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PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL-WIDE SOCIAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION: PERCEPTIONS OF A HOME NOTE PROGRAM

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If students are to become proficient at using social skills, parents must be involved in teaching and reinforcing these skills at home. Parent involvement is associated with increased student success, especially when it includes a two-way exchange of information between home and school. As the traditional family has changed, new methods of eliciting parent involvement are needed. This article presents a description and evaluation of a school-wide home note program used to encourage generalization of social skills taught in school to home settings. Teachers ($n = 20$), parents ($n = 107$), and students ($n = 383$) at an elementary school in the western United States completed a survey asking them to rate the program in the following areas: favorability, effectiveness, ease of use, and desirability of continued use. Parents had highly favorable perceptions of the program, while students and teachers rated it somewhat favorably. Students and parents reported that home notes helped improve social skills. A majority of respondents agreed that home notes were easy to implement and should continue to be used. Implications for implementing a home note program are discussed.

Social skills' training has traditionally been considered important for children with behavior or learning disorders (Townsend, 1994). Today many agree that schools should be attending to the social needs of all children (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007); school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) has begun to address these needs (Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002). However, social skills instruction has been challenged for its lack of generalization (Armstrong & McPherson 1991; Gresham, 1998; Townsend). One way schools may be able to improve the generalization of social skills is to include parents in the process-

es of instruction and reinforcement (Armstrong & McPherson; Budd & Itzkowitz, 1990).

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

Positive school environments can be cultivated using preventative teaching strategies that are fundamental to positive behavior support (PBS) (Sugai et al., 2002). As a model of school reform that has experienced unprecedented growth (Muscott et al., 2008), school-wide PBS seeks to employ evidence-based practices to achieve socially important behavior goals as well as to improve academics (Sugai & Horner, 1999). PBS incorporates a three-

tiered model to design interventions that meet the individual needs of students (Lane & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2004). School-wide PBS is based on research indicating that approximately 80% of students respond to universal or primary level interventions that explicitly teach and reinforce behavior expectations (such as social skills) to all students in a school (Horner & Sugai, 2002; Sugai & Horner).

Recently more attention has centered on collaboration at the school-wide level with a focus on involving parents and others in the community (Scott & Eber, 2003). Epstein (1986) noted that teachers and parents share common goals for children, and both have roles in their socialization and education. Many teachers believe that they can be more effective in achieving learning goals when they have parental assistance (Epstein). This can be accomplished via learning activities in the home which can also promote desirable home-school relationships. School-wide PBS, which underscores the importance of a strong working relationship between parents and educators (Muscott et al., 2008), can be used as a framework for parent involvement in school programs (Hendley, 2007).

Social Competence and Skills

Social skills are essential for educational and social achievement (Lane, Menzies, Barton-Arwood, Doukas, & Munton, 2005). The significance of social competence and social skills must not be underestimated; they are powerful predictors of school adjustment, school success, and lifelong success (Meadan & Monda-

Amaya, 2008; Siperstein & Bak, 1988). McArthur (2002) explained that teaching social skills communicates society's behavioral expectations. Children who lack social skills may face psychological consequences (Gresham, 1998; Utay & Utay, 2005), as well as poor relationships, academic and occupational failure, and despair (Merrell & Gimpel, 1998).

It has been widely acknowledged that children with high incidence disabilities have deficits in social skills (Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001). Involving these students in social skills instruction has become common practice in special education programs (Maag, 2006). However, many students in general education also have social deficits that disrupt their ability to be successful at school and in the community. Accordingly, social skills interventions are now being used school-wide with children who do not have identified disabilities (Merrell & Gimpel, 1998; Townsend, 1994).

Unfortunately, many social skills programs have neglected to plan for generalization (Gresham, 1998). In their seminal article, Stokes and Baer (1977) found that many students have challenges generalizing skills which are taught in only one setting. Thus it is important to involve parents, who can reinforce the social skills introduced by teachers in school and allow students to practice these skills in settings outside of the school (Armstrong & McPherson 1991).

Parent Involvement in Social Skills Instruction

Social skills instruction has traditionally

been conducted in classrooms by teachers and counselors (Budd & Itzkowitz, 1990). This instruction has generally involved role playing and practice in artificial circumstances, while the social skills are actually used in natural settings outside of the classroom (Armstrong & McPherson, 1991). The home is a natural setting in which to learn and practice social skills. If children are to become proficient at using social skills, parents must be involved in teaching and reinforcing the skills at home and in the community (Armstrong & McPherson; Townsend, 1994). Children tend to be more socially competent when their parents talk with them about social situations (Laird, Pettit, Mize, Brown, & Lindsey 1994).

Parent involvement is associated with increased student success, especially when it includes a two-way exchange of information between home and school (Cox, 2005). This success includes higher grades, improved behavior, and enrollment in post secondary education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Additionally, parent involvement can increase the positive results of many interventions which occur at school (Jimerison et al., 2006). Schools that include parents in program implementation have more opportunities to improve relationships and are able to obtain more parent support (Epstein, 1986; Townsend, 1994). Teachers who actively involve parents are rated higher by parents on their interpersonal skills and overall teaching quality (Epstein).

Schulze, Rule, and Innocenti (1989) suggest that parent involvement in teaching social skills is essential for three

reasons. First, as caretakers parents are generally with their children the most. Second, more opportunities to apply social skills occur in natural settings at home and in the community. Third, parents can teach a wide range of skills and include a variety of people not found in schools. Parents also have access to many unstructured settings outside of school to increase the likelihood of generalizing the social skills (Armstrong & McPherson, 1991). If schools inform parents about their efforts to teach social skills, parents are more likely to practice and reinforce these social skills in the home (Siperstein & Bak, 1988).

When involving parents in social skill instruction, potential difficulties must be considered. Parents may view solicitations for home involvement as a judgment on their ability to parent (Mize & Abell, 1996). Parents may also not be willing or able to devote enough time or energy to make an impact (Schulze, Rule, & Innocenti 1989). Finally, as the traditional family has changed, new methods of eliciting parent involvement are needed (Townsend, 1994). One method that has been used to include parents in social skill instruction is the use of home notes (McGinnis & Goldstein 1997). While the literature proposes the involvement of parents in social skills instruction using a school to home note strategy, we found no studies investigating the specific components of this approach. The purpose of this article is to describe stakeholder perceptions of a school to home program as a first step to evaluating this practice.

Method

Participants and Setting

The home note program was implemented in a suburban K-6 elementary school in the Intermountain West. At the time of the study the student population consisted of 436 students, with ethnicity being 75% Caucasian, 21% Hispanic, 2% African American, and 2% other (Pacific Islander, Asian, or Native American). Over 50% of the students were receiving free or reduced price lunch. The school faculty consisted of 20 teachers. All of the teachers and 383 (88%) of the students in the school participated in this study. A stratified random sample of 33% of the students' parents was selected across classrooms in an effort to obtain a representative parent sample. Of the 146 parents selected, 107 (73%) participated in this study.

Home Note Program Description

This school implemented social skills instruction as part of their SWPBS program for the past 7 years. The program was originally developed by a PBS team that included parents, teachers, and the principal. The social skills chosen were those the team thought were most needed by students. The school principal wanted to assess stakeholder perceptions of the program to determine whether to continue it in future years.

In kindergarten through grade six, three core skills were taught or re-taught to each student each year: following directions, accepting responsibility, and showing appreciation. Grades 1 to 6 added at least one other social skill per year. Appendix

A outlines these skills and the grades in which they were introduced or reviewed.

One social skill was taught or reviewed in a series of lessons delivered each month. During the first week the classroom teachers introduced the skill. They received notes in their boxes at the first of each month, which gave a rationale and teaching tips and reminded them to reinforce the social skill in their classrooms. Parent volunteers for each classroom taught a lesson on the skill during the second week of month. In week three, the social skill was taught by the librarian through a book presentation during media center time. During the fourth week the teacher reviewed and continued to reinforce the skill.

Monthly home notes were used to communicate to parents the social skill being taught or reviewed that month and to encourage them to teach the social skill at home and give the children opportunities to practice it. Distributed during the second week of the month, the notes (1) introduced the social skill to the parent, (2) included the name and steps of the skill, (3) described an activity related to the social skill (e.g., games, assignments, puzzles, role play, scenarios, and worksheets) that the family could do, and (4) requested that the parent sign and return the form to the teacher within one week. (See Appendix B for sample home notes.) If at least 85% of the students in a class returned their notes for the month, the class name was posted on a recognition board in the hall, and students received a reward (e.g. extra free time, small treat, or preferred activity).

Procedure

A survey evaluating the school's home note program was designed and administered to teachers, parents, and students at the end of the school year. The school principal managed the data collection. Teachers completed the survey during a faculty meeting, after being advised that it would be anonymous and confidentially analyzed by a third party. Teachers administered the student surveys in their classrooms. Each parent survey was enclosed in an envelope addressed to the student's parent or guardian and distributed with the final month's home note. One week after distribution of the parent surveys, follow-up telephone calls were made to parents who had not returned a survey, and the survey was administered over the telephone by a member of the PBS support team.

Survey

Separate versions of the survey were created for the three groups of stakeholders; teachers, parents and students. The surveys contained 11 to 13 questions, measured on a 7-point Likert type scale. Student surveys for grades three through six used the same scale as teacher and parent surveys. However, surveys for kindergarten through grade two used five expressive faces from happy to sad representing agree to disagree. Pictorial scales have been shown to be valid measurements for young children and adults with mental impairment (Harter & Pike, 1984; Ulrich, & Collier, 1990). The student responses for the five pictures were converted to numeric values similar to those used for a 5-point Likert scale. The 5-point scale was

converted to match the older students' 7-point scale using Dawes' (2008) rescaling method. Dawes has shown that 5-point and 7-point Likert scales for survey research produce similar means, standard deviations, skewing and kurtosis. The rescaling method was used as follows: 1 = 1; 2 = 2.5; 3 = 4; 4 = 5.5; and 5 = 7. Favorability, time commitment, effectiveness, ease of use, and desirability of continued use of the home note program were measured across all three groups of respondents. Other questions relevant to each group were also included (see Table 1). The final question on each survey requested open-ended comments.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to depict perceptions of the home note program. The percentage of respondents who agreed with each question of the survey was calculated. Agreement was defined as a response of 5, 6, or 7 on the 7-point scale. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed in order to examine differences between raters and grade levels. Four survey questions overlapped the teacher, parent, and student surveys, which allowed for an analysis of all the stakeholders. Each individual stakeholder group was also analyzed separately.

The open-ended comments were analyzed qualitatively, following the methods of Corbin and Strauss (2007) and Miles and Huberman (1994). The student comments and the parent comments were initially analyzed separately and then compared in cross-case analysis. The comments were sorted in open coding and then coded

axially to uncover patterns associated with student or parent satisfaction about the home notes. It is important to note that some comments were parsed out into different nodes in order to capture their nuances. Therefore, in this report the total number of comments exceeds the number of respondents. After these individual analyses were completed, the results of each group were examined and compared for similarities. These qualitative analysis methods were facilitated by using NVivo software (QSR, 2006). A peer reviewer not associated with the study corroborated the findings and the analysis.

Results and Discussion

Overall, the results suggest that teachers, parents and students had generally favorable attitudes towards the home note program. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses support these findings. More specific results are reported by stakeholder group.

All Stakeholders

Four questions overlapped the teacher, parent, and student surveys (see Table 1). A majority of all three stakeholder groups agreed that students enjoyed doing the home note activities and that home notes should continue to be used in the school. A small percentage of parents, students, and teachers reported that home notes took too much time. Both parents and students felt that home notes were effective in helping students improve their social skills. These findings support Cox's (2005) assertion that home notes can be an effective intervention.

One-way ANOVA results indicated that even with agreement on favorability items concerning the home note program, perceptions differed significantly by stakeholder for all four questions (see Table 2). Specifically, Bonferroni's post hoc tests indicated that parents rated the questions "students enjoy doing the home note activities" and "home notes should continue to be used next year" higher than did students and teachers. Teachers rated "home notes help students improve their social skills" lower than parents and students did, and students rated "home notes take too much time" higher than the other two groups. All post hoc comparisons were significant at the $p < .05$ level. It is also interesting to note that 92.4% of teachers and 94.3% of parents felt that social skills should be taught in school. Also nearly all the surveyed parents (98.1%) agreed with the importance of knowing about the social skills being taught in school. In context of parent involvement literature, it is not surprising that parent perceptions were consistently high. Epstein (1986) found that when schools make an effort to get parents involved, parents tend to rate school programs more positively.

Although teachers, parents and students had somewhat favorable attitudes towards use of home notes, few of them agreed that the number of home note activities should increase or that home notes should be used more often than once a month. These results suggest that one home note activity each month seems reasonable for stakeholders to manage. More activities or more frequent home notes may create too much work for the teachers, parents and

Table 1

Percentage of Participants who Agreed on Home Note Perception Survey Items

Questions	Teachers	Parents	Students
Students enjoy doing the home note activities.	60.0%	77.6%	56.5%
Home notes should continue to be used next year.	65.0%	91.5%	51.6%
Home notes help students improve their social skills.	35.0%	79.4%	65.9%
Home notes take too much time.	10.0%	9.3%	30.6%
Social skills should be taught in school.	92.4%	94.3%	-
Home notes should be used more often than once a month.	5.0%	44.9%	-
I wish there were more home note activities.	-	29.0%	38.0%
Families continue to use the social skills taught, even after the home note activity is finished.	-	77.6%	51.0%
It was easy to get home notes signed.	-	69.8%	81.2%
It was easy to (distribute/take home) home notes.	90.0%	-	85.0%
It was easy to (collect/bring back) home notes.	75.0%	-	72.0%
It was easy to track home notes.	57.9%	-	-
Home notes are an important part of my communication with parents.	30.0%	-	-
I like the home note part of the school PBS program.	55.0%	-	-
Home notes help me talk to my child about school.	-	94.4%	-
It is important for me to know about the social skills my child is learning in school.	-	98.1%	-
I like getting information about the social skills.	-	91.5%	-
I like the suggestions of activities to do with my family.	-	89.7%	-
Parents assisted with the home note activities.	-	-	65.9%
Home notes help students learn the steps of the social skills.	-	-	71.4%

Table 2

Stakeholder Differences for Overlapping Survey Items (N = 506)

Questions	Teacher M (SD)	Parent M (SD)	Student M (SD)	F
Students enjoy doing home notes.	4.30 (1.34)	5.36 (1.45) [†]	4.63 (2.09)	6.39**
Home notes should be used next year.	4.70 (1.69)	6.11 (1.26) [†]	4.39 (2.40)	25.82***
Home notes improve social skills.	4.00 (1.34) [‡]	5.45 (1.29)	5.17 (1.83)	6.10**
Home notes take too much time.	2.50 (1.57)	2.66 (1.43)	3.33 (2.16) [†]	5.74**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.[†] Post hoc comparisons yielding a significantly higher mean than the other stakeholders ($p < .05$).[‡] Post hoc comparisons yielding a significantly lower mean than the other stakeholders ($p < .05$).

students. However, stakeholders' perceptions differed slightly on this issue, as nearly 45% of parents would not seem to mind if home notes were more frequent than once a month, while only 5% of teachers felt that way.

The comments made on the parent and student surveys support the quantitative results, in that parents had highly favorable perceptions of the home note program and students had moderately favorable perceptions. The parents' comments were predominantly positive, with a positive to negative comment ratio of 7:1. The students' comments contained a positive to negative ratio of just over 3:1. Teachers did not write any additional comments.

Both parent and student comments mentioned the benefit of family interaction facilitated by home notes. Students mentioned this in terms of family bonding: "I think that home notes are a fun way to get the family involved and to bond with each other." Parents saw home notes as beneficial in allowing them to reinforce

what their students were learning: "I like the idea of a parent's signature so we can see and help with what the children are learning at school and so we can reinforce it at home." Students and parents both considered home notes a "good idea". A minority of parents (21%) and students (3%) saw home notes as additional work. Student and parent comments differed in perspective. Some students (16%) mentioned the "fun" aspect of home notes. No parents used the word fun, as their comments tended to be more practical, approving the home notes for their utility rather than amusement.

Teachers' Perceptions

Teachers' perceptions of home notes were generally favorable, with 60% of teachers agreeing that students tended to enjoy the home note activities, 55% agreeing that they liked the home notes as part of the school's PBS program, and 65% agreeing that home notes should continue to be used the following year. A majority

of teachers (74%) also agreed that the home notes were easy to manage. Although 35% of teachers agreed that home notes helped students improve their social skills, 30% disagreed, and another 35% responded that they were neutral or not sure. None of the teachers wrote additional comments about the home notes program.

The researchers suggest that schools seeking to implement a home note program should make the program as agreeable for teachers as possible. Providing and supporting opportunities for program feedback from teachers and parents would allow the program to be more carefully tailored to stakeholder needs. According to Guskey (1986), when teachers see the value of a program, or some proof that it works, they are more likely to put effort into participation. Similarly, if the teachers receive parent input early and often, they may recognize the value of the program to families and participate more completely. Additionally, increased training for new teachers could enable them to use the home notes with greater ease.

Parents' Perceptions

Parents had highly favorable perceptions of the home note program. Over three-fourths of parents reported that their children enjoyed the home note activities, and 91.5% agreed that home notes should continue the following year. Over 90% of parents also agreed that home notes helped facilitate communication with their children about school, that they considered it important to know the social skills being taught in school, and that they liked getting the information sent home via the home note program. Parents responded

favorably on the open-ended comment question. When individual comments were parsed out into multiple components, 60% were positive, while 20% were negative. The remaining 20% were suggestions for improving the program.

The positive comments clustered around general expressions of appreciation, program worth ("great program"), and program impact. The following are representative: "I am grateful to see my child learning these things" and "They are always things that will be useful throughout their lives! Thank you!" Throughout the comments on appreciation, program worth, and program impact, there seemed to be an underlying theme of collaboration or partnership with the school. Parents appreciated the communication provided by home notes, both in informing them what was being taught and in encouraging them to reinforce the skills: for example, "I am glad that I have the notes so I am able to reinforce what she has learned at school" and "Home notes are really important because they help us to recognize activities we probably aren't aware of and help our kids to stay active in their academic development."

Negative comments from parents tended to convey a feeling of burden: for example, "For the most part this just feels like one more thing to think about, and I am not sure if my kids really internalize the ideas" and "they just cause stress to me." One parent took offense, feeling that the home notes implied that parents weren't doing a good job. Suggestions for improvement to the program were offered by 7 parents. They recommended improving the School Pride (social skills instruction) pro-

gram by offering better explanations of the social skills earlier in the year, synchronizing social skills lessons across grade level, and giving home note activities weekly rather than monthly. Several supportive parents expressed the opinion that social skills would ideally be taught at home, but acknowledged that school is the next best place.

A few suggestions for implementing a home note program surfaced from this research. First, parent perceptions might improve, and feelings of judgment regarding their parenting be minimized, if they were informed early about the purpose of both social skills instruction and home notes, along with being provided a program overview. Parents should be assured that social skills are being taught in school not because the school doubts parents' ability to teach their children, but because children understand and apply the skills better if they are taught in a variety of settings. The recommendation that social skills instruction be synchronized across grade levels was to enable families with multiple children in the school to focus on one skill and activity at a time.

Students' Perceptions

Compared with their parents and teachers, students had more neutral feelings towards the home notes, with 56% agreeing that home note activities were enjoyable and 52% agreeing that home notes should continue the following year. Although students had less favorable attitudes towards home notes than other stakeholders, they did report that home notes were helpful: 66% agreed that home

notes helped improve their social skills, and 71% agreed that home notes helped them learn the steps of the social skills. Students also reported that home notes were relatively easy to manage, but reported that they took more time than reported by teachers and parents.

Grade levels were compared using ANOVA and subsequent linear trend comparisons. Results indicated a significant difference across grade levels for the questions "I like doing the home note activities" [$F(6, 370) = 4.24, p < .001$] and "Home notes helped me do the School Pride social skills more than before" [$F(6, 373) = 4.16, p < .001$]. A significant downward linear trend was evident for both questions, indicating that as grade level increased students tended to like home notes less [$F(1, 370) = 14.30, p < .001$] and to consider notes less helpful in improving their social skills [$F(1, 373) = 21.79, p < .001$]. However, as grade level increased students' perceptions of the ease of use increased. Significant upward linear trends were found across grade levels for the questions "It was easy to take home notes home" [ANOVA: $F(6, 371) = 5.60, p < .001$; Linear trend: $F(1, 371) = 16.66, p < .001$], "It was easy to get home notes signed" [ANOVA: $F(6, 369) = 3.82, p < .01$; Linear trend: $F(1, 369) = 11.38, p < .001$], and "It was easy to bring home notes back to my teacher" [ANOVA: $F(6, 371) = 14.83, p < .001$; Linear trend: $F(1, 371) = 44.30, p < .001$]. Although the older students did not seem to enjoy the home notes program as much as the younger students, they found it easier to complete. Perhaps the students in the older grade levels, who had already com-

pleted several years of social skills instruction, might have been experiencing burn out from the repetition, but efficiency from familiarity with the process.

Students' open-ended comments were mostly favorable toward home notes, with an overall positive to negative ratio of just over 3:1. When parsed into their components, comments from students were 71% positive and 26% negative. The remaining 3% consisted of suggestions. Positive comments included general statements of "liking," as well as more specific comments about home notes being beneficial, engaging, fun, and a good idea—expressing that the students liked particular activities and family involvement. The following are typical: "I think they help you be a better person," and "I like the activities—they help me learn while having fun; they help to show [School] Pride!" Over one-third of student comments mentioned a specific benefit of home notes. Students mentioned learning the School Pride program and improving behavior generally: e.g. "I think that they were a good idea. They helped to learn the steps of School Pride" and "I think that they will help other kids get along better and be kind and also be polite."

Negative comments, in addition to a general "I don't like them," included expressions of annoyance and boredom—specifically that the home notes were ineffective, too much work, not fun, or a waste of resources: e.g. "Most of the time I just had too much homework to do them." Also captured in the negative comments was difficulty with returning the home notes to school: e.g. "I don't like home

notes at all. I always forget to do it." Although the general dislike and the "not fun" comments came from students all across the spectrum, the more specific comments tended to come from upper grade students. For example, all six comments of annoyance or boredom came from 5th and 6th graders. Perhaps home notes might seem like less work if they could be incorporated into other homework assignments (e.g. social studies or English).

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this study was teachers' lack of response to the open ended question regarding their personal opinion of the program. This may have been due to rater fatigue. Not only were teachers asked to respond to 11 questions, they were asked to describe their procedures for supporting the home note program. All 20 teachers reported their procedures, but none gave additional comments. Another limitation is that this study includes data from only one school. Replication with other populations is necessary to draw more definitive conclusions. In addition, the psychometric properties of the survey were not investigated, and the survey asked for general perceptions without specification of which home note activities and suggestions were viewed more favorably. The home notes could also have been strengthened by including information to parents on how to specifically reinforce the social skills (beyond the activity) and provide more opportunities for practice in real life settings.

As the purpose of this study was not to evaluate the effects of the home note inter-

vention on students' behavior, only one survey item addressed the outcome of students' improved social skills. Additional corroborating data was not included (e.g., office discipline referrals, direct observations). Future research could investigate outcome data, rather than perceptions, to discern effects of a home note program on students' social skill acquisition and use. In addition, as Sugai and Horner (2007) note, typically home-school collaboration occurs within the secondary tier of PBS; however, this study found home notes to be an acceptable method of involving parents in a primary tier program, teaching social skills to all students. It may be of further interest to consider how home notes might fit into other primary level PBS programs. As noted in the literature review, if children are to become proficient at using social skills, parents must be involved in teaching and reinforcing the skills at home and in the community (Armstrong & McPherson; Townsend, 1994).

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Appendix A

Monthly Schedule for Social Skills Instruction

Month	Grade Level			
	Kindergarten	1 st and 2 nd	3 rd and 4 th	5 th and 6 th
September	Following Directions			
October	Accepting Responsibility			
November	Showing Appreciation			
December	Following Directions	Listening		
January	Accepting Responsibility	Following Directions	Resolving Differences	
February	Showing Appreciation	Accepting Responsibility	Review 3 Core Skills	Decision Making
March	Following Directions	Showing Appreciation	Listening	
April	Accepting Responsibility	Listening	Resolving Differences	
May	Showing Appreciation	Review 3 Core Skills		Decision Making

Appendix B

Sample Home Notes

Name _____ Teacher _____

School Pride Begins With Me!

Dear Kindergarten Parent:

The December **social skill** in our School Pride character program is *How to Follow*

Directions:

The steps for this social skill are

1. *look at the person,*
2. *say, "O.K.,"*
3. *do the task immediately, and*
4. *report back if necessary.*

You will probably notice that we are now repeating the first of the three social skills that our kindergarteners will focus on throughout the year. We have reviewed these steps at school with your student, but we hope that you will also **review the steps** to this social skill at home.

Explain to your child that it is important to follow directions; when everyone follows directions right away, it leaves more time for other fun activities.

Please spend a few minutes on our **family activity** to reinforce this social skill. Please play **SIMON SAYS** with your family. It is a fun way to practice following directions. We have asked your kindergarten student to take the lead in beginning the game and then to let everyone in the family take a turn being "Simon."

When you have finished the activity, *please sign below and send this note back with your child by this Friday*. If at least 85% of the notes are returned, the class earns the chance to participate in an activity of their choice.

Thank you once again for your support as we try to encourage positive social skills among our students. Without reinforcement from home, our efforts will be less effective.

parent signature

Name _____ Teacher _____

School Pride Begins With Me!

The social skill for December is ***HOW TO LISTEN.***

The steps for this social skill are

1. *look at who is talking,*
2. *think about what is being said,*
3. *wait your turn to talk, and*
4. *say what you want to say without changing the subject.*

Learning how to listen is very important for succeeding in school and in relationships with others. This is what we want you to do to teach your family about this social skill:

- ✓ **Teach** the steps to this social skill to your family.
- ✓ **Play** the telephone game with your family. Have everyone sit in a line. Think of a sentence (not too short), and whisper it to the person next to you. Have this person whisper what he or she has heard to the next person, and so on until you get to the end of the line. Have the last person repeat the statement out loud and see if you end up with the same sentence that you started out with.
- ✓ **Talk** about why you could start and finish with different sentences. Tell your family what happened when you played this game with your class. Discuss the importance of listening well when someone is talking to you so that there are no misunderstandings.

Have a parent sign below and ***bring this note back by this Friday*** to receive credit for your class.

parent signature

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