Research: The Talking Together Program

Overview
The Talking Together Program is used to teach students how to participate in class discussions. The research was conducted in 20 third- and fourth-grade general education classes. These intact classes were randomly assigned to the experimental or comparison condition. A total of 377 students participated. The 10 teachers of the experimental classes taught their students using the Talking Together Program. The 10 comparison teachers did not use this program.

Results
Observational data were gathered on the fidelity of the experimental teachers’ implementation of the instruction. They presented a mean of 91% of the information in the Talking Together instructor’s manual.

All students in experimental and comparison classes completed a written test of their knowledge about participating in discussions and community building skills at pretest and posttest. An ANCOVA revealed a significant difference between the posttest scores of experimental and comparison students, \( F(1, 17) = 112.04, p < .001, \eta^2 = .87 \), representing a very large effect size. (See Figure 1 for the mean scores.)
Data were also gathered on the students’ and teachers’ performances as they participated in class discussions. The ANCOVA for “yell outs” indicated a significant difference between the number of times students yelled out comments or answers between the two groups at the end of the study, $F(1,17) = 53.381, p < .001, \eta^2 = .76$. The ANCOVA for “group responding” also showed a significant difference between the experimental and comparison groups, $F(1, 17) = 9.386, p = .007, \eta^2 = .356$, indicating the number of times experimental students participated as a group during the discussion was significantly higher than in comparison classes. The ANCOVA for “partner responding” also showed a significant difference between groups, $F(1, 17) = 7.282, p = .015, \eta^2 = .300$, indicating the number of times experimental and comparison students discussed answers with partners during the discussion was significantly different during the posttest. The ANCOVA for “negative comments” made by students also indicated a significant difference between the groups, $F(1, 17) = 5.005, p = .039, \eta^2 = .227$. Finally, related to teacher behavior, an ANCOVA showed a significant difference between the groups of experimental and comparison teachers for positive comments made by teachers during the posttest discussion, $F(1, 17) = 4.864, p = .041, \eta^2 = .222$. 

**Figure 1: Mean Percentage of Correct Answers on the Knowledge Survey**

![Bar chart showing mean percentage of correct answers for experimental and comparison groups.](chart.png)
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Data were also gathered on nine targeted students within each class with regard to such behaviors as raising their hands, waiting quietly to be called upon, and participating. The percentage of times that experimental target students raised their hands and either answered the question or lowered their hands when someone else answered increased from a mean of 14% before intervention to 72% while the mean remained about the same in comparison classes (15% at pretest and 14% at posttest). An ANCOVA indicated the difference between experimental and comparison groups during the posttest discussions was significant, \( F(1,17) = 39.74, p < .001, \eta^2 = .70 \). In addition, ANCOVAs indicated significant differences between experimental and comparison groups during the posttest observation for "yell outs" made by targeted students, \( F(1,17) = 10.2, p = .005, \eta^2 = .38 \), and for the number of participations in the discussion, \( F(1,17) = 10.18, p = .005, \eta^2 = .38 \). All of these differences represent large effect sizes in favor of the experimental classes.

Experimental teachers and students used a 7-point Likert-type scale to rate items regarding their satisfaction with the program ("7" indicating extremely satisfied; "1" indicating extremely dissatisfied) at the end of the year. Teachers endorsed the program, and their ratings indicated satisfaction with each aspect of the program. Their average overall rating of the program was 6.4. Students also indicated that they were satisfied with the program with a mean rating of 5.7.

Reference