

## **Transferring Personal and Social Responsibility of Underserved Youth to the Classroom**

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This report is an evaluation of an in-school mentoring program for 16 underserved elementary youngsters. The goals of the program are related to a Personal and Social Responsibility Model (Hellison, 1995), which focuses on the following: (1) self-control and respect for the rights of others; (2) effort and participation; (3) self-direction; and (4) helping others. Teacher and mentor journals, and student exit interviews, constituted the data sources. Data sources were reviewed and a program-goal matrix was developed to determine the level of performance of each participant. Results of the study indicated that the youngsters were able to apply the goal of effort to learning tasks in the classroom. The club members struggled, however, to transfer some of the other values to the classroom. One particular problematic area was the club members' inability to set personal goals in the classroom setting.

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**KEY WORDS:** mentoring; underserved youth; youth development; responsibility; values.

Like many urban cities in our country, Greensboro, North Carolina, has begun to give considerable attention to escalating school suspension, combative behavior, and indifference of students in its schools. Once relegated to middle and high schools, these troubling behaviors have drifted into the elementary schools. Elementary teachers are now seeing more and more angry, violent children in their classrooms even in the kindergarten (Guilford County Schools, 1995; Varela, 1996). This was found to be especially true for the underserved areas of the city. Consequently, classroom teachers were asking for the development of alternative programs where additional training and collaborative programming between school and outside agencies can be provided.

In response to these concerns, a program called Project Effort was developed between Guilford County Schools and the University of North Carolina at

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Greensboro (UNCG). This collaborative venture focused on dismantling the problematic behaviors that some elementary kids bring into the classroom daily. We also felt that most intervention programs focused on ways to contend with oppositional behavior and poor motivational levels at the middle and high school levels. Certainly school suspension, metal detectors, zero-tolerance policies, and hallway cameras offered “quick fixes” to dealing with troublesome youth. Little attention, however, was given to ways in which the sources of misbehavior could be dismantled.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the impact of a 6-month sport club and mentoring program, Project Effort, for 16 elementary school youngsters who live in the “Grove” area of Southeast Greensboro, North Carolina. The Grove is a low-socioeconomic area of the city where the crime rate is one of the highest in Greensboro. All the youngsters come from the same elementary school, where they receive subsidized (free) lunch. The school is composed of 97% African-American students. Students for this program were selected because of their high office referral and low motivation toward academic work. Also included in the program were nine classroom teachers and eight mentors who worked with the children in their school.

The general goal of the sport and mentoring programs was to get kids to be more responsible for their academic work and behavior in school. The club helped students to experience ways of being responsible through physical activity, and mentoring helped them apply the responsibility values in the classroom.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, we talk about the sport and mentoring components of Project Effort. Special attention is given to Don Hellison’s Personal and Social Responsibility Model (1995) and how it connects to the goals of these two aspects of Project Effort. Second, we describe the evaluation process of the project. The final part gives a description of how the youngsters’ behavior in classroom settings was affected by their participation.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT EFFORT**

There appears to be growing evidence to show that physical activity, along with mentoring programs, can nurture the attributes associated with resiliency and adaptability to at-risk living conditions (Hellison and Cutforth, 1997). That is, physical activity provides ample opportunity for youngsters to interact with others, engage in moral decision making, and simply have fun through play. Mentoring offers youngsters not only contact with another person, often an adult, but also serves as a vehicle for having someone help in applying strategies like goal setting and problem solving to the classroom setting.

### ***Sports Club***

A Sports Club made up the physical activity portion of Project Effort. The content of the club was derived from Don Hellison's Personal and Social Responsibility Model (Hellison, 1995). The model has been used extensively with at-risk populations in Chicago and other urban and rural settings in America (e.g., Denver, Greeley, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, Grand Forks). It centers on the notion of empowering at-risk youth to take more control over their lives and engage in self-development regardless of external forces that significantly limit their vision and options for the future. Social responsibility involves being sensitive to the rights, feelings, and needs of others, and personal responsibility relates to self-nurturing and growth. Hellison's model operates from five basic levels of responsibility, each level having its own set of goals and strategies. These levels are:<sup>1</sup>

- Level I—Self-control and being respectful to others
- Level II—Effort and participation
- Level III—Self-direction
- Level IV—Helping others
- Level V—Applying Levels I–IV outside the gym

The levels served as an excellent club reference point for developing learning experiences for moving students from one level to another. They were also “focal points” for individual goal setting.

The responsibility values were taught as the club members participated in basketball, tennis, lacrosse, soccer, and fencing. We felt that the highly interactive and emotional character of sport activity allowed us to teach humanistic values and promote social and emotional growth. This was done by teaching students how to stay focused, set goals, and persist in the face of challenge.

Students were bused weekly to UNCG's Health and Human Performance Building for physical activity instruction. This offered a safe supervised place to participate in the club's activities. Having the program after school gave us flexibility in planning and avoided any disruptions of the regular school program.

Instruction was given by the authors with assistance from undergraduate and graduate student volunteers. In most cases, volunteer students used the experience to fulfill field requirements of undergraduate courses. For example, one of the introductory courses in teacher education requires students to complete 12 hours of work in a physical activity setting. In addition, a universitywide service learning course required that students assist in the club and mentoring programs. Other students volunteered just for the personal experience of working with kids.

### ***Mentoring Program***

The second component of Project Effort was a one-on-one mentoring program for the students in the Sports Club. Recall, we wanted to see whether the values and goals of the club could be applied back at their school. Consequently, the general goal of the mentoring component was to get youngsters to transfer the goal-setting strategies and values acquired in the clubs to the classroom. To do this, graduate and undergraduate students and the authors spent an additional two hours working each week with two students at the school site.

The focus of this part of the program was on goal setting for rerouting poor academic performance and social behavior. Tied to goal setting were efforts to help kids gain a sense of control over the successes and failures in their school and social life. We felt many of the kids in Project Effort had become helpless in terms of succeeding within the mainstream of schooling. Their feeling of helplessness was often viewed as permanent and pervasive throughout many of their life experiences. This significantly reduced their resiliency to deal with setbacks and reduced hope and optimism for a bright future (Martinek and Hellison, 1997).

Mentors continually reinforced the importance of trying hard in the face of challenges. A primary focus of this process was to help the students transfer “gym goals” (e.g., working on a task without bothering someone or helping a fellow club member out) to classroom and home settings. Monitoring and encouragement were important roles played by the mentors during the goal-setting process. The idea was to make the child believe that trying hard was one of the reasons for success. This included providing alternative strategies for approaching learning tasks or behavioral difficulties in the classroom and gymnasium.

A series of sessions help to prepare and assist the mentors throughout the year. Two occurred in the fall semester. These 1-hour sessions were designed to ensure that each mentor had (1) multicultural competence; (2) knowledge of the goals of the sport program; (3) an understanding of social and emotional differences among children and youth; and (4) competence in goal setting. Two other meetings served as follow-up sessions. A final session was held with parents, mentors, and teachers in the latter part of the spring semester. Table 1 provides an overview of the content and purpose of each mentoring session. A training manual (Project Effort, 1997) was developed to guide the mentors throughout the mentoring phase. The mentor worked with the same child for the entire school year using Hellison’s levels as a guide for the goal-setting sessions. Mentors were monitored throughout the program by the program leaders, who made sure that they were relatively consistent in the way they worked with the youngsters.

Goal setting provided some structure for the mentoring sessions. For each

**TABLE 1.**  
**Content of Mentoring Training Sessions**

Session	Content	Resources
1. Beginning of fall semester	Goals of Project Effort Introduction to mentoring Enhancing cross-cultural competence	Willis (1992) Mentor manual (Getting Kids to Try) Guest speaker—Deborah Jones, principal
2. Beginning of fall semester	Goal-setting strategies Filling out journal sheets Assignment of mentee(s)	Mentor manual (Getting Kids to Try) Vignettes for role playing
3. Beginning of spring semester	Mentor sharing African-Americans and schooling	Ogbu (1997)
4. Middle of spring semester	Parent night with mentors, teachers, and kids	Calendar to parents that showed responsibility goals
5. End of semester	Mentor sharing and planning for next school year	None

child, the mentors tried to set goals that were personally meaningful. The goals originated from problems that they were having, where the mentors talked about possible strategies for solving them. Goals also emerged from the children's interests, such as a sport or subject in school, where the mentors encouraged them to accomplish something in particular. If the goal was challenging or the benefits of accomplishment were realized, their efforts were reinforced by the experience.

The goal-setting process also created opportunities for discussion. When goals were not achieved, it may have been due to lack of effort as much as poor goal-setting strategies. The children were more apt to set grand or vague goals, what we call "big goals." They were encouraged to think about "little goals" or more specific short-term goals to help them achieve their big goals. For example, rather than "trying to get an A on a math test," they could study for 30 minutes for 3 days leading up to the test. This approach also utilized Levels II and III, where the student worked on improvement and the development of a *personal plan* to do it. Setting positive goals was also encouraged so they focused on what they wanted to happen, not on what they did not want to happen. Goals such as "not getting into trouble" were translated to "following directions" or "not getting in someone's face."

Finally, the mentoring sessions enabled the child to interact with an adult each week. This allowed the child to be heard and affirmed. Mentors reinforced

their efforts regardless of outcome. Sometimes, they worked on “reframing” issues. For example, one of the students was described as “troublesome” by his teacher because he did not remain seated. He loved to get up and socialize with his classmates. While this was disruptive for the teacher, the mentor wanted to assure the student that being friendly with others was OK. However, she emphasized that it was not appropriate when the teacher was teaching; there was a right time and place. In this case, mentors could praise children for their attributes while encouraging them to conform to social norms over which they had little control.

### ***Working with Teachers***

A related component of the mentoring program was to involve the teachers who worked with these students in the classroom. Two workshops (fall and spring) were held to assist the teachers in integrating the Personal and Social Responsibility Model into their classrooms. In the fall workshop, the nine classroom teachers were introduced to the model and shown how the goals of the club were taught. They were also given a poster with the goals and strategies used during the physical activity and mentor phases. Teachers were asked to place the poster in their classrooms and refer to the levels when discussing appropriate behavior with their students. The poster also served as an excellent reference for valuable dialogue in the classroom. This placed teachers in a better position to deal with behavior problems in their classroom.

In the spring, the staff and teachers met again to discuss the various outcomes of the past year and make recommendations for the next school year. Several teachers, for example, suggested ways of improving goal-setting efforts in the classroom by integrating the responsibility values into the class work of other students in their classroom. Others offered ideas about the collection of evaluation data. In all cases, a spirit of collaboration was maintained through the sharing of ideas among university staff and the elementary school teachers.

## **DESIGN FOR EVALUATING THE EFFICACY OF PROJECT EFFORT**

In order to evaluate outcomes of Project Effort, a participant-goal matrix (Demos, 1989; Van Tulder, Van Der Vegt, and Veenman, 1993) was developed from the data sources generated from journal entries and exit interviews. The matrix enabled us to see how well the club members transferred the values and goals of the Responsibility Model to the classroom setting.

### ***Data Sources***

Data collection took place over a 6-month period (October–April). Three data sources were used. The first was weekly journal entries from the mentors of the club members. Mentors were asked to fill out a mentor journal sheet

following each goal-setting session. Since there were eight mentors, each was assigned to two students. The entries described the types of goal(s) set (if any were set), the strategies that were used to reach the goal(s) (e.g., self-talk, self-imagining, reward attainment), how the students had done on the previous goal(s), and general impressions of how the mentor sessions were going. Twelve to fourteen mentor sheets were collected from each mentor.

A second data source was journal card entries from classroom teachers who taught the club members at school. Teachers were asked to fill out a journal card for each club member who was assigned to their classroom. These cards were deposited each week in a "journal card box." The box was located in the teacher lounge, and the cards were made available for referral by the mentor for goal-setting purposes. One of the things teachers were asked to describe was how the student had done in class that week. In some cases, the teacher described how the student had worked on the goal (i.e., if the student had set a goal that week or applied the strategy for working on the goal), or how the student had behaved that week. The entries also provided ongoing information about the program's impact on the youngsters' classroom behavior. There were 10–15 cards per student available for analysis.

A third source was responses from exit interviews. Each club member was interviewed at the end of the program in order to give further insights into his or her views of the goals of the program and what he or she had learned. The interview was semistructured and focused on two basic views of the program. The first related to what the students saw as the major goals of Project Effort and how the goals could be used in the classroom. The second focused on how well the students were able to set goals in the classroom.

#### ***Development of a Participant-Goal Matrix***

The development of the participant-goal matrix included the assessment of each student across the goals of Project Effort. This allowed us to do within- and across-subject program analysis. The goals were grouped under three general categories: (1) personal responsibility, (2) social responsibility, and (3) transference. The goal(s) subsumed under each category were:

##### *Personal Responsibility*

- Trying things out and not giving up when challenged
- Being self-directed and setting personal goals

##### *Social Responsibility*

- Showing self-control and respect for the rights of others
- Caring about and being responsive to others' needs

*Transference*

- Being able to apply the goals and values of the club in the classroom

Using a specified procedure, the participant-goal matrix was created from the data, which were compared for common and contrasting patterns. The procedure consisted of first reviewing all the data (journal cards, mentor journals, etc.) collected for each student. After each student's data were reviewed, a code was assigned to each of the program goals for classroom settings. For example, a student was coded for showing self-control and respect for others as it related to the classroom setting. Then the student was coded for trying things out and so on.

A student was coded either a +, a \*, or a - for each of the goal categories. A + meant that the student showed evidence of demonstrating that goal most of the time. An \* meant that each goal was demonstrated some of the time. A - meant that each goal was demonstrated little of the time. All three researchers reviewed and coded each student. Table 2 shows the general rubric that was used to evaluate the various goals of the program using the four data sources.

All of our club members struggled with goals in the classroom at the beginning of this program (that is why they were referred to us). Consequently, we were looking to see how they progressed throughout the year. The evaluation,

**TABLE 2.**  
**Rubric for Examining Student Data (Teacher and Mentor Journals,  
Interview Responses)**

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*Little of the time (-)*

The data indicate that the club member demonstrated the values of the club little of the time during the year. Attributes like effort, interacting well with others, setting goals, acquiring ownership in the club values, or respecting and caring for others were seldom reflected in the majority of data sources.

*Some of the time (\*)*

The data indicate that the club member demonstrated the values of the club some of the time during the year. In general, effort, interactions with others, goal setting, ownership, or respecting and caring for others was reflected throughout the year. There were some periods, however, where the club member did not demonstrate the values of the club.

*Most of the time (+)*

The data indicate that the club member demonstrated the values of the club most of the time during the year. The club member was able to consistently exhibit effort, goal setting, ownership, or respecting and caring for others. That is, there was clear evidence of consistent and sustained growth in applying the club values to the classroom setting.

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therefore, focused on the club member's overall performance for the duration of the program.

Reaching sufficient intercoder reliability included several steps. Initially, the codes from one of the reports were compared to the reports of the other two coders. Discrepancies were discussed and clarified until a clear set of codes emerged and consensus among the coders was reached. Next, teachers were consulted to verify the coders' evaluation of the classroom data.

### OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION OF PARTICIPANT-GOAL MATRIX

Table 3 provides a matrix derived from the codings for each student. The codings are broken down across three main categories: personal responsibility, social responsibility, and transference.

**TABLE 3.**  
**Participant-Goal Matrix**

Student	Personal responsibility		Social responsibility		Ability to transfer
	Effort (trying things out)	Self-direction (set goals)	Self-control	Caring	
Frederick	*	—	*	—	M
Rayshone	*	—	+	*	M
Lateesha	+	+	*	*	H
Leonard	—	—	—	—	L
Jamal	+	*	*	+	H
Sherman	+	—	*	+	M
Jeremy	+	—	—	—	L
Chantel	*	—	—	—	L
Deanna	*	*	*	—	M
Shanelle	+	—	+	*	M
Shaundra	*	+	*	*	H
Jamour	*	—	—	—	L
Chris S	—	—	—	—	L
Otis	+	+	*	*	H
Patrice	*	*	+	+	H
Raymond	*	—	—	—	L

+ Showed most of the time.

\* Showed some of the time.

— Showed little of the time.

### ***Personal Responsibility***

Two important personal responsibility goals of the club were to encourage the youngsters to try things out (not give up when given challenging tasks) and be self-directed. These goals encouraged youngsters to acquire a commitment to self-improvement.

#### *Effort—Trying Things Out*

The focus on Level II, effort and participation, was intended to help students positively experience the program's content. Participation counters self-defeating attitudes and behaviors, such as indifference (Hellison, 1995) and learned helplessness (Martinek, 1996). Level II was also intended to help students understand the importance of "giving it a try" even when the task was difficult. Benard (1993) believes that persistence and problem solving are essential for overcoming other challenges in life.

The journal card entries indicated that the club members' efforts appeared to improve in the classroom setting. With the exception of two club members, the rest of the youngsters (88%) appeared to put forth effort most or some of the time. While we cannot fully attribute this improvement in work habits to the club, we felt somewhat confident that participation in Project Effort played a role. For example, in one of her journal card entries a fourth-grade teacher described changes she thought were due to the Sports Club of Project Effort (Martinek, McLaughlin, and Schilling, 1999):

Taneka really likes Project Effort. Her work was sporadic at the beginning of the year. She would like to get on her classmates both verbally and physically. Lately she has gotten away from that. She seems happier with herself. I think the after-school activities have something to do with it. She always talks about how much fun Project Effort is. I think it is really working for her. (p. 64)

#### *Self-Direction—Goal Setting*

Personal responsibility also included working independently in setting personal goals. This means trying to get kids to go beyond Level II values and to learn to take more responsibility for their personal well-being (Hellison, 1995). Initially, goal setting was a difficult and obscure process with much guidance needed. One of the things we had to do was clarify the meaning of "setting a goal." This was usually done when mentors talked about the levels of responsibility, especially Level III: self-direction.

When we examined goal-setting efforts in the classroom, we found that only six (37%) of club members attempted to set goals either most of the time, or some of the time while the others (63%) set them little of the time. Most of the

goals that were set in the classroom were related to Level I, although there were other goals set as well (e.g., getting homework done for 1 day, choosing a project for the science fair, practicing “flash cards” on my own, or helping my mother out at home). Reluctance to initiate goal setting in the classroom was an issue throughout the program.

One reason for this reticence in goal setting was that many club members believed getting better grades, staying out of trouble, conforming to school policy, or doing homework was not important in their life. Our hunch is that intimidating others, playing sports like basketball, surviving stressful family circumstances, knowing how to deal with teachers and the principal, and not being bullied by others were much more important. University of California anthropologist John Ogbu (1997) agrees. He believes that for most underserved youngsters, especially African-Americans, embracing the norms and values of the school culture is not important. Consequently, setting goals that focus on academic and social performance was quite difficult.

Another reason for resisting goal setting was their fear of failure (Martinek and Hellison, 1998). The school biographies of the club members are plagued by frequent academic and social failure. For years, school performance indicators such as poor grades, unsatisfactory conduct marks, and teacher comments reflecting concern about academic and social capability have crystallized their feelings of self-doubt. It is little wonder, then, that some participants did not attempt to set any type of academic or social goals (Ogbu, 1997).

This reluctance was portrayed by one of our club members, Jeremy. In his mentoring sessions, Jeremy often remained distant and would not respond to any efforts aimed at helping him to set goals or to work on academic and behavioral improvements. His mentor best described this reluctance and the lack of importance placed on school goals in this journal entry:

During our mentor sessions, he just totally shut down. This has happened most of the time this year. He does not speak and apparently “zones out.” Although he eventually engaged in conversation with me, he tended to be inconsistent and even moody during many of the sessions. If he was asked to describe something he might want to work on in school, he either shook his head, ignored the question, or changed the subject. I just don’t think he is connected to things that go on here.

A final problem experienced during goal setting was the student’s uneasiness with the mentor. For some mentors, initial meetings with the student were spent in silence or with minimal dialogue. This was mainly due to the student trying to figure out what the “true intentions” of the mentor were. For most of the students, adults have come in and out of their lives, leaving them to fend for themselves. Therefore, trust building became an essential prerequisite to doing any type of meaningful goal setting.

Fortunately, a few mentors were able to use successful strategies to “connect” with the club member. For some, making the connection was merely staying with the child, even if the child was indifferent about engaging in any kind of goal setting. Some shared personal stories, while others set up formal and informal “agreements.” Other mentors set their own goals with the club members.

Mike, a graduate student, found that once the connection was made, everything seemed to flow well. According to Mike making this connection was not done overnight. Rather, it evolved from session to session. Each session enlarged the “comfort zone” for both him and the club member. This, in turn, fostered greater dialogue between the two of them as shown in one of Mike’s journal entries:

At first, it’s kind of awkward trying to talk to Jamal, but after a while I felt like he really wanted to open up and talk about everything in his life. In the beginning we kept the conversation casual, just getting to know each other. I brought in pictures of my home and family so he could get to know me better in hopes of opening up more. We hit it off pretty good, and by the third session I think we were pretty comfortable with each other.

### ***Social Responsibility***

Another goal of the program was to foster social responsibility. Self-control and respect and caring for others are the values that make up this goal. These two values focus on the moral issue of doing what is right for others. In the Sports Club, these values were often the centerpieces for resolving controversy about inclusion, leadership, and fair play.

#### *Self-Control and Respecting the Rights of Others*

We found 10 (63%) of the members were able to show respect and self-control most or some of the time in the classroom. On the other hand, 6 (37%) did this little of the time and were consistently in trouble with the teacher or principal. Teacher journal entries indicated that those few who struggled with this goal would frequently engage in trash talk toward the teacher, “dissing” other classmates, and getting into fights. Most of the students, however, became reconnected to more positive aspects of school life by gaining some control over their anger and frustrations.

One such member was a fifth-grader, Shaundra. Throughout her elementary school years she had earned a reputation for being an extremely “streetwise” and “in your face” kid. When she came to Project Effort 2 years ago, she brought a lot of hostility with her and the idea of respecting others and maintaining self-control was unsettling to her. By year’s end she became one of our

best club members. Shaundra took on leadership roles readily and was able to shed the combative persona she brought with her in the beginning. She was able to avoid the temptations that provoke confrontation in both the club and the classroom. Judith Wallerstein (1993) called this process “adaptive distancing,” which was reflected in Shaundra’s response to an exit interview question that asked what she had learned from Project Effort:

I think there should be less fighting because I don’t really think that it’s cool [to fight]. You can get killed while you are fighting. [You should] not fight as much. If you were fittin’ to say something ugly, you should stop and think about what you were going to say and then you should change the sentence around.

#### *Caring for Others*

Caring for others was one of the most difficult goals for the club members to reach. This goal was discussed often during several mentoring sessions (and during the club!). Only eight of the club members (50%) showed this most or some of the time. This has typically been a difficult goal for club participants to achieve for a couple of reasons. First, many of the students lack the social maturity needed to be concerned about others (Greenberger and Sorenson, 1974). As mentioned earlier, personal needs (social, emotional, and physical) are a priority for the youngsters, thus making group welfare a lesser concern for them. Empathy and being a good listener are Level IV attributes not easily acquired by most youngsters. A second reason is that many of the role models they see on television or in video games are not very positive. Thanks to electronic media, many kids see celebrities in a number of different contexts. In the sport arena, violent play, getting in someone’s face, doing whatever it takes to win, and just doing “your thing” appear to be the qualities that make one a celebrity. One of our teachers commented that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find role models who are true heroes for kids, that is, those who are compassionate and courageous enough to make a contribution to society.

#### *Transference*

The final goal to be examined was the overall ability of each club member to apply (transfer) the goals of the club to the classroom. This was a fairly objective evaluation. If the matrix ratings for a club member showed that *all* four goals (effort, self-direction, self-control, caring) were applied either some or most of the time, high transference (H) was indicated. If the club member showed that two or three of the four goals were applied either some or most of the time, medium transference (M) was indicated. Low transference (L) was identified when one or none of the goals were applied either some or most of

the time. Ten members (62%) demonstrated medium and high levels of transference. Six (37%) were at a low level.

We found that applying the responsibility levels in the classroom was a slow and evolving process. An example of how this process worked is the story of Lateesha, a fourth-grade club member. Two main features characterized Lateesha's classroom performance. First was the variety of reprimands directed toward Lateesha by her teacher throughout the year. The data from the teacher's journal card indicated that during the first part of the year most of the reprimands were in response to being disrespectful to the teacher, throwing occasional temper tantrums, alienating classmates, or just quitting in the middle of a task. During the last weeks of the program, however, she became more focused on doing her work and controlling her temper. By the end of the program, we felt that she was beginning to exercise responsibility values in the classroom. Three important incidents seemed to support this contention.

The first was her contribution to the club's newsletter. The club newsletter is published each month and distributed to the parents of the members and to all the teachers and students at the elementary school. The newsletter describes various activities and accomplishments of the members. It also serves as an important link to the parent and school community.

In February, Lateesha was asked to write a feature article about what it was like to have a substitute teacher. She was reluctant to do this at first but finally agreed. With a little editing she produced an excellent article that illustrated how she used the goals of the club to make a substitute teacher feel welcome. This was an important process for her. She was able to commit and follow-through on something that was not easy for her to do. She also was extremely proud of the article and requested copies of the newsletter to show her mom and aunt. This was a great example of showing how both Level II and Level III goals were applied to something outside the gym.

A second incident took place during one of the goal-setting sessions. Lateesha was having a bad day; the session did not go well. Finally, after 20 minutes of a difficult and strained discussion, she abruptly told the mentor that "this is not working" and that she would like to go back to her class. Later that day, Lateesha came to the club and participated well in the activities. It was at the end of the Sports Club session that something wonderful happened. After the club members had left the gym, Lateesha asked to talk to the mentor who worked with her earlier that day. After a little hesitation and stammering, she said, "I am sorry that our session didn't go well today. We will do better next time." This was an incredible statement for her to make. It reflected great insight and the caring and sensitivity toward others that we have been trying to get the kids to internalize. Up to this point, it was something that had eluded her most of the year.

The final incident took place at the school's end-of-the-year awards cere-

mony. Every year each teacher gives out a “principal’s award.” The award recognizes students who have shown the most improvement in effort and citizenship. Lateesha got it! For her, it was affirmation of her ability to meet some difficult challenges head-on. For us, it exemplified someone who was able to transfer the values of the club (especially Levels I and II) to the classroom. This was not easy for her and will no doubt continue to be a challenge for her next year.

Seeing values of responsibility applied to the classroom takes time. For those six club members who appeared to have little need in embracing the values and goals of the club, a longer stay in Project Effort may be warranted. Or perhaps the club and its goals are simply not for them; their “street values” are too steadfast to be replaced (Howe, 1991). We also know that ownership may be more than simply transferring goals from the gym to the classroom. It may mean feeling connected to something bigger and much more meaningful than a particular social setting or group. It may mean a sense of inner direction and control that all individuals strive to acquire. Therefore, determining the “true” level of ownership may require something other than the tools of observation and inference.

## FINAL COMMENTS

Cutforth and Puckett (1999) suggested that program evaluation should answer two basic questions: Did the program meet its goals? If not, how could it be made better? The answer to the first question requires one to look at what the program was trying to accomplish. From the outset, Project Effort focused on getting youngsters to assume some degree of responsibility in the classroom. When we examined the data we found that the youngsters were able to show a degree of effort at learning tasks in the classroom.

The club members struggled, however, to transfer some of the other values to the classroom. Earlier we talked about barriers (e.g., school culture, combative values, dysfunctional family life, lack of confidence) that keep many of our club members from applying the values of the sport club to the classroom setting. We cannot emphasize enough how important it is for program developers to understand these barriers when working with underserved youngsters who are at risk of failure. This was especially relevant for the mentors who worked to make the gym-to-classroom connection. We have found that applying the responsibility goals to the classroom, playground, neighborhood, and home remains our most formidable challenge.

Our club members have developed a unique repertoire of survival skills. They have evolved from a value system much different from ours and that of mainstream society (Martinek and Hellison, 1998). These survival skills allow them to navigate through the social and economic obstacles created by poverty.

If youth development people are to modify these values, a long-term commitment to working with these youngsters is needed. We have made this commitment as we enter another year of working with the same youngsters. At the very least, we hope that we have planted seeds that hopefully will germinate into alternative ways of responding to their life challenges. Our data seem to suggest that mentoring helps to facilitate the application of responsibility values to the classroom. This is a critical aspect of the club's mission. Getting youngsters to fully embrace the values of Project Effort will no doubt take time, however. Perhaps being responsible citizens will eventually be envisioned as a worthy value to embrace. We can only persist in teaching these values and wait and see.

#### NOTE

1. Other forms of the levels have been used to accommodate various types of settings and programs. See Hellison (1995) for different adaptations.

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