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Development of a Social Understanding Group Resource Manual

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Development of A Social Understanding Group Resource Manual

Purpose

The Social Understanding Group Resource Manual was developed to address the expressed need for a comprehensive, evidence-based curriculum resource manual which would provide facilitators with easy reference to access categorized materials, activities, worksheets, and resources for Wayzata West Middle School's Social Understanding Groups.

Review of Literature:

- Adolescents with social skill deficits have a high incidence of school maladjustment, delinquency, child psychopathology, and adult mental health problems (Fisher, Masia, Warner, & Klein, 2004)
- An advantage of social skills intervention in the school setting is the efficiency of curriculum-based approaches which can meet the needs of many students at one time, in their natural environment (DeRosier, 2004).
- There is no universally utilized Social Skills Curriculum intervention for adolescents (Nangle, Erdley, Carpenter, & Newman, 2002; Spence, 2003)
- The most important material of a social skills program is the teaching manual (Bullis, Walker, & Sprague, 2001)
- Combining validated social skills curriculum can provide teachers with practical strategies that are known to be successful in helping children with social competence instruction (Spence, 2003)

Methodology

A list of identified areas of social skills subject matter was developed through consultation with group facilitators (see Graph 1). An extensive systematic literature review was conducted to analyze psychoeducational, evidence-based, strengths-based lessons and techniques designed to teach/improve identified social skills subject matter. Textbooks, hard-copy journals, previously developed skills workbooks and multiple electronic databases were reviewed and utilized. A resource and reference content summary table was created to organize reviewed resources and lessons. Finally, the lessons and resources were compiled into a 14 section, 370 page, research-based skills curriculum and resource reference manual.

Tristann Carter, LSW

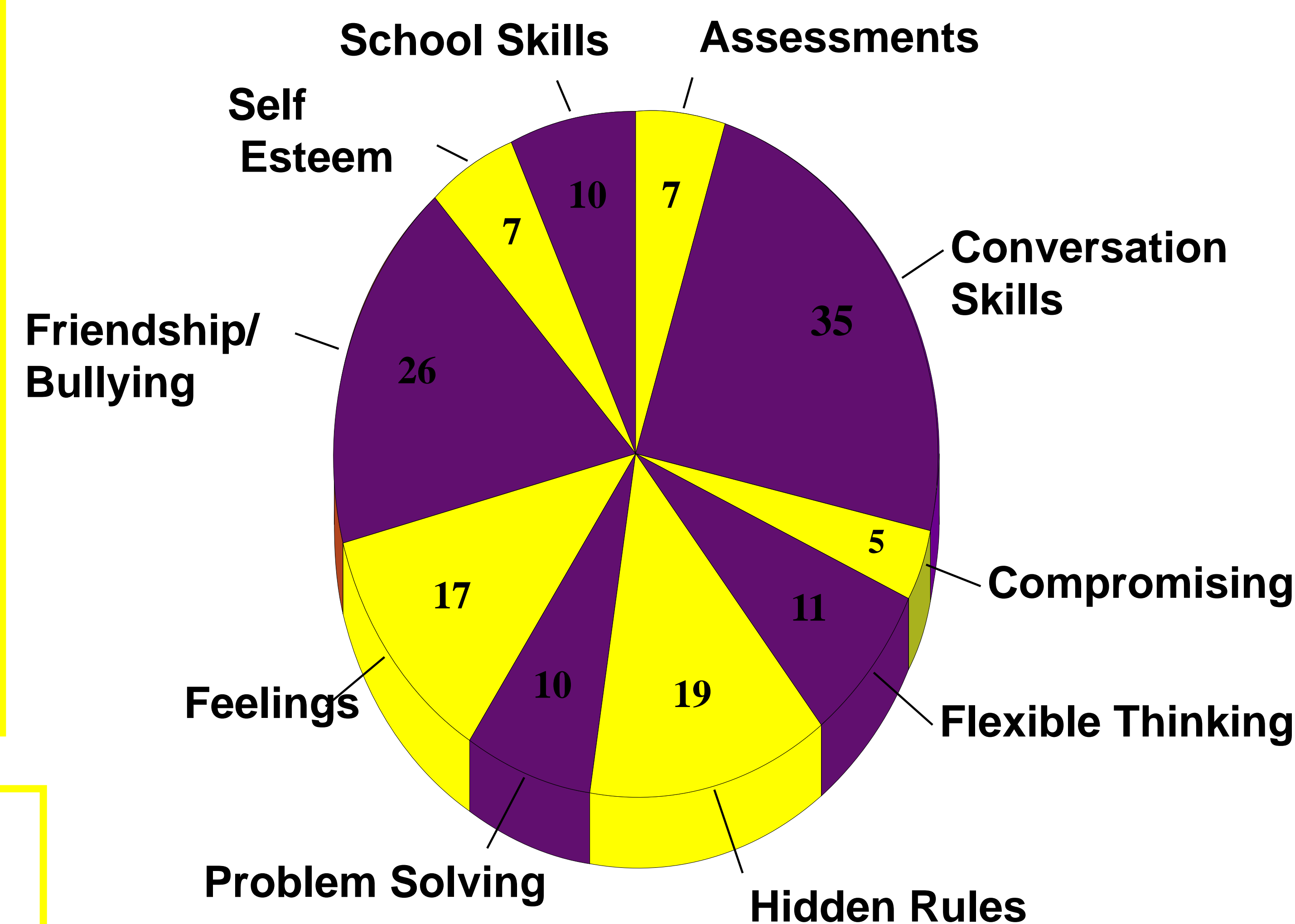
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Agency: Wayzata West Middle School Wayzata, MN

Field Instructor: Peter Binnie, LICSW

Advisor: Kimberly Zammitt, PhD, LICSW

Graph 1: Identified Areas of Social Skills Subject Matter & Number of Lessons in Manual



References are available from the author upon request

Key Findings

- The most identified areas of need for social skills subject matter included: Conversation Skills, Hidden Rules in Public Places, Friendship & Bullying, Identifying and Expressing Feelings
- Facilitators of the Social Understanding Group expressed a Perceived Need for evidence-based, validated, social skill assessments for adolescents.
- The most successful social skill interventions address three primary objectives: "promote skill acquisition, enhance the performance of existing skills, and facilitate the generalization of skills across settings and persons" (Kavale et al, 2004, p.446)
- Lessons in the Social Understanding Group Resource Manual include the following common cognitive and behavioral elements of social skills training; direct instruction, behavior rehearsal, social interpretation, self-regulation, reinforcement, observation, modeling, coaching, social problem solving, and feedback.

Implications For Practice

- Facilitators utilizing this manual must be familiar with and respect cultural norms, including age, gender roles, limitations on social roles imposed by ethnicity or social group, and expectations for age-appropriate child development and behavior (Lynch & Simpson, 2010).
- Facilitators and relevant staff utilizing the resource manual should have adequate training and competencies necessary to implement the lessons and activities, monitor group cohesion, and evaluate individual skill attainment and progress (DeRosier, 2004) .
- If a group member is not benefiting from the lesson, the facilitator should discuss, assess, and if applicable, alter the lesson.
- Facilitators of this manual should focus on social and emotional learning strategies that encourage reflection and self-awareness as well as create opportunities to practice the skills both individually and in groups (Lynch & Simpson 2010; Spence, 2003; Hansen, Nangle, & Meyer, 1998).

