



All Theses and Dissertations

2017-07-01

Utah Teachers' Perceptions of Student Social Skills and Behaviors: A Developmental Perspective

Karrah Beth Sampson
Brigham Young University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Counseling Psychology Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Sampson, Karrah Beth, "Utah Teachers' Perceptions of Student Social Skills and Behaviors: A Developmental Perspective" (2017). *All Theses and Dissertations*. 6909.

<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/6909>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Utah Teachers' Perceptions of Student Social Skills and
Behaviors: A Developmental Perspective

Karrah Beth Sampson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Educational Specialist

Ellie L. Young, Chair
Melissa A. Heath
Michael J. Richardson

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education
Brigham Young University

Copyright © 2017 Karrah Beth Sampson

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Utah Teachers' Perceptions of Student Social Skills and Behaviors: A Developmental Perspective

Karrah Beth Sampson

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education, BYU
Educational Specialist

Students' appropriate social skills and behaviors are essential for classroom success at any level but are of special importance at an elementary school level when the foundations of these skill sets are developing (Lane, Givner, & Pierson, 2004). An initial study investigated which social skills Utah elementary school teachers identified as being most important, and which behaviors are most problematic during the elementary school years. Elementary school teachers (Kindergarten through sixth grade) were randomly selected from Utah's school districts. In total, 295 of 1,144 teachers (26% return rate) participated (Weed, 2015).

As a follow-up, this current study utilized data from the initial study and analyzed teachers' perceptions by grade level, determining if there were discernible differences between the grades. A statistically significant difference was found in the social skill of following directions between third and fifth grade with the mean for third grade being higher. This suggests that third grade teachers viewed following directions as a more important social skill for students to display than fifth grade teachers did. Between first and fourth grade there were significant differences in both the areas of anxiousness and trouble making friends, again with first grade results showing higher means in both areas. This suggests that based on their teaching experiences, first grade teachers would find these behaviors more problematic in their classroom than fourth grade teachers. In all areas of statistical significance, the mean of the younger grade was higher than that of the lower grade suggesting that these behaviors are considered more problematic to teachers of younger grades.

These differences are important to consider when helping schools address children's social skills, taking into account potential developmental differences that emerge across ages. Additionally this age-specific information will assist school-based mental health practitioners to understand teachers' perceptions of which specific social skills are considered most important at a particular point in time so that these skills can be targeted as needed.

Keywords: social skills, behavior problems, elementary school teachers, teachers' perceptions

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, my sincerest thanks and appreciation go to my chair and advisor, Dr. Ellie L. Young, for her example of patience, kindness, and endless encouragement throughout this project. Her knowledge and constant guidance elevated the quality of this thesis and my graduate school experience, for which I am incredibly thankful. I would also like to thank to my committee, Dr. Melissa A. Heath and Dr. Michael J. Richardson, for their insight and encouragement throughout the process as well. Additional thanks are owed to Sara Moulton for voluntarily offering her time and statistical expertise to selflessly assist with this project. Lastly, I owe personal thanks to my parents, Dale and Yvette Sampson, who have always encouraged and inspired me in my educational pursuits throughout my life, especially as I have completed this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
Social Skills in the Classroom and School Setting.....	5
Challenging Behaviors.....	6
Challenging Behaviors' Influence in the Classroom.....	7
Long Term Implications and Consequences of Challenging Behaviors.....	8
Teacher and Student Relationships.....	8
Value of Teachers Perceptions and Opinions.....	10
Social Skills and Behavioral Development.....	12
Summary and Research Questions.....	15
CHAPTER 3: METHOD.....	16
Participants.....	16
Procedure.....	16
Instrument.....	17
Data Analysis.....	19
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	21
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	25
Major Findings.....	26
Limitations.....	28
Implications for Practice.....	29
Future Research.....	31
Conclusion.....	32
References.....	34
APPENDIX A: Teacher Survey.....	39

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	<i>Teachers' Ratings of the Importance of Social Skills: Means by Grade Level.....</i>	23
Table 2	<i>Teachers' Ratings of Problematic Behaviors: Means by Grade Level.....</i>	24

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Adequate social skills and appropriate behaviors are of paramount importance in a classroom setting to both students and teachers. Specifically, social skills help students to learn academic material efficiently and help maintain order in the classroom to facilitate a productive learning environment (Elliott, Frey, & DiPerna, 2012). Teachers report that they tend to place the highest value on student behaviors that help to maintain cooperation and harmony in their classroom as well (Lane, Givner, & Pierson, 2004).

However, when these harmonizing characteristics are not displayed and are instead replaced by problematic behavior, teachers are often challenged to create and maintain effective learning environments. This can negatively impact the achievement of the students misbehaving, but their classroom peers as well. A total of 36% of participating public school teachers stated that student misbehavior interferes with their classroom teaching (NCES, 2012). Teachers have also acknowledged that they feel they are less effective teachers due to disruptions caused by students who exhibit these challenging behaviors in their classroom. The resulting diminished teaching effectiveness then reduces the positive educational experience of all students in that particular classroom (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Westling, 2010).

Understanding teacher expectations in the classroom is crucial to designing appropriate interventions and supports. Lesson plans and activities for students related to social skills and appropriate behaviors need to ensure that the lessons are adequately meeting the demands of their students and teacher. According to Lane et al. (2004), interventions implemented by school professionals should consider and clarify the teachers' expectations for students' social skills and behaviors in the classroom. The school support team is then better able to consider how to help students develop the skills necessary to negotiate these specific demands in the classroom.

Additionally, it is also vital to understand how teachers' expectations and perceptions of their students' social skills and behavioral abilities change and develop throughout their time in elementary school. This informs and enables the implementation of developmentally appropriate interventions and programs to help students cultivate these skills as they grow and mature.

Expanding on the current research base to further explore teacher perceptions of the development of their students' social skills and evolving teacher expectations throughout grade levels is critical to our ability to support students in the developmentally appropriate acquisition of these skills over time. According to Meier, Diperna, and Oster (2006), despite the grade level a teacher currently teaches or the age of students, teachers' ratings of the importance of social skills in the classroom are consistent across all elementary grades. They also rate these skills as highly important. It is encouraging to see teachers recognizing the importance of these skills in their students. In this same study, teachers also reported that they expect their students' social skills to reasonably increase over time, yet no specific skills or traits were listed.

Lamont and Van Horn (2013) acknowledged that despite the established importance of social skills and their development throughout childhood and adolescents, there has been shockingly little empirical research conducted to investigate their normative development. Lamont and Van Horn (2013) noted that this was an especially surprising phenomenon because there is sufficient research to support that it is reasonable to expect these skills to change based upon the students' age and grade. The current study aims to target this gap in the research literature to further explore teachers' perceptions of students' social skills and behaviors based on the grade level they currently teach.

In this study, an existing data set from a previous research study was utilized (Weed, 2015). In that study, 1,144 Utah elementary (kindergarten through sixth grade) teachers were

invited to participate by completing a 10-minute anonymous questionnaire inquiring about their opinions and perceptions of their students social skills and behaviors as well as providing some demographic data. Each participating teacher was asked to indicate their level of concern for challenging behaviors using a Likert scale. Teachers also indicated the importance of certain social skills in regard to students' academic learning and social-emotional wellbeing using the same Likert scale method. To elaborate upon these original findings, the aim of the current study was to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the perceptions of teachers based on the grade level that they currently teach. The goal was to identify any patterns or differences that may offer insight into how the expectations and perceptions of teachers evolve as students develop and mature throughout their elementary years.

To analyze the data in answer to this question, the responses of participants were analyzed in groups based on the grade level the responding teacher reported they currently teach. Means were then calculated for each grade level group and compared to each other individual grade level group to determine if there were any statistically significant differences among them using a one-way analysis of variance. Based on the results of this survey, lesson plans and activities or intervention plans and programs could be generated to assist Utah's elementary school teachers in pro-actively identifying desired behaviors and targeted social skills at each individual grade level to promote both academic and social emotional learning in line with teacher perception and student development and maturity over time.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Gresham (2010), social skills are best defined as a behavior response class as social skills can consist of a variety of behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal. These learned behaviors enable a person to appropriately and effectively interact with others and to avoid negative behaviors, build collaborative relationships, and resolve conflict successfully. In a classroom setting, social skills enable students to interact effectively with their teachers and peers. Social skills help students learn more efficiently and help maintain order in the classroom (Elliott et al., 2012).

The importance of social skills reaches far beyond the classroom and school setting. We interact with others on a daily basis and having the appropriate skills to do so in an effective and generally positive manner is essential in society. Not only is it clear that healthy and supportive relationships enhance an individual's quality of life, but social skills are also a functional ability that is essential for success in many sectors of modern society. According to the book, *Promoting Social and Emotional Intelligence Guidelines for Educators*, employers view proficient social skills as one of the most valuable assets an employee can possess (Elias, 1997). Many of today's large corporations concede that "social... competence may be more important than all of the institutions attended, degrees earned, test scores obtained, and even technical knowledge gained. More focus is being placed on problem-solving, reflection, perceptive thinking, self-direction and motivation for lifelong learning-characteristics that are useful no matter what the job" (Elias, 1997, p. 7).

Additionally, "There is a broad agreement among educators, policy makers, and the public that educational systems should graduate students who are proficient in core academic subjects, able to work well with others from diverse backgrounds in socially and emotionally

skilled ways, practice healthy behaviors, and behave responsibly and respectfully” (Durlak Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). This illustrates the understanding that educated students should gain not only an understanding of academic material but also the appropriate skills needed to interact well with those around them in a variety of settings and situations. With such practical lifelong applications, it is clear that social skills are an essential part of life and are often an area of focus in elementary school settings around which a child’s primary social interactions with peers and teachers often revolves.

Social Skills in the Classroom and School Setting

When students begin elementary school they are expected to have specific skills that will help them become successful in the academic environment. For example, students are expected to show respect for adults by following directions, and students are expected to interact politely with peers by taking turns with toys and materials. Without these prerequisite skills, it is likely that the child will struggle and a variety of negative outcomes become highly probable in the child’s future (Lane et al., 2004). For students who struggle with social skills, some poor outcomes include poor academic performance, difficulty or failure in relationships with their peers as well as strained interactions with their teachers. These students whose social skills and behavior diverge from that of their peers are also more likely to be referred for intervention and support services during their academic careers (Lane et al., 2004).

Social skills have a strong connection to classroom performance that influences academic functioning and achievement. Research suggests that difficulty with social skills tends to persist over time and throughout the school years. In a longitudinal study, Malecki and Elliott (2002) found that social skills are positively predictive of students’ academic achievement and that social skills are also a significant predictor of future academic functioning over time as well.

Outside of the classroom healthy social skills also help students to establish and maintain friendships with their peers. If a student lacks this acceptance from their peers due to a deficit in social skills, this social disconnectedness also negatively impacts the student's academic performance (Womack, Marchant, & Borders, 2011). Clearly, social skills are essential and important to a student's learning and well-being. Therefore, better understanding social skills is critical for teachers, school psychologists, and other support personnel to design appropriate interventions and establish programs to support students in developing these critical skills over time.

Challenging Behaviors

Westling (2010) defined challenging behaviors as “intense behaviors that present physical, instructional, or social concerns to the teacher” (p. 50). He further elaborated by stating that these behaviors also “...disrupt learning, are dangerous to the student or others, cause physical pain, cause property damage, or seriously disrupt the teaching-learning process” (Westling, 2010, p. 50). These behaviors that disrupt learning also harm the relationships a child develops with peers and teachers, both essential components of the learning experience. A warm relationship with teachers as well as an emotionally and physically safe learning environment are vital to the academic success of all students in a classroom, both of which are disrupted by challenging behaviors (Durlak et al., 2011). In various research and educational literature, *challenging behaviors* (Alter, Walker, & Lander, 2013, p. 51; Westling, 2010, p. 48) have also been referred to as “misbehavior” (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012, p. 52); “behavioral problems” (Abidin & Robinson, 2002, p. 204; Harrison, Vannest, Davis, & Reynolds, 2012, p. 55); and “troublesome classroom behavior” (Beaman, Wheldall, & Kemp, 2007, p. 45).

Challenging Behaviors' Influence in the Classroom

In addition to social skills, students' classroom behavior is also highly influential in the overall educational environment and student learning as well. Based on Nelson's 1996 article, *Designing Schools to Meet the Needs of Students Who Exhibit Disruptive Behavior*, challenging and disruptive behaviors have become an urgent issue in schools. A total of 36% of participating public school teachers stated that student misbehavior interferes with their classroom teaching (NCES, 2012). Teachers have also acknowledged that they feel they are less effective teachers due to disruptions caused by students who exhibit challenging behaviors in their classroom (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Westling, 2010).

Shook (2012) investigated how teachers tend to manage challenging behaviors in their classrooms. In Shook's study, teachers were given three different strategies for potentially managing students' challenging behaviors. The strategies that implemented positive and negative reinforcement were used least by the teachers to manage student behavior. Instead, teachers reported that talking to the student was their most common reaction to disruptive behavior in the classroom. Additionally, they also reported that they would respond by removing the child from the classroom (Shook, 2012).

A common removal strategy is to send the student to the office for further disciplinary action (Gross & Pelcovitz, 2013; Shook, 2012). Unfortunately, this frequently utilized reactive approach to addressing misbehavior has been shown to lead to a decline in the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom (Alter et al., 2013; Westling, 2010). Although removal strategies provide the teacher with immediate relief from the student's misbehaviors, it may also reduce opportunities for the student to be engaged in academic work and to receive classroom instruction (Shook, 2012).

Long Term Implications and Consequences of Challenging Behaviors

As previously discussed, students' challenging behaviors do have immediate negative consequences. However, they can also lead to many pervasive negative outcomes across a student's lifespan as well. Studies have shown a relationship between early school adjustment and a student's educational and occupational success later in life (January, Casey, & Paulson, 2011), suggesting that students who cannot adequately adjust to the classroom environment will continue to struggle. Nelson (1996) also stated that these individuals with behavior problems have school dropout rates around 50% to 60% and unemployment rates from 30% to 40%. He continued to discuss the implications of such behaviors across an individual's lifespan and discussed evidence that problem behavior in adulthood is perpetually preceded by a pattern of similar behavior through childhood, usually seen before the age of eight (Nelson, 1996).

Further supporting evidence from Lane, Wehby, and Cooley (2006) suggests that students who are not able to understand and then meet their teachers' and peers' expectations are at risk for negative consequences both inside and outside the school setting. Current research shows that 32.4% of high school dropouts listed not getting along with either teachers or fellow students as the primary reason for leaving school (NCES, 2012, Table 3). Parker and Asher (1987) listed behaviors that were especially harmful to peer acceptance, including aggression, shy or withdrawn behavior, untrustworthiness, bossy or demanding behaviors, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

Teacher and Student Relationships

Both positive social skills and appropriate classroom behaviors are an essential part of the academic experience and can have a powerful influence on a child's future. Teachers play an essential role in this process as well, but that may be often overlooked. The introduction to *The*

Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning (Shriver & Buffet, 2015) described the relationship between teachers and students and purported that this relationship is the core of education and should be at the forefront of any conversation relating to educational reform. They further proposed that every child has an innate desire to belong and matter somewhere in the world and that teachers play a critical role in helping their students to feel important and valued. They also argue that for students to truly learn and thrive academically it is essential that they do so in a setting where the teacher is nurturing and able to address the social and emotional needs of a child as well as their academic needs. If these requirements are not met in the educational environment, problematic behaviors and negative coping strategies by the child may result. Additionally, an increase in problematic behaviors may alienate the child and teacher, straining this essential relationship and likely the student's academic and social functioning as well (Shriver & Buffet, 2015).

Students' difficult behaviors, including poorly developed social skills, are a source of stress for teachers. A qualitative study conducted by Blasé (1986) investigated sources of stress for teachers and then analyzed how that stress influenced their job performance. In his study, he found some of the top causes of stress teachers experience and then how they felt that influenced their job performance. One of the top things that teachers discussed as being a source of stress was working with students with difficult behaviors. In addition, Blasé's study found that teachers perceived that their increased stress was negatively correlated with their job performance. Teachers also indicated that they did not think they performed as well in the classroom and in their basic teaching duties when they were experiencing stress. Often this stress was associated with working with difficult students (Blasé, 1986).

Value of Teachers Perceptions and Opinions

In addition to the vital nature of the teacher-student relationship, there are many other reasons to reach out to teachers as an informational source in research regarding education and the school system. Because teachers have approximately six or more hours of interaction with their students each school day, they are an invaluable source of information about students' needs. Teachers have a respected and important view of children's social skills and abilities. There are many reasons supported by research for exploring teachers' perceptions of their students' social skills and behaviors. First, accurately understanding how teachers perceive social skills contributes a meaningful understanding of what happens in classrooms and increases information about the needs of students. It also helps to debunk any false media perceptions, such as a portrayals of classrooms as constantly chaotic environments. (Alter et al., 2013). By exploring teachers' perceptions we can learn what the problems concerning social skills and behaviors are and we can accurately understand the skills that need to be taught at various developmental levels.

Second, teachers are commonly the source of students' referrals to special education or other support, so understanding their classroom expectations will be helpful in developing interventions that match the context of the classroom. To help students to be successful, they should be given clear expectations and then taught the skills to meet those expectations if there is a deficit. According to Lane et al. (2004), interventions generated by the pre-referral team, or any school professionals, should consider and clarify the teachers' expectations for student's skill and behavior in the classroom. The team is then better able to consider how to help students develop the skills necessary to negotiate these demands in the classroom. Lane and colleagues (2004) also purport that since general educators are the most common source of referrals, due to

the amount of time spent with students in such a structured and often rigorous setting, it is especially important to identify their expectations in order to help students meet them. This idea summarizes some of the most salient reasons for studying and understanding the opinions and perceptions of teachers. They are the ones who submit referrals for students' inappropriate behaviors. Additionally, teachers are the authority figures who set and enforce the standards for correct and appropriate behavior and social interactions to their students.

Third, exploring teachers' perceptions helps expand the extant research literature (Alter et al., 2013). Asking teachers what types of students' social skills they see as problematic in their classroom gives a very accurate look at what they believe is occurring and may need more attention in the literature to develop research supported practices and interventions to improve those situations. If we recruit the support of teachers in identifying both problem and positive behaviors we are able to learn more efficient ways to intervene and help in the classroom.

Some research has already been done that addresses the specific social skills teachers found most important for student success. Meier et al. (2006), conducted a study investigating these opinions, and they found that fourth through sixth grade teachers viewed both cooperation and self-control as more important than assertion, with self-control being rated as slightly more important than cooperation. Additionally, Meier et al. (2006) found that 75% of teachers surveyed viewed following directions and volunteering to help peers as critical skills related to classroom success. This gives a very insightful picture of how teachers view their students' social skills and what they perceive as most important for the academic success of their students.

However, even given the myriad of reasons for the advantages of studying teachers' opinions and impressions, surprisingly, relatively few studies have been done to investigate teachers' perceptions of social skills and their expectations in the classroom. Additionally, even

fewer studies have been conducted to review the potential variables that could be related to or influence these expectations and impressions as well. Yet, this information is essential as it has a critical relationship with students' academic performance and achievement (Meier et al., 2006). Furthermore, teachers input has crucial application to education because of the requirement of a healthy nurturing relationship between teachers and students for those students to fully succeed in the classroom (Shriver & Buffett, 2015).

Social Skills and Behavioral Development

Kindergarten children vary greatly from the sixth grade students at any given elementary school in a myriad of ways. Their writing is at an entirely different level, they do different types of math and read very different types of books. The academic demands and expectations across these levels vary drastically. For example, according to the United States Common Core educational standards, Kindergarteners are expected to use common nouns in speaking while sixth graders are expected to correctly use possessive, subjective, and objective pronouns in both speaking and writing (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The differences those few years make in these academic demands placed on children are monumental. Why then, would one expect social skills to be any sort of exception?

According to Meier et al. (2006), teachers' ratings of the importance of social skills in the classroom are consistent across all elementary grades. The importance of these skills has already been established, and it is very encouraging to see that teachers also understand and recognize the need for their students to have these skills. These findings illustrate that teachers from all elementary grade levels perceive the importance of these skills, and that the importance of these skills neither increases nor decreases across the elementary school years.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Lane et al. (2004), teachers' expectations of their students' social skills were considered, and the researchers found that overall teachers valued skills that foster cooperation and order in their classrooms. They also found that, regardless of which grade level a teacher taught their views on the importance of assertion, cooperation, and self-control skills for students remained constant. This is a valuable insight into the current perceptions of teachers with respect to the grade level they teach and shows some of the similarities of teacher opinions across grade levels. We have reviewed evidence stating how teachers' expectations of certain social skills are similar regardless of the age of the students; yet we have little information about the possibility that teachers' expectations for their students may vary depending on the grade level taught, even though we can reasonably expect social skills to differ by age and grade (Lamont & Van Horn, 2013).

Meier et al. (2006), found that teachers typically expect their students' social functioning will increase over time and so they naturally anticipate that they will see more adaptive social functioning in their students as they age. However, with little research literature to explicitly identify expectations and specific social skills, it is difficult to determine the most developmentally appropriate best practices for helping students develop and hone specific social skills.

As a review of current literature and research was conducted in preparation for this study, it became clear that there was critical social skills information missing from the literature. Lamont and Van Horn (2013) acknowledged that despite the established importance of social skills and their development throughout childhood and adolescents, there has been shockingly little empirical research conducted to investigate their normative development. They continue, that this is especially concerning since so much of our ability to intervene and help students

struggling to gain social skills depends on understanding where they should be developmentally and working to close the gap between struggling students and their normative peer group.

Berry and O'Connor (2010) conducted one of very few studies to investigate the specific changes in social skills across student grade levels. They found that there was a positive growth in overall social skills over time. They noted that there were areas of pronounced growth in student skills between kindergarten and first grade, then again between third and fifth grade and that less growth seemed to occur between the fifth and sixth grades. However, they noted that the growth of skills was not entirely uniform among all the youth in the study. They discussed factors they found which had the most profound impact on this variability in social skill development. Some of the factors mentioned include the presence of internalizing behaviors and the quality of the teacher-student relationship.

It is believed by the research team, that looking at social skills in smaller grade level groupings (e.g., kindergarten through third grade compared to fourth through sixth grade or individual grades) and focusing on how these skills differ may give us a better picture of what types of learning and changes are occurring at which grade levels. This will then help to promote a greater understanding of when social skills are developing and which skills are needed at the various stages of schooling for a student to be their most successful in the classroom. This can lead to higher quality interventions that are more appropriate and effective. As was previously discussed, teachers and their relationships with their students are critical to the development of these skills. Therefore, it is the aim of this study to review their expectations of their students and to analyze those results by grade level to gain more insight into the expectations placed on students in the school system.

Summary and Research Questions

The current study used teacher perception data from a questionnaire conducted in a previous study (Weed, 2015) to better understand teachers' perspectives of what social skills need to be taught at various grades. The aim of this study is to help educators and researchers gain a better perspective of how social skills may develop over the elementary years and how teacher's perceptions differ by the grade level that they teach. Utilizing data taken from an online questionnaire completed by elementary school teachers across the state of Utah, we analyzed how their perceptions of their students' social skills differ based on the grade level that they teach. The survey addressed teachers' level of concern about 15 common unacceptable behaviors and their rankings of the five most concerning behaviors. Teachers were also asked about the importance of 17 social skills and were then asked to rank the five most important social skills. Our research considered if the teachers' rated concerns differed across grade levels.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The purpose of this study is to investigate if and to what extent teachers' perceptions of students' social skills and problematic behavior differ based on the grade level they teach. Therefore, a survey was designed and distributed to a sample of teachers of kindergarten through sixth grade classes across the state of Utah. This study utilized an existing data set from research completed in 2015 and our research question is intended to elaborate on the findings of this prior study (Weed, 2015).

Participants

Since the aim of the study is to understand the perceptions of elementary school teachers, the survey was sent to 1,144 kindergarten through sixth grade teachers across the state of Utah via email. These teachers were randomly selected from across the state to include those in a variety of locations and circumstances. Participants were pulled from suburban, urban, and rural areas and both general and special education teachers were included. A total of 143 teachers from each grade level (Kindergarten through sixth) and 143 special education teachers were invited to participate to promote equal sampling across grades. Understanding that online questionnaires have response rates of 50% or less, a large enough sample was invited to participate in order to ultimately secure 250 to 500 participants (Nulty, 2008).

Procedure

The survey was emailed to 1,144 randomly selected elementary school teachers across the state of Utah. The responses were compiled in an encrypted data base that is only accessible by researchers directly related to the project. The internet survey did not require any personally identifiable information and was completely anonymous.

Instrument

The research team who designed the questionnaire used in this study consisted of two associate professors at Brigham Young University in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education and a school psychology graduate student. The graduate student served as the primary researcher and consulted with the two professors throughout the process. Various tests used to measuring students' behaviors and studies that explored students' social skills are listed below and were reviewed to identify common behavioral concerns and social skills of elementary students. Behaviors under consideration were those listed in commonly used behavior checklists used to identify behavioral, emotional, and social problems in children. In particular, this research relied on behaviors commonly included in elementary school teacher behavioral checklists. These checklists included information drawn from the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992, 2004, 2015) and the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001).

Additionally, the behaviors which were selected for inclusion in the instrument used in the study were commonly reported in studies that investigated children's problematic behaviors. These studies included *Common Dimensions of Social Skills of Children and Adolescents: A Taxonomy of Positive Behaviors* (Caldarella & Merrell, 1997); *Chinese Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Classroom Behaviour Problems* (Shen et al., 2009); *Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Challenging Behavior and the Impact of Teacher Demographics* (Alter et al., 2013); *Teacher Perceptions of Distress and Disturbance Regarding Student Behaviors in an All-Male Orthodox Jewish Yeshiva Elementary School Classroom* (Gross & Pelcovitz, 2013); and *Skillstreaming the Elementary School Child: A Guide for Teaching Prosocial Skills* (McGinnis, 2012).

Once all social skills and behaviors listed in these listed measures had been considered they were included in a spreadsheet. Of these included social skills and behaviors, those that were the most commonly identified were consolidated into a single list of problematic externalizing behaviors, problematic internalizing behaviors, and desired social skills. Interestingly, the identified desired social skills were often replacements for problem behaviors teachers wanted to eliminate. For example, aggression (problematic behavior) could be addressed with a lesson on conflict management (desired social skill).

Once this list of social skills and behaviors was compiled, a survey form was designed from this list. A group of three experts, including two associate professors of school psychology and one in special education, were consulted during the development of the survey instrument. All consultants specialize in identifying and addressing externalizing and internalizing behaviors in children, social skill instruction in a school setting, and quantitative research through questionnaires to collect data. The survey was designed to invite teachers to rate and then rank unacceptable behaviors as a check for internal reliability and to support the questionnaire's validity. Reliability of the survey instrument was established by sending the survey to a small group of teachers as a pilot ($n=14$ teachers), and then sent to those same teachers again two months later. Their responses were then checked for consistency. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a p value level of significance set at .01 did not show any areas of significance among any of the items inquired about in this check (Weed, 2015).

The study's survey was designed to address teachers' perceptions and both desirable social skills and unacceptable behaviors of students. Using a five-point Likert scale, teachers were first asked to specify their level of concern for the fifteen included behaviors. On this scale, scores ranged from 1 (*unconcerned*) to 5 (*extremely concerned*). Then, using the same list of

behaviors, they were asked to rank in order, the top five most concerning behaviors. Teachers ranked the most concerning behavior in the first position.

The survey then transitions to understanding how important teachers believed the seventeen selected social skills were to their students' academic learning and social-emotional functioning. Another five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not important*) to 5 (*extremely important*). In the same fashion as the behavior portion, the teachers were then requested to rank the five most important, with one being the most important social skill for their students.

The survey also included a brief section that inquired about the participants' demographic information, questions about their teaching experience, and some inquiries about their current school setting. The demographic information included gender, age, highest degree they had earned. The questions regarded their teaching experience included items such as the number of years they had been teaching, whether they currently teach students with special needs, if they are a licensed special education teacher, and most pertinent to the current study, the grade level the teacher is currently teaching. The final portion inquired about their school setting and asked whether they taught in a public, private, or charter school, whether their school is in a rural, urban or suburban setting, and the percentage of students at their school on free and reduced lunch, as well as the number of students in their current class. A copy of the survey instrument is included in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedures used for Weed (2015) were implemented in this study; however, rather than analyzing the sample as a whole, the sample was divided into seven groups: Kindergarten through sixth grade teachers, to identify group differences and similarities. For example, Weed identified the mean score of the Likert ratings that indicated teachers' level of

concern for unacceptable classroom behaviors. The mean of the Likert responses to the question that addressed teachers' level of concern for unacceptable behaviors was compared by group. Similarly, the mean of the Likert responses to the question that assessed teachers' sense of importance of social skills was also compared by group. Weed (2015) also reported Kindergarten and first through sixth grade teachers' rankings of the most concerning behaviors and the most important social skills. However, the ranking portion was not considered in our current study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The first research question in the study asked whether there was a statistically significant difference among Utah elementary school teachers' ratings of the importance of different social skills in their classrooms based on the grade level they currently taught. When the survey instrument was completed, teachers were asked to indicate their level of concern regarding 17 listed social skills. They were instructed to do so utilizing a five point Likert scale response option ranging from *unconcerned* (1) to *extremely concerned* (5). For our study, means for each social skill item across individual grade levels were calculated. These means were then compared using a one-way analysis of variance to determine any areas of statistical significance between the grade levels. These means are included in Table 1.

In the area of social skills, there was only one statistically significant difference between grade levels. This was in the area of following rules and instructions between third and fifth grade. Here, the mean (M) for third grade was 4.90 and the mean (M) for fifth grade was 4.44 with a significance of $p=.011$. This suggests that third grade teachers tend to see following rules and instructions as more important than fifth grade teachers do. Other than this area, there are no other statistically significant values between grade levels in the area of social skills.

The second research question in this study asked if there was a statistically significant difference between teachers' rankings of challenging behaviors based on the grade level they taught. The teachers were asked to complete this in the same fashion as the social skills items, by using a five-point Likert type scale with response options ranging from *unconcerned* to *extremely concerned*. The teachers were asked to do this for 15 different concerning behaviors. The mean response for each item across each grade level was calculated and then compared

using a one-way analysis of variance to determine areas with statistically significant differences. These means are included in Table 2.

There were more areas of statistical significance among the challenging behaviors questions than there were among the social skills that teachers were concerned about. Among the externalizing behaviors there was a statistical significance between first and fifth grade for aggression (hits, kicks, shoves). The mean for first grade is 4.13 and for fifth is 3.12 ($p = .029$). Next, among the internalizing items the first area of statistical significance was for anxious, worried, nervous, fearful between first and fourth grade. The mean for first grade is 3.82 and fourth is 3.03 ($p = .019$). There also was a statistically significant difference between poor peer relationships/trouble making friends between first and fourth grades. Here the mean for first grade was 3.97 and fourth was 3.26 ($p = .049$).

Table 1

Teachers' Ratings of the Importance of Social Skills: Means by Grade Level

Social Skills	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Anger management	4.64	4.76	4.59	4.49	4.38	4.29	4.25
Conflict management/resolution	4.75	4.76	4.65	4.68	4.58	4.62	4.44
Following rules and instructions	4.79	4.71	4.73	4.90	4.70	4.44	4.63
Effective communication	4.71	4.61	4.43	4.74	4.68	4.56	4.38
Showing empathy/caring	4.64	4.61	4.35	4.38	4.46	4.41	4.25
Coping with challenging situations	4.71	4.68	4.65	4.49	4.50	4.50	4.44
Self-management: good use of free time, seatwork, assigned tasks	4.46	4.50	4.43	4.62	4.43	4.50	4.63
Cooperates with others	4.57	4.66	4.38	4.46	4.49	4.41	4.31
Healthy peer interactions and relationships	4.46	4.55	4.49	4.41	4.41	4.44	4.19
Shows self-respect	4.68	4.68	4.62	4.46	4.59	4.71	4.50
Shows respect to other students	4.71	4.84	4.62	4.62	4.70	4.65	4.56
Shows respect to adults	4.79	4.87	4.62	4.72	4.71	4.65	4.50
Manages anxiety/stress	4.61	4.61	4.38	4.46	4.38	4.35	4.25
Shows gratitude	4.25	4.26	4.19	4.18	4.28	4.33	3.75
Honesty	4.57	4.66	4.49	4.64	4.65	4.59	4.13
Shows good sportsmanship	4.39	4.37	4.05	4.41	4.30	4.26	4.00
Speaks up to protect others' rights	4.07	4.37	4.22	4.41	4.24	4.38	4.19

Note. Scoring options ranged from 1 (*unimportant*) to 5 (*extremely important*). Bolded sections indicate areas of statistical significance.

Table 2

Teachers' Ratings of Problematic Behaviors: Means by Grade Level

	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
<u>Externalizing Behaviors</u>							
Aggressive (hits, kicks, shoves)	4.03	4.13	3.82	3.45	3.31	3.12	3.82
Says or does things to hurt others feelings	3.93	4.11	3.97	4.08	3.79	3.82	4.41
Isolated, avoids and withdraws from social situations	3.31	4.03	3.59	3.52	3.23	3.53	3.88
Disrespectful to adults	4.24	4.16	4.24	4.20	3.92	3.73	4.18
Defiant and refuses to comply w/ teacher requests	4.24	4.18	4.32	3.95	3.56	3.62	4.06
Hyperactive	3.66	3.89	3.89	3.53	3.50	3.50	3.59
Stealing	3.69	3.82	3.58	3.55	3.15	3.41	3.59
Lying, Dishonest	3.79	3.87	3.71	3.85	3.59	3.71	3.94
Uses Foul Language	3.52	3.47	3.13	3.25	2.85	3.24	3.24
Threatens to hurt others	3.97	4.05	3.71	3.60	3.28	3.50	3.94
<u>Internalizing Behaviors</u>							
Sad, hopeless	3.28	3.92	3.42	3.50	3.15	3.35	3.65
Anxious, worried, nervous, fearful	3.31	3.82	3.66	3.55	3.03	3.32	3.76
Inattentive, daydreaming, distracted	3.62	3.95	3.95	3.75	3.70	3.68	3.65
Poor peer relationships, trouble making friends	3.48	3.97	3.68	3.65	3.26	3.62	4.06
Intentionally hurts self	3.59	3.87	3.49	3.33	2.95	3.09	3.76

Note. Scoring options ranged from 1 (*unconcerned*) to 5 (*extremely concerned*). Bolded sections indicate areas of statistical significance.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As discussed in the literature review, a wealth of research has already been done to determine the importance of social skills in the classroom setting. In fact, one longitudinal study found that a student's social skill level is also positively predictive of their academic functioning and achievement throughout their school career (Malecki & Elliott, 2002). Further research has also supported the influence of challenging behaviors in the classroom. Previous research studies have shown that the most common techniques used in schools to handle misbehavior (such as removal of the student from the classroom) also tend to diminish effective teaching and reduce student learning and engagement in the classroom (Alter et al., 2013; Shook, 2012; Westling, 2010).

This prior research has not only established the importance of social skills and the influence of challenging behaviors but also which specific skills and behaviors are important for classroom success. For example, a study by Lane et al. (2004), found that teachers tended to value social skills and behaviors that fostered cooperation and promoted order in the classroom. These researchers found that, regardless of which grade level a teacher taught their views on the importance of skills such as assertion, cooperation, and self-control skills for students remained constant. There were many other studies found that revealed similarities among teachers' views of the importance of social skills and influence of challenging behaviors and these findings are well supported. However, there was very little research on which social skills and behaviors are most important or challenging at which specific grade or developmental levels. Previous research has established that teachers do expect to see their students demonstrate an overall increase in social functioning and skills over time (Meier et al., 2006). Further research has even supported this expectation and found that there is, in fact, positive growth in the social skills and abilities of

student over time (Berry & O'Connor, 2010). However, none of these studies have addressed the specific skills that increase or given further details about what that growth precisely entails over time.

Lamont and Van Horn (2013) acknowledged that despite the established importance of social skills and their development throughout childhood and adolescents, there has been shockingly little empirical research conducted to investigate their normative development. They continue, that this is especially concerning since so much of our ability to intervene and help students struggling to gain social skills depends on understanding where they should be developmentally and working to close the gap between struggling students and their normative peer group. This is clearly an area of great significance that is important to address to better our understanding of how to support students in their development of these skills.

The purpose of this study was to address this gap in the research literature and determine if there were any statistically significant differences between teachers' ratings of the value of social skills and behaviors based on the grade level they taught and thus the developmental level of the students they work with. Additionally, the intent of the current study was to impact current practice in the field of education by helping education professionals better understand developmentally appropriate behaviors and to better support students as they strive to develop those skills.

Major Findings

The study results found four areas of statistical significance between the teachers' responses. One of these differences was in the area of social skills and the other three were among the challenging behaviors included in the survey instrument. First, in social skills, following rules and directions was significantly different between third and fifth grade teachers.

This result suggests that third grade teachers find these skills of following rules and directions as more important in their classroom than fifth grade teachers reportedly do.

There were three areas of statistically significant differences between grade levels among the challenging behaviors included in the survey. First, among the externalizing behaviors included in the surveys in the area of aggressive (hits, kicks, shoves) there was a statistically significant difference between first and fifth grade. This suggests that first grade teachers find this behavior more problematic than fifth grade teachers do. The final two statistically significant differences were among the internalizing behaviors included in the survey. In the area of anxious, worried, nervous, or fearful there was a statistically significant difference between first and fourth grade suggesting that these behaviors interfere more in the classroom in first grade than they would in a fourth grade classroom. Last, also among the internalizing behaviors and also between first and fourth grade there was a statistically significant difference in the area of poor peer relationships, trouble making friends. This again suggests that students' struggles in this area are perceived by teachers to be more problematic in first grade than in fourth.

Overall, a clear theme of differences in teacher perceptions of students' challenging behaviors and social skills is not evident in the survey results. Only 3 of the 15 challenging behaviors were statistically different, and the differences do not seem to show a clear developmental pattern between the grades that teachers taught. Similarly, only one of the 17 social skills showed significant differences in teacher perceptions across grade levels. While there are differences in teachers' perceptions of social skills and problem behaviors, these differences do not appear practically significant or to show a pattern or theme that is easily discerned in this data set.

In further reviewing the data, it is interesting to note the relationships and patterns between the means found among participants' responses to the questions about social skills compared to their responses related to problematic behaviors. In designing the survey instrument, it was noted that many of the social skills and behaviors were related because many of the desired social skills could serve as replacement behaviors for the problematic behaviors. However, it was noted that among the means for the social skills items, nearly all the means across grade levels and each social skills were high suggesting that all teachers viewed all social skills surveyed as important. However, the same did not necessarily occur in the items about problematic behavior. Here, there were consistently lower means overall and not as clear of a pattern across responses. Ultimately, this suggested to researchers that teachers feel all social skills included were important but that the challenging behaviors included are not necessarily all problematic.

This lack of substantial areas of significance or clear patterns among the results of the study could also explain the lack of research literature related to this topic. Research has likely not been conducted or published because the findings are not substantial enough to add to the literature and our understanding of these skills in the field. Therefore, the results of this study may in fact better support current academic practices and research as it does not show any substantial patterns that would suggest the need for any changes and adjustments.

Limitations

To begin, the most significant limitation of this study was that it was based on a previous research study and that existing data was utilized to complete our analysis as well. This is considered a limitation because the survey questions were not tailored to the needs and hypothesis of this study and thus may not have been the most compatible way to measure

hypotheses and our intended knowledge. This survey also only included questions about specific behaviors and social skills that were not tailored specifically to developmental changes and milestones and related to the specific research questions intended for analysis in this study.

There were also some limitations in the original research study when the data was collected that impacted the findings of this study as well. First, only 25% of the 1144 teachers who were emailed an invitation to participate actually completed the questionnaire; therefore, the sample was rather small and may not be generalizable to the entire state and may not fully account for the diversity and variety of communities and demographics throughout the state. Furthermore, the survey questionnaire was completed in Utah and only teachers currently working in that state were invited to participate. Therefore, the concerns they listed and the generalizability of the results of this study cannot be guaranteed. This could be particularly true for areas that vary greatly from Utah in diversity and differing social economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, the range that was used to analyze the results and the p value chosen to determine level of significance could have also limited the patterns and the differences discovered in this study. Using a broader range could have yielded greater results, or more areas of statistical significance revealing patterns between grade levels not seen in this study. Changing the p value may not be as reliable but could still provide some valuable insight into any developmental patterns and give more ideas for further research to be conducted as well.

Implications for Practice

In all areas of statistical significance, the mean of the younger grade was higher than that of the lower grade suggesting that these behaviors are considered more problematic or important to teachers of younger grades. This could impact current practice by helping educators understand that students in younger grades may benefit from additional support in the

development of the social skills and appropriate behaviors to better meet teachers' expectations starting with the skills that were found to be statistically significant in this study including following directions, and replacement behaviors for aggression, anxiety, and trouble making friends. Additionally, this pattern could have also occurred because older students are no longer displaying these behaviors, such as aggression, anxiety, and trouble making friends, and thus teachers at older grades would not report them as being as problematic in their classrooms. Yet, determining this difference is crucial in fully understanding how this specific result could impact current practice in school and how school teams attempt to address this phenomenon.

Another implication for practice comes from the areas where there was no statistical significance in this current study. Given the abundance of potential options for areas of significant differences between grade level expectations, there are relatively few areas of statistically significant difference. This may suggest that at the elementary level, teachers' expectations of their students' social skills and behaviors do not actually vary as greatly as originally hypothesized. Although academic demands and material may increase in rigor and teachers' expectations may increase there, the results of this study may suggest that teachers' expectations for behavior and social skills do not necessarily develop in a similar pace and fashion. However, this may also suggest that teachers are not aware of what types of skills they can reasonably expect their students to have based on their grade level and related stage in development. If this latter is the case, designing training programs for teachers so they can gain more knowledge in this area would likely be very beneficial in helping teachers to better understand how to work with their students and appropriately adjust their classroom expectations accordingly.

Future Research

There is a multitude of future research that could be conducted to build on the results of the current study. First, further research could be conducted to determine why teachers of younger grades seem to find an increasing number of behaviors as more problematic than those of older grades. This may be because these younger grade teachers observe certain behaviors more often and so they are more readily on their mind. However, if the wording of the survey questions or the method of the study were to change, teachers of older grades may actually report higher levels of concern for certain behaviors. The questionnaire used in this study asked teachers to respond “based on your teaching experience...please indicate your level of concern.” However, if the wording was changed to say something such as “if the following were to occur in your classroom, how concerned would you be?” the participant responses may then change to reflect this difference.

Teachers could also consider hypothetical situations rather than just their own prior experiences as they may not have experienced some of the behaviors included in the survey. This could have been unexpectedly reflected in responses, such as with teachers of older grades reporting lower levels of concern for many behaviors yet their level of concern may actually be higher given a hypothetical scenario rather than their own experiences.

Gathering more qualitative data about why participants responded to questions the way they did could also give additional insight into their responses and thus their perceptions. Asking direct questions related to teachers expectations of their students at different grade levels in a qualitative manner could also help to gain further insight into their perceptions of student social skills and behaviors. This could be measured by asking what teachers would expect under specific hypothetical situations at differing grade levels. Looking into this further by only

including participants who have taught multiple different grade levels and asking them how they felt their perceptions of students as well as their related expectations for them based on their developmental level could also yield great insight and tease apart some of the lingering questions from this study.

Further research could also be done to replicate this study in other states to determine how well these results generalize to other settings and backgrounds and geographic areas. Similar studies could also be conducted that expand the sample in age. Future researchers could look into the perceptions of teachers from preschool through high school. This may bring about more patterns and distinctive differences between grade levels and yield more significant results than the current study.

Conclusion

The current study sought to investigate any areas of statistically significant differences or patterns among development of students' positive social skills and challenging behaviors by looking into teachers perceptions of these skills in their students' using a data set from prior research. A statistically significant difference was found in the social skill of following directions between third and fifth grade with the mean for third grade being higher suggesting that third grade teachers view following directions as a more important in their classroom than fifth grade teachers would. In the problematic behaviors, a significant difference was found in the area of aggression between first and fifth grade, with first grade reporting higher means and between first and fourth grade. There were significant differences in both the areas of anxiousness and trouble making friends again with first grade results showing higher means in both areas. This suggests that first grade teachers would find these behaviors more problematic in their classroom than fourth grade teachers. In all areas of statistical significance, the mean of

the younger grade was higher than that of the lower grade indicating that these behaviors are considered more problematic or important to teachers of younger grades.

Although no clear patterns emerged and there were not many areas of statistical significance, the results of this study still add to our current knowledge base by helping us to understand teachers' current perceptions. Based on the results of this study, it may suggest that although we can clearly expect social skills to improve and change over times, teachers may not be aware of those changes and thus further training programs for them on child development may be appropriate. Additionally, developing lessons and interventions to target the development of positive social skills and replacements for challenging behaviors may be beneficial to implement with students in younger grades since the means were all higher for younger grades among the areas that were statistically significant.

This study also prompts many ideas for further research based on the results of this study. Looking into these same research questions further through qualitative rather than quantitative means could yield a wealth of valuable insight and designing studies to tease apart why there were not more areas of significance, such as looking at teachers knowledge of child development of specifically sampling teachers who have taught various grade levels could also add to the existing research literature and further elaborate on the findings of the current study. Overall, much was learned from the current study, yet there are still several questions left unanswered that could highly benefit both teachers and students if addressed.

References

- Abidin, R. R., & Robinson, L. L. (2002). Stress, biases, or professionalism: What drives teachers' referral judgments of students with challenging behaviors? *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 10*(4), 204–212. doi: 10.1177/10634266020100040201
- Achenbach, T. M., & Rescorla, L. A. (2001). *Manual for the ASEBA school-age forms and profiles*. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, Research Center for Children, Youth, & Families.
- Alter, P., Walker, J., & Landers, E. (2013). Teachers' perceptions of students' challenging behavior and the impact of teacher demographics. *Education and Treatment of Children, 35*(4), 51–69.
- Beaman, R., Wheldall, K., & Kemp, C. (2007). Recent research on troublesome classroom behaviour: A review. *The Australian Journal of Special Education, 31*(1), 45–60. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/205452827?accountid=4488>
- Berry, D., & O'Connor, E. (2010). Behavioral risk, teacher-child relationships, and social skill development across middle childhood: A child-by-environment analysis of change. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 31*(1), 1–14.
- Caldarella, P., & Merrell, K. W. (1997). Common dimensions of social skills of children and adolescents: A taxonomy of positive behaviors. *School Psychology Review, 26*(2), 264–278.
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-

- based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x
- Elias, M. J. (1997). *Promoting social and emotional learning: Guidelines for educators*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Elliott, S. N., Frey, J. R., & DiPerna, J. C. (2012). Promoting social skills: Enabling academic and interpersonal successes. In S. E. Brock & S. R. Jimerson (Eds.), *Best practices in school crisis prevention and intervention* (2nd ed., pp. 55–77). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Gresham, F. M. (2010). Evidence-based social skills interventions: empirical foundations for instructional approaches. In M. Shinn & H. Walker (Eds.), *Interventions for achievement and behavior problems in a three-tier model including RTI* (3rd ed., pp. 337–362). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Gross, K., & Pelcovitz, D. (2013). Teacher perceptions of distress and disturbance regarding student behaviors in an all-male Orthodox Jewish Yeshiva elementary school classroom. *Journal of Elementary Education*, 22(2), 57–79.
- Harrison, J. R., Vannest, K., Davis, J., & Reynolds, C. (2012). Common problem behaviors of children and adolescents in general education classrooms in the United States. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 20(1), 55–64. doi:10.1177/106342661421157
- January, A. M., Casey, R. J., & Paulson, D. (2011). A meta-analysis of classroom-wide interventions to build social skills: Do they work? *School Psychology Review*, 40(2), 242–256.

- Lamont, A., & Van Horn, M. L. (2013). Heterogeneity in parent-reported social skill development in early elementary school children. *Social Development, 22*(2), 384–405. doi: 10.1111/sode.12023
- Lane, K. L., Givner, C. C., & Pierson, M. R. (2004). Teacher expectations of student behavior: Social skills necessary for success in elementary school classrooms. *The Journal of Special Education, 38*(2), 104–110.
- Lane, K. L., Wehby, J. H., & Cooley, C. (2006). Teacher expectations of students' classroom behavior across the grade span: Which social skills are necessary for success? *Exceptional Children, 72*(2), 153–167.
- Malecki, C. K., & Elliott, S. N. (2002). Children's social behaviors as predictors of academic achievement: A longitudinal analysis. *School Psychology Quarterly, 17*(1), 1–23.
- Meier, C. R., Diperna, J. C., & Oster, M. M. (2006). Importance of social skills in the elementary grades. *Education and Treatment of Children, 29*(3), 409–419.
- McGinnis, E. (2012). *Skillstreaming the elementary school child: A guide for teaching prosocial skills*. Champaign, IL: Research Press Company.
- National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common core state standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects*. Washington, DC: Authors. Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/K/>
- Nelson, J. (1996). Designing schools to meet the needs of students who exhibit disruptive behavior. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 4*(3), 147–161. doi: 10.1177/106342669600400302

- Nulty, D. D. (2008). The adequacy of response rates to online and paper surveys: What can be done? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(3), 301–314.
- Parker, J. G., & Asher, S. R. (1987). Peer relations and later personal adjustment: Are low-accepted children at risk? *Psychological Bulletin*, 102(3), 357–389. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.102.3.357
- Reynolds, C. R., & Kamphaus, R. W. (1992). *Behavior assessment system for children manual* (1st ed.). Circle Pines, MN: AGS Publishing.
- Reynolds, C. R., & Kamphaus, R. W. (2004). *Behavior assessment system for children manual* (2nd ed.). Circle Pines, MN: AGS Publishing.
- Reynolds, C. R., & Kamphaus, R. W. (2015). *Behavior assessment system for children manual* (3rd ed.). Circle Pines, MN: AGS Publishing.
- Shen, J., Zhang, N., Zhang, C., Caldarella, P., Richardson, M. J., & Shatzer, R. H. (2009). Chinese elementary school teachers' perceptions of students' classroom behaviour problems. *Educational Psychology*, 29(2), 187–201.
- Shook, A. C. (2012). A study of preservice educators' dispositions to change behavior management strategies. *Preventing School Failure*, 56(2), 129–136. doi: 10.1080/1045988X.2011.606440
- Shriver, T. P., & Buffett, J. (2015). The uncommon core. In J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, R. P. Weissberg, & T. P. Gullotta (Eds.), *The handbook of social and emotional learning* (pp. xv–xvi). New York, NY: Guilford Press
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *Characteristics of GED recipients in high school 2002-2006* (NCES 2012-025). Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012025.pdf>

- Weed, K. (2015). *Utah elementary school teachers' perceptions of students' problematic behaviors and critical social skills* (Unpublished Educational Specialist thesis). Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
- Westling, D. L. (2010). Teachers and challenging behavior: Knowledge, views, and practices. *Remedial and Special Education, 31*(1), 48–63.
- Womack, S. A., Marchant, M., & Borders, D. (2011). Literature-based social skills instruction: A strategy for students with learning disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 46*(3), 157–164.

APPENDIX A: Teacher Survey

Demographic Questions	
Gender	Male Female
Age	Type in your age
What grade do you currently teach? Please indicate more than one grade if you teach more than one grade.	K 1 2 3 4 5 6
Are you currently teaching students with special education needs?	YES NO
In previous years, have you taught students with special education needs?	YES NO
Are you licensed as a Special Education teacher?	YES NO
How many years have you been teaching?	Type in the number of years (count part time as a full year)
Where is your school located?	Rural Urban Suburban
In which type of school are you teaching?	Public Charter
How many students are enrolled in your current classroom?	Type in the number of students

We are interested in which student behaviors are of greatest concern to you as a teacher. We are also interested in identifying important social skills to address challenging behaviors in a positive and proactive way. This survey lists phrases that describe students' classroom behaviors and social skills.

Based on your teaching experience, for each classroom behavior listed below, please indicate your level of concern:

	Unconcerned	Slightly concerned	Somewhat concerned	Moderately concerned	Extremely concerned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive • Hits, kicks, shoves • Isolated, avoids and withdraws from social situations • Defiant and disrespectful, argues, refuses to comply with teacher's requests • Sad , hopeless • Anxious, worried, nervous, fearful • Hyperactive • Inattentive, daydreaming, distracted • Poor peer relationships • Intentionally hurts self • Stealing • Lying/dishonest 					

Please rank the five most concerning behaviors below; 1 being the most concerning and 5 being the least concerning.

Aggressive	1	2	3	4	5
Hits, kicks, shoves	1	2	3	4	5
Isolated, avoids and withdraws from social situations	1	2	3	4	5
Defiant and disrespectful, argues, refuses to comply with teacher's requests	1	2	3	4	5
Sad , hopeless	1	2	3	4	5
Anxious, worried, nervous, fearful	1	2	3	4	5
Hyperactive	1	2	3	4	5
Inattentive, daydreaming, distracted	1	2	3	4	5
Poor peer relationships	1	2	3	4	5
Intentionally hurts self	1	2	3	4	5
Stealing	1	2	3	4	5
Lying/dishonest	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____ _____ (By choosing other, you omit one of the 5 options above)	1	2	3	4	5

Based on your past experiences, in regard to students' academic learning and social-emotional wellbeing, how important are each of the following social skills?					
	Unimportant	Slightly important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Extremely important
Anger management					
Conflict management/resolution					
Following rules and instructions					
Effective communication					
Empathy/caring					
Coping with challenging situations					
Self-management: use of free time, seatwork, assigned tasks					
Cooperation					
Healthy peer interactions and relationships					
Self-respect and respect for others					
Managing anxiety/stress					
Showing gratitude					
Honesty					

Please rank the top 5 most important skills below; 1 being the most important and 5 being the least.

Anger management	1	2	3	4	5
Conflict management/resolution	1	2	3	4	5
Following rules and instructions	1	2	3	4	5
Effective communication	1	2	3	4	5
Empathy/caring	1	2	3	4	5
Coping with challenging situations	1	2	3	4	5
Self-management: use of free time, seatwork, assigned tasks	1	2	3	4	5
Cooperation	1	2	3	4	5
Healthy peer interactions and relationships	1	2	3	4	5
Self-respect and respect for others	1	2	3	4	5
Managing anxiety/stress	1	2	3	4	5
Showing gratitude	1	2	3	4	5
Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____ _____ (By choosing other, you omit one of the 5 options above)	1	2	3	4	5