised. After volunteer 2 has responded to all the questions ask, *Do you feel complete for now?* If their answer is no ask, *What do you need to feel complete?*(explain the process of feeling “complete”, as stated in previous section.)
Say to volunteer 2, *You will ask the questions now.*

6. Continue with same process until all students have had a chance to answer. That is, after each person in the inner circle has asked a question and has had a chance to answer the questions, two different students will enter the inner circle. Students will switch seats to come into the middle of the circle if they are asking/responding to questions. Only two students will be in the middle of the circle at any given time. Continue to watch for opportunities to involve the other students in the fishbowl, and the students in the outer circle, particularly if the student who is sharing seems stuck.

After each student has answered a set of restorative questions regarding the particular event, ask, *Do you feel complete for now?* If their answer is no, ask, *What do you need to feel complete?* (explain the process of feeling “complete”, as stated in previous section.)

---

**Ask students to come up with ways that they can request a circle in the future.**  
If time is available, create a “suggestion box” that students can use to request a circle.

---

**Closing Round**
Using the talking piece, ask students to share what today’s circle was like for them. Fishbowl circles can also be used for the positive behaviors that the students listed. Try focusing on the positives by using the exact same questions. Some groups will take to this readily. Others will not want to participate; for these classes, kindness and affection may be socially riskier than confrontation!

Circle leaders can use optional prompts to help students answer questions and tell their stories more effectively.

Some useful prompts are listed:

1. *From your point of view, what happened?*
   - *This isn’t about proving what happened; it’s about hearing each person’s story or perspective.*
   - *Think back to the event and just tell how it happened, as you experienced it.*

2. *What do you remember thinking at the time?*
   - *What thoughts went through your head as it happened?*
   - *What have you thought about the incident since?*
   - *(After others have shared): How have your thoughts changed after hearing what others have shared?*
3. **How have you been affected? How have others been affected?**
   a. What kinds of impacts has this had on you? On others?
   b. What has been the hardest thing for you about this?
4. **What would you like to happen next?**
   a. What can be done to help make things right?
   b. Is there anything you would like to ask for? Anything you would like to offer?
5. **What feelings or needs are still with you?**

To end the discussion, ask students what it was like to participate in the circle and if they have any issues that they still feel need to be addressed.

**Check-In/Check-Out**
1. Ask the group to get out their check in- check out forms.
2. Ask students how the lesson can be applied to their check-in/check-out sheets and to their overall goals.
3. Ask the students:
   *How was the week? Who would like to share about something that happened this week, good or bad? How can we continue toward our goals?*
4. Complete and review form with each student individually. If group is held at end of day and end of week, collect forms. If not, return forms to students to keep until end of week.
Session 8
Goodbyes and Overcoming Roadblocks

Meeting Objective: To wrap up the group and give the students closure from the group. This session should be fun.

Icebreaker: Recap of the group
Purpose: For students to identify possible roadblocks that they will encounter after the group ends, and develop strategies to overcome them.
Materials: Snacks (if possible, to be provided by the facilitator; check on any food allergies beforehand)
Time Frame: 15 minutes

Instructions
1. Pass out and allow students to eat snacks if they are available that day.
2. The group leader will open the discussion and say, 
   *I have had the opportunity to see so much growth in you all over the past 7 weeks that we have been together, and I am tremendously proud of all of you. I am interested to hear what you all learned from the group.*
3. Write down the students’ responses on the board.
4. Ask the students, 
   *Many of the sessions focused on overcoming challenges and developing strategies for stressful situations. How do you see yourselves using these strategies when we don’t meet for group anymore?*
5. Encourage the students to keep in touch with one another after the group ends as a support to one another.
6. Ask students, 
   *What do you feel is missing from the group? What could we do better in the future to assist you as students?*
7. Write down the students’ responses on the board.
8. Congratulate the students on their growth.
**Activity:** Compliments

**Purpose:** For students to acknowledge the strengths and virtues that they see in one another.

**Materials:** Blank piece of paper with each of the students’ first names printed on it, Colorful writing utensils (markers, color pencils, etc.)

**Time Frame:** 15 minutes

1. **Tell the students**
   
   *Today we are going to do an activity where we acknowledge the strengths that we see in each other. These strengths can be things that you have seen in each other in our group time together, or they can be strengths that you have seen in each other in classes together. You will each get a piece of paper. Please write your name at the top, and, when I tell you to, you will pass the paper to your right to the student next to you. That student will write something positive on it. We will all pass our papers to the person next to us at the same time.*

2. **Pass out the students’ blank piece of paper and writing utensils.**

3. **Facilitator walks around the group to assist with students’ spelling and writing needs.**

4. **Give the students one or two minutes to write something about one another.**

5. **Make sure that the facilitators write something on each of the students’ papers.**

6. **After the papers have gone around the whole circle, allow the students’ to read what others wrote about them.**

7. **Did anything written on your paper surprise you? Is it hard or easy for you to read the nice things people think about you? Would anyone like to share something that is written on your paper?**

At the end of the session, students will be given the pre/post test to complete, as a way for the facilitators to collect data.
Appendix B1

Teacher Referral

Steps to Success

Teacher Referral Form

Dear ____________________, Date:

The counseling and psychology department at XYZ Middle School are currently seeking students who are currently exhibiting behavior challenges in the classroom. These referred students will have the opportunity to participate and benefit from a small group experience. The group will focus on building skills such as:

- Goal Setting
- Developing Strengths
- Coping Skills
- Communication
- Behavior Management

The Steps to Success group is intended to foster appropriate behavior and coping skills. The students selected to participate will have the opportunity to make many positive contributions, as well as gain from the genuine interactions with others. We are looking for your recommendations of students you think will benefit.

The group will meet every Wednesday for 45-50 minutes for eight sessions, starting on 00/00/00. Students will be held accountable for any school work missed during the group sessions. In addition, students will be placed in a check-in/check-out system, where they will be held accountable for their behaviors.

Please fill out and return the attached referral form no later than 00/00/00 to the counseling department.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

______________________________
Counseling/ Psychology Department
Teacher Referral Form

Student Name: ________________________________________

Teacher: ______________________________________________

Grade: ________________________

Date: _________________________

1. Why do you think this student will benefit from participating in this group?
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

2. What skills do you feel this student excels in? What would you like to see them develop?
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

Appendix B2

Parent letter sample

Date: 00/00/0000

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The mission of the counseling and psychology department at XYZ School is to provide students the skills to be successful at school and in life. As part of this mission, we offer a variety of small groups throughout the school year. We would like to invite your child________________________________, to participate in a small group experience that focuses on developing coping skills, understanding and using their strengths, goal setting, and stress management, among other skills. It is our belief that all students have something to contribute and something to gain during this group experience. The group will meet for 7 sessions once a week for forty-five minutes during the school day, beginning _________________. Weekly skills sheets will be sent home to parents to share what your student worked on during group, and offer suggestions of how you can help your student use the skill at home.

The specific meeting time will be determined with teachers to ensure the least impact on the student’s academic, though students will be responsible for any work missed during the meetings. Teachers are supportive of this group experience and have agreed to work with participating students to ensure that no schoolwork is missed.

In addition to giving permission for your child to participate in this group, we are asking permission to collect information about your child’s grades, attendance, and disciplinary history as a way for us to measure the effectiveness of our group improving your child’s academic success. In addition, participants in the group will be a part of a weekly check in-check out system, where they will set daily goals and their teachers will help them rate if they met those set goals. The goal sheets will be sent home daily with a parent signature line to facilitate home to school participation.

Participation in the group is voluntary and confidential. However, there are certain situations which confidentiality must be breached including situations where student’s safety is compromised. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the facilitators at (xxx)xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

______________________________
Group Facilitator
I give permission for my child to participate in the group

I do not give permission for my child to participate in the group

Student’s name and grade

Parent name

Parent signature

Date
### Appendix B3
#### Strength Cards

<table>
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<th>Goofy</th>
<th>Come to school everyday</th>
<th>Volunteer somewhere</th>
<th>Friendly</th>
<th>Kind</th>
<th>Loving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>Good Reader</td>
<td>Good at Math</td>
<td>Good at Science</td>
<td>Good Athlete</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>Musical</td>
<td>Generous</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Appreciate Beauty</td>
<td>Leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B4

My Strengths and Goals

My strengths:

_______________________________________

_______________________________________

How I can use my strengths at home:

_______________________________________

_______________________________________

How I can use my strengths at school:

_______________________________________

_______________________________________

How I can use my strengths in my community:

_______________________________________

_______________________________________

Strengths I would like to develop:

_______________________________________

_______________________________________

My Long-term goal to develop this strength is:

_______________________________________

_______________________________________

Why I choose this goal

_______________________________________

_______________________________________

_______________________________________
When will I reach this goal:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My First Short-term goal to reach the Long-term goal is:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My Second Short-term goal to reach the Long-term goal is:

________________________________________________________________________
Appendix B5

**SMART GOALS**

**Specific:** A specific goal addresses as many descriptor questions as possible (Who, What, When, Where, Why and How). It has a greater chance of being met if a specific plan is made for its completion.

**Measurable:** This involves deciding how to measure that the goal is attained; a finish line has to be set before it can be crossed.

**Attainable:** To properly set a goal, you must set the steps that are necessary to reach it. This scaffolding ensures that the goal actually is attainable, and therefore produces motivation as the goal’s completion has become a reality.

**Realistic:** A goal must be set in the spirit of desiring its completion. In setting a goal, one can determine if it’s realistic by asking the following questions: Am I capable of attaining this goal? Am I willing to work for this goal? Setting an unrealistic goal will often result in a decrease in motivation over time.

**Timely:** Setting the goal within a time frame helps to motivate; without an end goal, there is no set limit to help drive the goal’s completion.
Appendix B6

Parent/Teacher correspondence to send home

Session #1: Meeting Fellow Steps-To-Success Participants

Dear Parent;

We spent our session getting to know one another by playing getting to know you games! We also set up some general group guidelines. We will be looking at understanding more about our strengths next week.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions, and we thank you for being a valuable partner in your child’s education!

Dear Teacher;

We spent our session getting to know one another by playing getting to know you games! We also set up some general group guidelines. We will be looking at understanding more about our strengths next week.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions!

Session #2: Discovering Our Strengths

Dear Parent;

This week we spent some time taking a survey that analyzed our personal strengths. Our goal is to look at how our strengths can be used at home, in the community, and at school. This week, please talk to your child about your own strengths and strengths you see in them. Tell your child how you use your strengths, and encourage them to think about how they can use their strengths as well.
Also, look for the check-in check-out forms to start coming home! This will give you an idea of your child’s goals, and how they are doing at school.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions and we thank you for being a valuable partner in your child’s education!

Dear Teacher,

This week we spent some time taking a survey that analyzed your student’s personal strengths. Our goal is to look at how our strengths can be used at home, in the community, and at school. This week, please highlight strengths you see in your students. These can include things like being friendly, being a good student, a good leader, or many more.

Also, look for the check-in check-out forms that the students will start bringing to class! This will give you an idea of your student’s goals, and what they are trying to work on.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions or would like more resources on this topic!

________________________________________________________________________

Session #3: Understanding Our Strengths

Dear Parent;

This week was a continuation of our work looking at your child’s strengths. Your child should have a good idea of what their strengths are, and how they can use them at home, in the community, and at school. Help them build on their personal strengths by acknowledging them and helping them to find tasks at home where they can use these strengths.

Remember to keep looking for the check-in check-out forms!

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions, and we thank you for being such a valuable partner in your child’s education!
Dear Teacher;

This week was a continuation of our work looking at your student’s strengths. Your student should have a good idea of what their strengths are, and how they can use them at home, in the community, and at school. Help them build on their personal strengths by acknowledging them and helping them to find tasks at school where they can use these strengths.

Remember to keep looking for the check-in check-out forms!

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions, or if you would like more resources on this topic!

Session #4: Coping Skills

Dear Parent;

We spent our session this week identifying positive and negative coping skills for various situations that occur in life. Your child was able to understand how they cope and identified new ways to cope. A coping skills handout was also provided and it is our hope that you can review these skills with your child. Thanks for being a valuable partner in your child’s life. Please let me know how I can be of any assistance. I look forward to next week.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions, and we thank you for being such a valuable partner in your child’s education!

Dear Teacher;

We spent our session identifying coping skills and how to deal with stressors. Your student was sent with a list of coping skills and was taught how to use positive coping strategies. Please encourage these skills in your classroom. If interested, I can email or leave a copy of our coping skills handout that may benefit your classroom. In addition, if you notice any of the “Steps-to-Success Academy” members having a difficult time with using effective coping skills, please feel free to let me know. We will continue to use these skills throughout our time together.
Session #5: Communication Across Settings

Dear Parent;

We spent our session this week identifying different communication styles in various settings. Your child was taught how to appropriately communicate in the school environment and how communication is key in building relationships. Your student then practiced these communication skills in a fun and interactive way, where they were able to “flip the switch” and change their communication styles. You are encouraged to practice these skills with your child at home and to remind them how important effective communication is. If you need any assistance, or would like additional resources on this topic, please feel free to contact me. Thanks so much for being a valued partner in your child’s education. We look forward to next week where your child will be introduced to the restorative circle process.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions!

Dear Teacher;

We spent our session identifying effective communication skills across settings. As you may know, some of your students may have difficulty using effective communication in the classroom environment. Feel free to remind your students to “flip the switch” (switch communication styles) to aid in effective communication in the school setting. Also, please continue to encourage these skills in your classroom. If I can be of any assistance in this process, please let me know. Also, if you notice any of the “Steps-to-Success Academy” members having a difficult time with using effective communication skills, please feel free to let me know. We will continue to use these skills throughout our time together.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions!
Session #6 and #7: Restorative Circles

Dear Parent;

The next two weeks of the Steps-to-Success Academy will be geared toward restorative circles. Your student will be introduced to restorative practices and will learn how his/her actions can have a lasting effect on everyone around them, including him or herself. In our first circle, we learned about the “circle process” and came up with situations that have affected us as a whole (in school and in life). Your student was allowed to express how these situations may have caused a “ripple effect.” I encourage you to communicate with your student and to see if they are open with sharing more about these situations. The second circle will help to identify the specifics of the situations and allow your child to practice reflection so that he/she can begin to solve his/her own conflicts and problems. Your child will also be taught how to appropriately listen to others, so that he/she may understand how people experience different viewpoints. Your child will be encouraged to continue to practice these skills in school and in life. If you need any assistance, or would like additional resources on this topic, please feel free to contact me. Thanks so much for being a valued partner in your child’s education.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions!

Dear Teacher;

The next two weeks of the Steps-to-Success Academy will be geared toward restorative circles. Your student will be introduced to restorative practices and will learn how his/her actions can have a lasting effect on everyone around him/her (especially in the school setting). Your student was able to express how these situations may have caused a “ripple effect.” Throughout these circles, it is my hope that your student will learn effective ways to cope and solve problems. The second circle will help to identify the specifics of the situations that may have affected your student’s functioning in school. Your student will also be taught how to appropriately listen to others, so that he/she may understand how his/her actions affect others. During this process, please imagine how these students may be feeling as they are beginning to recognize and restore broken relationships. Imagining how the students are feeling can help in the process, as empathy is very important. If you need any assistance, or would like additional resources on this topic, or if you would like to introduce restorative circles in your class, please feel free to contact me. Please encourage your student to use restorative skills.

Thanks so much for being a valued partner!

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions!
Session #8: Goodbyes

Dear Parent;

We had our last session of the Steps-to-Success Academy group. We had a wonderful time together, and your child has exhibited a lot of growth. Thank you for the opportunity to work with him/her. I will continue to check in with your child periodically throughout the school year. In addition, if your child did not achieve 80% or higher on their Check-In/Check-Out forms, they will continue with this intervention. Thanks.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions!

Dear Teacher;

We had our last session of our group of the Steps-to-Success Academy. We had a wonderful time together, and your student has exhibited a lot of growth. I will continue to check in with your student periodically throughout the school year. In addition, if your student did not achieve 80% or higher on their Check-In/Check-Out forms, they will continue with this intervention. Thanks.

Please feel free to contact: _______________________________ at (000) 000-0000 if you have any questions!
Appendix B7

Biases

Teachers: As part of a large group activity, you are asked to take: Project Implicit's Hidden Bias Tests. The tests range from 5-10 minutes and will provide great information for a discussion. You can access the tests online free-of-charge at: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html. Again, it would be greatly appreciated if you participated. Thanks so much.

About Stereotypes and Prejudices  Hidden Bias Tests measure unconscious or automatic biases. Your willingness to examine your own possible biases is an important step in understanding the roots of stereotypes and prejudice in our society.

The ability to distinguish friend from foe helped early humans survive, and the ability to quickly and automatically categorize people is a fundamental quality of the human mind. Categories give order to life, and every day, we group other people into categories based on social and other characteristics. This is the foundation of stereotypes, prejudice and, ultimately, discrimination.

Definition of terms

A **stereotype** is an exaggerated belief, image or distorted truth about a person or group — a generalization that allows for little or no individual differences or social variation. Stereotypes are based on images in mass media, or reputations passed on by parents, peers and other members of society. Stereotypes can be positive or negative.

A **prejudice** is an opinion, prejudgment or attitude about a group or its individual members. A prejudice can be positive, but in our usage refers to a negative attitude.

Prejudices are often accompanied by ignorance, fear or hatred. Prejudices are formed by a complex psychological process that begins with attachment to a close circle of acquaintances or an "in-group" such as a family. Prejudice is often aimed at "out-groups."

**Discrimination** is behavior that treats people unequally because of their group memberships. Discriminatory behavior, ranging from slights to hate crimes, often begins with negative stereotypes and prejudices.
How do we learn prejudice? Social scientists believe children begin to acquire prejudices and stereotypes as toddlers. Many studies have shown that as early as age 3, children pick up terms of racial prejudice without really understanding their significance.

Soon, they begin to form attachments to their own group and develop negative attitudes about other racial or ethnic groups, or the "out-group." Early in life, most children acquire a full set of biases that can be observed in verbal slurs, ethnic jokes and acts of discrimination.

How are our biases reinforced? Once learned, stereotypes and prejudices resist change, even when evidence fails to support them or points to the contrary.

People will embrace anecdotes that reinforce their biases, but disregard experience that contradicts them. The statement "Some of my best friends are _____" captures this tendency to allow some exceptions without changing our bias.

How do we perpetuate bias? Bias is perpetuated by conformity with in-group attitudes and socialization by the culture at large. The fact that White culture is dominant in America may explain why people of color often do not show a strong bias favoring their own ethnic group.

Mass media routinely take advantage of stereotypes as shorthand to paint a mood, scene or character. The elderly, for example, are routinely portrayed as being frail and forgetful, while younger people are often shown as vibrant and able.

Stereotypes can also be conveyed by omission in popular culture, as when TV shows present an all-White world. Psychologists theorize bias conveyed by the media helps to explain why children can adopt hidden prejudices even when their family environments explicitly oppose them.

About Hidden Bias Scientific research has demonstrated that biases thought to be absent or extinguished remain as "mental residue" in most of us. Studies show people can be consciously committed to egalitarianism, and deliberately work to behave without prejudice, yet still possess hidden negative prejudices or stereotypes.

"Implicit Association Tests" (IATs) can tap those hidden, or automatic, stereotypes and prejudices that circumvent conscious control. Project Implicit offers a variety of tests designed to look at these areas.

The IAT procedure is believed to be useful beyond the research purposes for which it was originally developed. It may be a tool that can jumpstart thinking processes about
hidden biases: Where do they come from? How do they influence our actions? What can we do about them?

**Biases and behavior** A growing number of studies show a link between hidden biases and actual behavior. In other words, hidden biases can reveal themselves in action, especially when a person's efforts to control behavior consciously flags under stress, distraction, relaxation or competition.

Unconscious beliefs and attitudes have been found to be associated with language and certain behaviors such as eye contact, blinking rates and smiles.

**Studies have found, for example, that school teachers clearly telegraph prejudices, so much so that some researchers believe children of color and white children in the same classroom effectively receive different educations.**

A now classic experiment showed that white interviewers sat farther away from black applicants than from white applicants, made more speech errors and ended the interviews 25% sooner. Such discrimination has been shown to diminish the performance of anyone treated that way, whether black or white.

Experiments are being conducted to determine whether a strong hidden bias in someone results in more discriminatory behavior. But we can learn something from even the first studies:

- Those who showed greater levels of implicit prejudice toward, or stereotypes of, black or gay people were more unfriendly toward them.

- Subjects who had a stronger hidden race bias had more activity in a part of the brain known to be responsible for emotional learning when shown black faces than when shown white faces.

**Leading to discrimination?** Whether laboratory studies adequately reflect real-life situations is not firmly established. But there is growing evidence, according to social scientists, that hidden biases are related to discriminatory behavior in a wide range of human interactions, from hiring and promotions to choices of housing and schools.

In the case of police, bias may affect split-second, life-or-death decisions. Shootings of black men incorrectly thought to be holding guns — an immigrant in New York, a cop in Rhode Island — brought this issue into the public debate.

It is possible unconscious prejudices and stereotypes may also affect court jury
deliberations and other daily tasks requiring judgments of human character.

People who argue that prejudice is not a big problem today are, ironically, demonstrating the problem of unconscious prejudice. Because these prejudices are outside our awareness, they can indeed be denied.

**The Effects of Prejudice and Stereotypes** Hidden bias has emerged as an important clue to the disparity between public opinion, as expressed by America's creed and social goals, and the amount of discrimination that still exists.

Despite 30 years of equal-rights legislation, levels of poverty, education and success vary widely across races. Discrimination continues in housing and real estate sales, and racial profiling is a common practice, even among ordinary citizens.

Members of minorities continue to report humiliating treatment by store clerks, co-workers and police. While an African American man may dine in a fine restaurant anywhere in America, it can be embarrassing for him to attempt to flag down a taxi after that dinner.

A person who carries the stigma of group membership must be prepared for its debilitating effects.

Studies indicate that African American teenagers are aware they are stigmatized as being intellectually inferior and that they go to school bearing what psychologist Claude Steele has called a "burden of suspicion." Such a burden can affect their attitudes and achievement.

Similarly, studies found that when college women are reminded their group is considered bad at math, their performance may fulfill this prophecy.

These shadows hang over stigmatized people no matter their status or accomplishments. They must remain on guard and bear an additional burden that may affect their self-confidence, performance and aspirations. These stigmas have the potential to rob them of their individuality and debilitate their attempts to break out of stereotypical roles.

**What You Can Do About Unconscious Stereotypes and Prejudices** Conscious attitudes and beliefs can change.

The negative stereotypes associated with many immigrant groups, for example, have largely disappeared over time. For African-Americans, civil rights laws forced integration and nondiscrimination, which, in turn, helped to change public opinion.
But psychologists have no ready roadmap for undoing such overt and especially hidden stereotypes and prejudices.

**Learned at an early age** The first step may be to admit biases are learned early and are counter to our commitment to just treatment. Parents, teachers, faith leaders and other community leaders can help children question their values and beliefs and point out subtle stereotypes used by peers and in the media. Children should also be surrounded by cues that equality matters.

In his classic book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, the psychologist Gordon Allport observed children are more likely to grow up tolerant if they live in a home that is supportive and loving. "They feel welcome, accepted, loved, no matter what they do."

In such an environment, different views are welcomed, punishment is not harsh or capricious, and these children generally think of people positively and carry a sense of goodwill and even affection.

**Community matters** Integration, by itself, has not been shown to produce dramatic changes in attitudes and behavior. But many studies show when people work together in a structured environment to solve shared problems through community service, their attitudes about diversity can change dramatically.

By including members of other groups in a task, children begin to think of themselves as part of a larger community in which everyone has skills and can contribute. Such experiences have been shown to improve attitudes across racial lines and between people old and young.

There also is preliminary evidence that unconscious attitudes, contrary to initial expectations, may be malleable. For example, imagining strong women leaders or seeing positive role models of African Americans has been shown to, at least temporarily, change unconscious biases.

**'Feeling' unconscious bias** But there is another aspect of the very experience of taking a test of hidden bias that may be helpful. Many test takers can "feel" their hidden prejudices as they perform the tests.

They can feel themselves unable to respond as rapidly to (for example) old + good concepts than young + good concepts. The very act of taking the tests can force hidden biases into the conscious part of the mind.

We would like to believe that when a person has a conscious commitment to change, the
very act of discovering one's hidden biases can propel one to act to correct for it. It may not be possible to avoid the automatic stereotype or prejudice, but it is certainly possible to consciously rectify it.

**Committing to change** If people are aware of their hidden biases, they can monitor and attempt to ameliorate hidden attitudes before they are expressed through behavior. This compensation can include attention to language, body language and to the stigmatization felt by target groups.

Common sense and research evidence also suggest that a change in behavior can modify beliefs and attitudes. It would seem logical that a conscious decision to be egalitarian might lead one to widen one's circle of friends and knowledge of other groups. Such efforts may, over time, reduce the strength of unconscious biases.

It can be easy to reject the results of the tests as "not me" when you first encounter them. But that's the easy path. To ask where these biases come from, what they mean, and what we can do about them is the harder task.

Recognizing that the problem is in many others — as well as in ourselves — should motivate us all to try both to understand and to act.

*Taken from: http://www.tolerance.org/activity/test-yourself-hidden-bias*
Appendix B8

Examining Your Own Biases

I identify myself as _____________________________ (insert ethnicity)

For each ethnicity or group, please list any stereotypes you may have heard (these can be negative or positive)

**African American/ Black**

**Hispanic**

- Has there ever been a time where your identity affected the way you were treated?
- Please think about the IAT activity and be prepared to share any new things you may have learned from the experience.
- Have you ever assumed a positive or negative trait about a particular person without getting to know them?

Please take a minute to reflect on your answers. We will share them aloud in the group setting. Thank you.
Appendix B9

Sample Check-In/Check-Out Program

To the parent/guardian of: ________________________________________

Your student has been recommended for the Check-In/Check-Out Program. This is a program designed to help students meet our school-wide expectations in a positive manner. Your student will be assigned a coordinator and will be responsible for checking-in with that person each morning and checking-out again at the end of the day.

A report will be filled out daily by the teacher(s) and the coordinator will review the report at check-in/out time. Once per week, the report will also be reviewed in the Steps-To-Success group. We request that you also review and sign the report each night. Your participation will also help to encourage positive behavior with your student. In addition, students will earn incentives and rewards for appropriate behavior. These rewards will be chosen by the student and coordinator at the beginning of the program. As parents, you are responsible for making sure your child arrives on time each day for check-in and that you review and sign the daily report card. If at anytime you have any questions, you may contact the school directly and speak with the school psychologist. Together, we all can make this a positive experience and aid your child toward success in school and in life!

Thank you for your cooperation in this program. You are an important team member in supporting your student’s success. Please contact our school psychologist, if you have any questions at ___________________.

Please check only one:

______________ I do give consent for my child to participate.

______________ I do not give consent for my child to participate.

Parent/Guardian ____________________________ Date __________

Please return signed form to the front office

Adapted from Jessica Yergat, Polk Elementary School
### Check in Check out daily report card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name: ___________________________</th>
<th>Date: ________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My goal for today is: ___________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal for Today: ______%  Total for Today: ______%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your student did great in the following areas: ____________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifically, your student had some difficulty with meeting the expectation of:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______________________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Signature ______________________</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Strive for Five Check in Check out daily report card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name: ___________________________</th>
<th>Date: ________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My goal for today is: ___________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal for Today: ______%  Total for Today: ______%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your student did great in the following areas: ____________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifically, your student had some difficulty with meeting the expectation of:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>______________________________________</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Signature ______________________</td>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal for Today: ______%  Total for Today: ______%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your student did great in the following areas: ____________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifically, your student had some difficulty with meeting the expectation of:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______________________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Signature ______________________</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal for Today: _____% Total for Today: _____%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your student did great in the following areas:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifically, your student had some difficulty with meeting the expectation of:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Signature ________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Strive for Five Check in Check out daily report card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name: __________________________</th>
<th>Date: ____________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My goal for today is: ___________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal for Today: _____% Total for Today: _____%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your student did great in the following areas:</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Specifically, your student had some difficulty with meeting the expectation of:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Signature ________________________</td>
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</table>

Adapted from Jessica Yergat, Polk Elementary School
Appendix B11

Check-In/Check-Out Contract

Goal: To assist _____________________________ in his/her behavioral and/or academic progress so that he/she can be more successful in school.

This plan is designed to help you become a better self-manager of your behavior. In order to assist you, an Academic/Behavior Progress report will be used to remind and support your efforts to meet the school-wide expectations for behavior.

Student Responsibilities:
• Check-in with an office staff member every morning before the start of school to go over daily goals.
• Bring the report to class and have your teacher fill it out throughout the day at each designated time period.
• Check-out with your coordinator after school every day AND bring your progress report with you so that it can be reviewed.
• Have your daily report card signed every night by your parent/guardian.

Parent Responsibilities:
• Review the contract with your child and sign it.
• Discuss the goals with your child and support them in their efforts.
• Sign the report card nightly.
• Accept the evaluations of the teacher(s) and staff participating.
• Reward your child as he/she meets their goals.

Teacher Responsibilities:
• Evaluate the student’s progress toward meeting their goals on the progress report.
• Provide the student with positive and constructive feedback throughout the day.

Coordinator Responsibilities:
• Facilitate Check-in/Check-out.
• Provide student with positive and constructive feedback.
• Inform the student ahead of time if you are going to be absent.
• Track student progress.

I have read the expectations of this contract. By signing this contract, I accept my responsibilities.

Student signature: _____________________________ Date: ____________
Parent signature: _____________________________ Date: ____________
Teacher initials: ___________ Coordinator initials: ___________ Date: ____________

Adapted from Jessica Yergat, Polk Elementary School
Appendix B12

Coping Skills

Every time we are challenged by new or upsetting experiences our brain must come up with ways to deal with our stress or worry. Sometimes our brain needs to find better ways to deal with our upsets because the old ways don't work anymore. We need all three coping brain functions, thinking, feeling and self-protection, to get over experiences that make us stressed, worried, angry or upset. Training our brain to use health coping methods means we can heal our own emotional wounds so we also feel better about ourselves (copingskills4kids.net).

What would you do in the following situations?

- Your friend tells you that someone else has been talking behind your back and that you should fight him or her for the rumors they have spread about you.
- Your mom tells you that she cannot afford to pay the rent for the month and that you will have to move soon.
- Your teacher tells you that you are disruptive and sends you out of the classroom; you then receive detention from the principal.
- Your friend tells you to come to the bathroom to smoke marijuana during school hours; they tell you that you are “scared” and “not a true friend” if you choose not to.
- Someone you trust has been lying to you.
- A group of students have been making fun of you.

You may also think about an upsetting experience that has happened to you in school or home and write it here:

________________________________________________________________________

For each of the above situations, think about:

*What the experience was like (Loss, Rejection, Humiliation, Betrayal, etc)*

*Does this experience change me as a person?*

*How do you or will you deal with the situation if it occurs again.*
Appendix B13

Positive Coping Skills

Everyone feels stress at times- but there are things you can do to minimize stress and manage stress that is unavoidable.

**Healthy Living:**
Exercise on a regular basis (try for 30 min/day about 3-4 days per week to start)
Eat well balanced meals, 3 times per day
Get enough sleep and set up a regular sleep routine- adolescents need 9-10 hours of sleep per night
Avoid illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco and excess caffeine

**Healthy Thinking:**
Don’t worry about things you can’t control- ex. Weather, other people’s reactions, environment
Look at change as a positive challenge
Positive thoughts and positive self-talk
Set realistic goals and check in on your goals
Meditate

**Healthy Actions:**
Prepare well in advance for events that may be stressful- ex. Test/Project
Ask for help from friends, family, teachers, and professionals
Take breaks for daily stress with time with friends, fun activities and/or group sports
Work to resolve conflicts without anger and losing temper
Solve problems one at a time- take one task at a time
Avoid overscheduling- prioritize activities
Identify stressful situations
Learn how to ask for assistance in planning and organization.
Identify community resources that can help in time of need.

**Stress reducing exercises:**
*Two exercises you can do to alleviate stress:* deep breathing and muscle relaxation.
These take a little practice, but are exercises you can use anywhere to try to relax and reduce stress.

**Deep breathing:** Lie down on flat surface or sit in comfortable chair with arms by side and feet on floor. Breathe in slowly through your nose over 4 seconds feeling your stomach rise and your chest expand. Breathe out slowly through your nose and/or mouth over 6 seconds feeling your stomach go down and your chest contract. Repeat until you feel relaxed and tension drain out of your body.

**Muscle relaxation:** Start with one group of muscles (usually your feet), hold it tight for a
few seconds and then release. Then move to the next group of muscles (ex. Lower legs) and do the same thing. Work your way up through your legs, abdomen, chest, hands, arms, shoulders, neck and face muscles. You should feel the tension drain out of your body and leaving you feel heavy and relaxed.
Flipping the Switch
Handout

SITUATION 1: Saying hello or goodbye (starting a conversation or ending a conversation)

Friends:
Family:
Teacher:

SITUATION 2: Asking for help (needing assistance on a task you cannot do alone)

Friends:
Family:
Teacher:

SITUATION 3: Text messaging/ Email (conversation about your day or something that happened to you)

Friends:
Family:
Teacher:

SITUATION 4: Showing excitement (you just received $100.00 as a present and need to tell someone)

Friends:
Family:
Teacher:

SITUATION 5: Showing anger (several events had made you upset throughout the day)

Friends:
Family:
Teacher:

SITUATION 6: (Create your own)

Friends:
Family:
Teacher:

Appendix B15

Restorative Circle Questions

1. From your point of view, what happened?
2. What do you remember thinking at the time?
3. How have you and others been affected?
4. What feelings or needs are still with you?
5. What would you like to happen next?

Taken from: healthiersf.org/restorativepractices
Appendix B16

Steps-To-Success
Pre/Post Test (please circle pre or post)

Date: __________________________

Please read the following statements and answer the questions, using a scale from 1-5. For the purpose of this test, 1 means (not at all) and 5 means (always). Please answer truthfully. All answers are confidential and will only be used for the purpose of data collection. Thank you!!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My teachers understand me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I feel angry, I know ways to calm myself</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am often sent out of class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually think about what I will say before I say it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like who I am as a person</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my strengths</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know who/where I can go to for help if I need it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe I can do anything I set my mind to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know there are things about me that people like</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to change my communication styles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to the school environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to talk about my feelings without getting upset</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like coming to school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am understood by teachers and staff members</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know ways to care for myself when a lot is going on around me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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