

WHOLE SCHOOLING RESEARCH PROJECT

VI.4 BUILDING COMMUNITY

Dealing Proactively with Social and Emotional Needs of Children

KEY FINDINGS

Effective teachers put much energy into building a sense of community in their classrooms.

Effective schools support teachers in this process and engage in school-wide efforts to reinforce community, making parents and children feel welcome, facilitating mutual support and encouragement among staff.

Schools and classrooms in which community is built provide an environment that is more conducive to the positive mental health of children, thus helping to prevent emotional and behavioral difficulties and providing a range of pro-active approaches when problematic behavior occurs.

When a culture of commitment to children with high emotional needs is not established, pressure to remove such children grows, serving to weaken overall community in the building, moving the culture of the school from community towards punishment and rejection. This dynamic is heightened in schools with many lower income children and children of color.

Schools and teachers who are committed to keeping children in their communities develop a wide range of strategies to make this happen.

Teachers who were strong community builders were more likely to struggle to support and include students with challenging behaviors than teachers who sought to manage their classes through control, punishment, and rewards. However, this commitment was not automatic and depended upon their development of a philosophical commitment to inclusion.

Whole Schooling posits that building community and utilizing positive behavioral supports are critical for supporting inclusive education, particularly for students who for any reason may have behaviors that are challenging to teachers and other students. Throughout this study, we had many opportunities to observe how this thesis played out. We had hoped that all teachers and all schools would seek to build community in classrooms and schools, and to create safe havens for children who are under increasing stress. Unfortunately, we have been in schools where we have seen teachers scream at children, even where such teacher behavior has become an expected part of the school culture. At the same time, we saw other schools and teachers struggle mightily to develop a sense of community and care in their buildings, particularly struggling to help children whose lives are traumatic. In this section, we describe responses to the social and emotional needs of children, providing examples, and drawing guiding principles and practices for best practice from our observations.

**TABLE VI.4 –1: RESPONSES AND PATTERNS IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS
Social and Emotional Needs of Children**

RESPONSE to challenging behavior	DESCRIPTION
Chaos: reactive responses.	Teachers feel out of control, nothing works, no support systems in place and frustration. This often results in random lashing out at children and punitive responses. This pattern is often connected to punishment and expulsion below.
Punishment and expulsion.	Within a school and classroom relying on this approach, rules, most often developed by the school or teacher with little to no student or parent input, are administered inflexibly. Often in such educational cultures, rules are capricious, based on the momentary judgment of the teacher. When rules are broken or challenged, the prime mode of response is punishment: including taking away privileges, sending home, and eventual expulsion from the school. In such schools and classes, students are frequently referred for special education services with a goal of removing the student from the class or school entirely. Staff seldom working proactively with one another with a culture of blame operating – aimed at other teachers and particularly parents.
Staff control	This approach is often used in schools seeking to be inclusive but not clear as to how to deal with challenging behaviors of students. Most often a paraprofessional is systematically assigned to a student with behavioral challenges. This pattern is particularly seen with students with autism.
Rules and rewards.	Schools and teachers using this pattern focus on developing rules that are clear and providing rewards for compliance. This pattern often works hand in hand with punishment and expulsion and staff control. However, as the primary focus it provides a more positive culture in the class or the school. However, the focus remains on control of student behaviors and the definition of appropriate behaviors by adults. In this approach, a focus on building community and responding to inner needs of children is typically secondary.

<p>Community & positive behavioral support.</p>	<p>In this pattern, individual teachers and the entire school culture explicitly and systematically attend to building a sense of care and community in the school. When problems occur, such schools typically use some version of positive behavioral support, seeking alternative ways of helping children respond, and have their needs met, developing behavior plans that helped provide increased support to students and modeling and teaching of problem solving and alternate behaviors. In such schools, we also see much effort to build community among adults. The work of Glasser and strategies such as Peace Clubs were programmatic tools towards these ends in school we observed.</p>
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In our observations in schools, we identified several *responses* – strategies or behavioral responses to social and emotional needs and challenges of children. Each school had a different combination of these responses that constituted part of its culture, what we call *patterns*. Below, we describe both responses and patterns we observed. The above table contains a summary of responses to challenging behavior that we observed in intensive study and comparison schools. The next chart describes how these differing patterns played out in the intensive study schools, who are working intentionally towards inclusive education. Teachers and other staff in each school explicitly discussed the concept and practice of building community in interactions with one another, children, and parents. They sought to root responses to behavioral challenges in respectful efforts to meet the needs of the child, using strategies that were consistent with community building. For all schools this was difficult, particularly for schools serving high percentages of low income children or children of color.

Table VI.4 –2: Responses to behavioral challenges						
Responses	Elementary Schools				High Schools	
	Meadowview	Hamilton	Evergreen	Armstrong	Rogers	Drummond
Chaos	x					
Punishment and expulsion	X		x		x	x
Staff control	x	X	X	X		
Rules and rewards	x	x	X	x	X	x
Community & positive behavioral supports	X	X	x	X	x	X
Free & reduced lunch	56%	3%	12%	62%	22%	5%

x = Minor emphasis in school; major emphasis with small number of teachers.

X= Major emphasis in school and many teachers.

Certainly, these strategies were often used together. For example, even schools and teachers primarily used community building and positive behavioral support periodically found themselves using strategies of staff control and punishment. However, it was clear that the more emphasis was placed on community building and meeting needs through positive behavioral support strategies, the less that these latter approaches were used.

All this resulted in the development of patterns – paradigms and cultures of response in the way teachers and other educators viewed emotional needs of children. Each school had a slightly different pattern. However, within a school, teachers also often differed. Interestingly, in schools whose overall pattern was punitive and chaotic, there were often a small number of teachers who sought to respond differently. While they struggled against the overall culture of the school, they were often successful. Alternatively, in schools where the overall culture focused on community building, there were typically a small number of educators whose prime pattern was control, punishment, and devolution into frustrated chaos.

The relationship between these responses and race and social class of students that we found in our small sample is consistent with national literature. Specifically, the lower the socio-economic status of the students, and the more children of color in a school, the more likely the movement towards strategies of punishment.

All intensive study schools contrasted dramatically with other schools in which we were working in which the concept of community was not recognized. At best, such schools would try to systematically define rules and provide rewards for compliance. Most often, however, they emphasized punishment and expulsion in a chaotic culture where neither students nor adults supported one another.

MEETING NEEDS VIA COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

In the intensive study schools, as well as to a lesser degree in comparison schools, we observed many positive practices designed to build community within classrooms and the school. We describe these and provide examples below. We list key elements that we found critical to building community throughout the school and in the classroom. In this section, we primarily focus on classroom practices.

We observed many teachers consistently, intentionally, and thoughtfully seeking to build caring communities for learning in their classrooms. In these schools, those few teachers who did not contrasted dramatically. Below we provide examples of exemplary strategies we observed in classrooms where teachers typically had a much lower degree of behavioral problems than in comparison classrooms.

Classroom meetings: *Giving students choices and proactive ways to deal with difficulties in a supportive community.*

Classroom meetings are important tools for engaging students in democratic decision-making regarding needs and problems. Many teachers had meetings almost every day, whether about teasing, staying on task in writing workshop, or turning in homework. Meetings varied in length, sometimes only a few minutes, other times longer depending upon the issue. Classroom meetings topics were chosen both by students and the teacher. Some teachers had a box in which anyone could anonymously place issues, allowing those not comfortable sharing aloud to have their needs addressed. Classroom meetings were often run by the students, not the teacher. Teachers established basic rules that allow students to speak one at a time, sometimes using a designated object (a 'talking stick' for example) to pass to the person who has the floor to speak.



When I came into the classroom, the teacher was sitting in a rocker in the corner with the kids on the floor in a group in front of her. She was talking about some sort of difficulty that had occurred during or just after lunch. She told the group that she thought things could be worked out through a meeting with two of the boys and herself, and she assured the others that if they needed their help, she would let them know.

Melanie, a 3-5 multi-age teacher, described a *community meeting* that she had with the kids "yesterday for an hour - took my whole math time." "Oh well," she said. "They talked about respecting one another and people needing to listen to one another. I am trying to use the language of community in the classroom with the kids so I introduced the discussion by saying that 'We have a crisis in our community'". Since the kids did not know the meaning of crisis, this set off a good bit of discussion about what this might mean. "

Melanie started to take the kids outside to 'launch a rocket'. The kids get a bit out of order and she talks with them. "What did you notice that was a problem?" After a bit, she gives them choices about how to spend their time. "I hear people saying different things. Tell me how many would like to do the boards first. If you would like to go outside first, let me see your hands. OK, we'll do the boards first. I do need papers stacked nicely and the boards put away nicely." The kids immediately start putting stuff up.

The daily welcome. *Recognizing every person every day.*

In several classes, at both lower and upper elementary level, the teacher had students sit in a circle and they welcomed one another to the day. Teachers had a variety of formats for this activity. Sandra, a multi-age grade 1-2 teacher, had students welcome one another in a different



language each week. They sat in the circle and one at a time a student would turn to his right, put out his hand, and say, “Guten Morgan, Jacob.” And the pattern continued around the room. In Melanie’s room, they sometimes do their daily greeting in a dance. “One, two, three, four, Come on Carmen, hit the floor. We’re so glad you’re here today. Hooray!! Hooray!! Hooray!!”

Daily routines: *Opportunities for power, sharing and caring in the daily details.*

Children need both help from adults to provide structure in their lives and freedom to make choices.

The most effective teachers and schools provided choices for students in many daily routines, helping them learn to take responsibility for such choices, and presenting options to individual students, small groups, or the entire class. Choices included:

- **What to learn.** Students were given input into topics they wanted to address. If particular areas were mandated by the school curriculum, teachers provided options in particular areas of focus or ways to approach the topic study.
- **What order:** Teachers with even the youngest students led them in a class discussion regarding the day’s agenda. In other situations, teachers gave students assignments in writing and allowed them to pick the order in which they were done within a particular time frame.
- **Choice Time.** Many teachers provided choices of activities from which to choose that are structured around a topic, such as literacy, physics experiments, or algebra.
- **What to read/write.** Students were given directions and parameters for writing projects but also had choices regarding books to read or stories to write.
- **Day to day goals.** Students chose daily or weekly goals for themselves related to academics or behavior.
- **Seating Arrangement:** One teacher did not assign stable seating



Inclusive first grade teacher leads children in discussion regarding how they will schedule their day’s activities.

assignments to any students, explaining that all could work at any location in the class. This increased the feeling that the room belonged to everyone and allowed the teacher and students great flexibility in how they used their space.

- **Daily schedule.** One teacher we observed daily involved her first graders in a discussion of the order in which they would engage in various subjects. She placed the activities of the day in a circle around the name of the day and then facilitated a thoughtful discussion with the children. If she saw a potential problem in their suggestions, she would query them, “Would this work?” and point out the problem. Children would work through issues with her support and guidance.

In comparison schools, we saw little choice-making and much time and energy spent by teachers and other school staff in directing and managing these daily activities. One particular area of focus in elementary schools for us came to be how children went to the bathroom.

We enter Lowe Elementary School and see a class lined up at the bathroom. The teacher is admonishing the children to stay quiet while trying to rush the children through the bathroom. The noise of laughter and scuffling around is heard through the bathroom door. In about twenty minutes, the teacher manages to return to the class to work.



In Melanie’s class, children go to the bathroom as they need, waving one of two bathroom passes at her to ask permission to leave without interrupting, and she nods “yes.” She checks the clock to

make sure they are not gone too long. This process teaches children responsibility for their own actions while not wasting learning time. Melanie explained that many children tried to wait longer to leave for the bathroom because they do not like missing fun activities in class.

Many teachers sought to teach students how to function as responsible adults giving them daily responsibility and supportive structures to facilitate this goal, designing activities that would both be fun and teach responsibility simultaneously. Routines we observed that build community and responsibility included:

- Getting class attention. The teacher clapped hands in a rhythm and students imitated, rang a bell or other musical instrument, held up a silent hand and counted down while children join in, or quietly ask each group to put their eyes on the teacher. Teachers involved students in selecting attention-getting strategies.
- Transitions between areas or activities. Some teachers would begin singing a song all knew, ask students to fill in blanks in funny story, start reading a poem, or begin a riddle.

- Bathroom. Effective teachers had a signal to ask permission silently or used a bathroom pass, and provided consequences for misuse.
- Lining Up. In the situations that did require that children walk in lines, effective teachers had the children lead with teacher following, stopping at key areas.
- Lunch Count. One teacher used a magnetic board with one column for hot and cold lunches. Students moved their magnetic ticket to hot/cold lunch and another student charged with the job of pulling tickets and sending information to the office.
- Dismissal. Teachers established a routine for leaving room including assigning jobs needed for straightening up.
- Attendance. Students take attendance on a sheet, passing it around.

I build community in my class and the students help one another. *Community has provided a basis for Kevin’s learning and growth this year.*

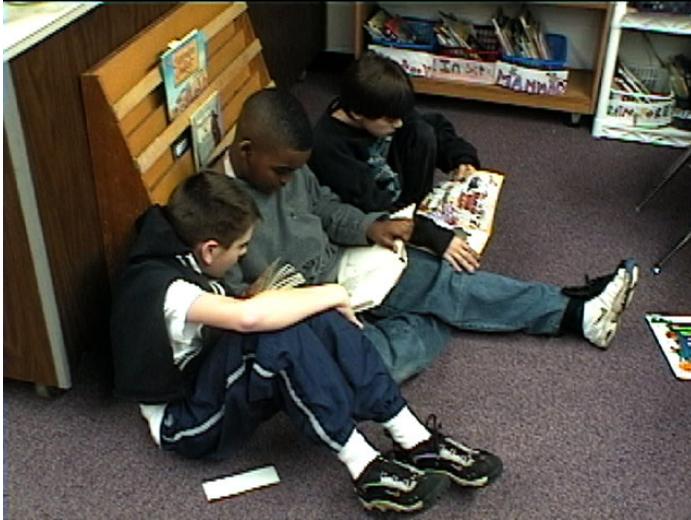
Building community was critical in some cases for both academic and social-emotional development. One third grade teacher had a student, Kevin, labeled “trainable mentally retarded.” The teacher explained, “he’s a nice kid but he functions far below most students in my class. However, it’s important to me that Kevin is welcomed and can work at his own level.” She described the multiple ways she builds community in the classroom and how these interact with academic instruction. She used cooperative learning groups, with students helping one another as experts, classroom meetings, and heterogeneous grouping of students so that students can help and learn from one another. “You should have seen Kevin showing his parents what he has been learning in his student-led conference,” Melanie explained. “For Kevin, writing just a short sentence now is a lot. But he *likes* to write and read. It was terrific to watch him with his parents who were a bit amazed.”



A student and Kevin work together on a project where they scoured the room to find objects that matched shapes they were studying.

A circle of support for Kevin. *I’ll help Kevin with spelling because I need to improve spelling also.*

We did not see circles of support used often, though several schools were considering their use. In one class, however, the teacher one year used two circles, one with a student with academic challenges and the other with a student with behavioral challenges. However, the response students provided underscored their potential for incorporating into the repertoire of schools. His teacher decided to ask Kevin if he wanted a circle of support.



Kevin and two friends read together. Kevin often listens to his friends read more difficult books than he can read.

I talked with Kevin about getting some kids together who might help him. He didn't say much but was interested. I asked him who he would like to be in his circle and, at his request, asked these students if they would like to participate. They were all interested and willing. I explained to them, however, that we would meet once a week during recess time and that this is a real responsibility. I wanted them to be clear the commitment they were making. All wanted to do it.

During the first meeting, I asked Kevin the areas in which he would like help. He listed them all. Then students volunteered to provide help. What was neat was that the students picked areas in which they also needed to learn more. This was their idea. One student said she needed to work on spelling, so she would help Kevin on spelling. Another said she needed to improve on reading, so she would work with Kevin on reading. Each did this.

Sharing feelings, making choices: *Hooray for a job well done!*

Larry, a third grade teacher, regularly and naturally connected social and emotional support with academic learning as illustrated in the following example.

When I came in, the kids were sitting at desks (arranged in 3 "tables") doing writing projects. Students were working on two projects: a "school feelings" paper or "plant logs."

Students are completing a school feelings paper, "I feel good in Mr. Wheeler's class when ____." Kids told me that these papers would be checked by the teacher and if she put a blue sticker, it would go in their portfolios. The parents will be looking at them at student led parent conferences.

Plant logs alternate pages for writing with pages for drawings. Some of the drawings are copied from the board. Content deals with progress of their own lima beans, planted in cups and growing on their desks, and also with what they are learning about plants. Kids show me how their beans are doing. One boy shows me that his is molding. They point out one girl's plant at another table that has grown far more than the others. One girl shows me the root system of her bean in great detail.

After a few minutes, Larry tells the kids that in five minutes he will ask them to gather in their conversation area so that he can give some compliments and talk about some things with them. He also says that later on he'll be reading with some of the children and offers a choice of reading alone or in pairs. Kids unanimously opt for reading in pairs. They then return to work for five more minutes, and then gather in the conversation area.

He commends a few students for very specific accomplishments and has the class give each a "hip hip hurray." He then has a short discussion about what it means to be doing "personal best" and what the kids' goals are for the day.

Kids raise several issues. She accepts them all, but is looking for comments that have to do with the content of their writing. One girl talks about not writing "fall asleep sentences." This is apparently a class phrase. Larry also is asking the kids to go beyond "right there" answers to questions, or to ask their own questions that are not "right there." He has developed classroom terminology for many of the key values and processes in his classroom. Kids seem to enjoy this language very much. Larry invites students to say one thing from their feelings papers and most volunteer.

The kids gather around Donald: *He is member of the classroom community.*

One teacher we observed had a dynamic personality and engaged students in lessons of discovery. As she posed questions, hands shot up eagerly. She had a student with a severe multiple disabilities in her class for three years. She looped up with the total group one year and the parents wanted Donald to spend another year with her. On the one hand, Donald is very accepted in the class. Students help him constantly. On the other hand, it is not clear how much Donald is truly accepted by his classmates as an equal peer and friend.



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As the students read from their social studies book and engage in discussion, a cluster of two boys and one girl stand or sit all around Donald. One held the book for him and points to the passage. Every now and then, the teacher directs the conversation to him, his eyes glisten, and he smiles. Later, she directs the students to get into groups of 2 or 3 and read with one another talking answering questions. Two children wheel Donald to a table in the corner of the class under which his wheelchair can fit, and the three of them work together.

Students as resources for one another: *Using the expertise of the class and reinforcing a sense of competence and value.*

The most effective teachers we saw, which included some teachers in every school in the study, systematically involved students in collaborative learning, pairing, working in small groups, taking jobs and learning the routines of the class, and helping one another in work. We saw one teacher have students teach an entire lesson to a small group of peers. In other cases, teachers asked students to help others after their work was finished. Teachers helped develop expertise in students that could be shared. As students developed skills in certain areas, a teacher would refer other students for assistance. In this way, teachers expanded their instructional resources, deepened the understanding of the helping student, and enhanced self-esteem and a sense of efficacy and competence. Teachers further provided guidelines to help students understand the difference between helping and doing the work for another person. In this fashion, we observed several classes where there were many people to ask for help, not one teacher who cannot be everywhere at once. Students could be experts can be on any subject -- spelling, adding or dividing, proving theorems, placing capital letters or quotation marks, making a cursive 'm', or being knowledgeable about the science topic being studied. For example, in Julie's second grade class we made the following notes:



“Kids are working individually on various assignments, with some chitchat between pairs of kids. One student asks teacher meaning of “chief-of-state”. Teacher responds: “Who already asked me about chief-of-state this morning? [Remembers] “Go talk to him, he’s a good resource.” Other students then go to the same boy for help. After he helps them, he turns to his seatmates to get their assistance on something he’s working on.”

Julie is very good at having students see each other as resources. On another occasion, we observed her using a technique she called, “one, two, then me”, which required students to ask two peers for help before bringing a question or problem to her. This technique used in the above snapshot is particularly good for making sure that students who are seen as less successful also serve as resources to their peers. A student who has asked for help then becomes a resource when other students need help. In addition to creating mutuality, the knowledge that students will become resources appear to lead students to pay more attention when getting help from the teacher and to make sure that they really understand before moving on.

Sometimes teachers formalized ways that learners help each other -- for example, pairing students on an ongoing basis as Study Buddies, students who work together on an ongoing basis in the class and on projects.

All are in the advanced group. *Self-recognition of strengths.*

In Larry's third grade class we saw this strategy carried in a slightly different direction, helping students to identify and publicly declare at least one strength that each possessed.

On walls around room are large (legal size) self portraits with descriptors added giving something special: "Marianne is an expert at drawing upside down, Rudy is an expert at being a soccer goalie, Albert is an expert at holding his breath underwater for close to a minute, Christine is an expert at swimming under water, Kenji is an expert at drawing cheetahs, Asa is an expert at using colored pencils, Candy is an expert at drawing and coloring, Joshua is an expert at back handsprings, etc." Quality of drawing is extremely high - shows care and confidence.

Class projects: *Teaching responsibility and providing ownership.*

In effective classes, we saw teachers providing valued jobs for every student in the class, a job for which they are responsible without constant reminders. In one classroom, all 25 students had a job upon which someone else depended-- watering the plants, straightening books, passing out materials, helping on computers. This helps students see the interdependence people have on



each other. As students have choices, leadership roles often evolve naturally out of their work. Some students act as peer mediators, as members of circles of support, at leading and facilitating our classroom discussions. Students may make suggestions to the teacher regarding learning activities and ways to help students who are having difficulty learning particular lessons.

A fifth grade teacher has set up three committees to help with classroom activities this year: birthday, PR, and community service. Birthday

is in charge of celebrating each student's birthday (birthday sucker on desk, card, decorated locker) and the birthdays of key school staff (specials teachers, principal, etc.) The PR committee writes articles for the school paper, will handle a big picnic at the end of the year for their first grade buddies, does publicity for class activities, etc. The community service committee plans and coordinates service projects, four this year (planned so far): fundraising for a family that lost everything in a house fire, something that benefits the class itself, a relationship with a senior center or nursing home, and assisting one of the student's grandfather who serves food to homeless people around the Detroit bus station on Saturdays.

He is setting up a number of habitats in the classroom -- an ant farm, an aquarium, a terrarium, mealy worms, and he's looking for a mammal and has offers pending of a

gerbil and a hamster. Each habitat will have a student committee that is fully responsible and must handle care over school breaks, including summer vacation.

Interestingly, in our conversations with this teacher, he never made any reference to the enormous community-building value of his committee structure. The committee structures, with their visible and important spheres of responsibility, are a clear mechanism for community building that could easily be emulated in other classrooms. In the teacher's view, however, they were simply ways of making his own life easier.

Many other teachers similarly provided students ongoing job responsibilities that were real and authentic. Larry, the third grade teacher, had a . . .

job chart on wall - cutouts of hands with names paired with jobs: table clearer, librarian, center baskets, recycler/sharpener cleaner, marker board, locker policeman, plant waterer, computer duster, cubbies, Teddies, desk checker.

Sandra, a multi-age, grade 1-2 teacher, had students select one or more jobs in the class that they held all year. Melanie, a fourth grade teacher, has followed her lead. She constantly is growing the list of jobs as needs come up. "Do you need another job?" she said to Raymond, a student in class, as she decided that someone could use help in cleaning her desk off each day. These teachers talk about the responsibility that students feel and the degree to which students can actually run much of the class.

Students in a community organizing work:

A poetry reading organized by students.

The most effective teachers we observed built a community where children at very young ages new routines, had jobs, took responsibility for the class. All this was predicated on ongoing instruction, guidance, support, problem solving from teachers, frequent problem solving and dealing with conflicts and issues. Yet, we were amazed at the degree of responsibility and leadership that children were allowed and took. In this example, this leadership played out in a very interesting way.



In a fourth grade class, the teacher was called to the door of her classroom by another teacher who needed to talk with her. Students were completing an activity and in transition. She told them to move to the next activity. However, it soon became clear that they did not know exactly what to do. They stood around for a minute, and then decided that they would create their own poetry reading circle. "I get to read first," said Stacey. "No, John should go first said another student". Within a few moments, some 15 students were seated in a circle. One student was in the middle of the circle, reading aloud. They had organized their own poetry reading group, following the model set earlier in the week by the teacher. I watched as one student after another read, each very different poetry, each at different levels of ability. I was particularly interested as Alex, a student with first grade reading level, read a very simple picture book. The other students

listened intently showing him respect and interest. (Other students formed smaller groups and also engaged in literacy-related activities.)

This occurred in a school with some 56% free and reduced lunch with a group of students often considered problematic by other teachers in the building, a school that most who work in urban schools would recognize. This event demonstrated how building community and encouraging leadership pays off for students and teachers in the daily life of the class.

Community Projects: *Bringing students together to be a part of their community's life.*

Teachers and entire schools frequently involved students in community projects. Following are three examples from our notes:

- Yesterday, the kids met at one girl's house after school to build a float for the homecoming parade. All attended except two girls who had scouts and one boy who had football practice. Very successful. Will be in parade tonight – only elementary school class to ever do a float. Will then have their own homecoming party for the class (after the parade). Expect full participation.
- Earlier this year, kids did a walk for Juvenile Diabetes. Class raised \$2,500.
- There is a recess walking program set up by a local hospital. Kids record number of circuits on walking course and get various prizes, such as tags to wear on shoelaces (some much bigger). 2 kids in class are dedicated walkers and walk every minute of every recess. One girl has 90 miles. Other kids do it less religiously. Very successful program – for health and to make recess more fun.

Clearly, some teachers in each school were leaders in developing such community projects and engaging their students. The most effective teachers we saw, however, were constantly looking for possible projects in which to involve their students in concrete, meaningful learning and service activities.

Including parents in the learning community: *Family Fridays.*

The connection between home and school and its relationship to building community within the school is too often not well addressed. All schools were constantly aware of shortcomings in this arena, reaching out in a variety of ways. However, individual teachers found numerous ways to make parents part of the learning community. We saw examples that included:

- An open door to parents to come observe and participate in class activities.
- Involvement of parents in hands-on centers, reading to children, and other class activities.
- Use of authentic, enjoyable homework projects that could be done collaboratively between children and parents.

One of the most interesting examples we saw was one teacher's use of what he called "Family Fridays." In Evergreen Elementary School, a fifth grade teacher invited families to the classroom to eat lunch with the students each Friday. Families bring in food to eat with their

children. There is a host and hostess who makes sure placemats are out and napkins are on the table.

Colleen, the cooperating special education teacher, talk with families about what is going on in their lives rather than school issues during this time. Earlier she had explained that some students never have meals with their families, and this gives them the opportunity to have a family meal. Steve explained that this is a way to get parents involved during the school day in a non-threatening way.

Four students have families are here today. Both Steve [general education teacher] and Colleen [co-teaching special education teacher] are sitting at tables with students and families. Steve is sitting at the table with a student whose mom didn't come today. Students made placemats for everyone to use.

The atmosphere of room is really friendly. Families are interacting with all the children at the table. Students really seem to enjoy their company, and the families seem to really like being here. Students who do not have family here seem to enjoy the company of their peers – maybe their own classroom family?

Steve initiated this practice in his classroom and then it was picked up in at least four other teachers. On one visit, students actually cooked (using crockpots) for the occasion. On other occasions, people ate food they brought in or food bought in the cafeteria and brought back to the classroom.



Games that build community. *Cooperating rather than competing.*

We observed effective teachers using a wide range of games to help build community. These games teach children to work together to win the game. They do not pit students against each other in competitions. Children learn that someone else does not have to do poorly for them to do well, and they also teach conflict resolution. Community-building games show children how everyone is alike, bringing out similarities between children who might not have seen themselves as having anything in common. Oftentimes such games were linked to academic learning.

In the photograph at the right, we see the teacher and children playing a *balancing game*, the goal of which is making the whole classroom community able to walk with paper on their heads.

In another teacher's class, we observed a *seal race*, a game played by Inuit children, linked to the study of frozen worlds in which the class was engaged. In this game, children race on their stomach and hands, imitating the movements of a seal. As we observed the children clapped for the contestants.

In yet another case, we saw children play *cooperative musical chairs* where the goal was to see how many children could be on one chair at one time.

We were struck in these classes that movement and physical activity was an ebb and flow part of the day. Students engaged in games, movement around the class to work on projects, working in any location in the class – floor, under desks and tables, in the hall. This allowed children who had greater difficulty sitting still at a traditional desk to move without problem in the class, giving more of a sense of home and comfort rather than being in a sterile bureaucratic environment.

Cooperative learning. *Group learning that builds relationships and balances gifts and needs.*

All effective teachers we observed used a mix of individual, paired, small group, and whole group learning activities. However, these teachers used cooperative learning and small groups projects more extensively than we have seen in classrooms elsewhere. Such projects required students to work together in groups where each had a different role requiring different levels of expertise. In a science experiment, one student got the materials, another set up the experiment, one read the directions, one recorded the results, one shared with the class, and one drew a picture of what happened. Students were learning to depend on others for help and that different people bring different strengths to a partnership.

Cross Grade Level Interactions. *Older and younger children learning and bonding together.*

We observed many strategies used by teachers to link students within their classes as well as link older and young students. In multi-age classes, this worked quite naturally. However, in both multi-age and traditional classes, teachers developed strategies for linking younger and older students. In one school, once a week, fifth graders were paired with first grade partners to read. A small group of older reading buddies would come to several first and second grade classrooms. We also saw older and younger classes do research or art projects together, take field trips that share common interests, write a story together, and share completed work with each other. Students with special needs, however, in these situations were not only in a receiving role. The older students with special needs also served as tutors or reading buddies for younger students. A sixth grade student struggling to read sixth grade material fluently read a story to a first grade student.

Pairing students for interactions: *Clock partners.*

Teachers used a range of strategies to help students work together. However, they needed strategies that would help avoid the formation of cliques where only some students worked together. One effective strategy we observed was the use of clock partners. Students were given a drawing of a large clock with a line in the middle of the face, and lines at each hour. Students asked each other to sign on each hour line but could not have the same student twice. If one student asked another to sign, the student could not say no. In an activity, teachers would ask students to get their clocks and get with, for example, their 5:00 partner to do work together. This allowed teachers to easily mix students and provided an efficient mechanism for re-pairing students in different ways.



Sharing work. *Learning from one another, learning about one another.*

Effective teachers provided many opportunities by which students shared completed work. This helped give students a sense of appreciation for others and a sense of pride in their own accomplishments, building self-esteem and community at the same time. For example, as students completed writing, they would share with one another. Several teachers used ‘authors chairs’ for this purpose where the reader would sit in the middle of the reading circle at the front of the class. One innovative teacher had taken a yellow toilet, planted flowers in the top: this became her author’s chair. Students might also have a book signing to which adults are invited, or share stories with other classes, either older or younger. Children shared project work at the end of a unit through celebrations in which they prepared activities, set up projects, skits, and written work to show what they have learned. Some classes invited other classes or parents to participate.



Understanding and Appreciating Difference. *Highlighting rather than hiding or ignoring difference as a tool for learning.*

We were particularly interested in the ongoing and overt way that some particularly effective teachers in schools with high degrees of racial and socio-economic, as well as ability-related, diversity had ongoing ways of pointing out and appreciating diverse student characteristics. Teachers explicitly helped students acquire language for talking about differences and about how each child

brought strengths to the learning community. One teacher we observed used multiple intelligences to help students understand each other's strengths.

Thematic units.

Teachers used thematic units of study as one way to explore differences. One teacher did an extended study project, for example, on 'Coming to America.' Students read many books, did research on how different groups came to America, interviewed family members, and collaboratively wrote the story of their family, which was then read by parents who attended the class.

PRO-ACTIVE RESPONSES TO SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES

Of central concern to our research was the way in which schools and teachers responded to the social and emotional challenges and difficulties of their students. Consistent with the national literature, this was the greatest challenge to inclusive education in all of the schools.

We saw some troubling and problematic practices. In another school where community building was well developed, staff failed to draw together as a community to support a few troubled children, choosing to abandon previous practices of including these students and instead referring them to the local program (in another school) for students with emotional disturbance. These situations, contradicting as they did many of the values held by staff in the school, were unsettling. In other situations, we observed students who were socially isolated, where teachers and other staff did not pay adequate attention to building a community around children. In the worst situations in comparison schools, we saw tremendous anger by teachers against children with difficulties.

Yet, we also saw some schools and teachers struggling hard to keep children with emotional challenges in their school. We observed individual teachers building community and struggling with challenging situations. Out of both examples on the negative and positive sides, we were able to develop, in interaction with school staffs, some guiding principles for pro-active responses to behavioral challenges depicted in the chart below. We explore how some of these principles played out in examples and observations below.

STUDENT STORIES

Positive And Negative Outcomes And Lessons To Be Learned.

In the course of the project, several students came to our attention who had challenging social and emotional situations. We felt these students particularly exemplified both positive and negative practices, and the complexity in responding effectively. Two students were not considered problems by school staff. However, they were so socially isolated that the parents of these children withdrew them from schools seeking to be inclusive and placed them in segregated schools for students with disabilities. Four students had highly challenging acting-out behaviors, clearly rooted in problematic home lives. In three situations, teachers and schools struggled successfully to include and support these children. In two situations schools did not, in fact we felt that much of the entire staff of one school turned on these two students. That this was

a school that exemplified the most effective community building we saw was particularly troubling. In Table VI.4-3 we summarize the stories of these students, going on to discuss these stories, exploring their meaning for inclusive education. Our conclusions regarding effective practices and principles for dealing with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges are summarized in Table VI.4-4.

Table VI.4-3: Student Stories

Student Disability and Description	Responses	Outcome
Cheryl (Down syndrome, SXI label).	<p>In 2nd grade supported by one on one aide. Parallel curriculum.</p> <p>School emphasized rules and parallel curriculum in regular classroom. Minimal emphasis on community building in the classroom.</p>	<p>Some interactions with other children as paraprofessional drew kids into her activities. However, at the end of grade parent withdrew her because of lack of social relationships.</p>
Kelly (cerebral palsy, SXI label).	<p>3rd and 4th grade in regular class. However, much pull-out for speech and technology needs. Paraprofessional one on one support.</p> <p>School emphasized rules and parallel curriculum in regular classroom. Minimal emphasis on community building in the classroom.</p>	<p>Parents pulled her out at the end of fourth grade to go to a separate special education school because she was not developing friendships.</p>
Kevin (mental retardation, TMI label)	<p>In regular classes beginning in kindergarten through fifth grade.</p> <p>High commitment on part of all teachers and principal to including child. Emphasis on community building via Glasser Quality school across grade levels.</p>	<p>Some friendships developed. Cognitive functioning assessment increased from trainable to educable level of mental retardation. Gradually developed low-level literacy skills. Enjoyed writing. Accepted as a full member of the class.</p>
Nathan (Down syndrome, SMI label)	<p>In regular class in first through third grade. One on one paraprofessional assigned to him. He was seated in a desk separate from the rest of the class and involved in a parallel curriculum.</p> <p>School emphasized rules and parallel curriculum in regular classroom. Minimal emphasis on community building in the classroom.</p>	<p>Isolated from other students. Social skills did not improve. Parents were concerned with his isolation and principal and teachers concurred with his placement in a segregated special education school for grade four.</p>

<p>Ned (autism, AI label)</p>	<p>In regular class with one on one paraprofessional support in 1st grade.</p> <p>School and teacher emphasized community building and multi-level teaching. Teacher worked to pull paraprofessional into working with the class overall and building supports for and relationships with Ned. At risk coordinator and teacher developed strategies such as social stories to help Ned.</p>	<p>Nathan flourished in this class and was an integral part. Sometimes he was engaged in parallel activities. He proceeded in regular class into the second grade.</p>
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<p>Student Disability and Description</p>	<p>Responses</p>	<p>Outcomes</p>
<p>Jacob (emotional disturbance, EI label)</p>	<p>In regular class in first grade with caring teacher who attempted to respond to him. However, many staff highly stressed over his behaviors, particularly school psychologist and social worker.</p> <p>High commitment on part of all teachers and principal to including child. Emphasis on community building via Glasser Quality school across grade levels. Shifts in the last year to higher degrees of punishment and efforts to refer to a segregated special education program.</p>	<p>Jacob had great trouble in a class with a very caring teacher. She was conflicted over whether to go along with the new principal's plan to send him to a segregated special education class. Given lack of support and real advocacy for him from others and a growing cadre of outspoken teachers who felt he should be sent to another program, this is what occurred.</p>
<p>Jeremy (conduct disorder, EI label)</p>	<p>In the third grade he had a teacher nearing retirement who had drawn a line around his desk that served as an imaginary jail. In this year and the next a new teacher took over who sought to build community, invited Jeremy to her house, looked for ways to build on his strengths, and resisted the efforts of special education staff to place him in a special education class.</p> <p>High commitment on part of all teachers and principal to including child. Emphasis on community building via Glasser Quality school across grade levels.</p>	<p>Jeremy was known as the terror of the school in third grade. However, with the new teacher by the end of the third grade he received the 'best improved' award in the school assembly. His fights decreased from several daily to 1-2 mild arguments per week. His academic performance improved dramatically. At the end of the fourth year, however, he moved to a school where he was immediately placed in a separate special education classroom.</p>
<p>Wesley (emotionally disturbance, EI label).</p>	<p>Paraprofessional support in pull-out situation and re-entry to the class with continued support over time.</p> <p>Rural school highly committed to inclusion of all children. Support from all adults for Wesley. High degree of support from specialists and principal.</p>	<p>For several months, a one on one paraprofessional spent time with Wesley in activities, pulling him into contact as deemed possible in the lunchroom with other children. By the Spring of first grade, he was back in the general education class full-time. Staff seemed unanimously committed to this child.</p>

In these stories, we see two central themes emerging as issues, each with two very different types of responses – one in which social needs were ignored or the student rejected, the other where commitment to having the child as a part of the school community was strong and expressed by intentional, thoughtful, explicit efforts to provide support to deal with social and emotional needs of both children and staff. The first set of responses, linked by the common bond of lack of attention to community, led to segregation, forced or chosen, for all of the children followed in detail in this study. The second set of responses, founded on community and a commitment to including and supporting all children, consistently led to successful outcomes valued by children, parents, and teachers alike. In the chapter on Including All, we discussed children where social isolation was an important issue. Below we describe a small number of examples in which problems centered on behavioral acting out, exploring dynamics.

Table VI.4-4: Responses to students’ social needs			
		Challenging Situation	
		Behavioral acting out – defiance, hitting, cursing.	Social isolation
Approach By School Staff	Social needs and community building are not central concerns	Anger at and rejection of child. Reactive, punitive responses. Little to no support for child and teacher. Staffings focus on removal. Forced segregated placement in special education classroom.	Ignoring social needs of child. Lack of facilitation of interpersonal connections. Structures that enhance isolation – e.g. wheelchair at a separate table in the class. Ultimate parent chosen segregation.
	Social concerns and community building are central to staff perceptions of their roles	Commitment to child as part of the community. Thoughtful, collaborative planning and support. Continuance in the school and the classroom community.	Intentional efforts to build community and connections among students. Attention to social isolation. Continued part of the community with high degrees of parent support and appreciation.

Jacob’s Story
From Chaos to Expulsion

While no teacher or school we observed suggested that chaos, being at a total loss for how to respond to the emotional needs and challenges of children, was a positive strategy, we nevertheless saw this pattern emerging in a number of classes in intensive study schools as well as comparison schools in which we worked. The lower the socio-economic status of children and families in a school, and the higher the percentage of children of color (statistics that were correlated in our school sample), the more likely we were to see teachers feeling that their classes were out of control, that nothing they did made a difference. Such teachers felt teachers at a loss, frustrated and angry, responding reflexively. In one school, only a few teachers embodied such an approach. In several schools, we saw no teacher that matched this pattern. In other comparison schools, all located in the inner city, such a pattern seemed to pervade the entire culture of the school. We describe Jacob’s story and shifting dynamics in one school in some detail as it exemplifies many of the issues.

Jacob was a first grader in a school that had some of the most effective overall uses of community building, child to child sharing and helping, and pro-active responses to behavioral challenge that we saw. However, in the year that Jacob's story played out, a new principal was hired. She quickly moved towards punitive responses with many children in the building, de-emphasized the emphasis on Glasser's Quality School approach that had become an integral part of the school culture. One observer watched in horror as this principal literally dragged a second grader down the hall some 30 feet to the office, feet trailing on the rug, in response to a very mild transgression.

Chaos: Do you know what I should do? *A teacher disconnected from her class, at a loss with a child with significant emotional needs.*

In a few cases, we observed teachers who seemed to have little sense of how to talk to and interact with children in general. When problems occurred with students with significant problems in their lives, this lack of skill created a situation of crisis. Following is one such observation.

Arlene, the art teacher, serves children throughout the school. Children come in for 45-minute periods. We are struck with how bare the room looks – no work of children up, stark, only a few posters of paintings of famous artists.

A new class files in. The kids know they are supposed to come in and sit on the carpet, unless you are wearing a skirt and then you can sit on a chair near the rug. However, Jacob sits in a chair and shortly begins twirling like a ballerina, he wears a red tie dyed t-shirt too big for him. He also has a pencil and now and then rolls out on the floor. The teacher begins her lesson.

“Jacob I know you're tired but you need to sit up.” (He is lying on his back). He doesn't sit up. “We are going to be studying Georgia O'Keefe”, Arlene explains then says, “Steffie, be quiet. . . “Georgia O'Keefe was born in Wisconsin, so what does that make her?” Hands go up. “Chinese,” says one girl. “No” “A man?” says Christopher. “Georgia, not George,” Arlene responds, a slight edge in her voice. “That makes her American.” And she was a woman who was born at that time there were not a lot of famous women artists. She made a lot of flowers. She points to a poster on the board, a box of cards, and some pictures in a book.

We are reminded of the review of the national professional standards for art education in which Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde¹ expressed concern and disappointment in the extensive listing of academic knowledge proposed. Rather than focusing on helping children to engage in art and expression, art educators appeared to need to develop a list of more typical academic content to help justify their role in the school.

Jacob is now sitting on a chair, there is some rearranging of kids on the rug; Billy is still lying down; two others are doing the Macarena. Arlene clearly doesn't have

¹ Zemelman, S., Daniels, H., & Hyde, A. (1998). Best practice: New standards for teaching and learning in America's schools. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

their attention and engagement in this lecture discussion that is reminiscent of a college art appreciation class. “Do these look like flowers?” continues the teacher. “Yes... no...” “Georgia O’Keefe sometimes zoomed in on flowers and just looked at a tiny part of them but made it big, an abstract.”

“I don't see why she gets to sit in a chair,” complains Jacob. “She has a skirt on,” responds Arlene. “Well I have a skirt on,” says Jacob. “You know that if you have a skirt on you may sit in a chair, you don't have to ask. Jacob, go sit on the rug.” “I have a skirt on,” he says, and twirls around in his big t-shirt. “This is boring,” says another student. “Steffie, sit still, keep your hands to yourself. Raymond!!”

Kids are talking to each other. Some have turned 360 degrees and are not even facing Arlene. Norma is sitting there seemingly listening, but maybe she can't hear anything? Arlene is not at this point wearing the microphone but then she puts it on later.

From the floor, it was hard to see the poster that was tacked to the board. The light reflected off so it was hard to see. Arlene had pictures of flowers she had laminated from old calendars. She showed a couple of these and then had the same activities from couple weeks ago. She wanted them to start in the center and work out, making rows of petals. She wanted the stem to be copied with parallel lines so that as the lines went progressively out, eventually the whole page would get covered.

We continue to see the interaction here of unengaging, boring instruction. Even the art activities are highly structured, copying a pattern, allowing or encouraging little creativity.

“Ms. Hack, Mrs. Forest said when I start to get angry, I should go out in the hall.”

“That’s nice Jacob.”

“So your whole sheet will be covered. Now if you don’t like to do it this way, do it your way, but the rules are to cover your paper. Next week we will add color.”

Jacob says, “Mine’s is gonna be the best.”

You will get one sheet of paper. “Any questions?” Natanya will you pass out the pencils?

Kids scatter to tables, taking the opportunity to run around in circles, to scream. To go to the sink. To finger the masks.

Jacob gets two sheets; he asks me, “Are you supposed to have two sheets? One sheet.” Jacob said to me, “Don't talk to me, I’m thinking.”

After only five minutes, the kids were dismissed and sent back to their classes early. They would apply color next time.

Jacob had had not done any work when he left. However, within 60 seconds after having been dismissed, he ran back in with a drawing. "When did you do that, just now in the hall?" Asked Arlene. He nodded. "It's good Jacob." It was nicely done, value-wise. All scribbled, as if he never took his pencil off the page, but a wonderfully executed abstract scribble flower, with the right amount of lights and darks just the way it was.

The teacher asked me, "What would you do with this class? Do you have any advice?"

This situation occurred in a school working hard to develop a sense of community, using Glasser's Quality School model. The school has many children with emotional difficulties and teachers range in their ability and commitment to support such children. This teacher is particularly at a loss, with no particular philosophy to guide her responses. She is known to send classes of children back to their teachers quite frequently, prior to the end of class, because of problematic behaviors.

In this particular instance, we see many disturbing indicators on the part of the teacher. Lecturing in a way that did not engage students while using materials hard to see, reacting rather than pulling in the children, she set up confrontational responses that tended to set children against her. What was particularly interesting was that Jacob, a student with many emotional challenges, actually created excellent artwork at the end of class. Yet, during class, and in subsequent classes, she failed to recognize and draw on Jacob's strong skills as an excellent, communicative artist. A focus on his emotional and behavioral problems, and lack of recognition of strengths on which to build, was to continue and lead ultimately to his expulsion from the school.

Yearning to help. *The price of limited commitment and support systems.*

We followed Jacob to another class and observed a very different teacher who reached out to him. Yet, many forces in this school were arrayed against Jacob; many of the staff were tense and upset, angry with him.

We talk with Harry, Jacob's teacher, who explains that he has a very bad home situation. Both dad and mom were themselves special education students and they are very poor. The mom thinks that he may have inherited some of the dad's manic-depressive tendencies. She told Harry that during the summer, Jacob one night climbed out of the window of their trailer home and went into the woods looking for 'robbers and bad guys'. She says that Jacob sometimes will refuse to go to group activities, saying he wants to color. Sometimes she lets him do this. Sometimes, however, he screams. Harry says that he is very good at math even though his language arts skills are at pre-kindergarten level.

Harry believes that the problem is the change from Ritalin to Aderol and wants to talk with the psychologist about this. He has tried to get in touch with Jacob's psychologist, who has not returned his calls. Jacob was discussed in the child study team last week, and some staff proposed that he be put in a segregated special education classroom for emotionally disturbed children. No decision has yet been

made, however. Harry feels he may need to be in an emotionally impaired special education classroom. She said "the previous principal would never have allowed the program for emotionally impaired students to be considered. She talked about the staff meeting about Jacob in which the principal asked the social worker to see him a couple of times a week but the social worker said that she doesn't have time.

Talking with Harry and watching him work with Jacob, we see a teacher who cares deeply, who tries to help and understand him. This stands in great contrast to Arlene down the hall. Yet, we also sense Harry's quandary about what to do. What is also clear is that the strategies to build a community of support around Jacob have not been well explored. While a staff meeting was conducted, the primary discussion was whether to send him to a segregated class. The social worker essentially refused to provide assistance with the family. Many strategies that could be tried were even discussed: circle of support, peer buddies, identifying and building on strengths such as his art work, reaching out to the family. It is also clear that this caring teacher is being provided no real support from other teachers, the psychologist, social worker, or even the conflict management program in the building.

Later they finished their projects and Harry called the kids to a reading group where he read aloud to the children. Several times, she called Jacob. "Jacob, come join us. We are waiting on you." He eventually comes over standing next to Harry, going back and forth between that location and the sink to wash his hands. He eventually sits at the front.

A couple of kids indicate they are having trouble seeing after awhile, Notai says that "I can't see because of Jacob." Another kid says he can't see. Jacob then gets up and leaves the group. "Where are you going Jacob?" says Harry. "I can't see," he says. "But you have the best seat in the house," says Harry. He tries to get a chair. "No, everyone will want a chair," he says. Jacob moves a chair over. Harry gets up, asks another student to move the chair back, and gently takes him by his shirtsleeve and leads him back to the front of the group. Jacob sits down and attends for quite a while.

While Harry is having difficulties, the difference between his approach and that of the art teacher is dramatic. It is also interesting that the central issue in this scenario, as in the art room, was Jacob's desire to sit in a chair. Is this simply a way to challenge authority, to do something different? Or is there some other message about sitting? The pattern was never recognized, nor did Harry get any help in trying to see and understand such patterns.

The kids then go to computers. Jacob eventually gets on the computer. At first, he does not want to because someone is on the computer that he typically uses. He comes over and sits down. "It lies to me," he says about the computer. Eventually he gets on. "I want to make a 100%," he says. Harry says that he has begun leaving the scores where they can be seen but that Jacob will shut it down and start over if he misses one. He wants to get 100%. Jacob calls me over. He asks for help. It is clearly very important that he get them 'all right'. He asks me to tell him the answers on the

computer worksheet. I tell him that I won't do it. "You are mean." He says and acts like crying. I ask him if he likes to get in trouble. He says, "No. But I can't help it."

Chaos again: Jacob said, "They want to murder me!" *Opportunities lost and strengthening emotional upheaval.*

A week later, an observer is in Harry's room when the students go to the art room. Jacob does not want to go. He says over and over, "I am going to be murdered." Eventually, Harry coaxes him into going with the other students. In a few minutes, the art teacher comes in with the students. She is furious and says, "They were totally out of control." Apparently, Jacob defied her in some way. Harry is polite but clearly upset. Walking by the art room later, we saw that Arlene, the art teacher, was glaring tensely at the kids in the room. She was rigid. It felt as though a wave of anger was pouring out of her.

Frustration and anger. We don't have the resources to meet his needs. *An entire staff turns against one child.*

The previous principal talked often about these children with social and emotional problems. She would virtually not allow such children be labeled emotionally disturbed saying, "You go to their home and tell me that this is their issue and then we can talk". She had pushed hard, working with staff to use the Glasser Quality School model in the school, to focus on needs of children, to help children learn responsibility for another. Many staff had developed amazing approaches to building community in their rooms; others remained angry with children with such difficulties, sometimes trying to get such children removed when the principal was out of the building for several days.

However, given the new principal's apparent agenda to remove such children from the school, teachers were split and conflicted. There were some five other children who were having similar difficulties. In each instance, the principal herself had come up with a behavior plan, most often a picture schedule that ended with a picture of the teacher calling the parent to come pick up the child, and simply gave it to the child. No functional behavior analysis, no team meeting. She also began to hire paraprofessionals to work one on one with some students. What became clear, however, was that these were strategies to comply with pre-referral procedures for the segregated classroom for students labeled as "emotionally disturbed" located in another school.

Some teachers felt relieved that the principal was trying to remove these children. Others were concerned with the punitiveness and the lack of collaborative planning for behavior intervention plans, as well as the steps that were simply set-ups for removing the child. As part of the research project, we offered to meet with staff to explore other ways to work in a more positive way with these children. In such a meeting with a small number of staff, the principal resisted all efforts to work to keep these children in her school, becoming defensive at the suggestion that they were not doing all that could be done.

We were most surprised, however, when one teacher-leader in the building, whose class was a model of community building and positive strategies for dealing with social difficulties, joined other teachers and the principal in supporting Jacob's placement in a segregated class:

Sandra went on to talk about her own misgivings and frustrations around three kids who are especially challenging this year. She said that she feels that the school does not have the knowledge or supports to meet their needs and that teachers are too overloaded and frustrated to take on the immense amount of work that would be necessary. She said that part of her feels that she should take Arthur into her class, but then she isn't really sure that she could manage him either.

Within a couple of months, all three of these children were placed in a segregated program. The parents did not want this. But being poor, and having low educational skills and no political connections, they acquiesced. One of these children had been dragged down the hall by the principal and jostled roughly in the office, the latter having been observed with great concern by the parent. His teacher indicated that the parent agreed that her son should be placed in the special education classroom to escape a principal she felt to be abusive to her child, but we found no evidence for this, and previous parent statements suggested otherwise.

Jacob's story, and the story of the shifts in this school, was troubling. Clearly, this school promotes social and emotional skills better than most we studied. Yet, no teacher stood up on behalf of these children against the punitive, sometimes abusive, way they were treated. The art teacher and two or three other teachers were simply allowed to continue practices that made problems worse. While community building provides a context for more positive outcomes for troubled children and helps prevent some difficulties, clearly it cannot be assumed that pro-active reaching out, circling a child in trouble with support will occur even in generally supportive classrooms or schools. A commitment to such children as part of the learning community is an additional strand of community building that must be explicitly addressed.

Wesley's Story

Commitment, Community, and Staff Control

Wesley's is a different story. The child was much like Jacob, a very troubled, defiant, challenging kindergartner. He was introduced to us by the principal, a caring, committed woman, who showed us a videotape of Wesley cursing defiantly and angry, telling the teacher he would kill her as he was put in a time-out room. Yet, the reaction of the entire staff of this school was extremely different, as was the level of intentional support and assistance put in place to assist both Wesley and the teachers involved.

How could we not try? *A staff commit to a very challenging child.*

One day we talked with the principal about this child. Her response was telling.

Bobbie talked about Wesley, a student who has been having very serious problems with behavior. She said that she made a videotape and showed it to the child's physician who said "either you are crazy or a saint for keeping this kid." However, she and the specialists decided that they had to try. They like Wesley and every now and then 'see a child in there'. "How could we not try to keep him," says Bobbie reflecting on the fact that the likelihood of his going to prison increases if he is segregated.

Over the next year, Wesley came up in discussions with teachers and other staff throughout the building. Teachers and the total staff felt they did not know what to do. The principal discussed the need to have a psychiatric evaluation to determine the 'correct diagnosis' that she believed would give them guidance in how to respond. Staff talked about Wesley much. What was striking, however, is that no time with no staff were sentiments expressed suggesting that Wesley should be sent to a segregated school. The commitment and strong desire to have Wesley at their school seemed genuine and unanimous.

They sought to develop a behavior plan for Wesley that was not particularly successful in dealing with challenging behaviors. They assigned a paraprofessional to be with him one on one. Wesley communicated that he did not want to be with other children, a behavior that the team did not understand. The teacher had Wesley sit in kindergarten at the end of a table where he could be more by himself. Observers saw Wesley eating alone in the cafeteria. However, when talking to a researcher, he looked around the room and said, "All these people are my friends." The observer talked with Wesley each time that he came, and Wesley would alternately hug and hit him.

He burned down the house. *Trauma that makes emotional stability worse.*

One day an event occurred that made matters much worse. Wesley was taken home by a driver although he was supposed to have been taken to a relative's house on this particular day. Instead, the driver left him at home where no adults were present. Wesley tried to cook himself some lunch and ended up burning his house down. As we observed Wesley in school, anxiety and fear seemed to pervade his being. His eyes looked wild and he mumbled almost incoherently.

Soon after, Wesley and family were 'evaluated' by a psychiatric team at the University of Michigan. The school principal and staff put much effort into communicating with this team. The psychiatrist recommended termination of parental rights saying that the mother simply cannot handle being a parent. Wesley and his mother are in a subsidized apartment. However, the mom did not have enough money to get their furniture out of storage so there are only two beds.

Crying she said, "We may lose him!" *A child thought of as one of a family.*

Talking with Bobbie, the principal, at lunch, she was very concerned about what would happen with Wesley if he were taken away from his parents. "If they cannot find a family in this town, he'll likely go to another county and immediately be put in a segregated program for EI kids," she said with tears streaming down her cheeks. "I am afraid we are going to lose him."

Paraprofessional supports. *One on one assistance to provide stability.*

After this, Wesley and the paraprofessional spent most of the day in one-on-one activities in a small room, coming out for recess and lunch. She is a warm, easy-going, quiet person who is quite good with Wesley. He liked her. The staff continued to develop a behavior plan that would be effective.

They continue to be concerned that 'he only wants to do what he wants to do' and that this has been even more so since the house fire. They hope that the U of M evaluation will tell them a

diagnosis so that they ‘know what to do’. Noreen said several times that ‘we are not trained’ to deal with Wesley.

Re-entering the classroom. *Gradual, successful progress.*

This routine continued for a while as they looked for ways to supportively reintegrate Wesley back into the classroom. A few weeks later . . .

Noreen, the kindergarten teacher tells us that Wesley is mostly with a paraprofessional now but comes in the classroom in the morning to put his name down for lunch each the day. The students are concerned for him, asking where he is. Noreen is very concerned about and cares about him. She says over and over, “I do not want to lose Wesley.” At the same time, she says that she doesn’t know how to help him.

The progress continues. We observed him again after another few weeks.

Bobbie, and later Betty, the special education teacher explained that Wesley is now back in the kindergarten classroom a good bit of the morning. They have him come to the therapy room first to ground himself but everyone has been delighted how well it has been going. A family worker has been following up with the mother to help assure that Wesley gets places and help her in other ways.

Later we find that Wesley is in the general education class most of the time and has made the transition well. The following fall, Wesley was still in school and in the general education class full-time.

What is most telling about Wesley’s story, and the success to date with a very difficult child, was the commitment to keeping Wesley at the school. The strategy they used, having a paraprofessional spend time with Wesley, seemed to give him the support he needed. We suspect that the nurturing and care he felt from the staff, time to gain some inner security, and gradual support for re-entry into the classroom were the keys in positive outcomes to date.

Jeremy’s Story

A Kid Out Of Control Becomes The Best Improved Student

Melanie is a grade 4-5 teacher who has been ‘looping’ with her students in a school that has a mix of ethnic groups, from primarily low-income district. We enter the school and immediately are impressed by the high quality of the student artwork that hangs on the walls of the corridors. Student work literally covers the walls, ceilings, and windows of Melanie’s classroom. We interviewed Melanie on several occasions regarding one particularly challenging student named Jeremy. As we shall see, Melanie started with an absolute commitment to including him in their classroom community, a commitment that resulted in numerous specific strategies and led to very positive outcomes. It is interesting and instructive to note that this teacher worked in the same school that Jacob, the student we discussed above, attended. This story occurred, however, prior to the change of principals that had such an important effect on the school. We quote extensively from our interviews with this teacher that took place over a year and a half.

I was introduced to Jeremy when I took over his third grade classroom in the middle of the year. I was the third teacher that year, and so the class had been in chaos for months. Out of 23 students who were struggling in this confusing situation, Jeremy was certainly the most notorious one. When I went in to observe the class, I was appalled at how previous teachers had dealt with his situation. There was tape making a box around his desk that was his “space.” He was not allowed to be out of this area at any time during the day. The teacher taught all day using only worksheets. Given that type of treatment, I might have resorted to jumping off tables, yelling, and throwing things as well. He was obviously bored and angry at the situation.

From invisible jail to caring classroom. Building an environment for support.

From the beginning, this teacher empathized with her student. Even in a school using Glasser’s model, however, his “504 Plan” included the use of the invisible jail formed by tape around his desk. Part of Melanie’s strategy for helping Jeremy was a strategy for the entire class:

The first thing I did was to clean out the room and create a warm, child friendly environment. This did not have any immediate benefits, as Jeremy was insubordinate, and was constantly hitting and yelling at students. Initially, the only way to get him to cooperate at all was to give him a choice about where he would rather spend his time, in my class or in the office. When necessary, the principal personally came down to get him. This resulted in fits of crying and screaming.

Why does he act this way? *No place to live and daily problems.*

Despite her initial efforts to establish a caring, interesting classroom, Jeremy’s behavior continued. Note the positive, collaborative support this teacher felt from her principal. Note that her reaction, however, went beyond the management of behavior to thinking deeply about the child.

Confused by what was making him act this way, I began to ask questions. I learned that he lived in a one-bedroom apartment with his mother and grandmother. He used to live in a trailer park, where our poorest children live, with a boyfriend who regularly beat the mother. Her current boyfriend is part of a motorcycle gang, and she does not seem to get along with Jeremy any better than his other teacher did. At the time I took over, the grandmother was trying to get the mother and Jeremy kicked out of the apartment. I was beginning to understand what made him act that way. He was angry, scared and had no stability in his life.

When will he be leaving us? *Angry staff longing for exclusion.*

By herself, intuitively, she begins to conduct an effective functional behavioral analysis and begins to develop some hypotheses about what is happening. Yet, we see the responses of other staff that came to bear on Jacob later.

As it circulated around school that Jeremy might be moving, teachers began to ask me about it on a daily basis. The excited looks on their faces made me feel sad for him. Some of the comments I began to hear were amazing to me, especially from the support staff who were the most adamant about getting Jeremy out of my room. They began to mention to me that Jeremy really deserved to be in an EI room, and that it was too bad that we were doing him this disservice. I was beginning to get angry at this unwanted interference. At a meeting I went to my principal with, she told me that the support staff was pushing to get him removed, and that it made her furious. I soon realized that the support staff had no real idea of what to do to help him, so they wanted him to go away.

Several points are worthy of note here. Once again, the principal was standing for keeping this child in the school, providing support to the teacher. The teacher was herself willing to advocate for the child, standing against his removal, in the face of mounting pressure from both special and general education teachers. Finally, the role of support staff is critical – suggesting that he be removed rather than supported. Below, we begin to see how this teacher began to try different strategies.

In charge!! *Using a problem to give authority and responsibility.*

Jeremy had been causing a lot of problems in the clothes closet. For some reason he loved it and kept playing in it. So, I decided to give Jeremy the job of coat closet monitor. While I was nervous, it really worked, giving him a legitimate reason to be there. He was very proud of his job. My teaching style is much more hands-on than what he was used to, and he often had choices about what to do and who to work with. I moved people who loved to help others to his table, and began to get someone to read with him every day at quiet reading. I let him stay off of computers during the scheduled time, as he hated them and only played anyway, and used this time for him to catch up on his work. I found that he would work hard during this 30 minutes he was alone.

Deficit visions. *Support staff seeking to punish and isolate rather than support in community.*

In these few words are a world of proactive strategies. Melanie's primary focus in supporting Jeremy involved giving him control in any area where he'd been "causing trouble." Once again, however, as she sought to build positive supports for this child, she ran into difficulties with the support staff assigned to her room.

I began to make simple accommodations for Jeremy, handling any issue with him myself, no matter if there were other teachers in the room or not. I started this after he refused to do a KWL about penguins one day because he did not get a red penguin. Rather than simply ask other children if they would trade, the support teacher let him give up on the assignment.

The support teacher and I disagreed on how to handle Jeremy. She constantly said things like, "He needs that one on one attention." While there are times that he needs

extra attention, he is also someone who thrives on community because he does not get it at home. There are many times that he will ask if he can work with a student, and I know that if I do not let him he will not do the assignment. Even if they are not actually working together, he likes to sit with others. I have found that one of the main reasons for this is so they can help him spell. He needs the help of peers to do the work and to feel part of a group. This other teacher was very wrong and I was determined to prove it.

In this study, we found several examples, some dealing with behavioral issues, others with academic instruction, in which the general education teacher took a more holistic, child-centered view and the special education teacher came from a deficit-driven, behavioral perspective. As in this instance, this caused friction. As we see below, however, these more child-centered strategies often worked.

Fun and care. *Keys to improved behavior.*

As the weeks went by, he gradually began to improve. I remember the first day he was in my room all day without getting in trouble. I made a huge deal about how happy I was. It was a large step forward. I think two things were responsible for his change of attitude. One was the way I taught. He began to decide that what we were doing was fun and he did not want to miss it. The second thing he began to realize is that I care about him. I was willing to work around him, and thus he began to be more accommodating.

Here we see this teacher validating a central hypothesis of this study – that engaging instruction where children are supported at their own level of learning combined with building a supportive, caring community facilitates effective inclusion of challenging children. We continue to describe step-by-step positive steps Jeremy made. This child was continuing to have great challenges. It is significant that this teacher was looking for and able to identify and discuss in detail positive steps towards improvement.

Another large step forward occurred when he began to listen to me when I asked him to sit down instead of fighting. When Jeremy gets upset, his first reaction is to fight. He has no qualms about kicking, hitting, or punching. I was excited the day that he came to tell me that a child was bothering him instead of immediately fighting back. I could see that he was beginning to try.

One day he asked me if he could have the daily progress report that I had created for another student. This lists things like “Did you do all your work?” and “Did you follow the teacher’s directions?” for both the morning and the afternoon. If it was good they get a smiley face, and if it was not, then they get a “not yet.” I had not thought of doing one of these for Jeremy because I know he has so little support at home. However, he asked for it. I found that it was a valuable help. It gave the two of us a couple of minutes every day to talk about him and I really found that he began to work harder to have all smiley faces. This was his way of showing me that he wanted to improve. As one of the questions is “Did you help the teacher?” he also began to

find ways to do nice things for me, such as holding the door, putting away materials and other helpful jobs. I loved the fact that we were beginning to connect.

This instance is also revealing. Jeremy asked for a daily report card like some other children. It is notable that there was even a place that Jeremy could have this conversation with this teacher and that he obviously assumed she would listen to him. She continues to describe points of progress.

At first, if he did not want to follow my directions he would run from me. I refused to chase him, but continued to try and implement the same rules for him as everyone else. I had several talks with him to explain that I was not punishing him and that I wanted to help him, wanted him to stay in and finish his work so that he would not get bad grades, and wanted him to wait his turn so he would be fair with the other children. He is changing gradually. He still gets angry and says he will run off if I ask him to stay in line or wait on someone to get back from the rest room, however now he actually waits. He is quick and sloppy with his work at recess, but he will stay in and do it. He also is working harder. Every day I see more progress with him.

Emotional safety leads to academic progress. *Looking for ways to support learning at his own level, in his own time, yet with high expectations.*

Bit by bit, as we conducted interviews with this teacher, she described how Jeremy began to do better academically, as she described it, “get caught up” on his work. For a while she let him do work on the computers at the end of the day while other students were playing a game. This allowed him to get individual computer time, which he now liked, and extra study time as well.

Last week amazingly he had worked so hard that there was nothing for him to do at computer time. He asked me if he could go on computers when the other children did. I was shocked and thrilled. This has continued without issue for a straight week.

We asked Melanie some of the strategies she used with Jeremy to help him move ahead academically. She described strategies that built on his strengths while connecting to effective instructional practices.

How did I get Jeremy all caught up? Instead of him reading the daily letter out loud at group time, he read it with another student to me as the class was getting off of computers. In spelling, I allowed him to pick five words from the list the rest of the class was using. For several weeks, he would not do it until later on his own. This week he took the test with the rest of the class. This is yet another large step.

When he does not understand something or feels like he does not do it well, he refuses to do the work. I am thrilled that he is beginning to continue to try.

Writing is still a slow process for him, as he is very worried about perfect spelling. However, he has made great strides in his effort. He now writes to me daily

in his journal, and while it is only one or two sentences, it is progress that he is writing at all. I do not expect the same amount of written work from Jeremy as I do from everyone else, but my expectations continue to grow as he tries more and more.

This teacher looked for genuine ways to show Jeremy how proud she was of him for his progress, looking for celebrations.

In math, science, and social studies he is holding his own without any changes made specifically for him. His report card boasted A's, B's and one C in reading. I will never forget his face the day that he asked to see his grades in the grade book. He stared at it and said with shock on his face, "Those are A's...and B's!!" This is a child who had gotten mostly C's and D's all of his school career.

Building a community of help. *Teaching about feelings, interactions, and helping through doing.*

Showing the ongoing interaction of academics and social-emotional functioning, this teacher shares some of her learning regarding having children help one another in solving problems. Her comments provide a concrete example that illustrates how teachers may build peer support in a way that benefits all children socially and cognitively.

Today was yet another example of a simple way that I am learning to accommodate for Jeremy. The children were to work in groups. Several minutes in, Sharee came up very frustrated and told me "Jeremy will not do anything. He is not working." At this point, I could have gone over and talked to Jeremy. However, instead I pulled Sharee out of earshot of other children and had a quick talk with her. I told her that when Jeremy refuses to do something, usually it is because he does not know how to do it. I asked her to try explaining it to him, and then if he still would not do the work then to just work with Michael, the other table member. I know how much Sharee loves to help other children, and so I knew she would be willing to try and work with him. It is why she is such a good table partner for him. Several minutes later, I checked on their group and they were working away.

I think some wonderful things were learned here that have nothing to do with math. Sharee learned that there is usually a reason that people are being difficult. I think she is on her way to learning how to figure this out and help on her own. Jeremy learned that he does not always need help from the teacher, as I do not have the time to give him the detailed help anyway. Without the sense on community and working together that is so important, the only thing they would have learned was how to add two digit numbers, and that would be a waste.

You have to fail him so he can be removed. *They will take me first. Teacher advocacy for children.*

Despite these areas of progress, this teacher continued to receive pressure from other professionals, particularly special education staff. She explained it this way:

While these wonderful things were beginning to happen in my room, there were other people who still thought he belonged somewhere else. A support staff member continued to ask me if he was doing any real work in my room and had the nerve to tell me that if he was not, I had to fail him so that I would be able to remove him. After hearing the uncaring comments and seeing how improved he was, I was ready to go to battle for him. As I told my principal, “He is not coming out of MY room to go to an EI room. They will have to take me first.” I have very strong beliefs about how “special” children should be treated in a regular classroom, especially that they have the right to be there and learn with everyone else. I was also beginning to take a very personal interest in Jeremy.

Throughout this study, as we encountered teachers and principals this committed to children, we asked the source of their commitment. Few knew the answer. However, it is this commitment that is the beginning of truly struggling to help children with trouble lives. As we see below, her commitment carried over after school as she reached out to Jeremy asking him to her house for fun activities.

Inviting him home to play. *Reaching out beyond the school day.*

I began to plan to spend time with Jeremy after school. By this time, I had learned that I would have my same class the following year for fourth grade. After talking to two other teachers who spent time with one special child, I decided that I would do this too. I brought him to my house for dinner, games, swimming, and whatever. This started on Monday April 13, when I took him to watch my husband’s softball game. He came to our house for a pizza dinner, ran around in the back yard, and wore out my mom’s dog, and then we went to a game. It was a lot of fun. It did my heart good to see him playing and laughing with the dog in the back yard. I think it will do wonders for my relationship with Jeremy and what he does in the classroom.

It is also interesting that his mother has started coming by the school. She has been there four times in the last two weeks, even bringing Jeremy to the science fair. From what I have gathered, this is unheard of. This started after I had his parent conference when I brought him home. I think she sees that I am doing things differently and is trying to check me out. I hope she comes by more, as this is good for Jeremy to see his mom showing that she cares.

The most improved award. *Recognizing hard work and progress.*

I was proud to be able to give Jeremy the “Most Improved” award at the Honors Assembly this card marking. He has really changed a lot. He said his goal is to get on the Honor Roll this last time.

Strategies That Worked
*Effective Principles and Practices for Social’
And Behavioral Challenges*

A thorough analysis of these stories, combined with those in the chapter on “including all” presents clear picture about helpful and hurtful practices in responding to the social and emotional needs of children, particularly troubled children with many stressors in their lives. For many years, school reformers like James P. Comer have been calling for schools to become caring places that help compensate for the devastation in the lives of children. As these stories indicate, it is possible for teachers and schools to do this. It is also frequent, however, that schools at minimum miss this opportunity, at worst actually make problems worse. As illustrated in the chart, we have begun to develop principles that seem to undergird effective practices that we observe, principles that were violated in other situations. Below we provide a description of some additional strategies we observed that exemplify and build on these principles.

The classroom community was so strong!! Kids helping Ned out so he’s a real member in first grade.

In one classroom, we particularly saw how building community and pro-active responses to behavioral challenges work together in a complementary fashion. In this first grade class, Ned, a student with autism, had difficulty coping with noise as his class readied for the presentation of their play. He screamed with a loud voice and a classmate simply helped him refocus. No one was distracted as they knew their friend Ned, and they went on with their activities (see sequence in pictures on the next page). On another day, we made a similar observation:

I see a group of four kids working in hall with Kirby, the speech therapist including Ned, a student with autism, and Brandon, who has brittle diabetes, and Nissa. Kids are working on a tree with leaves that say things to do when I am "calm, quiet, and thoughtful." Ned is partially engaged, making noises, and moving a bit. Brandon is sitting with his arm around Ned. When Ned gets noisy, Brandon briefly puts his hand over Ned's mouth. Kids then work on gluing leaves onto construction paper tree. Kirby tries to help Ned open his glue stick. Ned keeps saying that he can't and making "spaceship" noises

Figure VI.4-1: Guiding Principles for Pro-active Responses to Behavioral Challenges

1. Identify and *meet student needs* and aim to *build a caring relationship* rather than working to control and punish.
2. Constantly seek to build and strengthen reciprocal helping and caring relationships among students in classes and among and with school staff and parents.
3. Seek to *provide information* to help students learn how to respectfully meet their needs and *communicate based on respect* rather than power or control.
4. Use the *classroom community* to assist in developing solutions to problems rather than having discipline is teacher directed.
5. Utilize *professional services* to aide students in gaining information and insight about their own goals, personality, behavior, and needs.
6. *Engage parents* and concerned community members in a partnership in helping a student.
7. Develop a *pro-active method of dealing with behavioral crises* that draws on the school community – both students and other staff.
8. Constantly look for ways to *structure the classroom and school environment* and supports to aid the student rather than just focusing on student problem behaviors.
9. Deal with behavioral challenges in the context of the total *quality of life* of the student rather than just seeing problem behaviors.

Kirby asks Ned if he wants to let Nissa do it. He says yes and hands the glue to Nissan. He settles down quite a bit.

In this last example, it is clear that his peers are comfortable with Ned and his “different” reactions to his environment and the activity around him. It appeared that Brandon was genuinely trying to help, and his actions did seem appreciated, or at least well tolerated, by Brandon. On the other hand, as described in another vignette elsewhere in this report, Kirby continues to appear oblivious to Ned’s needs and to the efforts of his classmates. This was particularly ironic given the content of the lesson she was conducting.



Teaching dialogues.

Most significant was the way in which effective teachers interacted with children, in general, and specifically regarding concerns with social and behavioral issues. In general, teachers talked with respect to students. This did not mean that they were not seen as authority figures or did not use their authority. However, most of their time was spent in helping children understand their behaviors and provide them with information about how they might better react to situations or communicate their needs and emotions.

For example, we observed Jennifer talking with Matthew and Michael regarding their calling one another names. She asked students to discuss their own feelings and then explained how their behavior made her and other members of the class feel. After talking a while they join the whole class and she asked the boys to explain their reactions. Classmates then shared how they felt. The teacher asked them to use “I” statements, such as “I felt mad when you said that to me” but did not allow students to interrupt, yell, or accuse. Following discussion, the class created a plan for what to do the next time.

Dealing with social conflicts: *A classroom community circle.*

Effective teachers frequently drew the class together to sort out an issue that had arisen. These teachers were masters at facilitating a real community discussion. Ineffective teachers in such situations would pull a student, a pair, a group, or the whole class together, announce that the rules had been broken, and announce a consequence. This typically results in anger, whining, defensive reactions that made it clear that students did not accept responsibility for the situation and that their anger was directed at the teacher. Such responses clearly exacerbated rather than improving the situation.

The effective teachers were able to bring the group together and facilitate a discussion where children were problem-solvers. Such teachers asked questions, reflected back what they heard

children saying, helped students put their feelings out to be discussed, and queried how they might solve the problem. Teachers thus modeled problem solving while giving students real experience in complex social skills.

We observed a particularly powerful example one day in a grade 1-2 multi-age class. Two students, Nelly and Celeste had come in from the playground where they were yelling at one another, quite upset.

The kids come back in and Sandra gets them in the class circle on the mat. "We seem to have a problem," she says. What ensues is a twenty-minute discussion where she leads two kids and the whole group through a problem-solving session sharing feelings, listening, reflecting, and asking if they used "I" statements. Ultimately both girls were feeling rejected because the others said they "did not want to be my friend" and would not allow the others to play with them. "What need is not being met?" asks Sandra. They know the Glasser needs. "Belonging," says a little boy. Ultimately they work out solutions to help one another, to apologize with another girl at recess who was trying to help. They decide to come up with some activities that can involve more than two people and go off happily to work on this task together.

Later Sandra pulled the kids over to read a book that just happened to be called, "I Don't Want To Be Your Friend Anymore", a story about two children who were friends but had a huge argument. They talked about the relationship of this book to the situation between the two friends. Students drew connections, self-named, from text to text and from text to world, saying, "It reminds me of" and referring to situations in their own experience. The children in the story were to give each other presents for birthday and the children predicted what the presents might be. At the end, Sandra told them that she wanted a group to go to the computers and the others to get a book and read. "If you read something that reminds you of belonging then write it on these sticky notes" she said as she put about eight yellow stickies next to 'my big book'. After about 10-15 minutes, she asked the kids to get ready for lunch.

Sandra explains to me the family situations of both children, both of whom are living with other relatives given problems with their own parents. In one case, the child had been staying with an aunt who has been now admitted to a psychiatric hospital and is now staying with yet another relative. One child is Sandra's godchild, with whom she spends a lot of time.

Here we viewed a complicated situation where a teacher involved first and second graders in some complex problem solving applying Glasser's Five Principles to a conflict occurring in their classroom.



A circle of support for Richard. *The potential and failure of support.*

We also observed the use of circles of support with students who were having difficult times socially and emotionally. Circles were used both to provide support to these students and to provide a source of help and guide to aid in preventing difficulties, but also to have a group of supportive peers available when difficulties did arise.

In the first case, the researcher was directly involved in helping to establish a circle, trying to provide support for a child, and the teacher as well. As we shall see, the establishment of this circle illustrated enormous potential. However, the lack of follow-up by the teacher, her lack of understanding and comfort with dealing with social and emotional issues, caused the circle to fall apart and for this child, like Jacob whom we discussed above, finally to be sent to a segregated program for students with emotional disturbance. This story, then, demonstrated the potential of community to deal with complex emotional needs and the effect of the failure of community.

The teacher explained that Richard is a real problem in class. He gets out of his seat, sometimes loses control, swears. She said that the work is too difficult for him. Earlier in the year, she would hold his hand sometimes and this seemed to help. He needs some recognition to help settle him down. I asked if she had had the kids involved with helping him. One girl had taken this on herself but Richard had 'turned on her' and requested that she not sit with him at the table. So she moved this girl away and two other girls are sitting at the table with Richard.

The special education teacher described Richard's 'behavior plan'. The principal told the teachers to make pictures showing Richard what he is to do. The teacher puts a stick in a cup each time he is out of his seat. Three sticks and a picture shows her calling his mother. The principal directed the teacher to take the pictures, set up the



poster, and inform the teacher she is to use it.

Richard has also had a paraprofessional assigned to him, a male whose name is Louis. He and Richard have bonded together. On this day, however, at the end of the spelling test, Louis talks to the class and announces that "this 'is my last day. I am just not making enough money. " "This is very hard for both of us," says Elaine. " Well," he pauses, almost crying, "I moved my family here . . . I've enjoyed all the friends I have made here. I love all of you guys. Think of me as a role model. I have to get a job with better pay for my family. I wish the best for you guys and I will miss and remember every one of you."

Kids have their hands up. "Can you give me your phone number or email address?" He says he will be in touch. "Nothing against you guys, but my last paycheck was barely enough for us to make it." "Can we have field trips at your house? Will you come and visit us?" "Yes," he says.

Elaine says the kids can talk a bit. After a bit she says, "Every body stand. We're going to go out just about five minutes and then we will come back. We just need a bit of break." As they line up, two girls are holding one another and sobbing as they go out. Another teacher walked by and as she watched the students said, "These kids have had so many people in their lives leave them."

I walked on the playground out into an amazing, incredible sight. Many of the kids in this class were out on the playground, sitting on a bench together, Richard on one end, sobbing and holding one another. I began talking with the teacher wondering if there were some way that she could build on the care and support these kids were showing for one another with Richard. I then began talking about circle of friends as a tool that could be useful and described a bit of how this could work. She was interested even though she didn't know exactly what to do. I told her that I would be willing to help her get started. She thought I meant today and this made sense.

She called Richard over, put her arm around him, and asked, "Richard, would you like a support group of kids to help you?" He shook his head and said, "Yes." I explained more in detail to him and then asked, "Do you know some kids you would like to ask?" He said, "Yes" immediately. I suggested that he go find the kids he wants to be in his circle and ask them to come to a meeting. He wandered across the playground talking with kids who gradually wandered over to where we were. At first, we sat on the sand but it was too noisy and so then we moved to some grass next to the building. Richard would say, "Go away," when some other kids came up and wanted to be part of the group that he had not picked.

When we finally sat down, I told the kids that we were all there for Richard and asked them, "How many of you know that Richard has been having trouble in class?" All raised their hands. I then indicated that Richard had invited each of them to be part of his circle of friends, to really help him out. I asked how many were willing to do that. All raised their hands. We had to go shortly, so the teacher indicated a time Monday that they could get together. I asked the group to be thinking of ways they thought they could help Richard and Richard to think about what he could do as well as how the other students could help him.

Going back to the room, Elaine was very emotional and asked again what to do on the meeting on Monday.

Peer and conflict mediation.

Several schools in which we observed had established a school-wide program to train volunteer students in conflict resolution and peer mediation. If two or more children are having a problem, they are taught to approach a child designated as a "peacemaker," who asks each student: "Do you want to solve the problem? With whom?" Each child then gets a turn to tell his or her story. When one speaks, the other listens. When each understands the other, the "peacemaker" facilitates a discussion regarding solutions. Children begin using language like "I

feel... I need... and to listen to the point of view of another". One fifth grade teacher explained her experience this way:

One thing that I have learned in teaching is that the social aspects of children being in school directly affect how they learn. One of the best ways that I help children learn how to cope with their emotions are through the use of Peer Mediators. These are children that are trained by staff to help other children talk through their problems nonviolently, and it has worked wonders in my room.

Just the other day, there was a problem that the children worked through with very little direction from me. We were in a transition time, and as I waited patiently in my rocker, two children got into an argument. Nettie was yelling and crying, and Chris was complaining loudly. You have to know a little about Nettie to understand my dilemma. She has very poor social skills. I am constantly looking for ways to help her learn.

In this case, I could have taken over, admonished her for grabbing, and asked each child what it should have done. However, I chose to let the children handle it. I asked if anyone could help Nettie and Chris solve their disagreement. Very quickly, two groups of children formed, each trying to get an accurate story. They were great! They calmed them down, asked what happened, and repeatedly brought the children back into focus when they went off on tangents.



With a comment or two from me, two of my peer mediators then led a discussion between the two children. They discovered that each one did something they themselves would not have liked, and talked about what they could do next time. While this effort was initiated by Peer Mediators, most of the class got involved in helping them talk it out.

Everyone benefited. The children learned how to facilitate those meetings, Nettie received the positive attention she needed and hopefully they both gained some small skills. I even learned how much better my children can be at solving problems constructively. Now it does take time, and this one took about 30 minutes. I do not often have the time to take as a whole class, however in small groups children can be just as effective, and then they feel ownership over the classroom and how the people in it are treated.

Peer supports.

Students can also help one another in both formal and informal ways. Teachers create formal structures like ‘peer buddies’ where students work together in certain assigned topics or help a newcomer become accustomed to the school. However, when a community has been built, students will naturally help each other in unpredictable ways. They will read together, help with classwork, talk to a hurting student, or calm down an angry friend. As we expect learners to help and teach them how, they do so in ways that are invaluable in supporting those with behavior struggles. No matter what the problem may be, whether it is about the loss of a boyfriend, a bad grade, or calling names, whether the children are very young or in high school, students can help each other through problems. Another teacher explained his experience this way.

When I think about my classroom and all the varied children in it, I know that there is only way I am able to accomplish everything that I need to. The simple answer is that I don’t accomplish it at all. The children follow my examples and then do most of the work for me. For example, I would not get through one day without help from my children with Annie. She is a very troubled child who is most often either in conflict or excited. Several times a day, she will have loud crying scenes. She has to be the center of attention, even when the topic has nothing to do with her.

Just the other day, as we were coming back from art, she was upset by a comment and began to cry. Charisse decided that she would help her. She spent the entire afternoon talking to her, reading with her, and working on assignments with her. Every time she would begin to interrupt, Charisse would stop her quietly and remind her not to interrupt me. She sometimes had to do this 3 or 4 times for one instance! She also went and retrieved her each time she tried to wander off from her work.

This is so beneficial for both children. Annie actually gets some work done and is able to feel like she has a friend for that day. She also gets a chance to see how she should interact with other people. As for Charisse, her behavior goal for the card marking was to be kinder to other children. She was able to work on this, while also experiencing that deep step of learning and understanding that is teaching.

Lunch club: *From segregated to a special, inclusive group.*

In a comparison school, we saw a particularly interesting and powerful tool initiated by a special education teacher, salvaging some dynamics that were intended to segregate children with behavioral problems. In this school, the school principal was irate at some eight children who were considered behavior problems, particularly at lunchtime. She directed the special education support teacher to have these students with her during lunch every day to prevent them from



causing problems. The first day, Sarah, the teacher welcomed the students to their special “Lunch Club” indicating that they were going to have a lot of fun and do interesting activities. One boy looked askance, a combination of depressed and angry, saying “Everyone in here is Bad!”

Over the next few days, however, this teacher got some other adults to volunteer. They got ideas from the kids and started doing art projects, plays, and other activities. They invited other students to join them so that soon it became an honor to be in the Lunch Club. This was an activity that ended up reducing problem behaviors by providing a preventative, engaging time that included a wide range of students together. The creativity and initiative of this teacher shifted this lunch group from being segregated and punitive to inclusive and fun.

Restorative justice in the classroom.

Restorative justice provides us a powerful idea for thinking about how to help students learn responsibility without the use of punishment while simultaneously strengthening our learning community. Rather than the teacher, or even the class, punishing a student, we observed several teachers asking a student who has done wrong to make amends. In a class meeting, teachers helped facilitate a discussion in which the class talked about what had happened and asked the class and the student for ideas to help repair the damage, heal hurt feelings, and negotiate ways to welcome the student back into the community. In some cases, we saw teachers have similar conversations with individual students, peer mediators, circles of support. We saw students simultaneously learning responsible behavior and experiencing community and care in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Our observations in schools and classrooms helped us to understand how critical are commitment to children with challenges, intentional building of community in the school and classroom, and a positive, needs-based approach to dealing with behavioral challenges. We saw that it is possible for whole schools and individual teachers and staff build caring, inclusive, supportive communities. However, we also saw many complexities. We observed some schools that had no framework whatsoever for addressing the social-emotional needs of children; we saw others who had developed an understanding of community building in substantive ways, yet did not go the full distance when it came to dealing with children with very troubled lives. In all situations, however, we saw that individual teachers who had a clear philosophy of both community and inclusion could and did challenge problematic practices in the school and achieve substantial success with children. We also saw that entire schools can successfully develop cultures of inclusion and care where they struggle to deal with challenging children.

Much more is needed in this arena. Studies that expand on our beginning efforts to document positive practices and understand methods by which schools develop cultures of care and inclusion are necessary. We need a better understanding of methods for building such cultures, particularly in schools that serve children of color and those from low incomes. The courageous and innovative teachers, principals, and leaders we came to know in the course of the research project demonstrated possibilities on which to build.