Enhancing Socially Withdrawn Children’s Playground Behavior
Via Social Skill Instruction and Self Management Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing the challenge of instructing socially disengaged children who come to the classroom lacking peer acceptance, social skills and positive feelings about themselves and school. Parents and teachers frequently simply view these children as shy and fail to recognize the ramifications of these social deficits on the child’s functioning both within and outside of the school setting. These quiet “invisible” students are classified as “Internalizers.” Socially withdrawn students have restricted social interactions and as a result are deprived of the opportunity to acquire positive interpersonal and coping skills through the traditional means of peer modeling and natural shaping and role modeling. Key elements of recent social skills curricula such as at students with internalizing disorders include modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and structuring future opportunities in which to use the specific skills.

Recent studies have suggested that treating shyness and social withdrawal through peer involvement can have lasting success (Rosenberg, 1992). Such efforts have included involving shyness students in small groups with older children, enlisting peers as partners to increase the use of specific skills.

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PARTICIPANTS/SETTING

5 students who showed signs of internalizing behavior
- Determined using a variety of criteria including recommendations from the school’s student support team (teacher, principal, consultant principal, school psychologist, school social worker and school volunteers).

5 peer partners
- Chosen from students who had the following attributes:
  - Good school attendance
  - Positive interaction with peers
  - Ability to follow directions

3 research assistants who served as self-management supervisors
- Grandview Elementary in Provo, Utah, on the school playground

DATA COLLECTION

Interobserver Agreement
- 52% of all sessions
- Participation: 20-second whole interval recording
  - Mean of 88%
  - Range of 84%-100%
- Communication: event recording
  - Mean of 98%
  - Range of 83%-100%

REFERENCES

Marchant & Allyn.
Pepple & Sopris.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Positive social interventions:
- Participation with other students (e.g. running, jumping, playing on playground equipment, and/or playing with sports equipment with another student)
- Communication with other students
  - Verbal statements (e.g. “Hello”, “You wanna play catch?”; “Can I play?”)
  - Physical gestures (e.g. waving, thumbs up, high five, handshake)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Social Skill Instruction (Direct Teaching)
- Daily and Weekly Goals
- Daily Reminder of Definitions (playing and talking to others)
- Token Economy
- Self-Management Program

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

Multiple baseline across students

DISCUSSION

Strengths:
- Functional relationship between independent and dependent variables to increase participation and communication on the playground
- Alignment of IDEA and the designed BIP for target students
- Social validity from students, parents, and teachers that indicate acceptability and effectiveness
- Extension of Marchant et al. (1992) playground research with externalizing behavior problems

Implications for Future Research:
- A methodological approach to selecting peers for peer mediation
- Peer mediation (pairing with another student)
- On playground equipment, and/or playing with sports equipment
- Participation with other students (e.g. running, jumping, playing on playground equipment, and/or playing with sports equipment with another student)
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