



Jefferson Parish Public School System Social Responsibility Training (SRT®) Program



Intensive Evaluation Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview of the Evaluation	4
Introduction	9
Social Responsibility Training (SRT)	13
Evaluation Results:	
JPPSS SRT Implementation and Evaluation	
2007-08 School Year	15
2008-09 School Year: Evaluation Visit Interviews	17
2008-09 School Year: Evaluation Implementation Questionnaire	22
2008-09 School Year:	
Field Test of the “How I Think” (HIT) Survey	31
2008-09 School Year:	
Disciplinary Infractions, Attendance, Academic Performance, and Student Demographic Indicators	37
The Effects of SRT on Disciplinary Infractions and School Days Missed	43
2009-10 School Year: Next Steps in the Evaluation	48
Bibliography	50

Figures

Figure 1 – Page 24

Mean Teacher Ratings of Time Invested, Implementation Intensity and Student Engagement

Figure 2 – Page 39

Percent with Zero and One or More Disciplinary Infractions by Special Education Status

Figure 3 – Page 45

Mean Disciplinary Infractions by Quasi-Experimental Condition and Academic Achievement.

Figure 4 – Page 48

School Days Missed by Quasi-Experimental Condition and Academic Performance

Tables

Table 1 – Page 33

HIT Study: Participants Students by Gender and School

Table 2 – Page 37

Distribution of Disciplinary Infractions among JPPSS 6th Graders in 2008-09

Table 3 – Page 40

Total Disciplinary Infractions by JPPSS 6th Grade Students Subgroups

Overview of the Evaluation

Jefferson Parish Public School System (JPPSS) has begun implementing an important prevention/early intervention initiative targeted for all sixth graders in the District in order to decrease unexcused absences, decrease school discipline referrals, and enhance school academic performance. Beginning with 2007-2008 school year, most sixth graders participated in the Social Responsibility Training (SRT) curriculum during the school year. The only exceptions were sixth graders in two schools that are treated as program as usual, and did not receive the SRT intervention, in order to establish a control group to enhance the research design of the project.

SRT is an evidence-based cognitive behavioral curriculum developed in 2001 for dropout prevention and critical life skills development for high risk students. SRT is now used in 20 states in schools and community agencies. This important prevention initiative in Jefferson Parish provides a valuable opportunity to evaluate SRT program implementation, to collect outcome data, and provide information on the program's effectiveness and impact in this community.

JPPSS contracted with Glacier Consulting, Inc. (GCI) for program evaluation services during the early stages of their planning for program

implementation. The independent evaluation team¹ performed analysis of early SRT implementation steps, and conducted an initial evaluation visit to Jefferson Parish on October 29-November 2, 2007.

Following the submission of the initial evaluation report² which established the basis for the evaluation to develop more intensive evaluation design as presented in this report, the first intensive study of program implementation. A final report will include both intensive process and outcome evaluations results to be completed at the end on the 2009-2010 school year.

Nationally there is a significant need for information on school and community early intervention and prevention programs that work, as well as confirmation on why they work. Gathering outcome results for SRT as an innovative prevention program designed for schools will prove valuable guidance to school administrators and community decision-makers in Jefferson Parish. Systematic research evaluation provides important information to guide future implementation of SRT within the complex political and bureaucratic environment of public schools as they work to accomplish numerous and sometimes conflicting goals with limited resources.

¹ The team was comprised of Drs Gregory Robinson and Robert A. Kirchner, Glacier Consulting, Inc., with advice of other GCI Research Associates who will be directly involved in final evaluation efforts. The views of the authors do not represent the opinions, policies or official positions of Jefferson Parish Public School System, personnel or other offices and organizations included in the report.

² See: Kirchner, Robert A. (2007) *Jefferson Parish Public School System Social Responsibility Training (SRT) Program: Initial Evaluation Report*. Annapolis, MD: Glacier Consulting, Inc.

Assessment and evaluation are important tools to improve the effectiveness and quality of education programs. A systems approach to program evaluation helps ensure that: (1) effectiveness and efficiency are maintained within the Program and (2) progress on the JPPSS SRT objectives is communicated to key policy makers, administrators, and the public. Building evaluation into program implementation allows evaluation activities and methods to be useful and relevant, and provides for on-going program improvement as well as opportunities for future, more intensive evaluation. Practical needs dictate that evaluations answer the questions of decision makers, and deliver information and recommendations that are readily useful to practitioners.³

The first two years of implementation have produced numerous achievements in improving the delivery of SRT, as well as in the development and institutionalization of the SRT modality itself. First, the first year of introducing the intervention, training facilitators and teachers, and testing its use with 6th Graders produced useful feedback

- The evaluation team found strong support for the program at administrative levels as well as within the visited schools.
- Character Development Systems, LLC (the curriculum developers), used the feedback to modify the workbooks and lesson plans for the

³ Based on: The approach and definitions presented here are fully explained and demonstrated in: Kirchner, Przybylski and Cardella (1994). This publication is available as part of the “Electronic Roadmap for Evaluation,” and can be found on the INTERNET at: www.bja.evaluationwebsite.org.

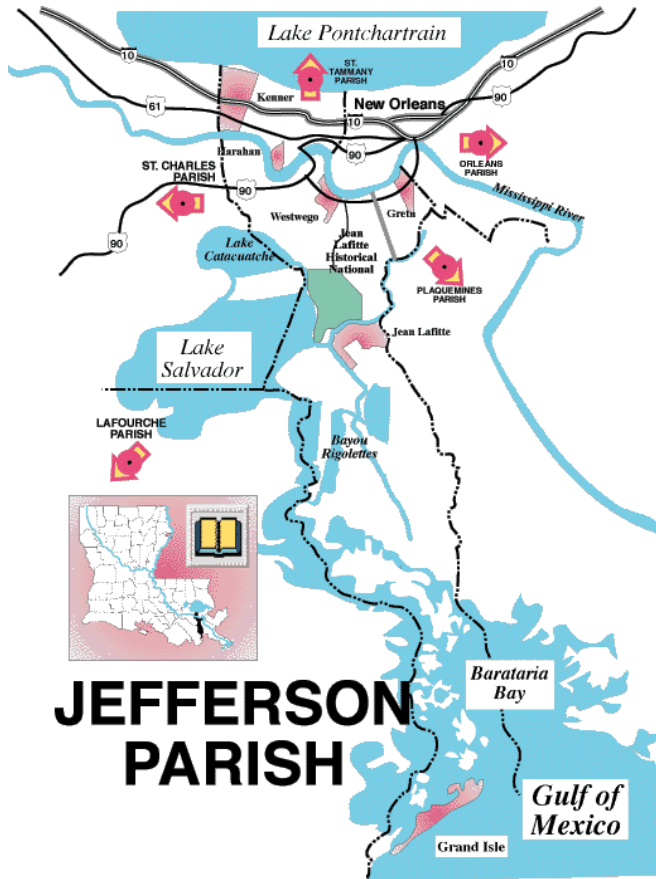
2008-09 school year. This exemplifies the role of formative evaluation early in a project's life cycle. Indicated program improvements "tuned up" the intervention, readying it for the more intensive scrutiny of in-depth process evaluation and a preliminary look at outcomes in the following school year (2008-09).

- The value of SRT with high-risk, low achieving students is apparent from the interviews with these two alternative middle school teachers.
- Interviews conducted by the evaluation team at these three schools in December, 2008 confirm that SRT is perceived by teachers to be an asset, and to be an effective intervention for many students.
- For the 2008-09 school year, the four-level academic performance indicator shows that although the mean number of disciplinary infractions is lower in the SRT condition ($M= 1.78$) than in the comparison condition ($M= 2.17$), the main effect for SRT is not statistically significant. There is a significant main effect for academic performance, as the combined mean number of disciplinary infractions rises steadily as academic performance becomes poorer ($M= 0.281$ in the highest achieving category; $M= 0.958$ among 6th graders in the second highest category; $M= 1.942$ infractions in the third highest achievement category, and $M= 4.24$ among the lowest achieving 6th graders); $F(3, 3705) = 170.123, p < .001$.
- An important feature of this analysis is the significant interaction between SRT and academic performance. That is, the effect of SRT depends upon the level of academic achievement (as illustrated by

Figure 3, SRT has the most effect in the lowest-achieving student group); $F(3, 3705) = 4.884, p < .003$. This important quantitative result is consistent with the strong anecdotal testimony provided by teachers in the system's alternative middle schools, which educate students that have been suspended from other campuses.

- This analysis shows that across all academic achievement categories, the mean number of days missed is lower in the SRT condition ($M = 9.79$) than in the comparison condition ($M = 12.43$). The main effect for SRT is statistically significant; $F(1, 3705) = 14.045, p < .001$. There is also a significant main effect for academic performance, as the mean number of days missed rises steadily as academic performance becomes poorer; $F(3, 3705) = 92.538, p < .001$.

Introduction



This report presents the results of the first intensive evaluation of an initiative currently underway in the Jefferson Parish Public School System (JPPSS) to promote a safe and orderly learning environment and to build student skills—Social Responsibility Training (SRT). To appreciate the critical nature of this initiative in Jefferson Parish, the context in which the public school system and the SRT program operate are briefly reviewed in this section.

As indicated by the map⁴ at left, Jefferson Parish extends from a northern border on Lake Pontchartrain into Barataria Bay, including Grand Isle as its southernmost populated area. The Parish is part of the New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner Metropolitan Statistical Area. The U.S. Census estimates the population of Jefferson Parish in 2008 to be 436,181.

⁴ http://enlou.com/maps/jefferson_map.htm

Following the devastation brought by Hurricane Katrina in late August, 2005, JPPSS became the second-largest district in the state with an enrollment of 43,000 students in 87 schools located on the east and west banks of the Mississippi River⁵. In addition to repairing and updating its physical facilities after Katrina, a persistent challenge addressed by JPPSS through a variety of educational initiatives has been to improve its mean LEAP (Louisiana Education Assessment Program) test scores.

Despite improvements in 2008, LEAP scores at JPPSS continue to fall below statewide averages. These lower performance scores are an important part of the context in which Social Responsibility Training is implemented. SRT is designed to reduce behavioral problems in the classroom, and to promote an environment in which students and teachers are at peace to focus upon the business of learning. For reasons explained below, the student cohorts arriving each year at JPPSS schools are not representative of the Parish's middle class and lower middle class residents. This amplifies the challenges the system faces in a profound way, and underscores the need for a program like Social Responsibility Training to complement the academic curriculum.

In a report released May 9, 2008 by the Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) and GCR & Associates, Inc.,⁶ the association between the quality of a public school system and socioeconomic indicators such as an area's appeal to homebuyers, workforce preparedness, crime and a robust local economy are described. This report credits educational leadership in the Parish for its proactive response to the academic deficits of its students:

⁵ <http://www.jppss.k12.la.us/news/pdf/jppss-2008-report.pdf>

⁶ Jefferson EDGE 2020 Strategic Implementation Plan: Public Education

“...new magnet schools and themed schools have been created; state of the art technology has been implemented; internal accountability has been strengthened; and curricula have been diversified and improved. The list of new,

well-conceived programs that the Superintendent and School Board have initiated over the past several years is truly comprehensive” (pg. 1).

Addressing the correlation between the socioeconomic status of a school system’s constituency and the performance of its students, the Economic Development Commission’s report points to a key challenge that JPPSS must address:

“There is a strong, well documented correlation between the presence of a strong middle class in public school systems and their academic performance. School systems with little middle class buy-in typically register lower test scores. This creates a vicious cycle in which lower performing schools fail to attract students from middle class families, thereby blocking one route (i.e. greater middle class enrollment) to higher academic achievement. (pg.6)”

With regard to the socioeconomic status of the families it serves, data provided by JPPSS indicate that of 4,227 students in sixth grade in the 2008-09 school year (the student population exposed to SRT), 398 (9.4%) were eligible for reduced-fee school lunches, and 2,977 (70.4%) were eligible for free school lunches. The proportion (79.8%) of sixth grade students qualifying for subsidized school lunches is an indicator of student poverty and its concentration in Jefferson Parish public schools. Research indicates that children from low-income families are more likely than others to go without necessary food, less likely to be in good preschool programs, are more likely to be retained in grade, and more likely to drop out of school. The remarkably high proportion of JPPSS children eligible for subsidized school lunches

suggests that economic conditions in Jefferson Parish are much worse than they actually are.

Presenting results of the 2007 American Community Survey, the U.S. Census reports that the median annual household income in Jefferson Parish is \$47,366; substantially higher than the median household income statewide (\$40,866). Similarly, 2007 Census data indicate the percentage of persons in Jefferson Parish below the poverty threshold to be 14.6%. This proportion is not insubstantial (the national proportion is 13.3%), but it is well below the statewide proportion (18.8%) of persons beneath the poverty threshold. The Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission's strategic plan for education explains the inconsistency regarding socioeconomic indicators between all Parish residents and the families of children served by JPPSS in terms of disproportionate enrollment in private, parochial schools. Higher-income families that can afford to send their children to private schools in the parish do so, while children of lower income families go to public schools.

JPPSS has a number of long-term goals to be accomplished by a number of suggested partnerships, initiatives and educational reforms. The JEDCO strategic plan to improve public education proposes 13 specific action items, including increasing the number of academically-themed schools, broadening eligibility to enroll in them, investing in capital improvements to school facilities, increasing parental involvement in the school system and expanding public funding and support for alternative schools serving children with discipline problems, among others.

This report focuses upon a key action step in addition to these proposals that has already been taken by JPPSS. Research featured by the Achievement

Gap Initiative at Harvard University⁷ conducted by Rausch and Skiba, 2006⁸ concludes with the observation,

“As schools increasingly attend to the responsibility of educating students, it appears clear that attaining the goal of high achievement for all students cannot be accomplished without attending to the need for evidence-based and preventive strategies to maintain school climates conducive to learning” (pg. 27).

With outcome objectives including the reduction of disciplinary infractions, a reduction in missed school days, and improved academic performance, this is precisely what Social Responsibility Training (SRT) is designed to do. This introduction has established the context and importance of this key initiative in Jefferson Parish. The extent to which it has succeeded to date for 6th graders in 22 JPPSS middle schools is detailed below.

Social Responsibility Training (SRT)

SRT is an evidence-based cognitive behavioral curriculum developed in 2001 for dropout prevention and critical life skills development among high risk students. SRT is now used in 20 states in schools and community agencies. The

⁷ See: <http://www.agi.harvard.edu/>

⁸ Skiba, R.J. & Rausch, M.K. (2006). *The Academic Cost of Discipline: The Relationship Between Suspension/Expulsion and School Achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Center for Evaluation & Education Policy.

program consists of standardized, cognitive behavioral exercises designed to teach participants thinking, judgment and life skills in classroom settings. SRT is based upon the presumption that reducing character risk factors and developing in youth the critical skills, personal qualities, and interpersonal competencies essential to successful integration into the workforce requires significant practice and experience to achieve mastery.

A systematic, step-by-step curriculum in the form of student and teacher workbooks is designed to alter how participants think, how they make judgments and decisions about right and wrong, and to promote actions and behaviors focused on changing negative relationships. The program is typically implemented at JPPSS in 6th grade homeroom/ advisory or social studies classes during the regular school day.

Evaluation Results: JPPSS SRT Implementation and Evaluation

2007-08 School Year

Twenty-two schools throughout the Parish had sixth grades in 2007-08, and a comprehensive plan was developed by the SRT Implementation Facilitator to begin delivery of the program at different points during the school year at twenty of these sites. The two remaining schools, Marrero Middle School and Theodore Roosevelt were designated as comparison schools, and the SRT intervention was not implemented at these sites. Withholding the intervention from these schools enabled a quasi-experimental research design capable of a rigorous assessment of program outcomes. Nationally, information on school and community early intervention and prevention programs that work is badly needed, as well as confirmation of why they work. Building evaluation into the SRT program from the outset has produced feedback for program improvement, and ultimately, will result in valuable guidance to school administrators and community decision-makers in Jefferson Parish.

The evaluation design proposed by Glacier Consulting, Inc. specified a program review of first year SRT implementation during the 2007-08 school year, a full process evaluation to be conducted during 2008-09 school year, and an intensive process and outcome evaluation to be completed at the end of the 2009-10 school year. An initial evaluation visit to Jefferson Parish conducted October 29 to November 2, 2007 confirmed the cooperation of JPPSS personnel to collect the necessary quantitative data for program participants (pre-program baseline information from the preceding year matched with discipline, attendance GPA and test score data at the conclusion of each implementation year). The evaluation team found strong support for the program at administrative levels as well as within the visited schools.

An SRT Implementation Questionnaire, circulated by Ms. Debra Rogers (then Social Responsibility Training Implementation Facilitator) was completed by 45 teachers during the spring, 2008 semester. Survey results indicated that in the first implementation year, four teachers (8.9%) led SRT sessions every other week, five (11.1%) were conducting SRT classes once a week, the majority ($n= 27$, 60.0%) teachers were presenting SRT twice a week, and six (13.3%) were delivering SRT three to five times per week. Three other answers that didn't fit into these categories were: "randomly," "whenever," and "3 hours and 45 minutes per week."

Teachers liked the fact that workbooks were provided and that they had a "Coach's Guide" with lesson plans that minimized preparation time. Many remarked that they got to know their students much better, that SRT provided students an opportunity for introspection and reflection, as well as for self-expression, and that many students were beginning to connect with their own feelings. In general, teachers indicated that 6th graders appeared to be enjoying and engaging with the program.

Survey respondents also voiced concerns about first-year implementation, however. SRT-trained teachers pointed out that the student workbook was above the comprehension level of many students, and that the lessons needed to be simplified and made shorter. They called for scenarios and examples more relevant to the lives of their students, more "hands-on" activities and fewer writing assignments. Some students were perceived as insufficiently mature to grasp the lessons or to set long term goals. It was discovered too that not all teachers were comfortable or had the personality and interpersonal or counseling skills required optimizing students' experience of SRT.

The implementation facilitator responded to this feedback, communicating teachers' concerns regarding the workbook to Character Development Systems, LLC (the curriculum developers), resulting in modifications to the workbooks and lesson plans for the 2008-09 school year. This exemplifies the role of

formative evaluation early in a project's life cycle. Indicated program improvements "tuned up" the intervention, readying it for the more intensive scrutiny of in-depth process evaluation and a preliminary look at outcomes in the following school year (2008-09).

2008-09 School Year: Evaluation Visit Interviews

An on-site review by the evaluation team conducted in December 2008 confirmed that SRT implementation was proceeding well, in particular at John Q. Adams and Allen Ellender Middle Schools; two of the sites visited. The value of SRT for low-achieving, high-risk students was reported anecdotally by two teachers at Westbank Community School, one of two alternative middle schools in the district to which "regular and rosyed (remainder of school year)" suspended students are sent for nonviolent offenses. The first interview was conducted with a teacher with over 22 years of experience. Her observations about students and the SRT program are paraphrased below:

You have to understand what kind of school we have here. That's why I like SRT. I do it in my other classes too. Kids get out of their street slang and start really talking. Our student body is diverse, but they're all from the same subculture—they call each other "Dawg"—it's not racial, the subculture trumps race. Students here have hit teachers and set fires. They have emotional problems. Some students have not been tested for learning disabilities, and need to be. These kids didn't have anything from the bottom up. Now they're in 6th grade. They've had absolutely no parental support. We are psychiatrists, teachers, social workers; all of it. The students have their own probation officers, but not the mental health support they need. As a rule, young teachers can't deal with this. All of us are over 50. We get their respect because we're the grandparents that

never hurt them. Our 6th graders and 8th graders are just about the same age. Black girls have a better chance of making it because they have been taught by Black women, and White women too—they have role models. White society has let them in. Boys are less controlled and more threatening to White society. Here, we have to use every moment as a “teachable moment.” I like SRT so much because it teaches kids to think about consequences. These kids couldn’t care less about PBS activities—give them popcorn and let them watch a movie or play on the computer—they can do that all day at home. But SRT makes them think. It makes the individual the focus and it promotes cross-talk between kids. We only do SRT here in homeroom, but it should be in every class. DARE failed these kids. SRT gets them talking about their decisions. We see 6th graders 15, 16, 17 years of age that drop out to prostitution or selling drugs. Parents come in with no bra, tattoos all over, in their pajamas. Many have been in prison. At this point, we’re almost finished with the SRT workbook, and something is needed to keep SRT going; a follow-up. The old book could follow the new book. SRT works if we can do it every day. There are no mentoring programs in the Parish—these might be an alternative to absent parents. More activities in the neighborhoods in the afternoon are needed. Five of eight teachers here are very excited about SRT and are major proponents. We recognize the importance of instructional content, but these kids also need social and personal help.

This interviewee spoke highly of SRT in comparison to other interventions for low-achieving, high-risk 6th grade students in an alternative school setting. An impromptu discussion with Westbank 6th grade students indicated a range of goals, from “the first person in my family to go to college,” to “a rapper,” and aspirations to play various professional sports. Revealing the fatalism in these students’ outlook, only two of eight in a pull-out discussion group believed that they will live to 35 years of age. A second interview with a Westbank Community School teacher is paraphrased below:

We have a very unique group of students here—they are very high risk. Students here are transient. Save one, and you've done a lot. I like SRT, and the kids love it. We have to balance it with material for the state guidelines. Kids love the SRT “ten tools for life success.” They want to do it every day, but 2-3 days a week is enough. A realistic goal in this population is to make it through to eighth grade. You have to make it real for them, and with SRT you can do that. The level of respect here has improved, and we have a long way to go. A 6th grade student told me this morning, “My daddy and me drank a 40 last night.” Parents want to be friends with their kids. Some will make it out of WBC to their home schools. Attendance, grades and teacher input are key.

The value of SRT with high-risk, low achieving students is apparent from the interviews with these two alternative middle school teachers. A teacher interviewed at Allen Ellender Middle School (in a more suburban setting) had a different view of SRT:

(Last year) We gave Ms. Rogers [then JPPSS Implementation Facilitator] a list of suggested SRT curriculum improvements. The first workbook was too intensive for kids at this age level. These kids are very visual, they're lost after three paragraphs of text. This is not a problem with content, but format. I suggest exposing them at 6th grade as we are now, but starting them at 3rd grade and following up at 9th grade. This is a racially diverse student body of about 700; 5-6% Latino and 40-50% each Black and White. Boys are not as used to sharing their feelings. SRT is implemented during Social Studies, but there's some stress balancing it with the academic curriculum—there's just not enough time.

Asked about the changes in students that SRT seems to elicit, this teacher replied, “It’s funny. You start to hear the jargon. You can tell they’re processing. The messages seem to diffuse into their lives.” SRT can be taught with an adult scenario, followed by several kid-based examples. We have some 3rd-year 6th graders up to 15 years of age. Mature students may get more out of it, but younger ones are less self-conscious and more willing to share.

Some kids who never talk on academic subjects will open up with SRT. The changes I notice are fewer trips to the office on disciplinary referrals. Discussing action goals and the means to achieve them and keeping a weekly report card seem to be helping students to become more goal-oriented. The interaction between kids is productive. Self-disclosure promotes introspection. I suggest making a student planner from the action goal sheets with the instrument panel. PBS is kind of a reward program—it’s not really infused into the curriculum. SRT facilitates teachers getting to know students, for example, the strengths and difficulties posters. I think the program may work because it focuses upon them as individuals. The book does that—it brings it back to the kid. Some, even though they don’t share, may internalize the messages.

This anecdotal information suggests that implementation of SRT is occurring in the 2008-09 school year, and that outcomes attributable to the program are recognized by teachers. A break-out discussion with girls in this teacher’s 6th grade class followed:

SRT relieves stress—you can talk about what you’re feeling and let it all out. Today, we talked about goal setting. “I’m going to pass my science test.” “Trying to avoid being late to class and getting written up.” Asked, “Do you think boys are learning anything from SRT,” the reply

was a chorus of “Nos.” “They don’t set goals.” “Writing things down like our goals keeps us focused. My goal is trying to get to cheerleader.” “My goal is to stop biting my nails.” Sometimes it doesn’t work, and you have to try different ways. “I tried 19 things—more than 19!” The girls went on to discuss the family travails that SRT helps them to deal with, including divorce and parental separation, deaths in the family, and a dad on the run from police.

A final interview with a teacher at John Q. Adams, another middle school in a more suburban environment is paraphrased below:

It’s not going to take the full year to get through the workbook. These kids don’t like to take anything home. They like to do the work in class. I suggest using “guardian” instead of “mother/ father” in the book. The book was a little shorter this year. I think it’s a great program, but the book is still a little over their heads. Girls will write more than boys. They all like to talk about their friends, and how they can keep them out of trouble. They also raise serious topics. “There was a shooting last night, and Mama told us to get down on the floor.” Last year, SRT was really deep into finding out a lot of stuff about family circumstances, but I don’t like that. There’s nothing I can do about that. The kids don’t like to do charts. There’s not enough on some pages to take up a full homeroom period. SRT helps kids to recognize when trouble is starting. It makes them more aware of developing problems and how to avoid them. Kids like the stories and analyzing how the students in the anecdotes might have dealt differently with circumstances. But some of the stories are kind of deep for 6th graders. SRT does integrate with PBS because it promotes awareness of what’s going on around them. Kids learn to respect each other’s feelings.

Interviews conducted by the evaluation team at these three schools in December, 2008 confirm that SRT is perceived by teachers to be an asset, and to be an effective intervention for many students. Program implementation in the 2008-09 school year appeared to be progressing well. One problem noted during this visit, however, is that SRT attendance is recorded on hard copy records that are not faithfully transferred to “Infinite Campus,” the JPPSS automated student recordkeeping system. Not having access to this information will limit the extent to which analyses can target the students who participated at an intensive level, and contrast them to students in the comparison condition, and to students at intervention schools that did not receive a strong program “dose.”

2008-09 School Year: Evaluation Implementation Questionnaire

Another evaluation visit was conducted in May 2009. During this visit, evaluators worked with the SRT Implementation Facilitator to revise the SRT Implementation questionnaire. It was distributed to all sixth grade teachers, and completed by 39 teachers at 15 schools. Twenty (51.3%) of these were completed by teachers at John Q. Adams Middle School, and one or two by teachers at twelve regular middle schools and two alternative middle schools. Twenty-seven (69.2%) of the responding teachers implemented one SRT class, three (7.7%) taught two SRT classes, four (10.3%) teach three classes, one (2.6%) teaches four classes, three teachers (7.7%) implement five SRT classes and one (2.6%) teaches six SRT classes.

These data reflect very different patterns of SRT implementation. For example, at John Q. Adams, twenty separate teachers present one SRT class each. Responding teachers from Deckbar ($n= 1$ teacher), Grand Isle ($n= 1$), Kerner ($n= 1$), and Jefferson Community ($n= 2$ teachers) also teach just one SRT class. At Allen Ellender, however one teacher presented two SRT classes and one five classes. Similarly, at Henry Ford Middle School, one teacher

implemented two SRT classes and one taught six. At Livaudais Middle School and at Westbank Community School, one teacher presents five SRT classes. A *de facto* contrast is suggested here between an “SRT specialist” approach in which one teacher assumes responsibility for multiple classes, and an “SRT generalist” approach in which many teachers are involved, but each has responsibility for just one SRT section. The merits and difficulties associated with each of these approaches establish a topic for qualitative and quantitative inquiry during the 2009-10 school year, but class and teacher identifiers and attendance data are needed to support such analyses.

Two classes (both at Jefferson Community School) were implemented intensively in April and May, 2008 over 25 days. The remainder of the 2008-09 SRT classes were implemented over a duration lasting between 64 and 268 days, with a mean of 184.3 days and a median (the point above which and below which half the values fall) of 190 calendar days. Fewer than 25% of all SRT classes were implemented in fewer than 140 calendar days.

Figure 1. Mean Teacher Ratings of Time Invested, Implementation Intensity and Student Engagement

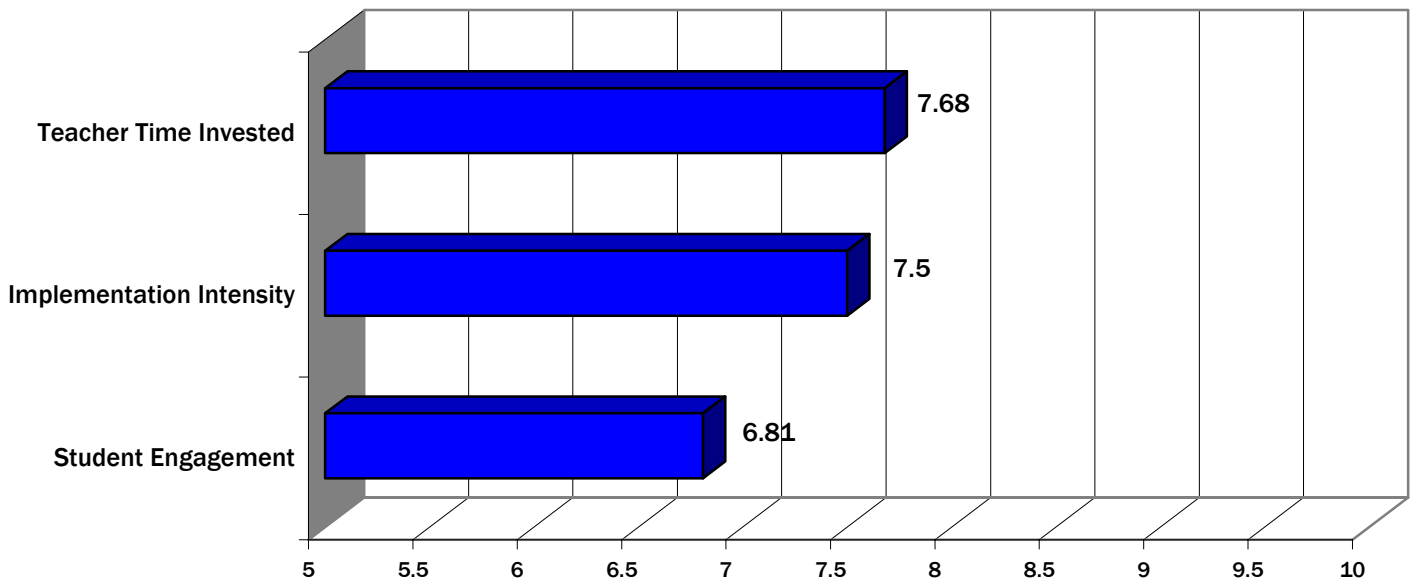


Figure 1 illustrates mean teacher ratings provided on an 11-point scale from zero to ten. Note that the axis in Figure 1 has been truncated to show the area from scale midpoint (5) to the highest scale value (10). The self-rating of implementation intensity was introduced on the questionnaire as follows: “So we don’t expect big changes from students who are not exposed to an intensive implementation of SRT, please tell us how intensely SRT was administered in your class this year...”

Scale anchors ranged from 0= “Not implemented at all” to 5= “Implemented moderately well” to 10= “Implemented extremely well.” Similar labels were associated with the same scale points (0, 5 and 10) on the student engagement item (Students not engaged in lessons, Students sometimes engaged in lessons, Students well-engaged in lessons) and on the teacher time invested item (No teaching time invested, Teacher somewhat involved, Teacher very involved). On “Teacher time invested,” (Ratings from two to 10) and “Implementation intensity,” (Ratings from three to 10) the median ratings are

8.0, and on “Student engagement,” (Ratings from one to 10) the median rating is 7.0.

With means near seven and medians near eight on the 11-point scale, JPPSS teachers appear to be investing considerable energy in the implementation of SRT. These self-reported teacher ratings reflect a high degree of variability in the intensity with which SRT is implemented across classes, however. These results emphasize the need in the 2009-10 school year for better and more frequent implementation assessment. Teachers passionate about SRT are likely to produce different student outcomes than their colleagues who don’t “get” the program, don’t like it, or view it as a distraction to academic content that have been forced to implement.

If they are available, measures of the fidelity and intensity of SRT implementation can be used to create an SRT “dose” variable for use in the statistical analyses of outcome attainment at the end of the 2009-10 school year. The use of a “dose” covariate will result in more sensitive and more accurate outcome analyses. Including these teacher ratings in “Infinite Campus” would be ideal, but only if these data are actually entered into the system. We strongly recommend that hard-copy teacher implementation assessments should be recorded and retained at the site level as a backup.

Four open-ended questions were also included on the 2008-09 SRT Implementation Questionnaire. Thirty-three teachers answered a question about what they liked best about SRT. The most frequent category of answers ($n= 9$, 27.3%) cited the *opportunity for positive interaction or engagement with students*. Examples in this category include: “Getting to know the students,” “I was able to interact with students on a positive level,” and “It was a good forum to have open discussions with students.”

Five teachers (15.2%) identified *opportunities for student self-expression* as the aspect of SRT they liked best. Some of these responses include: “How involved the students became. I was impressed that it got so many of my students to open up and share what they were feeling and felt about many issues,” and “SRT gives students the opportunity to express how they feel about themselves, life and challenges, in a non-invasive format.”

Four teachers (12.1%) replied that they liked the fact that *workbooks were provided and it was not necessary to make copies*, e.g. “There is little preparation needed. Since there is a handbook I do not have to run off copies.” Four (12.1%) named *SRT activities*, providing responses like, “The guided activities,” and “The different activities that were part of the lessons that allowed the students to express themselves. Examples include true lives, drawings, and the worry wheel just to name a few.” Four (12.1%) indicated that what they liked best about SRT was *what the program taught*. Examples in this category include:

“I think that SRT is a wonderful vehicle to get our students to begin to realize that everything they do is a choice they make and those choices bring either rewards or consequences. I find that they are more conscientious.”

“It teaches our students how to handle life's issues and how to do well in school.”

“It teaches about responsibility.”

Replies categorized as “*Other*” included: “It helps with block schedule to make-up and pass time that is needed to keep students on task,” “That there were realistic situations, use of research based methods to deal with stress, quiet etc. Stages of change,” and “Is not much. The students found the topics to be too juvenile. Many of the activities were hard to understand. There was much

reluctance to share. I did enjoy the suggestions for organization and how to better a student.”

The second open-ended item invited teachers to indicate how they would improve SRT. Five teachers (17.2%) provided suggestions categorized as “*More/ different activities*,” for example, “By providing more activities that allow the students to get up and walk around,” “More activities for students to do, more stories. No personal information about their home life. They don't want others to know their parents are in jail or drug dealers,” and “Placing more activities in the workbook.”

Another five teachers (17.2%) raised issues around the best *target population for SRT*. Opinions are divided on this issue. Some teachers believe that SRT in its present form is not entirely appropriate for their more suburban, higher-achieving students:

“Making it more relevant to the higher achieving student,”

“Targeting a group of students to teach this to. There are so many aspects of the program that do not apply to our students. We are an elementary school. Maybe 7th graders would benefit more,”

“Making it relate more to younger people and those who do not have home lives that tag them for being ‘at risk.’ Many of my students found some of this hard to relate to.”

Others express the opinion that SRT should target a broader cross-section of students beginning earlier than 6th grade, e.g. “Teach to younger students,” and implementing the program across grades, e.g. “Requiring it of more grades.”

Four teachers (13.8%) believe that SRT in its present form involves *too much reading*, “Maybe having more discussions and less reading,” *writing*, “Adding games; less writing; shorter book” and “The students complained about

having to write as much as they did. I would allow more discussions instead,” or *drawing*, “Reduce the drawing.”

Other themes in these responses include requests ($n= 3$, 10.3%) for *SRT videos*, “Videos to go with lessons,” “Videos and other visual aids;” a need for a “*more explicit*” *teacher’s guide* ($n= 2$, 6.9%): “Making the lessons more engaging - need an explicit teacher's guide;” and *more role-playing activities*, “I think they would enjoy scripted role play,” “Make activities more of a role playing and more interesting for 6th graders.”

A variety of suggested improvements were categorized as “*Other*.” Some of the responses in this category include: “Make simple things to hang up in the class, e.g. Positive role model, Positive feelings,” “Making the strengths and difficulties poster one of the first activities that the students complete,” “Much improvement from last year's book,” “Teaching in exploratory,” “Providing a pacing chart for each activity,” and “Having a teacher dedicated to teaching only this class. Person should meet once a week like drama or other enrichment classes.”

Teachers responding to the 2008-09 Implementation Survey were also asked what students appeared to like best and least about the SRT program. Thirty-seven teachers answered the first of these questions. The largest proportion of responses ($n= 10$, 27.0%) focused upon *the opportunity to talk, discuss, interact with the teacher and other students, and to present in class*. Examples of responses in this category include: “Talking about different issues and actually having someone listen to them,” “Open discussion time/ being able to air their concerns/ grievances,” and “Being able to participate as a group and the teacher's involvement. I think students really appreciated the stories I shared with them.”

A related category of responses, *the opportunity to express feelings*, is the second most frequent answer ($n= 7$, 18.9%). Examples are: “All the students

opened up to each other from their own personal experiences, especially in the area of Hurricane Katrina,” and “They enjoyed being able to express feelings with their peers,” and “I think my students liked the fact that they could be themselves without fearing ridicule from their classmates and they took comfort in knowing that everything in the class was confidential.”

The third most frequently reported category ($n= 6, 16.2\%$) of “Things students liked best about SRT” relates to *drawing and art, and using these forms of expression as an alternative to talking or writing*. Examples include: “Activities involving the arts, drawing, acting etc.,” “The kids liked showing their feelings by drawing pictures. They really enjoyed the lessons that incorporated art,” and “Draw simple sketches instead of writing too much.” Fourth, teachers mentioned *games, activities, role-playing and acting out situations* ($n= 4, 10.8\%$). Two examples of responses in this category are: “My students liked the activities. They liked when they were able to get out of their seats and act out things,” and “Games and role-playing.”

One teacher indicated that students liked the writing, and one mentioned that students liked the assignments. “*Other*” responses include: “The way it helps them deal with personal problems,” “The grief section. They liked that they could write what they wanted, share with the class when they wanted, different themes, class interviews, understand myself was a favorite,” “They receive advice on handling hard situations and having teachers who want them to improve,” “Nothing” and “Students were not really enthusiastic about it at all.”

Thirty-five teachers completed the open-ended item, “What my students liked least about SRT is...” The most frequent response ($n= 8, 22.9\%$) is *writing*, which was expressed as, “Writing the problems,” “Writing every week,” and “They don’t like all the writing.” Four (11.4%) responses concerned *the repetitive sequence, or that the process was boring*. Examples are: “It was the same style of lesson. Read, write, and explain. The students said it was boring,”

and “They thought it was boring.” Another four (11.4%) suggested that *the pacing, or time allotted to certain tasks* was a problem. Two of these responses are: “Not always enough time for each to present,” and “Doing too many various activities in one chapter.”

Three teachers (8.6%) said their students *did not like sharing personal information, or information about their families*. Responses in this category include, “Exploring one’s self or situation in a classroom is very difficult,” and “Sharing personal information.” Three (8.6%) also noted that their *students didn’t care for all the drawing*. These responses included: “The drawing, a lot of the students complain about the drawing. I run into a problem in class when I ask them to draw maps,” and “Too much drawing throughout the book.” Two (5.7%) teachers each answered that *more discussion time was needed*, that *the program was confusing or “over the heads” of their students*, and that *the students did not care for all the reading involved*.

“Other” responses to the query about what students liked least included, “The homework,” “The fact that they need to be critical of themselves,” “Some of the ‘corny’ examples and activities,” “Interfered with lessons and Podcast project,” “That they have to do (1) particular activity. They don't get to choose what they want to do or talk about,” “Everything. I really had a hard time getting the students to get involved in the activities. On the mornings we had SRT planned, many of the students would groan and complain about having to work in the book. One student went so far as to hide his book so he would not have to do it,” and “That it did nothing for them. They didn't like it at all.”

Fourteen teachers took advantage of a prompt soliciting other comments. The teacher who provided the last response in the preceding paragraph elaborated in the comment section, saying, “The students had nothing positive to say. They said it would take more than that book to help them.” Another comment referred to the fact that formative evaluation results were used to revise the workbooks for the 2008-09 school year: “This year was much more

enjoyable. Thanks for listening and the changes.” Another comment in this vein is, “Overall the students and myself like the SRT books.” One teacher suggested, “More example stories would pull the student's attention. It was hard describing some of the explanations because there weren't enough background stories for the students to relate to, and I only have so many stories. I do feel that it brought my students closer together as an advisory group.” Another teacher elaborated on the fit between the revised workbook material and students, observing, “My students did not understand many of the concepts and what was being asked of them. It took a great deal of explanation on my part.”

Finally, it is evident that a few teachers simply don't like implementing SRT. For example, one remarked, “I was pushed to do this, along with test-prep.” It may make sense for JPPSS to explore the administrative feasibility of this teacher's recommendation: “It would be nice to have a person who could go to different schools and do the SRT with students.” The demerit of this idea is that such an arrangement doesn't support the teacher/ student relationship building that occurs when teachers invest in the program. On the other hand, the quality of the program as implemented by unwilling teachers is doubtless less than it would be if SRT was presented by a teacher with strong interpersonal skills and a proclivity for dealing with students' personal issues. At minimum, teachers who are uncomfortable talking about these issues might be allowed to opt out of teaching SRT.

2008-09 School Year: Field Test of the “How I think” (HIT) Survey

With invaluable assistance and support from Ms. Debra Rogers, the JPPSS SRT Implementation Coordinator, on April 30 and May 1, 2009 the “How I Think” (HIT) Questionnaire was field tested by administration to 197 6th-grade students in two classes each in four middle schools. Two sites (John Q. Adams Middle School and Allen Ellender Middle School) were selected by the SRT

Coordinator as strong implementation sites with student demographics reasonably comparable to two comparison schools (SRT not implemented); L. H. Marrero Middle School and Theodore Roosevelt Middle School.

Table 1. HIT Study: Participating Students by Gender and School

Middle School (Intervention/ Comparison)	Student Gender		Total Count (%)
	Male Count	Female Count	
Adams (Intervention)	32	20	52 (26.4)
Ellender (Intervention)	26	23	49 (24.9)
Marrero (Comparison)	26	19	45 (22.8)
Roosevelt (Comparison)	23	28	51 (25.9)
	107 (54.3)	90 (45.7)	197 (100.0)

Table 1 presents the counts and proportions of participating students by gender and school.

Questionnaires were completed in comfortable and quiet classrooms. Proctors answered student questions and/ or read each of the 54 HIT items aloud. Each item consists of a statement, e.g. “Everybody steals—you might as well get your share,” and a six-point response metric: Agree Strongly, Agree,

Agree Slightly, Disagree Slightly, Disagree, and Disagree Strongly. Consistent with the HIT Questionnaire Manual, item coding is 1= “Strongly Disagree” and 6= “Strongly Agree.”

The HIT includes eight subscales; four “cognitive distortion” scales (Self-Centered, Blaming Others, Minimizing/ Mislabeled, and Assuming the Worst) and four “behavioral referent” scales (Opposition-Defiance, Physical Aggression, Lying, and Stealing). These subscale scores are used to generate three summary scores. The Overt Scale is computed by averaging the Opposition-Defiance and Physical Aggression means. The Covert Scale by averaging the Lying and Stealing means. An overall score is computed by averaging the means of all eight subscales.

Subscale reliabilities (Cronbach's Alpha) were computed for the JPPSS HIT student sample. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are: Self Centered .774; Blaming Others .716; Minimizing Mislabeled .756; Assuming the Worst .799; Oppositional Defiance .670; Physical Aggression .820; Lying .772; and Stealing .845. Other than Oppositional Defiance (Cronbach's Alpha= .670), each HIT subscale falls within an acceptable range for field testing.

An Anomalous Responding scale is included to identify invalid protocols. This subscale consists of items like, “Sometimes I get bored,” “Sometimes I gossip about other people,” and “I have taken things without asking.” Eight items are included on the AR scale. In one case, a missing value was replaced by the school/ gender mean for that item. The manual advises that protocols associated with AR scores between 4.0 and 4.25 should be considered suspect and interpreted cautiously, and that AR scores greater than 4.25, “should be disregarded altogether in clinical contexts and excluded from data analysis in research contexts” (pg. 23). Utilizing this criterion, of 197 cases, 160 (81.2%) are valid protocols, 21 (10.7%) are suspect, and 16 (8.1%) are invalid. These proportions are not significantly different by school or by student gender.

Invalid protocols are not included in the analyses that follow, reducing the sample from 197 to 181. The HIT Questionnaire Manual authors indicate that, "The cutoff score of 4.25 typically invalidates a small percentage of protocols (usually less than 5%). The rate of invalid protocols in this sample (8.1%) is somewhat higher, but not extremely different than the authors' experience.

Described by its authors as a reliable, valid and practical measure of self-serving cognitive distortion, the HIT is viewed as an appropriate tool to evaluate therapeutic progress or outcomes. In the JPPSS student sample, selected from two strong implementation schools (Adams and Ellender) and two comparison schools (Marrero and Roosevelt), however, *no significant differences on any of the HIT subscale or summary scales were observed.*

To summarize its purpose simply, the HIT is designed to measure self-serving cognitive distortion. According to the instrument's developers, cognitive distortions are "inaccurate or biased ways of attending to or conferring meaning upon experiences." The authors of the questionnaire manual observe that people who engage in frequent or severe use of cognitive distortions are likely to exhibit psychopathology. "Self-serving" describes the cognitive distortions associated with externalizing behaviors (aggression and delinquency) and "Self-debasing" describes cognitive distortions associated with internalizing behaviors (anxiety and depression).

From one theoretical perspective, self-serving distortions protect the self from blame or negative self-concept and disinhibit aggression or other antisocial behavior. For example, self-serving distortions can operate to neutralize potential empathy or guilt. They operate in this regard as ego defense mechanisms. More recent cognitive behavioral theorists conceptualize these "cognitive distortions" as "biased processing tendencies" that serve as mechanisms of moral disengagement. Self-serving cognitive distortions have

been studied in the context of juvenile delinquency. The HIT was designed to "provide a comprehensive and ecologically valid account of the self-serving cognitive distortions exhibited by antisocial individuals."

For the most part, however, sixth grade Jefferson Parish school children do not appear to be antisocial individuals (although, granted some are). The HIT may be better suited for use with an offender population (and perhaps a multiple-offense population). For our purposes, however, the HIT was not sensitive to the effects of SRT in what is generally a clinically normal 6th grade population. Having learned from this field test, our evaluation focus turned to the comprehensive behavioral measure over time of disruptive and antisocial behavior—the JPPSS discipline and truancy records maintained in the “Infinite Campus” system.

2008-09 School Year: Disciplinary Infractions, Attendance, Academic Performance, and Student Demographic Indicators

The following analyses are based upon data extracted from Jefferson Parish Public School System records by Ms. Sue Adam, owner of Strategic Solutions Applied (SSA), LLC; a JPPSS contractor. The Excel file produced by SSA for the SRT evaluation included school, special education status, demographics, test scores in four subjects, grade point average, attendance information, “meal status” (a proxy for family income) and counts of 64 possible disciplinary infractions, in 32 “infraction/ minor infraction” pairs.

Table 2: Distribution of Disciplinary Infractions among JPPSS 6th Graders in 2008-09

Table 2 shows that the majority of JPPSS 6th graders (54.6%) commit no disciplinary infractions and that approximately three quarters (74.3%) of all 6th grade students commit two or fewer. A small proportion (5.2%) committed between 11 and 45 disciplinary infractions in 2008-09.

Because 1,919 (45.4%) of 4,227 students commit a total of one or more disciplinary infractions (up to 45), the mean number of infractions across all JPPSS 6th graders is about 2.2. The number

Number of Infractions plus Minor Infractions	Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	2308	54.6	54.6
1	531	12.6	67.2
2	302	7.1	74.3
3	208	4.9	79.2
4	182	4.3	83.5
5	125	3.0	86.5
6	104	2.5	89.0
7	88	2.1	91.0
8	69	1.6	92.7
9	45	1.1	93.7
10	44	1.0	94.8
11 or More	221	5.2	100.0
Total	4,227		

of disciplinary infractions committed during the school year is highly related to

Special Education status, student gender, race/ ethnicity, age group, family economic status, and academic achievement. These relationships are important to recognize, because they must be accounted for (statistically controlled) in analyses comparing students exposed to SRT to those in the comparison condition when disciplinary infractions are the dependent (outcome) variable.

Figure 2. Percent with Zero and One or More Disciplinary Infractions by Special Education Status

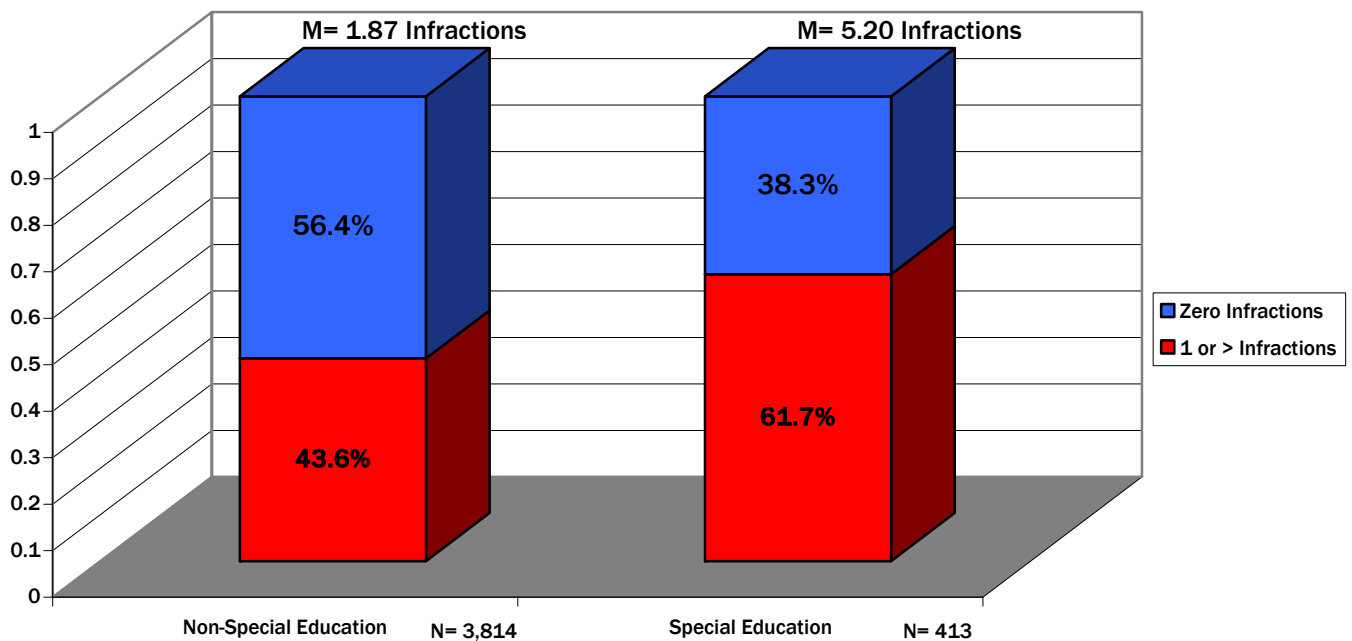


Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the number of disciplinary infractions committed by 6th graders and Special Education status, showing that proportionally fewer Special Education students committed no disciplinary infractions (the blue portion of the bar at right), and that their mean total infractions—the sum of infractions and minor infractions—($M= 5.20$) is significantly higher than the mean among non-Special Education students ($M= 1.87$); $F(4, 4222) = 61.785, p < .001$. To provide an overview of the relationships between student subgroups and total disciplinary infractions, this information is repeated together with other student subgroup information in Table 3.

Table 3. Total Disciplinary Infractions by JPPSS 6th Grade Student Subgroups

6 th Grade Student Subgroup		N	Percent with 1 or > Infractions	Subgroup Mean Total Infractions
Special Education	Non-Special Education	3,814	43.6	1.87
	Special Education	413	61.7	5.20
Gender	Female	1,946	39.3	1.77
	Male	2,281	50.6	2.86
Race/ Ethnicity	Black, Not Hispanic	2,171	55.6	3.14
	White, Not Hispanic	1,273	35.1	1.27
	Hispanic	566	38.9	1.35
	Asian/ Pacific Islander	183	15.8	0.32

	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	34	44.1	1.94
Age Group (Quartile Split)	<12 Years, 2.5 Months	1,055	30.2	0.94
	12 Years, 2.5 Months to < 12 Years 7.7 Months	1,058	32.7	1.12
	12 Years 7.7 Months to < 13.5 Years	1,055	52.7	2.54
	13.5 Years and older	1,056	66.0	4.19
Meal Status (Proxy for family income)	Not eligible	852	31.1	1.25
	Reduced eligible	398	35.9	1.30
	Eligible for free school lunches	2,977	50.8	2.59
Academic Performance*	Lowest	939	75.1	5.17
	Third highest	879	63.3	2.57

(Quartile Split)	Second highest	989	39.5	1.29
	Highest	990	18.2	0.39

* See explanation in the paragraphs that follow.

GPA and Test Scores: Constructing an Academic Performance Indicator

The data extraction from “Infinite Campus” (the JPPSS automated record keeping system) lists GPA for 3,362 (79.5%) 6th grade students, and GPA is missing for 865 (20.5%). Categorical indicators of Louisiana Education Assessment Program (LEAP) test scores are listed for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. The values listed are 1= Unsatisfactory, 2= Approaching Basic, 3= Basic, 4= Mastery and 5= Advanced. Summing these indicators produces a variable ranging from four ($n= 64$, 2.9%)—“Unsatisfactory” in all four subjects to 20 ($n= 1$, 0.05%)—“Advanced” in all four subjects. Across all 6th graders, the mean of summed test scores is 10.89, the median is 11.0 and the mode (the most frequent score) is 12. All four test scores are listed for 2,129 (50.4%) students and one or more is missing for 2,098 (49.6%). A cross-tabulation of indicators for non-missing GPA and test scores shows that 430 (10.2%) students have neither, 435 (10.3%) have test scores only, 1,668 (39.5%) has a GPA only and 1,694 (40.1%) have both scores.

To create a single academic indicator that minimizes the number of missing cases, first, a quartile split is computed for GPA. Eight hundred forty (25.0%) students with a listed GPA lower than 1.65 (Mean test score= 8.957) comprise the lowest achieving quartile, those with a GPA between 1.65 and 2.2082 ($n= 810$, 24.1%—Mean test score= 9.689) fall into the second quartile, students with a GPA between 2.2083 and 2.9166 ($n= 838$, 24.9%—Mean test

score= 10.51) fall into the third quartile, and those with a GPA above 2.9167 ($n= 874$, 26.0%—Mean test score= 13.272) comprise the highest-achieving quartile.

The mean test scores for each GPA quartile are utilized to create a four-level test score variable. If *GPA is missing* and summed test scores are less than 9, students are classified in the first (lowest achieving) quartile. If GPA is missing and test scores sum to 9 or 10, students are assigned to the second quartile (the third highest). Students with a missing GPA whose summed test scores are 11 or 12 are assigned to the third quartile (the second highest), and those with a test score sum of 13 or more are assigned to the highest achieving quartile. This creates a 4-level academic indicator with 3,797 (89.8%) valid values and 430 (10.2%)—those with neither test scores nor GPA—missing values. This is the indicator utilized in the last data rows of Table 6 to depict the association with total disciplinary infractions.

Not only is this indicator of 6th grade academic performance highly related to total disciplinary infractions, it is significantly related to each other student subgroup. To simplify analyses of the effect of SRT on two key outcome variables, disciplinary infractions (not including minor infractions) and days missed from school, academic performance is statistically “controlled” by including it in the analysis.

Effects of SRT on Disciplinary Infractions and School days Missed

The available data at this time support a two-group, post-test only research design, sometimes referred to as a static group comparison, or cross-sectional design. Where “O” signifies an observation (testing) and “X” the intervention (Social Responsibility Training), this pre-experimental design is diagrammed as:

Intervention	X	O ₁
Comparison		O ₁

This design provides an indication of how SRT may be affecting JPPSS 6th graders, and consistent with the evaluation plan, it sets the stage for a more intensive research design capable of ruling out rival explanations for intervention effects in 2009-10.

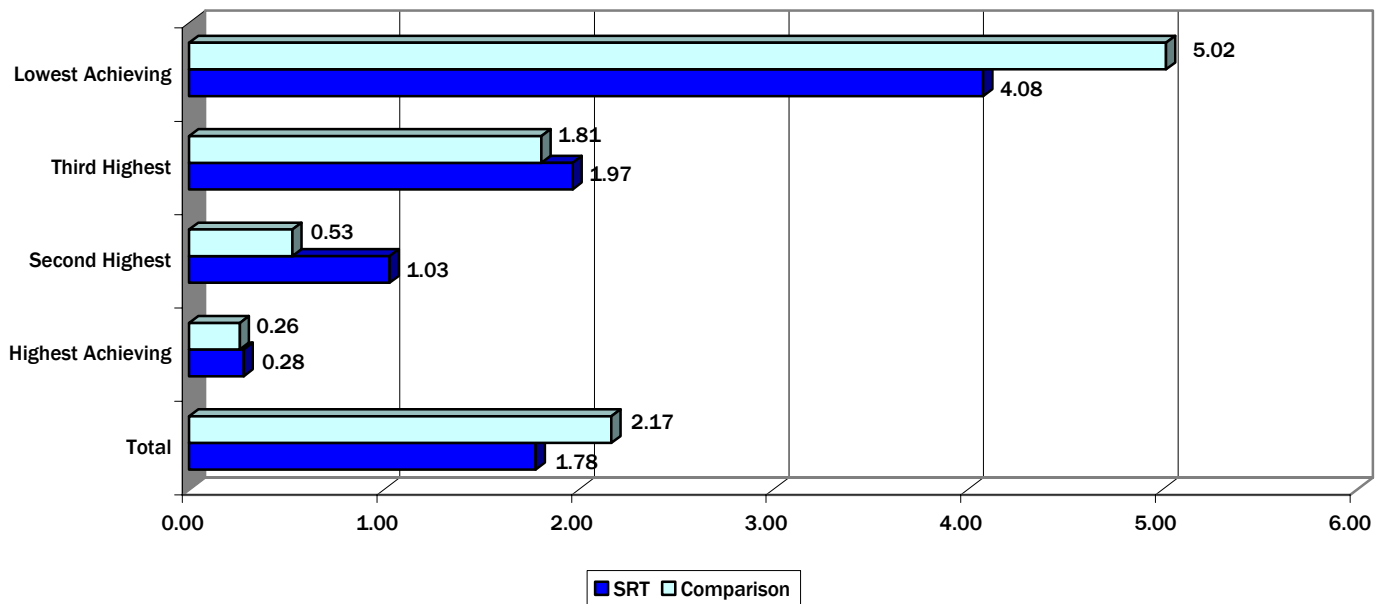
To construct groups of JPPSS 6th grade students that were exposed to SRT (the intervention condition), and to contrast them with students that were not (the comparison condition), the evaluation team had hoped to utilize records of the number of SRT lessons completed by each student. The “SRT Attended” indicator provided in the data extraction, however, appears to be incomplete. It contradicts information provided during the 2008-09 school year by the district’s SRT Implementation Facilitator and by the responses of individual teachers to the Implementation Survey conducted in May, 2009, (discussed on pages 13-21). Consequently, “SRT Attended” is not utilized here as an indicator of exposure to the intervention. To be completely safe, however, nine students at Marrero and 25 at Roosevelt (the “comparison” schools) that “SRT Attended” suggests were exposed to SRT are omitted from the comparison condition.

Because SRT may not have been implemented at Patrick Haynes Middle School (an “Academy” school with a 6th grade class of 56 that is dissimilar to 6th grade classes in most other schools) and at Jefferson Wetland Marine (17 6th graders), these schools are not included in the intervention condition. This configuration produces an intervention condition with 3,519 JPPSS 6th grade students and a comparison condition with 601 students. This total (4,120 students) holds out of the analysis 17 students at Jefferson Wetland Marine, 56

students at Patrick Taylor, nine at Marrero who records indicate received some SRT exposure and 25 at Roosevelt, also who may have been exposed to SRT.

A two-way analysis of variance for Infractions by quasi-experimental condition and the four-level academic performance indicator shows that although the mean number of disciplinary infractions (this analysis does not include minor infractions) is lower in the SRT condition ($M= 1.78$) than in the comparison condition ($M= 2.17$), the main effect for SRT is not statistically significant. There is a significant main effect for academic performance, as the combined mean number of disciplinary infractions rises steadily as academic performance becomes poorer ($M= 0.281$ in the highest achieving category; $M= 0.958$ among 6th graders in the second highest category; $M= 1.942$ infractions in the third highest achievement category, and $M= 4.24$ among the lowest achieving 6th graders); $F(3, 3705) = 170.123, p < .001$.

Figure 3. Mean Disciplinary Infractions by Quasi-Experimental Condition and Academic Achievement



An important feature of this analysis is the significant interaction between SRT and academic performance. That is, the effect of SRT depends upon the level of academic achievement (as illustrated by Figure 3, SRT has the most effect in the lowest-achieving student group); $F(3, 3705) = 4.884, p < .003$. This important quantitative result is consistent with the strong anecdotal testimony provided by teachers in the system's alternative middle schools, which educate students that have been suspended from other campuses.

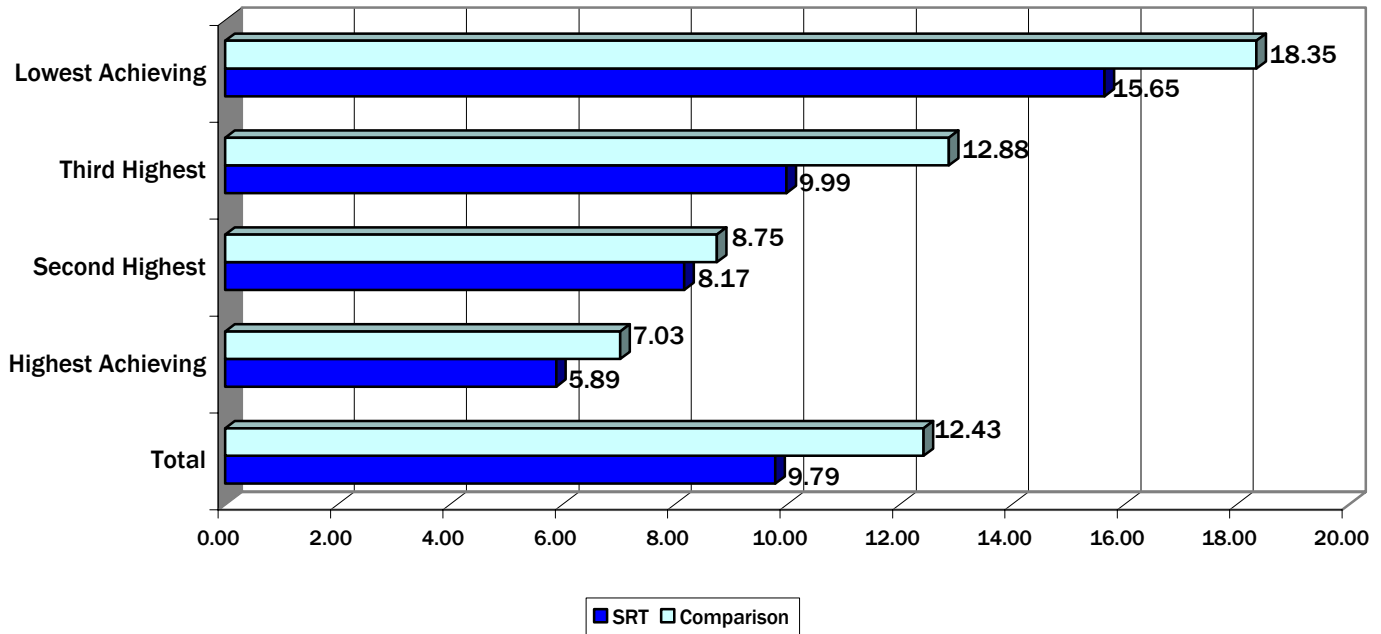
Classifying disciplinary infractions into three categories suggests that Social Responsibility Training has a greater effect among low-achieving students with regard to attendance (D18- Cutting Class, Leaving Campus and D19- Excessive Tardiness and/ or absence) and disobedience, disruption, disrespect and profanity (D01- Willful Disobedience, D02- Disrespect for Authority, D04- Speaks Profane and/ or Obscene Language, D10-Disturbs Class, Habitual Violation of School Rules, and D-12 Writes Profane and/ or Obscene Language) than on more intractable behaviors like fighting and violence (D06- Bodily Injury to Students, D15-Throws Object to Injure Others, D16- Fighting Students and/ or Faculty, and D23-Assault and Battery). These results are below the threshold for statistical significance, however.

Advice from Strategic Solutions Applied, the JPPSS data contractor, suggests that "Days Missed" is the most accurate index of attendance, which serves as the second major dependent variable in this investigation. Across all 6th graders, this value ranges from zero days ($n= 648, 15.3\%$) to 140 days ($n= 1, 0.02\%$) with a mean 9.42 days missed, a median of 6.5 days, and a modal absence of zero days. To place this distribution in context, 25% of 6th graders miss fewer than two days, 50% miss fewer than 6.5 days, and 75% miss fewer than 13.0 school days.

Special Education students miss significantly more days ($M= 14.89$) than non-Special Education students ($M= 8.83$); the average number of days missed is highest among American Indian students ($M= 10.50$) days, next-highest among Black, non-Hispanic students ($M= 10.28$), White students miss ($M= 9.199$ days), Hispanics ($M= 8.05$) and Asians miss ($M= 4.79$) days. Days missed is not significantly different by student gender, but students from lower-income families miss more school days on average ($M= 10.215$), than “Reduced eligible” ($M= 7.136$) students, and those from families ineligible for subsidized lunches ($M= 7.707$). Total school days missed is strongly associated with academic achievement. The average number of days missed in the lowest GPA/test score category is ($M= 15.966$), descending linearly to ($M= 10.402$) days in the third highest category, to ($M= 8.23$) days in the second highest category, and to ($M= 5.955$) days among the highest academic achievers. Total days missed is also linearly associated with age group, from ($M= 6.671$) among the youngest students to ($M= 14.427$) among the oldest 6th graders in the system. As with the analysis of disciplinary infractions, academic performance is statistically “controlled” by including it in the analysis.

The results of a two-way analysis of variance for school days missed by quasi-experimental condition and the four-level academic performance indicator are illustrated by Figure 4. This analysis shows that across all academic achievement categories, the mean number of days missed is lower in the SRT condition ($M= 9.79$) than in the comparison condition ($M= 12.43$). The main effect for SRT is statistically significant; $F(1, 3705) = 14.045, p < .001$. There is also a significant main effect for academic performance, as the mean number of days missed rises steadily as academic performance becomes poorer; $F(3, 3705) = 92.538, p < .001$. The interaction between SRT exposure and academic achievement is not statistically significant. This means that the effects of SRT are not dependent upon the level of academic achievement with regard to school attendance. SRT appears to affect students at all levels of achievement.

Figure 4. School Days Missed by Quasi-Experimental Condition and Academic Performance



2009-10 School Year: Next Steps in the Evaluation

These very promising findings will be more rigorously investigated in the 2009-10 school year, utilizing a two-group, pre- and post-test quasi-experimental design. Where “O” signifies an observation (testing) and “X” the intervention (Social Responsibility Training), this quasi-experimental design is diagrammed as:

Intervention	O ₁	X	O ₂
Comparison	O ₁		O ₂

Also called the nonequivalent group, pretest-posttest design, this approach partially eliminates a major limitation of the static group comparison, or post-test only design employed in this report. At the start of the study, differences between students in the 5th grade that are assigned to the intervention or comparison condition by virtue of school enrollment in the 6th grade can be examined. If students in the intervention condition perform better than comparison students on post-test measures, initial differences can be ruled out (if the groups were in fact similar on the pre-test) as an explanation for the differences. The two-group, pre- and post-test quasi-experimental design is the most common design in educational research.

Better SRT implementation data and a more accurate indicator of student exposure to SRT are also critical to a more rigorous investigation of its effects. The 2009-10 school year at JPPSS has seen great change, as students, teachers and site administrators have been reassigned in the context of a court order concerning racial integration. Our challenge will be to collect the necessary evaluation data without burdening teachers and administrators who are intensely focused upon improving test scores. The data presented in this report offer strong indications that SRT is working. The importance of the role that SRT appears to be playing to minimize school days missed, and to affect the lowest-achieving JPPSS students, in turn improving the learning environment for all 6th grade students in the system. The need for strong, quantitative evidence regarding the effect of Social Responsibility Training on JPPSS student discipline, attendance and academic achievement can not be overstated, if SRT is to transition from a promising to an evidence-based program.

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