

ABSTRACT

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Teacher Perception Of The Effects Of A Social Skills Curriculum On The Social
Competence Of Primary-Age Students With Learning Disabilities

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The purpose of this study was to examine teacher perception of the effects of a social skills curriculum on the social competence of primary-age students with learning disabilities. More specifically, the researcher attempted to determine if the use of a social skills curriculum incorporating a direct instructional approach would positively affect the perceived social competence of primary-age students with learning disabilities. Previous studies in the field have suggested that use of a direct instructional methodology was the most effective strategy for improving the social competence of children with learning disabilities.

This study was conducted in a northeastern Louisiana urban school system during the spring school term of 1998. The sample consisted of 56 students with learning disabilities in grades K - 3 enrolled in special education classes at eight elementary schools. A quasi-experimental design was employed in this study. Instruments utilized for the pretest and posttest measures included the *ACCEPTS Placement Test*, a curriculum-based rating scale (Walker et al., 1988), and the *Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment* (Walker & McConnell, 1995a), a norm-referenced teacher rating scale to measure social behavior of students. The experimental groups received social skills instruction from their special education teachers for 40 - 45 minutes daily over a ten-week period using the *Walker Social Skills Curriculum: The ACCEPTS Program* developed by Walker et al. (1988). The control groups received no direct social skills instruction. Statistical comparisons were made using the pretest and posttest mean scores of each group. The mean scores were compared by using a two-tailed *t* test analysis at the .05 level of significance. The results of the statistical analyses did not reveal evidence to reject the null hypotheses. Both the pretests and the posttests showed that students with learning disabilities were perceived as demonstrating poor social skills. Although the findings of this study did not indicate support for the social skills curriculum implemented for this research, further consideration should be given to direct instructional programs to improve social competence of children with learning disabilities. Implications for future research in the area of social skills instruction were provided.