Small-Group and Intensive Intervention for Social-Emotional Intelligence

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A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Education Specialist

In

School Psychology

At

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

July, 2014

Graduate Studies

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The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2014
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Social-emotional intelligence (SEI) can be described as the basic skills an individual has to recognize and manage emotions appropriately (Hoffman, 2009). The development of these skills in children can be very influential in developing appropriate behaviors, which in turn can support academic achievement (Elias & Weissberg, 2000). The current study implemented a small-group SEI intervention to four preschool students. In addition, a one-on-one intervention was introduced in a staggered fashion across participants over the course of ten weeks to examine the effects of the one-on-one intervention on teacher perceptions of social skills and measures of early academic skills. Results suggest that teacher perceptions of participants' appropriate behavior and emotional expression did not significantly improve after the one-on-one intervention was introduced. Early academic skills gradually improved over the ten week intervention period.

Keywords: Social-emotional intelligence, social skills, early academic skills

Melissa Coolong-Chaffin 4/28/15

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Children's behaviors and academic performance in school can be attributed to a number of factors. These influential factors can be either external, such as classroom environment or teaching style, or internal, such as ability, motivation, or social-emotional intelligence (SEI). SEI can be described as the ability to understand and manage emotions appropriately (Hoffman, 2009). While many influential factors are important, research has suggested that SEI plays an essential role in students' classroom behaviors and academic achievement (Elias & Weissberg, 2000).

Many students display significant behavior problems in school that are related to the lack of well-developed SEI. For example, about 20% of students entering kindergarten do not have adequate SEI to make a successful transition into kindergarten (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2011). Additionally, in a national sample of sixth to twelfth grade students, only 29-45% of participants self-reported having the characteristics necessary (e.g., empathy, decision-making skills, conflict resolution skills) for well-developed SEI (Benson, 2006). Due to the large number of students with deficits in SEI, it can be expected that the prevalence of problem behaviors is rather high across all ages.

Reinforcement and punishment techniques can often be effective means to remediate problem behaviors; however, within-child characteristics, such as students' internalizing behaviors or skills related to SEI, are sometimes not targeted for interventions. Additionally, these problem behaviors may get in the way of academics,

leading to poor grades and low academic achievement (Rode et al., 2007). Interventions that emphasize social-emotional learning (SEL) teach children how to manage their emotions, make good choices, and regulate their behaviors, among other similar skills. SEL interventions aim to reduce the amount of problem behaviors exhibited by children and consequently improve academics.

There are many types of interventions that can be used in schools to promote SEI. Prevention and intervention methods can be used in small groups, in the classroom, and throughout the entire school. These programs are also effective with children of all ages, cultures, and from all socio-economic statuses (Durlak, Weissber, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Children and adolescents who have been taught the skills of SEI have typically displayed improvements in their social interactions, inter-personal understanding, and have even shown gains in academics (Payton et al., 2008).

In addition to determining which SEL curriculum to use, it is important to determine the setting in which the intervention is delivered (e.g., classroom-wide, small-group, or one-on-one). Many students who require additional instruction in skills related to SEI receive interventions within the context of a small group. However, at times students with more significant needs may require more individualized instruction to improve these skills. Research has supported improvement in students who have received classroom-wide or small-group interventions related to SEI (Durlak et al., 2011), but little research is provided on the efficacy of one-on-one SEI interventions. School resources and schedules affect teachers' and school psychologists' ability to take on small groups and/or work with students on an individual basis. Therefore, it is important to determine the most effective and efficient way to provide interventions to students in need.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Purpose of the study. When children show poor emotion understanding, poor emotion management, and display socially inappropriate behaviors, interventions should be implemented to remediate these skills deficits. Interventions that address these skills can be effective when implemented with children of varying ages and in many different settings (e.g., small-group or classroom-wide) (Durlak et al., 2011). Additionally, task analysis (the breaking down of skills into small, more manageable steps) and modeling of social skills are also effective in teaching children behaviors (Cartledge & Milburn, 1980; Dowd & Tierney, 2005). In addition to implementing a small-group SEI curriculum, this study incorporated task analysis and modeling in addition to reviewing small-group lesson content in one-on-one intervention lessons with the participants. The purpose of the current study was to examine the effects of a small-group SEI intervention paired with a one-on-one intervention as compared to the small-group intervention alone on teacher perceptions of social skills and measures of early academic skills. This study explored whether a small-group intervention for SEI is sufficient or if an added one-on-one setting is beneficial to student outcomes.

Research questions. How does adding a one-on-one social skills intervention component to a small-group social emotional intervention impact teacher report of social skills? How does adding a one-on-one social skills intervention component to a small-group social emotional intervention impact participants' early literacy and early numeracy skills?

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

This literature review will first discuss the definition of SEI. It will then explain the importance of SEI, how it is developed, and how it can affect behavior and academics. Types of interventions and their effectiveness will also be discussed.

What is Social-Emotional Intelligence?

Social-emotional intelligence (SEI) is defined as the basic skills and competencies that allow us to manage our emotions and behaviors accordingly (Hoffman, 2009). It facilitates awareness of emotions and behaviors, allowing us to interact with others in a safe and responsible way. SEI makes it easier to understand others' perspectives and feelings, and therefore can lead to developing and maintaining positive social relationships (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, & Greenberg, 1997).

Individuals who have high levels of SEI are typically responsible, empathetic, caring, and not overly fixated on negative emotions (Goleman, 1997). These traits, among other SEI characteristics, can contribute to a positive attitude toward oneself and others. Overall, the traits of SEI can be classified into five core competencies, as outlined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2005). These competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. These five competencies are all part of three main interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies, and they can be defined as follows. CASEL defines self-awareness as the ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influences on behavior. Self-management is the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in a variety of situations. Social

awareness is defined as perspective taking and empathizing with others to understand norms for behavior in those from diverse backgrounds. The ability to create and maintain positive relationships by communicating, cooperating, asking for help, and using constructive problem solving are all aspects of relationship skills. Lastly, responsible decision making includes making constructive and respectful choices about interactions and behaviors that promotes the well-being of oneself and others (CASEL, 2005).

Importance of Social-Emotional Intelligence

SEI is important for children to develop because it can influence several things that occur in the classroom. For example, high SEI has been found to be related to a positive overall well-being, higher displays of appropriate behavior, and better school performance (Durlak et al., 2011). Additionally, children's emotional processes and relationships affect how and what they learn at school. Thus, strong emotions that go unmanaged can negatively impact a student's academic engaged time, task completion, and could hinder relationships with other students and teachers (Elias et al., 1997). If SEI is not adequately developed, a student's social-emotional competencies will continue to be inadequate as he or she goes through elementary, middle, and high school. Low SEI will likely negatively affect the student's behaviors, academics, and even health, and make the student feel less connected to their school environment as the student grows older (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Durlak et al., 2011). Therefore, SEI should be considered throughout a child's development.

Development of Social-Emotional Intelligence

A child can begin to develop social-emotional intelligence through his or her first attachment relationship with a primary caregiver. For example, an adequate emotional

attachment is developed when the mother and/or father is able to consistently provide for the child's needs, and a loving relationship between caregiver(s) and child is established. As the child grows older, the increasing interactions with parents and siblings, then teachers and friends, can foster the development of the child's SEI (Ulutas & Ömeroglu, 2007). Parents who talk through feelings with their children, teach them how to make responsible decisions, encourage goal setting, and model consideration of others' feelings tend to have children who develop a healthy SEI (Elias et al., 1997; Hoffman, 2009). Furthermore, children who experience frequent positive interactions with caregivers are likely to have a well-developed understanding of emotions and a wide breadth of emotional vocabulary (Zeidner, Roberts, & Matthews, 2002).

If a safe and loving environment is not provided for a child, there is an increased likelihood that he or she will develop poor SEI. If a child is exposed to consistent negative attitudes, he or she may display negative emotions more frequently. The child's understanding of emotions and ability to independently cope may then be limited (Smith & Walden, 1999).

It has also been suggested that SEI in children five years old and above is related to their family's social-economic status (SES), the neighborhood the child lives in, the emotional expression of caregivers, and family conversations about feelings (Rothenberg, 1970). Parents who create conversation around the meaning of feelings, the occurrence of feelings, and what can be done to regulate feelings typically promote development of these skills in their children. The parent's socialization and explanation techniques along with the child's perspective-taking abilities and assertiveness influence SEI (Dunne, Brown, Slomkowski, Tesla, & Youngblade, 1991).

A child's temperament, or inborn behavioral style, can also contribute to the development of SEI. Depending on the type of temperament (e.g., easy, difficult, or slow to warm up), a child may find it easy or difficult to regulate emotions, adapt to change, or approach new situations, for example. The skills to adapt and regulate feelings can be taught as the child grows up; however, given that temperament is genetic, it may contribute to the stability of one's ability or inability to use these skills effectively (Cassidy, 1994; Zeidner, Matthews, Roberts, & MacCann, 2003).

Gender differences in SEI. While the development of SEI can be similar among many children, differences between males and females have been found. A study conducted by Garaigordobil (2009) examined the differences in social-emotional characteristics, such as ability to interpret emotions, empathy, and interactions with others between males and females ages ten to fourteen. Results suggested significant differences in these characteristics between males and females at each age. It was found that girls displayed a higher amount of prosocial behavior, and had a higher capacity to interpret their own negative emotions and to know how to cope with them. Boys were described to have more assertive and aggressive behaviors. The results from Garaigordobil's (2009) study seem to reflect the commonly held belief that males are often more aggressive and females are more prosocial. However, other research shows no significant differences in the development and expression of SEI between boys and girls (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2011).

Social-Emotional Intelligence and Behavior

The inability to understand and manage one's emotions is significantly related to displays of inappropriate behavior. Conversely, having a high ability to regulate emotions

is associated with a high level of acceptable behaviors (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2011). Brackett, Mayer, and Warner (2004) measured emotional intelligence, personality traits, and academic achievement through self-report methods in seventeen-to twenty-year-old males and females. Participants' scores indicated that those who had lower scores on the emotional intelligence measure displayed higher amounts of deviant behavior, engaged in frequent substance use, and typically had negative interactions with peers. These behaviors remained significant in those with low emotional intelligence even after personality and academic achievement were controlled for. Furthermore, low measures of emotional intelligence were more strongly associated with negative behaviors for college-aged males (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004).

Negative and externalizing behaviors displayed by children in the classroom can be influenced by an array of developmental factors, such as family structure, SES, or a disability (Hinshaw, 1992). However, SEI can be a moderating variable to classroom behavior. Cavanagh and Huston (2006) examined SEI's strength as a moderator by measuring family instability (i.e., divorce, remarriage, new siblings) in early childhood, and children's problem behaviors upon entering elementary school. Results from this study suggested that the degree of instability in the family was related to children's problem behaviors at school. However, the amount of maternal sensitivity and warmth was a significant moderating variable. Mothers with greater maternal sensitivity and emotional availability had children who displayed lower amounts of problem behaviors upon entering school, even when the child was from an unstable family (Cavanagh & Huston, 2006).

Problem behaviors in school occur for many reasons and interventions to increase SEI can be used to help students evaluate their feelings and to understand how those feelings can influence their behavior. Teaching these skills should facilitate emotional growth which could lead to control of inappropriate behaviors (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2011).

Social-Emotional Intelligence and Academic Skills

There have been mixed results from studies examining the relationship between SEI and academic achievement. It is believed that SEI plays an important role in academics because of the stresses of managing class work, meeting goals and deadlines, and taking tests (Rode et al., 2007). Part of well-developed SEI is setting goals and making responsible choices, and these skills can positively impact school performance. If students do not hold high academic standards for themselves or take responsibility for their school work, academic performance is likely to suffer. The ability to manage stress, make good decisions, and adapt to classroom expectations may therefore be a valuable skill to have to obtain a higher level of academic achievement.

SEI as a whole, however, may not contribute to academic achievement; rather, specific traits within SEI may influence academic performance in school (Lam & Kirby, 2002). For example, one study measured SEI as a broad construct and examined its influence on adolescents' grade point average. There were no significant relationships found between broadly defined SEI and academics (Rode et al., 2007). On the other hand, strengths in certain SEI traits, such as well-developed stress management techniques and a high level of emotional understanding, may be more predictive of academics compared to broader measures of SEI. Predictors of academic achievement have been found in

specific traits of SEI; adolescents and university students were more successful when higher levels of adaptability, interpersonal skills, and frequent use of stress reduction techniques were reported (Lam & Kirby, 2002; Parker et al., 2004). Furthermore, prosocial behavior, which stems from one's ability to understand others' emotions, is also related to academic achievement. Early displays of prosocial behavior were found to be a significant predictor of adolescent academic achievement, even when prior academic achievement was controlled for (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2000).

As mentioned previously, low levels of SEI can increase the amount of problem behaviors and intense emotional reactions (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004; Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Onchwari & Keengwe, 2011; Payton et al., 2008). Children with high levels of these behaviors could disrupt others' learning as well as their own. If problem behaviors frequently occur, they may interfere with instruction and work time in the classroom, which could lower academic achievement (Rode et al., 2007).

Studies examining the influences of SEI on academic achievement report heterogeneous results due to the many other influences on academics. A child's level of ntelligence, social-economic status, and culture, in addition to classroom management and teaching styles also contribute to one's academic performance (Rode et al. 2007; Qualter, Gardner, & Whiteley, 2007). Moreover, the complexity of measuring academic performance can be difficult, especially in early elementary-age children (Qualter et al., 2007). Despite these limitations in SEI and academic research, it is important to consider that certain traits of SEI may be able to positively influence academic achievement.

Interventions for Social-Emotional Intelligence

Studies have found that underdeveloped SEI may be detrimental to a student's behavior and academic performance (Caprara et al., 2000; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Parker et al., 2004). If nothing is done to improve SEI, the student may continue down a negative developmental path.

SEI is typically developed in the home; however, adequate SEI may not develop due to previously described family and caregiver characteristics. Fortunately, an assortment of school-based interventions have been developed to teach students from a variety of ages the skills and competencies that make up well-developed SEI. CASEL (2005) stated that an intervention program should aim to increase positive attitudes and social-emotional skills. The long-term benefits of successful SEI programs are the reduction of conduct problems and emotional distress, and a rise in appropriate social behaviors, emotional management, and academics (CASEL, 2005).

Interventions and supports are typically provided in a multi-tiered system of support where the type and amount of services a student receives is based on his or her need. Universal, or tier 1, supports are provided to all students in a school or within a classroom. Services at this level are meant to prevent problems from occurring in the general population. Those who need additional instruction may receive a targeted, or tier 2, intervention that is used as a supplement to universal instruction. If students have not improved in their area of need over time after receiving a tier 2 intervention, they may be provided with an intensive, or tier 3, intervention (Tilly, 2008). SEI interventions can be used within this multi-tiered system, as evidence-based interventions for each tier are available (Becker & Luther, 2002; Durlak et al., 2011; Hoffman, 2009; Ulutas &

Ömeroglu, 2007). However, not much is known about the best way to implement these intensive services (Payton et al., 2008).

Selecting an intervention. Guidelines have been provided for successful development and implementation of prevention and intervention methods for SEI programs. Zeidner et al. (2002) suggests that teachers and administrators should consider the environment in which they plan to implement the program, and how social-emotional skills will be taught. These factors are important as the proper skills and behaviors taught should be generalziable to environments both inside and outside of school.

Additional recommendations for program implementation have also been outlined by the acronym *SAFE* (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). According to these recommendations, programs should first be *Sequenced.* Social-emotional skills should be taught in a successive order from basic skills to more challenging ones. Secondly, the program should be *Active*, in that it engages children in role-playing and frequent practice of social-emotional skills. Amount of time spent teaching SEI is also important. A *Focused* program should allot sufficient time to focus on learning the skills, talking about them, and practicing them on a regular basis. Lastly, the program should be *Explicit.* It should target distinct social-emotional skills during each lesson, and provide straightforward directions on how to use those skills (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). SEI programs that are implemented in accordance with these guidelines have been found to be more effective compared to programs that did not follow these guidelines (Payton et al., 2008).

Types of interventions. As mentioned, SEI competencies and skills should be explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced in a variety of situations throughout children's daily activities to make social-emotionally intelligent behaviors part of everyone's typical

daily functioning (Ladd & Mize, 1983). This can be done with children in small-group lessons or with a school-wide program implementation, and can be done with children of varying ages.

Small group SEL instruction often takes place outside of the classroom. Students can either be referred by teachers to receive guidance in this area, or they may receive these services as part of their individualized education plan (IEP). Small group SEI instruction can be taught by a teacher, special education teacher, school psychologist, school counselor, or other qualified school faculty.

Ulutas and Ömeroglu (2007) conducted a study in Turkey where a small-group SEI intervention was implemented with a group of six-year old preschoolers. The children completed a survey which assessed their SEI skills before and after the intervention. Preschool teachers also completed rating scales on each student's perceived level of emotional intelligence. The rating scales from before and after the intervention were compared, and the scores indicated that the small-group SEI program improved the preschoolers' skills and competences in displaying appropriate behaviors and regulating emotions.

One SEL curriculum that can be used with a small group of students or whole class is the series of Strong Start curricula (Merrell, Whitcomb, & Parisi, 2009). The Strong Start curriculum is available for children in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten through second grade. The Strong Kids curriculum is provided for third through fifth grade and sixth through eighth grade children. The Strong Teens curriculum is available for adolescents in ninth through twelfth grade. These interventions were developed by Merrell, Whitcomb, and Parisi (2009) at the University of Oregon. The content of the

curricula teach a wide range of SEI skills, including identifying emotions, skills to manage emotions, solving interpersonal issues, making good choices, and more.

These curricula offer appropriate instruction in SEI as the skills taught build upon one another. The Strong Start curriculum for preschoolers, the curriculum used in this study, teaches children about six basic emotions, two basic strategies to manage emotions, and skills in being a good friend.

The Strong Kids curricula have been heavily researched at the University of Oregon where these programs were created. The results from these studies conducted for all programs (ages Pre-K to 12th grade) indicated that students improved in their knowledge of basic concepts of SEI (i.e., emotions, ways to manage emotions, how to problem solve, etc.). Results have also shown a reduction in problem behaviors from children who participated in the Strong Kids programs. A high level of social validity among teachers and students was also noted (Merrell et al., 2007).

A study conducted by Caldarella, Christensen, Kramer, and Kronmiller (2009) examined the effects of the Strong Start curriculum on second grade students' pro-social behaviors and their understanding of emotions. Teachers of students in the control group and intervention group completed the School Social Behaviors Skills and Social Skills Rating System scales. Results indicated that the students receiving the ten-week Strong Start intervention experienced increases in peer-related pro-social behaviors and displayed significant decreases in internalizing behaviors, as rated by teachers, compared to students who did not receive the Strong Start intervention (Caldarella, Christensen, Kramer & Kronmiller, 2009).

A similar study also used the School Social Behavior Skills and Social Skills Rating System scales to examine the effects of the Strong Start curriculum on kindergarteners' pro-social and internalizing behaviors, as rated by parents and teachers. Results suggested significant increases in kindergarteners' prosocial behaviors, which were even maintained after a six-week follow up. Additionally, rating scales completed by the teachers indicated a significant decrease in internalizing behaviors, but rating scales completed by participants' parents did not suggest significant differences in internalizing behaviors seen in the home (Kramer, Calderella, Christensen, & Shatzer, 2010).

In a series of pilot studies conducted by Merrell, Juskelis, Tran, and Buchanan (2008), participants completed a measure assessing knowledge of healthy social-emotional behavior and current levels of internalizing symptoms before and after receiving the Strong Kids curriculum. Participants were in fifth, seventh, and eighth grades, and in a high school emotional/behavioral disabilities program. Scores from the measures suggested a significant increase in participants' knowledge of healthy social-emotional behavior across all grade levels. Fifth graders and high school students also reported a significant decrease in internalizing behaviors; no significant differences were noted for seventh and eighth graders' internalizing behaviors from pretest to posttest (Merrell, Juskelis, Tran, & Buchanan, 2008).

Research has also supported within-classroom interventions (Becker & Luther, 2002; Payton et al., 2008; Ruiz-Aranda, Salguero, Cabello, Palomer, & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2012). Learning about SEI in the classroom involves the teacher and each student. Everyday modeling and teaching of SEI skills can promote emotional attachment

to school and foster positive attitudes toward oneself and others (Payton et al., 2008). One framework that can be used in the classroom is known as the Responsive Classroom approach. This method encourages frequent engagement in classroom discussions and activities pertaining to social skills and reduction of problem behaviors (Horsch, Chen, & Wagner, 2002). Paired with rigorous instruction and academics, the Responsive Classroom approach can help to develop skills related to SEI and improve academics, especially in disadvantaged children (Becker & Luther, 2002). Additionally, research on Responsive Classroom and other SEI classroom-based interventions suggest that correctly implemented programs are effective when conducted by school staff, such as teachers (Payton et al., 2008).

Beyond classroom-based intervention is the implementation of a school-wide approach to SEL. This method requires the participation of all school staff and administration who promote positive behaviors and social skills. Similar to a classroom-based method, SEL is also integrated into the school's curriculum and daily activities. School-based interventions aim to help children develop basic emotional intelligence. Students are taught how to understand, express, and manage their emotions within the context of everyday personal, school, and social problems (Elias et al., 1997). An example of an effective school-wide prevention and intervention method is Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which is frequently used in schools. PBIS teaches and rewards socially appropriate and expected behaviors, and provides social and emotional support to students in need (Russell-Carter & Lull-Pool, 2012).

At the Tier 1 level of PBIS, all school staff are responsible teaching appropriate behaviors and skills and positively acknowledging and rewarding these behaviors. For

students who have reoccurring behavior problems, Tier 2 instructional methods are implemented. These methods may be small-group interventions or simple behavioral strategies used with just one student. In the area of SEL, this could include small-group lessons that focus on teaching emotions, calming strategies, or social skills, for example (Shinn & Walker, 2010). Scott and Eber (2003) suggest that school-wide PBIS interventions at Tier 2 should serve all at-risk students in the school who have not responded to Tier 1 strategies and should be conducted in the general education setting. When Tier 2 interventions and supports are ineffective, Tier 3 or a more individualized student plan should be developed.

Durlak et al., (2011) assessed the effectiveness of several SEI school-wide programs through a recent meta-analysis. Outcomes of social-emotional skills, attitudes toward self and others, positive social behavior, conduct problems, emotional distress, and academic performance were all considered in this meta-analysis. The authors found that schools that implemented a SEI program, compared to control schools that did not address SEI, had lower levels of conduct problems and emotional distress, with higher levels of SEI skills, positive attitudes, academic performance, and appropriate behaviors. They also found that the SEI programs evaluated were effective at several grade levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) and in urban, suburban, and rural schools.

An advantage of school-wide SEI programs is that the whole school environment can be based around teaching and modeling proper SEI skills and behaviors. Those who need to improve their SEI can then be surrounded by proper modeling and encouragement to display appropriate behaviors and to regulate their emotions in a socially-acceptable way. Furthermore, children who already have adequate SEI would

continue to receive instruction and modeling of socially-desired behaviors to foster continued development of SEI (Hoffman, 2009).

Conclusion

Many children currently display a variety of problem behaviors and an inability to regulate their emotions in the school environment. One potential contributor to these issues is low SEI, which is the ability to understand one's own and others' emotions, make good decisions, and manage one's emotions and behavior (Hoffman, 2009).

Adequate SEI typically develops within most children in the context of their home through a secure attachment relationship and talking with parents about feelings and decisions. However, some children do not grow up in an environment that is conducive to this process and thus do not learn the important skills that come from developing adequate SEI. Fortunately, schools are able to provide prevention and intervention methods that can facilitate and improve children's SEI.

Small-group, classroom, and school-wide intervention and prevention methods can be used as each type is supported by research (Becker & Luther, 2002; Durlak et al., 2011; Hoffman, 2009; Payton et al., 2008; Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2012; Ulutas & Ömeroglu, 2007). These methods have been shown to decrease emotionally-influenced problem behaviors, increase academic performance, and enhance understanding of emotions.

It is therefore important to consider the implementation of a SEI intervention and prevention method in a school. The program will not only help those children who need to develop social-emotional intelligence, but all children so everyone can learn the necessary SEI skills and competencies to become better students and individuals. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the best method of implementation for an SEI

intervention by exploring in the intervention is best delivered in a one-on-one setting or whether a small-group intervention is just as effective.

CHAPTER III

Method

Participants

Four students from a four-year-old kindergarten (4-K) program in a school district providing universal 4-K in a small city in the Midwest participated in this study. All four participants were from the same classroom, which had two teachers. The parents of all students in the program were given consent forms and a description of the study. Participants were included in the study when their consent forms had been signed and returned.

Participants were residents of a school district where 87% of children are white, 7% are Asian, 1% are African American, and less than 1% are American Indian. About 35% of students in the district are eligible for free and reduced lunch (Winkler & Kemp, n.d.).

Ava was a five-year old white female who was described by her teacher as emotionally over-reactive in minor situations. Teacher report from the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) completed before the intervention indicated skills deficits in empathy and self-control, but Ava was perceived to have adequate social skills and minimal problem behaviors overall. Claire was a four-year old Asian female who was described by her teacher as having difficulty listening to teachers. In addition, her mother reportedly had concerns of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Scores from the SSIS rating scales indicated deficits in cooperation, assertion, responsibility, engagement, and attention. Scores indicated a high level of hyperactivity and problem behaviors, and slightly below average abilities in social skills. Michael was a four-year old white male

who was described by his teacher as following others' patterns of inappropriate behavior, and having difficulty following directions at times. Scores from the SSIS rating scales indicated deficits in communication. He was perceived to have adequate social skills, and minimal problem behaviors. Nathan was a four-year old white male who was described by his teacher as displaying physically aggressive behaviors, non-compliance, and often running from the classroom. His teacher reported having to take Nathan to the main office on several occasions when Nathan's behavior became aggressive and extremely non-compliant. Scores from the SSIS rating scales indicated deficits in communication, cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, engagement, and self-control. Concerns were also noted in areas regarding externalizing behaviors, bullying, hyperactivity/inattention, and internalizing behaviors. Nathan's scores for social skills and problem behaviors were significantly below and above average, respectively.

Measures

Social Skills Improvement System. Teachers completed the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) rating scales to provide pre- and post-intervention scores for social skills and problem behaviors for each participant. However, because the classroom had two teachers, the same teacher may not have completed the scale before and after the intervention. Thus, a true sense of participant's abilities pre- and post-intervention cannot be determined due to differing perceptions of each teacher. As a result, the SSIS rating scales were used to provide qualitative descriptions of students in regards to overall social skills and problem behaviors and more specific behaviors. These rating scales provide standard scores, percentile ranks, and descriptive ranges for a variety of behaviors. The descriptive ranges for specific behaviors were used to describe

participants rather than interpreting the standard scores and percentile ranks for overall behaviors. Scores from this measure for each participant are presented in Appendix A.

The SSIS measures social skills, problem behaviors, and academic competence (teacher report only) in children ages 3-18. Teachers rate each item on a four-item Likert scale (N = *Never*, S = *Seldom*, O = *Often*, or A = *Almost Always*). Importance scales are also provided with each item to measure the rater's perceived importance of a particular social skill or behavior. The rater circles *N* (not important), *I* (important), or *C* (critical), depending on the rater's perceived importance of the skills described in the item. The teacher rating scale has an additional section with items pertaining to perceptions of the student's academic competence compared to peers in the same class. The academic competence items are rated using a five-point Likert scale (1 = lowest 10%, 2 = next lowest 20%, 3 = the middle 40%, 4 = the next highest 20%, 5 = the highest 10%). Results of the rating scale are provided as standard scores and percentile ranks for each of the three composites (i.e., Social Skills, Problem Behaviors, and Academic Competence). In addition to the three composite scores, qualitative descriptions are also provided for behaviors related to communication, cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, engagement, self-control, bullying, hyperactivity/inattention, internalizing behaviors, and externalizing behaviors.

The SSIS rating scale has been supported by research and is a reliable and valid measure of children's social skills. It has an internal consistency in the mid to upper .90s and moderate to high correlations with other measures, such as the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition (BASC-2), of social skills and problem behaviors. At least four weeks is required between administration periods (Merrell, 2008).

Brief behavior report cards. One of the two teachers completed a brief behavior report card at the end of the school day for each student three times a week to assess social and emotional skills targeted in the intervention. The teacher who completed the form was consistent day to day for each child. The report card was created by the researcher, and consisted of four items describing desired behaviors in the preschool classroom. Teachers rated each behavior on a nine-point Likert scale, where 1 = *Never* and 9 = *Always*. Items on the report card were: *The student got along with others while showing socially appropriate behaviors*; *the student spoke respectfully and complied with adult requests without argument or complaint*; *the student was able to resolve problems and disagreements appropriately*; and *the student was able to express his or her feelings appropriately*. Each item on the behavior report card was the same for all four participants. The results of these brief behavior report cards were not shared with the students or parents; they were only used for the purposes of the study. See Appendix B for this measure.

Early literacy measures. Participants' early literacy skills were measured using the Aimsweb Tests of Early Literacy assessments, Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) and Letter Sound Fluency (LSF) (Clarke & Shinn, 2002; National Center for RtI, n.d.). The measures assessed important skills that are needed for later reading. These measures are typically used for kindergarten benchmarking assessments, so age-level performance standards were not available for the pre-school-aged children in this study. However, these measures are accurately reflected the desired outcomes of the 4-K program in which the participants were enrolled.

On the LNF measure, participants were required to say the names of visually presented letters for one minute. The LNF measure consists of 100 upper and lower case letters presented on one page in random order. Scores were determined by the number of letter names correctly identified in one minute (CLNM). The LSF measure consists of lower case letters presented on one page in random order. On the letter sound fluency measure, participants were required to say the sounds of visually presented letters for one minute. Scores were determined by the number of letter sounds correctly identified in one minute (CLSM). See Appendix C for an example of a LNF and LSF probe.

The two measures of early literacy skills are reliable and valid measures of basic reading skills for kindergarten students. Alternate forms of both measures are provided by Aimsweb, so participants are presented with a different list of letters each week.

Test-retest reliability for LNF is .90, and LSF test-retest reliability is .83. Predictive validity for oral reading fluency in the spring of first grade and the fall, winter, and spring of second grade ranged from .72-.76 for LNF measures. Criterion validity for LNF ranges from .47-.6 on standardized assessments that measure more advanced reading skills and range from .72-.76 on measures of oral reading fluency in the first and second grade. Criterion validity for LSF ranges from .43-.52 on standardized tests and has a measure of .61 for measures of oral reading fluency in the first grade (Aimsweb, 2012; National Center for RtI, n.d.).

Early numeracy measures. Early numeracy skills were measured using the Aimsweb Tests of Early Numeracy assessments Number Identification (NI) and Oral Counting (OC) (Clarke & Shinn, 2002). NI and OC measure important number skills and are used with kindergarteners for benchmarking assessments. On the OC measure,

participants were required to count out loud, staring with 1, for one minute. Scores were determined by the number of correct oral counts in one minute (COCM). On the NI measure, participants were required to correctly identify visually-presented numbers. The numbers 0 through 10 were presented in random order several times on one page. Scores were determined by the amount of correct number identifications in one minute (CNIM). See Appendix C for an example of an NI and OC probe.

Both NI and OC assessments are reliable and valid indicators of early numeracy skills for kindergarten students. Two week test-retest reliability for OC is .93, and NI test-retest reliability is .97. Concurrent validity between OC and other assessments of early math skills range from .49-.7; concurrent validity between NI and other assessments range from .6-.7. Predictive validity for later math skills was .56 for OC and .68 for NI (Clarke & Shinn, 2002).

All measures in literacy and numeracy used standardized administration procedures. To ensure administration fidelity and inter-observer agreement (IOA), 20% of the assessment administrations for each measure were evaluated via audio recording by a trained teacher. Following along with the assessor copy for each measure, the teacher evaluated if the measures were administered appropriately and the correct score was obtained on each measure for each participant. To calculate IOA, the experimenter used the following equation: Percent of IOA = Number of Agreements/(Number of Agreements + Disagreements) x 100. The IOA for all early literacy and numeracy measures was 98.6% for Ava, 87.3% for Nathan, 100% for Michael, and 90.8% for Claire. Overall IRR was 94.2%.

Procedures

The researcher recruited participants from a district preschool 4-K program in a small city. Consent forms were sent home to all parents of children in the program, and those whose parents signed and returned the consent forms were included in the study. Baseline measures of social-emotional intelligence (SEI) were obtained by giving the SSIS to participants' classroom teachers. Each of the two classroom teachers completed the rating scale pre- and post-intervention for each participant.

After baseline data were collected, the researcher began implementing the small-group social-emotional learning intervention. The four participants received the small-group intervention twice a week for approximately fifteen minutes over the course of ten weeks. Of the twenty total small-group sessions offered, Ava attended 18 sessions, Michael attended 14 sessions, Claire attended 19 sessions, and Nathan attended 18 sessions. During small-group time, skills related to social-emotional intelligence were taught using components of the Strong Start curriculum (Merrell, Whitcomb, & Parisi, 2009) and additional instructional material developed by the researcher related to emotion regulation (described below).

After two weeks of small-group intervention implementation, the researcher began meeting one-on-one with one participant at a time to begin more intensive SEI lessons in addition to the small-group time. Participants began receiving the additional one-on-one support in a staggered fashion, with a new participant added every two weeks. The order in which participants were chosen to receive one-on-one time was based on teacher-reported need in social emotional learning such that the student with the greatest need started first and so on. Once a participant was introduced to the one-on-one component, it was implemented for the remainder of the small-group intervention. The

one-on-one component time varied, as it was given either before or after the small-group lesson depending on the participants' classroom schedule. During the individual and more intensive instruction, the researcher reviewed the information and skills taught in the group lesson, and helped the student practice the skills using task analysis and role-playing techniques. Nathan attended a total of 15 one-on-one sessions, Ava attended a total of 11 one-on-one sessions, Claire attended a total of 8 one-on-one sessions, and Michael attended a total of 2 one-on-one sessions.

Measures of early literacy and numeracy were administered once a week throughout the duration of the intervention. Social and behavioral ratings were collected throughout the implementation of the SEL intervention; one of the two teachers completed the behavior report cards three times a week for each participant. Intervention implementation fidelity (20% of sessions) was monitored via audio recordings by a trained teacher who used an intervention schedule to check the number of planned intervention activities completed for the small-group and one-on-one sessions. Four of the sessions were reviewed; one session completed 2 out of three items on the intervention schedule, and the other three sessions contained all three or four of the activities intended for the session (66%-100% fidelity). Overall, an average of 92% of the intervention steps was followed.

Data from each participant's behavior report card and performance on early literacy and numeracy measures were graphed and visually analyzed to examine whether the independent variable (i.e., the intensive one-on one instruction) would impact each participant's behavior and academics skills (i.e., dependent variables) above and beyond the small-group intervention alone.

Strong start curriculum. The Strong Start curriculum developed by Merrell, Parisi, and Witcomb (2009) was used in this study. The curriculum includes ten lessons that were developed for children in preschool. The lessons taught participants about feelings, problem solving skills, and being a good friend. The first lesson introduced participants to the program and discussed what the remaining lessons would entail. Additional lessons focused on individual feelings, such as anger, worry, happiness, and fear. Skills related to managing the emotion and expressing it appropriately were also taught.

Strong Start is supported by eight research studies that have been conducted to test the effectiveness of the program. These studies have shown a reduction in problem behaviors from children who participated in the program, and have also shown to have good social validity among teachers and students (Merrell et al., 2007). See Appendix D for a sample lesson.

Additional instructional material. To provide supplemental instruction to the Strong Start curriculum and the one-on-one intervention time, additional SEL lessons developed by the researcher were used. One-on-one lessons were developed prior to intervention implementation, and included some of the following activities: discussions on what causes certain emotions; practicing a deep breathing strategy; drawing facial features of emotions on a worksheet; practice in changing negative thoughts into positive thoughts; and learning and practicing skills related to asking for help and talking to others nicely, for example. Each participant received different content from these one-on-one lessons based on when the one-on-one component was added to the small-group lessons. A detailed intervention schedule and description of lessons is provided in Appendix E.

Research Design

This study used a multiple-baseline across participants design to measure the effects of a small group and on-on-one SEL intervention on teacher ratings of social skills and early literacy and early numeracy skills. This study examined the following research questions: How does adding a one-on-one social skills intervention component to a small group social emotional intervention impact teacher report of social skills? How does adding a one-on-one social skills intervention component to a small group social emotional intervention impact participants' early literacy and early numeracy skills?

CHAPTER IV

Results

The first research question addressed whether adding a one-on-one component to a small-group SEL intervention impacted teachers' ratings of participants' social skills. Scores from the behavior report cards were plotted, and the immediacy of change, level, trend, and variability were visually analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the one-on-one component.

Behavior

Two items on the behavior report card best represented skills that the intervention addressed, and data from these items were chosen for visual analysis. The first item was: *The student was able to express his or her feelings appropriately.* The second item was: *The student got along with others while showing socially appropriate behaviors.* Results from all four behavior report card items are presented in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

For the first item, *The student was able to express his or her feelings appropriately* (Figure 4), none of the participants seemed to show significant changes in performance from the baseline to intervention conditions. Nathan demonstrated a slight decrease in level from baseline to the intervention condition. For the baseline phase, the mean level of performance was 4 (corresponding with a qualitative descriptor of "sometimes" on the behavior report card) and the mean level of performance for the intervention phase was 3.2, which falls in the "never/seldom" category. Scores during the baseline condition range from 3 to 5, while more variability was seen in the intervention condition (range 1-5). Trend in performance during baseline was slightly negative, while performance in the intervention condition showed a slightly positive trend.

Ava demonstrated a minimal increase in level from baseline to the intervention condition. The average rating in the baseline phase was 5, and the average rating in the intervention phase was 5.3.Both of these scores correspond with the qualitative descriptor "sometimes." More variability was seen with Ava in the intervention condition (scores ranged from 3-7) as compared to the baseline phase (scores ranged from 4-6). The trend in behavior ratings was constant during the baseline phase, but increased very slightly in the intervention phase.

For Claire, there was no difference in level between the phases. The mean rating for Claire in the baseline phase was 4.3 and 4.2 in the intervention phase (qualitative descriptor of "sometimes" in both phases). Claire also demonstrated variability in her performance, with scores from the baseline phase ranging from 2-6 and scores from the intervention phase ranging from 1-7. Claire showed a slight increasing trend in the baseline phase, but showed a slight decreasing trend in the intervention phase.

Michael showed a decrease in level from the baseline (mean rating of 5.7) to the intervention phase (mean rating of 4.5). This corresponds to a qualitative rating of "sometimes" during both phases. Michael's performance was more variable during the baseline phase (range of 4-8) as compared to the intervention phase (range of 3-6). Trend in performance during baseline showed a very slight increase, while trend in performance during the intervention showed more of an increase.

For the second item, *The student got along with others while showing socially appropriate behaviors* (Figure 1), none of the participants appeared to make significant improvements from baseline to intervention. Nathan's level of performance showed a gradual increase from a mean of 3 (scores ranged from 2-4) in baseline to a mean level of

4.1 (scores ranged from 2-6) during the intervention condition. Thus, qualitative descriptors changed from "never/seldom" during baseline to "sometimes" during the intervention phase. Nathan showed a very slight increase in trend during the intervention phase.

Ava's level of performance showed minimal improvement from baseline to intervention. Her mean level of performance in the baseline phase was 5.5, and the mean level of performance in the intervention phase was 5.7. These scores correspond with the qualitative descriptor of "sometimes." Ava showed some variability throughout the intervention, with ratings in both the baseline and intervention phases ranging from 4-7. The trend in Ava's performance was relatively flat in both the baseline and intervention phases.

Claire showed a slight increase in level from baseline to intervention with a mean performance of 3.9 in the baseline phase and a mean performance of 4.8 in the intervention phase. Both scores correspond to a rating of "sometimes." Claire also demonstrated variability in her performance, with scores in the baseline phase ranging from 2-6, and scores in the intervention phase ranging from 1-7. Claire showed a slight decrease in trend in the intervention phase.

Michael's level of performance was slightly lower in the intervention phase, with a mean performance of 5.4 in the baseline phase and a mean performance of 5 in the intervention phase. However, both of these scores fall under the qualitative descriptor of "sometimes." Michael's performance was more variable in the baseline phase (range of 3-7) as compared to the intervention phase (range of 4-6). Michael showed a slightly increasing trend across both baseline and intervention phases.

Academic Skills

The second research question was related to academic skills over the course of the ten-week intervention period. All participants had a slight to moderate increase in their performance on LNF, LSF, NI, and OC probes over the course of the intervention. Measures of LSF appeared to have the highest increase in level and trend over the ten weeks for all participants. Graphs of scores from each probe are displayed by participant in Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Nathan's performance on academic measures showed increases in level in both baseline and intervention phases. Ava's performance on academic measures showed an increasing trend in both baseline and intervention phases. Claire's performance on academic measures showed an increasing trend in both baseline and intervention phases. Michael showed more variability in performance on academic measures during baseline and intervention phases. He showed little to no increase in trend in both baseline and intervention phases. However, only five academic data points were collected due to his absences. A table of average academic scores during baseline and intervention phases is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Mean Baseline and Intervention Scores for Early Literacy and Early Numeracy Skills.

	Correct Letter Names in Onc Minute		Correct Letter Sounds in One Minute		Correct Oral Counts in One Minute		Correct Number Identifications in One Minute	
	Baseline	*Intervention*	*Baseline*	*Intervention*	*Baseline*	*Intervention*	*Baseline*	*Intervention*
Nathan	6	13.3	1	4.6	14	12.1	9	17.9
Ava	5	7.5	2	3.6	33.3	38.2	15	23.2
Claire	2.8	10.3	1.6	3	11.2	15.5	11.4	9.8
Michael	17.8	18	3	5	33.8	42	19.3	22

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a small-group and one-on-one SEI intervention on participants' social and academic skills in a 4-K program. Specifically, this study examined whether a one-on-one social skills intervention would have a greater impact on participants' social-emotional and academic skills than a small-group SEI intervention alone.

Overall, results of the study did not demonstrate that the one-on-one SEI intervention resulted in greater gains in social-emotional skills than SEI intervention delivered in a small-group format alone. The daily behavior rating scales completed by participants' teachers suggested little to no improvement in specific behaviors related to SEI. Regarding participant's ability to express their feelings appropriately, there were not large gains. However, there was some increase in Ava's and Michael's perceived ability to express feelings appropriately after the one-on-one intervention was introduced. Nathan and Claire did not show any improvements in this skill after the one-on-one intervention. Nathan's and Claire's lack of improvement could have been due to their inattention and disruptive behavior during the intervention. Both students needed frequent redirection to remain on task during the intervention. Their behaviors may have prevented them from focusing on the intervention content at times.

Ava and Michael's improvement in their ability to express emotions (although slight) is consistent with previous research. Teaching children the names of various emotions, practicing identifying emotions, and discussing situations in which certain emotions could occur can increase children's ability to express those emotions

appropriately when they occur (Durlak et al., 2007). The items used to assess participant outcomes, however, only measured the way participants expressed and controlled their feelings in a classroom setting. Perhaps, if participants' specific knowledge of emotions or knowledge of how to manage emotions were assessed, a stronger intervention effect would have been observed across the ten weeks. Although research has noted a link between emotion identification knowledge and appropriate emotional expression, the intervention content and lack of practice with the intervention material in participants' classrooms could have limited any potential increase in emotional expression.

Displays of socially appropriate behaviors were also measured throughout the study. Three out of four participants did not show gains in this area after the one-on-one intervention was introduced. Nathan, however, showed a slight increasing trend on this report card item after the introduction of the intervention (Figure 1). This is could be due to the three low to moderate report card ratings during the baseline phase and the many variable data points during his intervention phase. A higher trend in the intervention phase could have been due to the variability of his behavior rather than an actual intervention effect.

Previous research has found that teaching children ways to manage emotions and problem solve in social situations can increase the frequency of socially appropriate behaviors (Durlak et al., 2007; Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Goleman, 1997; Onchwari & Keengwe, 2011; Payton et al., 2008). However, most participants did not show behaviors consistent with previous research findings after receiving the intervention. Low intervention effects could have been due to a variety of factors. First, participants' problem behaviors during the intervention could have interfered with their ability to pay

attention and learn the content presented in the sessions. For example, two participants often had difficulty sitting among the group and would frequently blurt out statements unrelated to the intervention content. These behaviors likely negatively influenced their own and others' learning. A second reason for lack of intervention effects could be the possible insensitivity of the behavior report cards to participants' behaviors. Since this measure was developed by the researcher, this characteristic was unknown. The measure's items may have been too general to detect changes in behavior. Since outcome data was largely based on teacher rating, teacher biases is a third factor that could have influenced the results. The teacher that completed the behavior report cards was very familiar with each participant and likely formed his or her own opinions about each student and rated them accordingly. That is, ratings could have been exaggerated for some participants. Lastly, the intervention content may not have been directly related to the outcome measures or it may not have provided enough instruction to allow participants to retain what was taught. Additionally, intervention integrity should be considered, as one or two of the lesson components were not completed during the small-group time due to time and participants' off task behaviors.

When evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention, it also should be considered if the intervention was *sequenced*, *active*, *focused*, and *explicit*. These previously described characteristics of intervention implementation have shown to be necessary to produce meaningful effects (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Payton et al., 2008). The intervention content used in this study was considered to be *sequenced*, as lessons went from discussing simple concepts and emotions to teaching more advanced concepts and skills. The intervention was also considered to be *active*; skills taught were practiced

using role-playing techniques and through activities with the participants. Participants learned and practiced a variety of important skills and concepts, but only for about 20 minutes twice a week; therefore, the intervention was not entirely *focused* since material learned in the lessons was not emphasized and practiced in the participants' preschool classrooms. Lastly, the intervention content was *explicit* as emotions were discussed in each lesson, and skills from lessons were task-analyzed for easier learning and practicing of skills. Improving the curriculum and implementation methods in these four areas could have also improved overall participant outcomes.

All participants showed increases in early literacy and numeracy skills over the course of the ten week period. Changes were not seen based on the introduction of the one-on-one SEI intervention component. Trends consistently increased across baseline and intervention conditions. This gradual skill progression over time is consistent with the expectations of the 4-K program and likely reflects the results of students being taught these skills within the general curriculum. While teaching skills related to SEI may not directly influence the development of academic skills, it is related. As previously mentioned, specific traits within SEI, such as the ability to manage stress, make good decisions, and adapt to classroom expectations, may influence academic performance in school (Lam & Kirby, 2002). Therefore, students who have lower levels of SEI may often show deficits in academic achievement. In this study, no significant behavioral gains were made over the course of the intervention. However, participants' increasing performance on the academic measures suggests that their levels of SEI and related skills were adequate to facilitate learning of early literacy and numeracy skills taught in the 4-K program.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Some limitations were noted in this research study. Regarding the measures, the SSIS scales and behavior report cards were completed by different teachers for different students at different times, as there were two teachers in the participants' classroom. Results on both measures could be the result of differing teacher perspectives and expectations. Second, the SSIS rating scales can be used four weeks apart, at minimum. In this study they were completed ten weeks apart, but the ten week intervention may not have been sufficient for differences in overall social skills and problem behaviors to be noted. A third limitation is that the brief behavior report card was developed by the researcher. Other research on behavior report cards used in school settings suggests well-developed reliability and validity of the measures (Vannest, Davis, Davis, Mason, & Burke, 2010); however, reliability and validity were not specifically assessed for the report card measure used in this study. Additionally, the measure was a rating of participant's behaviors and emotional expression, so results may be more of a reflection of teacher perceptions rather than the actual frequency of participants' behaviors. Future research could measure outcomes by observing participants' behavior directly. Reliability of teacher response was also unknown, as one of the two teachers completed the measure three times a week on varying days. Another technical component that was not assessed for the behavior report card was sensitivity to changes in behavior. Thus, the results of this study may stem from a lack of sensitivity in the behavior report card measure as opposed to limited strength of the intervention content. Daily behavior report cards used in school settings are often used to measure a specific behavior or behaviors over time, so having well-developed sensitivity in a measure is important. Finally, because the

behavior report card measure is not standardized, no information is available regarding the ratings the "average" student would receive.

Additional limitations were also noted regarding the study. First, all students enrolled in the 4-K program were already participating in a school-based program that addressed behavior and emotional well-being. Any improvements in behavior may be the result of additional instruction related to SEI skills rather than only the researcher's SEI small-group and one-on-one intervention. That being said, this effect should be controlled for with the multiple baseline design. Because all participants received the same classroom and small-group instruction, if changes in behaviors are seen only after the introduction of the one-on-one component, we could be reasonably confident that the one-on-one component was responsible for those changes. Second, participants were chosen based on returned and signed consent forms rather than being chosen due to actual SEI needs. Some of the participants already had developed the skills that were addressed in the intervention, and may not have improved significantly because their SEI skills were already where they needed to be for their age. Attendance was also a concern with participants as one or two small-group and one-on-one sessions were missed due to absences for each participant.

This research study provides a number of ideas for future research in the area of SEI intervention. Research has shown that interventions addressing SEI skills can be effective for many students (Durlak et al., 2007; Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Goleman, 1997; Onchwari & Keengwe, 2011; Payton et al., 2008), but research should continue to explore additional components of interventions and the benefits of one-on-one instruction, task analysis, and modeling. Future research should also explore this research

design with older students and with students who have more needs in the area of SEI. In this study, the one-on-one lessons were implemented either before or after the small-group lesson. It may be interesting to explore an intervention schedule where the one-on-one component was provided on different days. Additionally, studies using group designs to examine effectiveness of a one-on-one SEI intervention compared to a small-group intervention should be conducted to see which settings are most beneficial for children when learning skills related to SEI. Regarding the use of behavior report cards, future research should explore the use of these measures and their appropriateness and sensitivity to measuring social skills and other SEI-related behaviors.

This study illustrated that an intervention addressing SEI skills may have the ability to increase the frequency of socially appropriate behaviors and emotional expression in some pre-school-aged students. However, more research is needed to address the feasibility of offering more individualized SEI instruction, the use of behavior report cards, and SEI interventions with preschoolers. More knowledge in this area would be beneficial for school psychologists and other school professionals in their work with students.

Implications for Practice

This research study provides some implications for practicing school psychologists. First, the results from this study are informative for school psychologists as interventions to address skills related to SEI are often implemented in schools. Results indicated that the one-on-one intervention did not improve participant's behavior in comparison to the small-group time alone. This is important as school psychologists should make efficient use of their time throughout the day. When working with students,

the small-group time may be sufficient to address student needs and additional time may not required. Additionally, rather than developing one-on-one intervention content prior to its implementation, content of the lesson could be developed based on individual student need. Third, when implementing SEI interventions in the school, one should also consider teaching the concepts and skills more frequently than twice a week, especially with students who have higher needs. Instruction should also be taught and practiced in the general education setting with same-age peers so that skills can be generalized and reinforced in students' routine educational setting.

Second, the use of behavior report cards in this study can provide direction for use of other behavior report cards or behavior ratings in the schools. In this study, items on the report card described general skills related to SEI, such as emotional expression and showing socially appropriate behaviors. As mentioned, the sensitivity of this measure was unknown. Perhaps measures that outlined more specific knowledge, behaviors, or skills would be more appropriate to detect changes in behavior during intervention periods. Furthermore, the technical properties (e.g., reliability and validity) should be established for measures assessing behavior and should be chosen based on technical adequacy.

Summary

Participants receiving the small-group and one-on-one interventions made some slight gains in certain areas, but did not show significant differences in skills related to SEI after the one-on-one intervention was introduced. These findings suggest that an evidence-based curriculum used in a small-group setting may be sufficient to address student needs. Minimal effects could have been observed due to a variety of factors, such

as participant behavior during the intervention, poor sensitivity in the outcome measure, teacher biases, or ineffective intervention content. The behaviors measured on the behavior report cards may not have been specifically related to the content of the intervention which could have also limited improvement in behavior. All participants increased their performance in most measures of early literacy and numeracy, indicating that their behaviors did not significantly impact their ability to improve in the academic skills taught in the 4-K program.

This research provides guidance for future research related to SEI. It would be beneficial to evaluate the best intervention implementation methods for students to see if a one-on-one component is effective as school psychologists and teachers strive to be efficient in their time in providing supports for students. Teachers and school psychologists should also be familiar with the specific behaviors and knowledge that the intervention is teaching and measure behavior accordingly to monitor student progress when teaching skills related to SEI.

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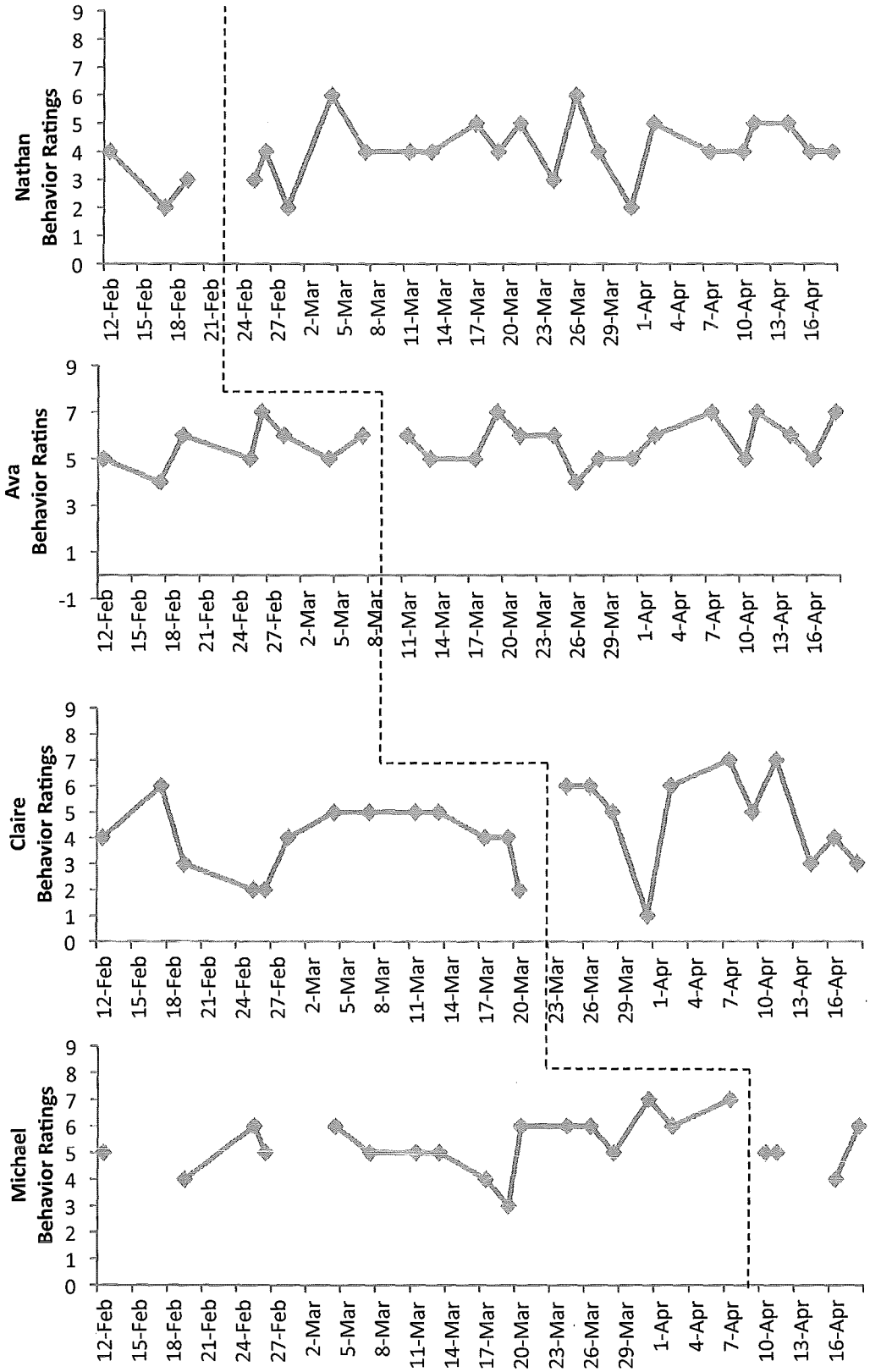


Figure 1. Scores from behavior report card item: The student got along with others while showing socially appropriate behaviors.

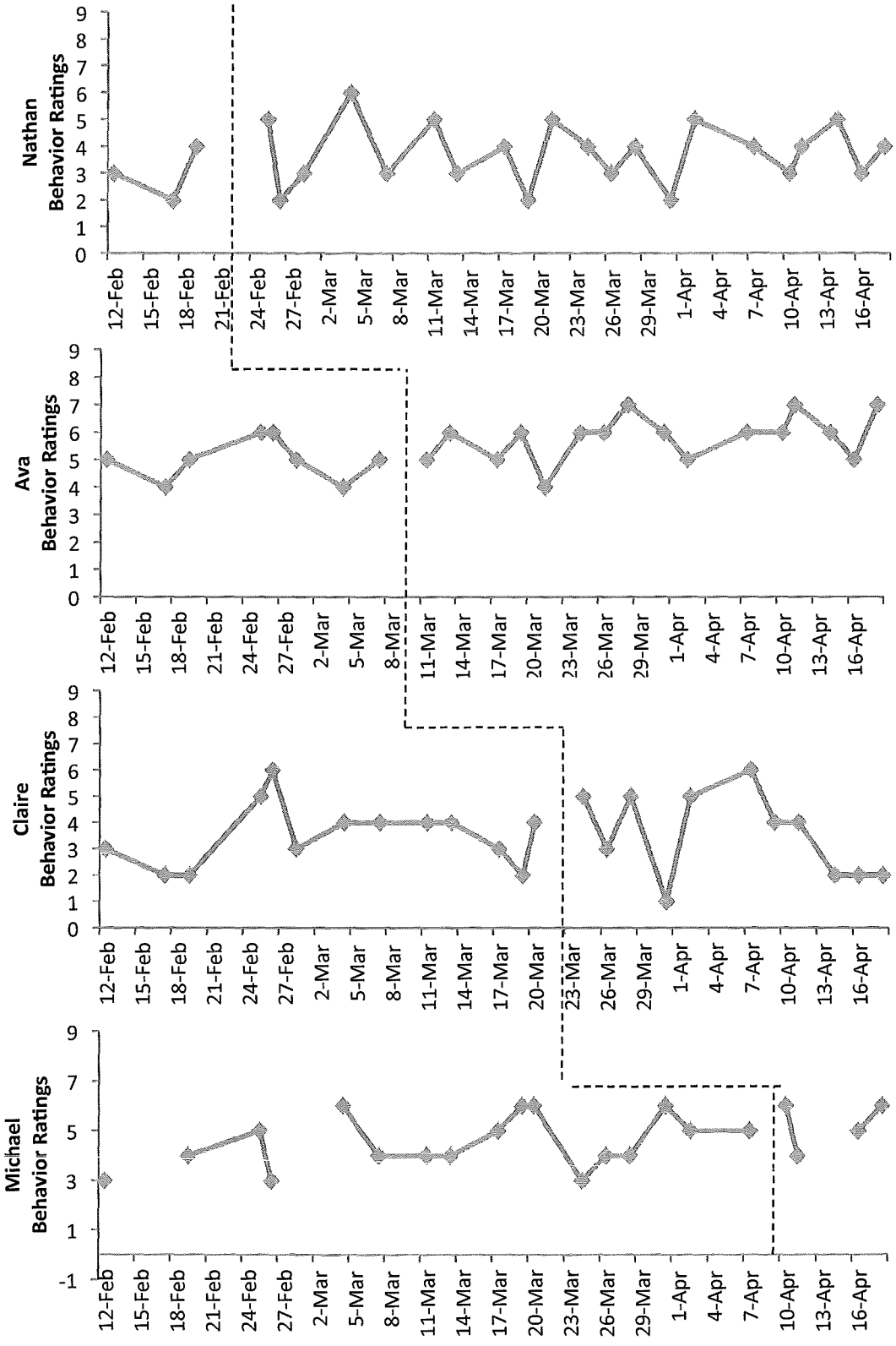


Figure 2. Scores from behavior report card item: The student spoke respectfully and complied with adult requests without argument or complaint.

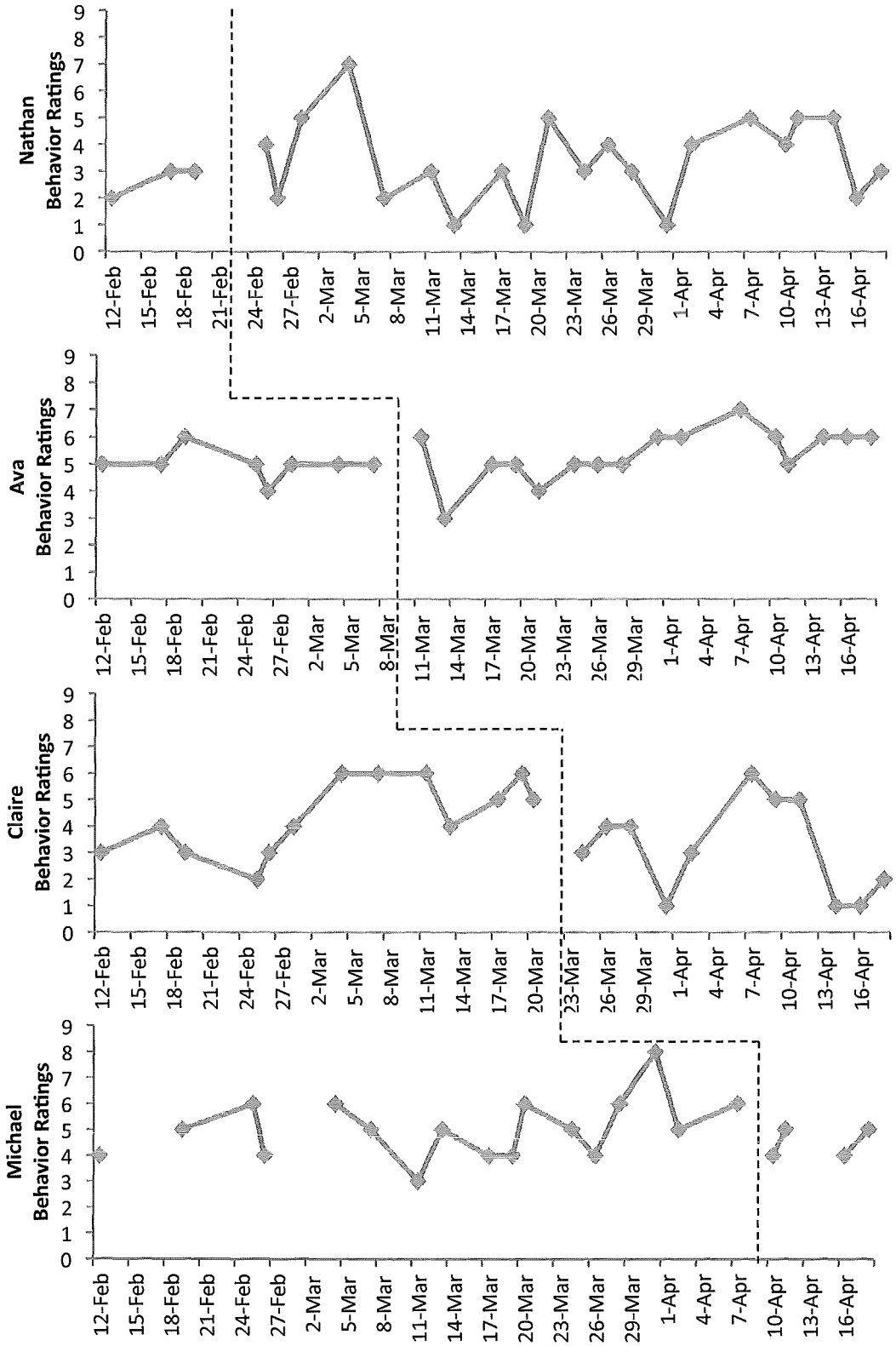


Figure 3. Scores from behavior report card item: The student was able to resolve problems and disagreements appropriately.

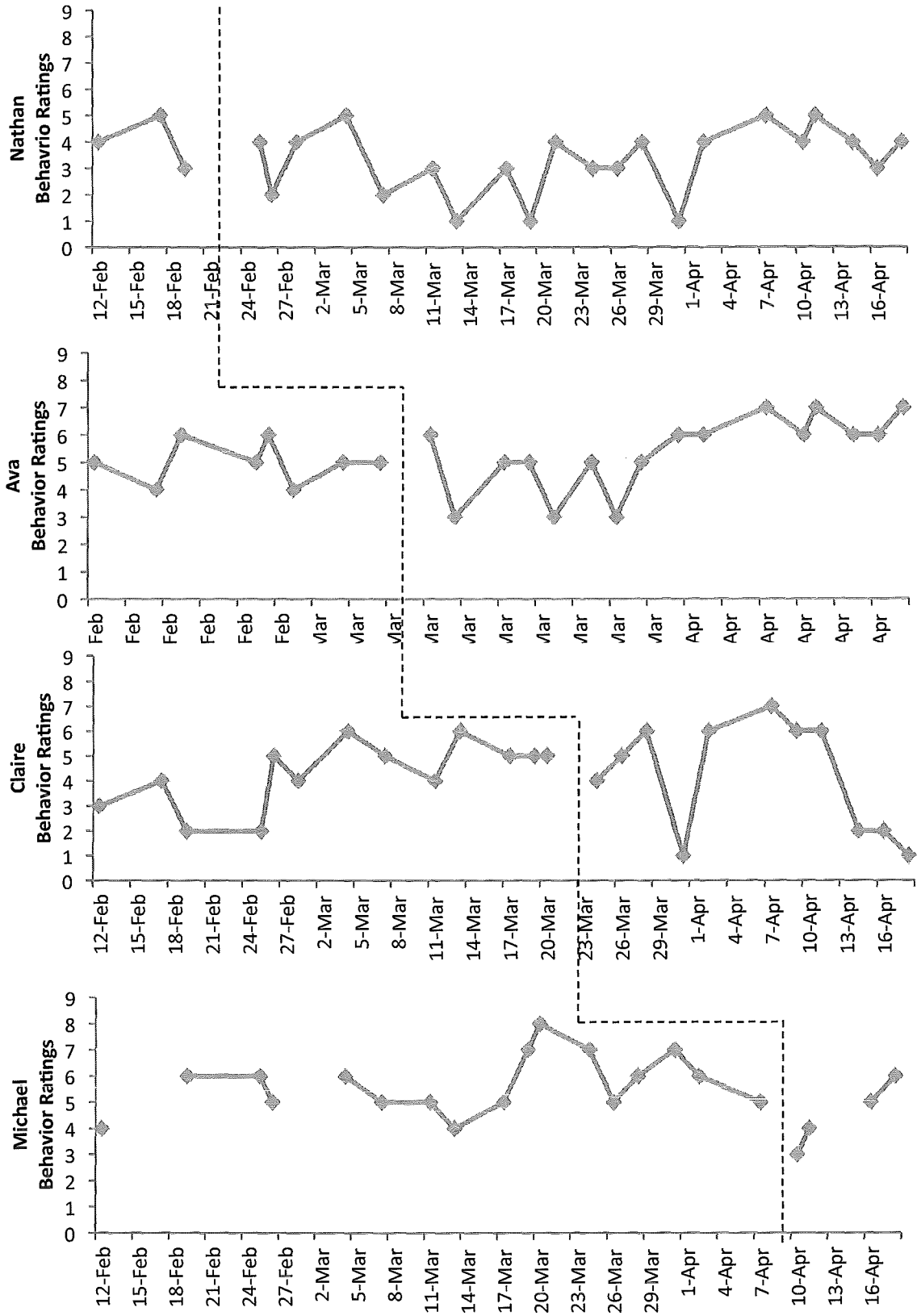


Figure 4. Scores from behavior report card item: The student was able to express his or her feelings appropriately.

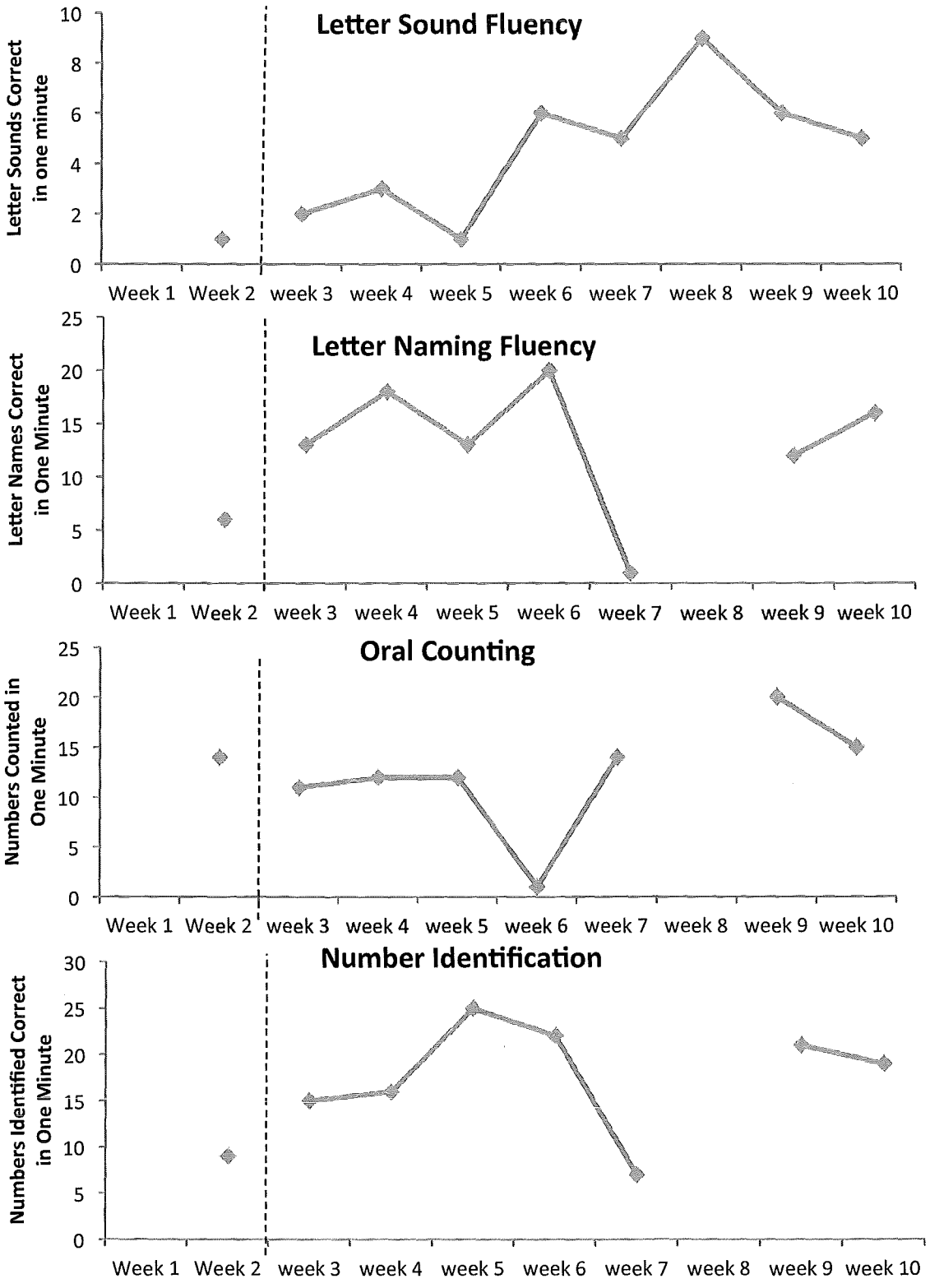


Figure 5. Nathan's Academic Data. Graphs depict Nathan's progress in early academic skills during the baseline and intervention phases.

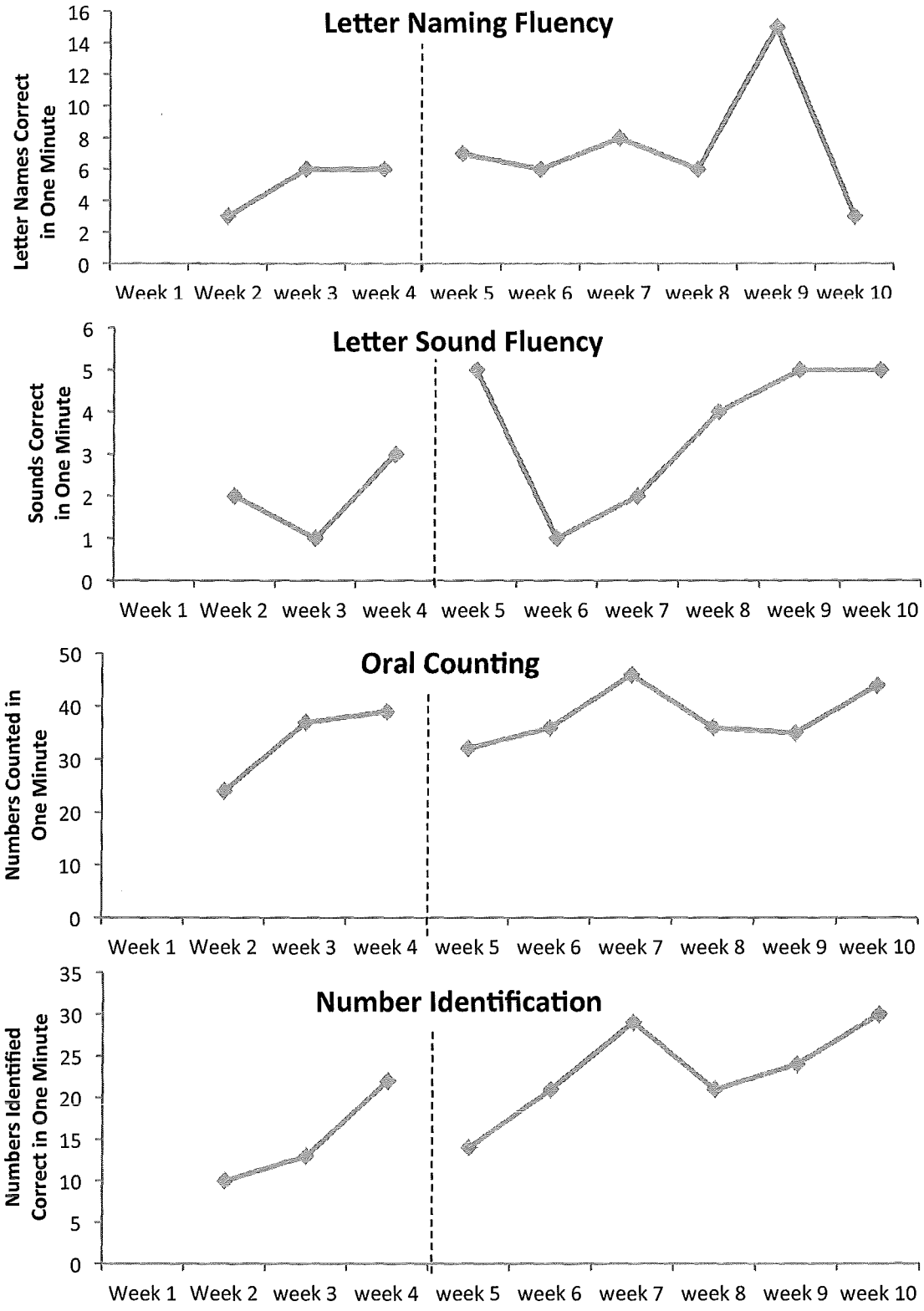


Figure 6. Ava's Academic Data. Graphs depict Ava's progress in early academic skills during the baseline and intervention phases.

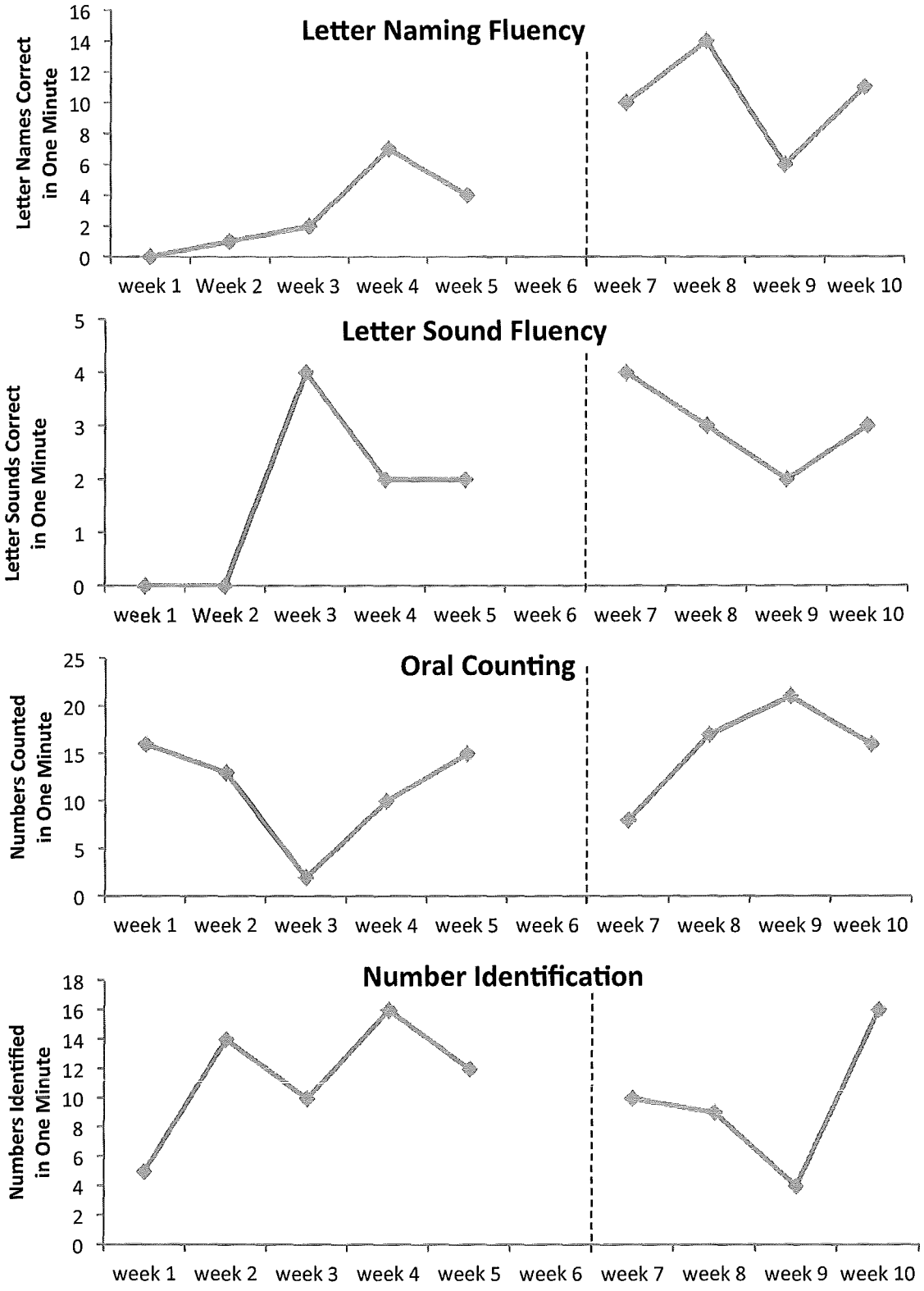


Figure 7. Claire's Academic Data. Graphs depict Claire's progress in early academic skills during the baseline and intervention phases.

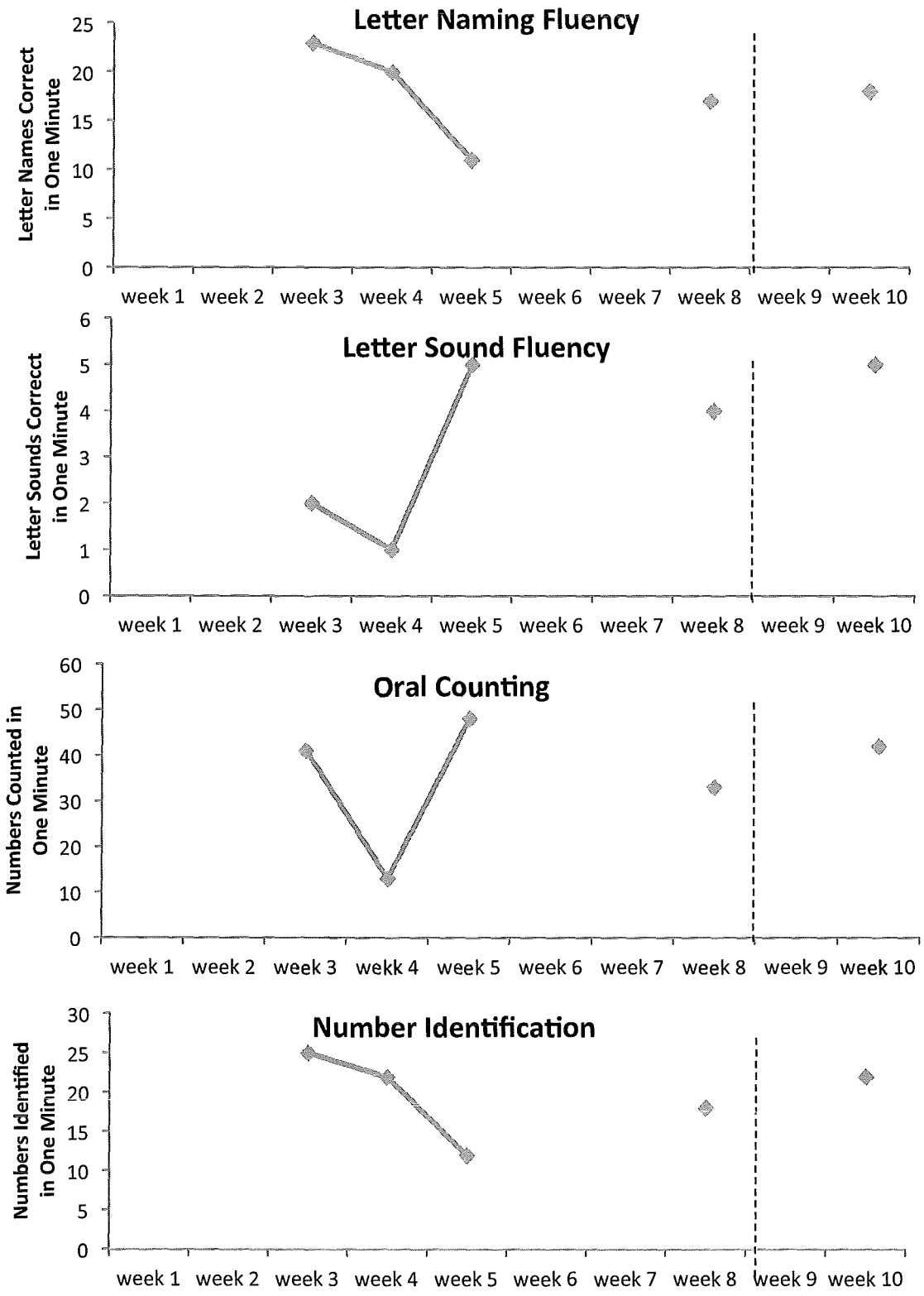


Figure 8. Michael's Academic Data. Graphs depict Michael's progress in early academic skills during the baseline and intervention phases.

Appendix A

SSIS Rating Scale Scores

Ava's SSIS Scores

	Pre-intervention	**Post-intervention**
Communication	Average	Average
Cooperation	Average	Average
Assertion	Average	Average
Responsibility	Average	Average
Empathy	Below Average	Below Average
Engagement	Average	Average
Self-Control	Below Average	Below Average
Externalizing	Average	Average
Bullying	Average	Average
Hyperactivity/Inattention	Average	Average
Internalizing	Average	Above Average
Social Skills Scale (Standard Score/Percentile Rank)	92/27th percentile	85/18th percentile
Problem Behaviors Scale (Standard Score/Percentile Rank)	102/59th percentile	110/76th percentile

Claire's SSIS Scores

	Pre-intervention	**Post-intervention**
Communication	Average	Below Average
Cooperation	Below Average	Below Average
Assertion	Below Average	Average
Responsibility	Below Average	Below Average
Empathy	Above Average	Below Average
Engagement	Below Average	Below Average
Self-Control	Average	Average
Externalizing	Above Average	Above Average
Bullying	Average	Average
Hyperactivity/Inattention	Above Average	Above Average
Internalizing	Average	Average
Social Skills Scale (Standard Score/Percentile Rank)	82/14th percentile	76/7th percentile
Problem Behaviors Scale (Standard Score/Percentile Rank)	120/87th percentile	118/84th percentile

Michael's SSIS Scores

	Pre-intervention	**Post-intervention**
Communication	Below Average	Average
Cooperation	Average	Average
Assertion	Average	Below Average
Responsibility	Average	Average
Empathy	Average	Average
Engagement	Average	Average
Self-Control	Average	Average
Externalizing	Average	Average
Bullying	Average	Average
Hyperactivity/Inattention	Average	Average
Internalizing	Average	Average
Social Skills Scale (Standard Score/Percentile Rank)	90/22nd percentile	92/30th percentile
Problem Behaviors Scale (Standard Score/Percentile Rank)	100/52nd percentile	106/69th percentile

Nathan's SSIS Scores

	Pre-intervention	**Post-intervention**
Communication	Below Average	Average
Cooperation	Below Average	Below Average
Assertion	Below Average	Average
Responsibility	Below Average	Below Average
Empathy	Below Average	Average
Engagement	Below Average	Average
Self-Control	Below Average	Below Average
Externalizing	Above Average	Above Average
Bullying	Above Average	Above Average
Hyperactivity/Inattention	Above Average	Above Average
Internalizing	Above Average	Above Average
Social Skills Scale (Standard Score/Percentile Rank)	49/<1st percentile	84/17th percentile
Problem Behaviors Scale (Standard Score/Percentile Rank)	149/>99th percentile	136/96th percentile

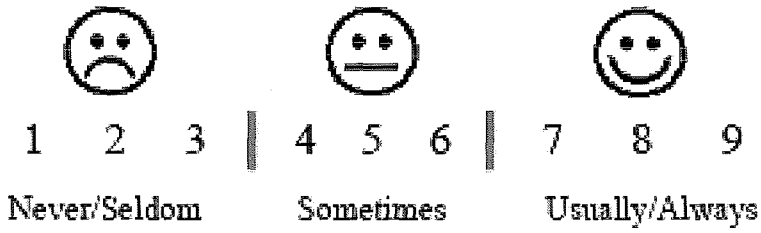
Appendix B

Behavior Report Card

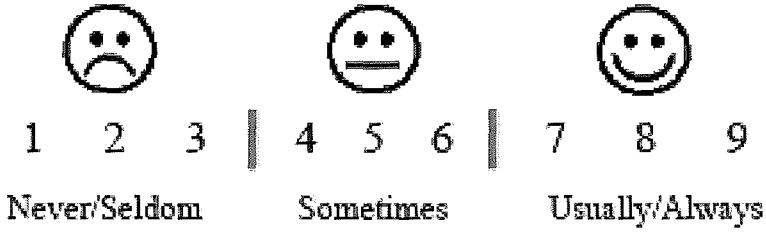
Teacher Daily Behavior Report Card

Student: _____ Date: _____

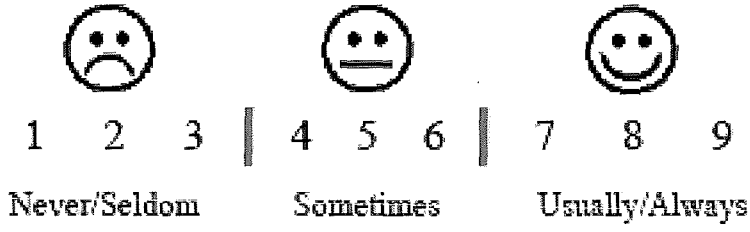
The student got along with others while showing socially appropriate behaviors.



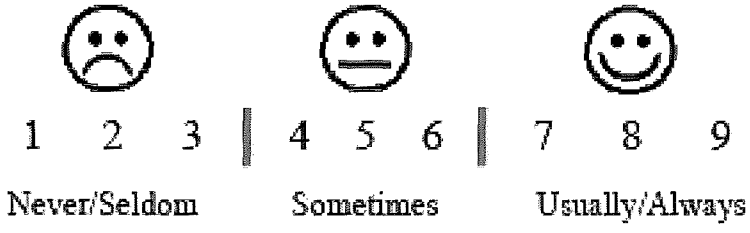
The student spoke respectfully and complied with adult requests without argument or complaint.



The student was able to resolve problems and disagreements appropriately.



The student was able to express his or her feelings appropriately.



Appendix C

Sample TEL and TEN measures

a d e g t o p w y c

z u i l j o k t b c

s n r i t v z k p o

h b l e z t j n p m

a d s j f i b r n e

s c m w y e l h z j

d m t l z g s c f r

g f y e h d n m v r

b t j s y z d w m e

z d g e f s r w o v

AIMSweb® Letter Sound Fluency - Progress Monitor Assessment #6

Given To: _____ Given By: _____ Date: _____

a d e g t o p w y c / 10 (10)

z u i l j o k t b c / 10 (20)

s n r i t v z k p o / 10 (30)

h b l e z t j n p m / 10 (40)

a d s j f i b r n e / 10 (50)

s c m w y e l h z j / 10 (60)

d m t l z g s c f r / 10 (70)

g f y e h d n m v r / 10 (80)

b t j s y z d w m e / 10 (90)

z d g e f s r w o v / 10 (100)

/

AIMSweb® Oral Counting – Benchmark Assessment

Given To: _____ Given By: _____ Date: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

u D P S R A X y l n

C V g W A G J z c E

r W Z F M c L t u f

g c T Y U b d p S o

c G S U J d a T K m

R T G l k S q n u A

R k L K s j f E h q

K h b U T l D s l a

N K k v l Z a u A F

k X O T e h g M B W

AIMSweb® Letter Naming Fluency - Benchmark Assessment #1 (Kindergarten - Fall)

www.AIMSweb.com

AIMSweb® Letter Naming Fluency - Benchmark Assessment #1 (Kindergarten - Fall)

Given To: _____ Given By: _____ Date: _____

u D P S R A X y l n / 10 (10)

C V g W A G J z c E / 10 (20)

r W Z F M c L t u f / 10 (30)

g c T Y U b d p S o / 10 (40)

c G S U J d a T K m / 10 (50)

R T G I k S q n u A / 10 (60)

R k L K s j f E h q / 10 (70)

K h b U T I D s l a / 10 (80)

N K k v I Z a u A F / 10 (90)

k X O T e h g M B W / 10 (100)

___/___

6	5	1	0	9	7	8
3	2	8	9	6	1	7
10	1	5	9	8	0	7
6	3	8	9	2	5	4
6	7	9	0	10	2	1
8	9	2	6	1	10	0
10	8	4	2	1	9	6
3	1	7	5	4	6	0

AIMSweb® Number Identification - Benchmark Assessment #1 (Kindergarten - Fall)

www.AIMSweb.com

AIMSweb® Number Identification - Benchmark Assessment #1 (Kindergarten - Fall)

Given To: _____ Given By: _____ Date: _____

6	5	1	0	9	7	8	/ 7 (7)
3	2	8	9	6	1	7	/ 7 (14)
10	1	5	9	8	0	7	/ 7 (21)
6	3	8	9	2	5	4	/ 7 (28)
6	7	9	0	10	2	1	/ 7 (35)
8	9	2	6	1	10	0	/ 7 (42)
10	8	4	2	1	9	6	/ 7 (49)
3	1	7	5	4	6	0	/ 7 (56)

____/____

Appendix D

Sample Strong Start Lesson

LESSON 3

Understanding Your Feelings 2

TEACHER NOTES

Purpose

- To review the six basic feelings
- To teach students appropriate ways of expressing feelings

Objectives

- Students will become fluent in identifying basic feelings.
- Students will be able to distinguish between *okay* and *not okay* ways of expressing feelings.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- ❑ Henry (stuffed animal mascot)
- ❑ Blank overhead transparency or chart paper
- ❑ Book from the literature list (or one of your choice)
- ❑ Supplement 3.1–3.6 (feelings pictures on laminated cards)
- ❑ *Strong Start* Bulletin

2 minutes

Review

To activate prior knowledge, review and discuss previous topics and main ideas. Prompt students to remember the six basic feelings: happy, sad, angry, afraid, surprised, and disgusted. Make sure to provide feedback.

Sample Script

During our last meeting, we learned to name our feelings. Raise your hand if you can remember a feeling that we learned about in our last class.

1 minute

Introduction

Communicate the lesson's purpose and objectives clearly.

Sample Script

Today, we are going to learn more about feelings. I have brought Henry to help us as we do this.

10 minutes

Read a Book from the Literature List

Read a book from the following list of examples or choose your own book to share with students.

- *The Chocolate-Covered-Cookie Tantrum* by Deborah Blumenthal
- *Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day* by Jamie Lee Curtis
- *The Grumpy Morning* by Pamela Duncan Edwards
- *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes
- *Julius: The Baby of the World* by Kevin Henkes
- *Bye, Bye!* by Nancy Kaufmann
- *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
- *Sometimes I Like to Cry* by Elizabeth and Henry Stanton

Be sure to point out all of the actions or ways in which the characters behave when they are acting on their feelings. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- What was one of the feelings the character had?
- Do you think it was a **good** or **not good** feeling?
- What did the character do when he or she was feeling that way?
- Was it an **okay** or **not okay** way of showing the feeling?

5 minutes

Understanding Basic Emotions

- Revisit *If You're Happy and You Know It.*
- Present pictures of each of the six basic feelings using Supplements 3.1–3.6. Have students give examples of when they may experience these feelings.

Sample Script

This is a picture of disgust. Disgust is ***not a good*** *feeling. Raise your hand if you can think of a time when you might feel disgust.*

3 minutes

Ways of Showing Feelings

Convey the following main ideas to your students:

- Everyone has feelings, and it is okay to have any feeling.
- We have different feelings at different times.
- It is important to talk about what we are feeling on the inside.
- There are **okay** and **not okay** ways to show feelings.

Sample Script

Everyone has feelings, and it is ***okay*** *to have any feeling. We have different feelings at different times. When Henry is playing outside, he feels happy, and when it is cold and rainy and he has to stay inside, he feels sad. There are different ways to show our feelings. When Henry eats broccoli, he has a feeling of disgust, which is a yucky feeling. He chews it up and spits it out on the table. This is* ***not an okay*** *way of showing disgust because Henry wasn't showing good manners. Instead, when Henry's mom makes broccoli for dinner, Henry can say, "No, thank you." This is an* ***okay*** *way of showing disgust because Henry is showing good manners*

5 minutes

Okay and Not Okay Examples of Showing Other Feelings

The following additional examples may reflect similar situations that the children share. Use them to guide your thinking as you plan for this lesson. It might be helpful to use Henry as a puppet and have him act out **okay** and **not okay** ways to show feelings.

Have students stand up if the example suggests an **okay** way of showing feelings and stay seated if the example **is not an okay** way of showing feelings.

Feeling	Example	Okay	Not okay
Sad	Henry's dog runs away.	Henry tells you how he is feeling.	Henry screams and demands a new pet.
Angry	A friend borrowed Henry's toy car without asking.	Henry takes a deep breath and uses nice words to tell his friend how he is feeling.	Henry pulls the car out of his friend's hand.
Surprised	Henry sees his preschool teacher at the grocery store.	Henry gives his teacher a little wave.	Henry hides behind the counter and hopes she will not see him.
Afraid	Henry has to go to the doctor.	Henry tells his parents how he is feeling.	Henry keeps his feelings a secret and gets a tummy ache.

2 minutes

Closure

Gather your students together, and review the lesson objectives.

Sample Script

We all have feelings. Today, we learned that there are ***okay*** *and* ***not okay*** *ways of showing feelings. It is all right to have any feeling, but it is important that we show our feelings in* ***okay*** *ways.*

Applying What We Learned

Anticipate

Tell your students to remember to practice naming their feelings and using **okay** ways to show their feelings. It might be helpful to prompt them prior to potentially emotional times of the day, such as at recess, choice time, or when making the transition between activities.

Remind

Similar to the last lesson, if you notice students having difficulty expressing their feelings (e.g., saying, "He is not sharing. I hate him!"), remind them that these are **not okay** ways to express their feelings, and ask them to try it again in an **okay** way. Initially, you might have to model an **okay** way of expressing the particular feeling (e.g., "Watch me and listen. When you don't share, it makes me feel angry.").

Acknowledge

Praise your students for displaying **okay** ways of expressing their feelings. Some examples of **okay** ways could include students using "I feel" statements, talking (not yelling) about their issues with one another, or asking for help if they are getting frustrated.

Appendix E

Intervention Schedule

Week 1 – Session 1

- ❖ Strong Start lesson 1 (Introduction, rules, confidentiality, introduction to curriculum, closing)

Week 1 – Session 2

- ❖ Strong Start lesson 2 (Introduction, feelings identification activity, closing)

Week 2 – Session 1

- ❖ Review emotions six basic emotions, use lesson supplements and have students sit down or stand up for good/bad feelings, sing, "*If you're __ and you know it.*"

Week 2 – Session 2

- ❖ Strong Start lesson 2 additional activity (choose an emotion card and tell about a time you experienced that emotion, what happened next?)

Week 3 – Session 1

- ❖ Strong Start lesson 3 (introduction, understanding basic emotions, ways of showing feelings, ways of showing feelings activity)
- ❖ 1:1 – Guess the feelings, describe a bad and a good way you could show an emotion)

Week 3 – Session 2

- ❖ Strong Start lesson 4 (show and define anger)
- ❖ 1:1 – Draw anger on blank face worksheets and discuss-What do you do when you're angry? What makes you angry?

Week 4 – Session 1

- ❖ Strong Start lesson 4 (ways of handling anger, closing)
- ❖ 1:1 – Break down steps of Stop, Count, In, Out again, model, and role-play scenarios that would elicit anger

Week 4 – Session 2

- ❖ Review Stop, Count, In, Out; emotion regulation curriculum lesson 6 discussion and basic concepts
- ❖ 1:1 – Review steps for asking for help (skills 15 in Teaching Social Skills to Youth), modeling, role-playing skill with emotion regulation curriculum lesson 6 scenario cards

Week 5 – Session 1

- ❖ Strong Start lesson 5 (introduction, show and define happiness)
- ❖ 1:1 – Draw happy on blank face worksheets, and discuss what makes you happy, what do you like to do when you're happy, etc.

Week 5 – Session 2

- ❖ Strong start lesson 5 (Happy Talk, additional activity-act out emotions)
- ❖ 1:1 – Emotion regulation curriculum lesson 7 activity-positive vs. negative

Week 6 – Session 1

- ❖ Strong Start lesson 6 (introduction, show and define worry, letting go of worries)
- ❖ 1:1 – What makes you worry? Positive vs. negative with scenarios

Week 6 – Session 2

- Strong Start lesson 6 (additional activity-relaxation exercise)
- 1:1 – What is deep breathing? Taking deep breaths when we worry activity

Week 7 – Session 1

- Strong start lesson 7 (introduction, name and define skill, modeling)
- 1:1 – Emotion regulation curriculum lesson 3 activity (have students describe what the other person would look like/feel in each scenario)

Week 7 – Session 2

- Strong start lesson 7 (additional activity: charades)
- 1:1 – Look at pictures-what they would say or do in that situation?

Week 8 – Session 1

- Strong start lesson 8 (introduction, talking and listening, approaching others and sharing)
- 1:1 – Learn skill #3 in social skills book, role-play scenarios

Week 8 – Session 2

- Strong start lesson 8 (Additional Activity: discuss what a good friend does, draw pictures of friends)
- 1:1 – Learn skill #8 in social skills book, role-play scenarios

Week 9 – Session 1

- Strong start lesson 9 (introduction, how to say you're sorry and solving people problems)
- 1:1 – Learn skill #2, #6, role-play

Week 9 – Session 2

- Strong start lesson 9 (additional activity: role play with scenario cards)
- 1:1 – What would you say to your friend when…? (role play)

Week 10 – Session 1

- Strong start lesson 10 (introduction, review emotions, skills to use)
- 1:1 – Emotion regulation curriculum lesson 8 discussion questions

Week 10 – Session 2

- Strong start lesson 10 (finish reviewing emotions and skills to use)
- 1:1 – Emotion regulation curriculum lesson 8 activity-emotion summary page