<u>**National Curriculum Integration Project**</u>

Final Report Phase Two (2000-2001)

Submitted to

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By the
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Executive Summary

Research Questions

1) What are NCIP's impacts on students' emotional competence and conflict competence?
In terms of emotional competence, the CRE efforts are intended to increase the emotional competence of students. In this study emotional competence is defined as emotional perspective-taking and strategic expression of emotion in terms of impulse control of negative emotion like anger. Conflict competence involves the development of cognitive perspective-taking ability, the tendency to make non-hostile attributions, and an inclination to use constructive conflict management behaviors in conflict situations. A central purpose of CRE, some would say the central purpose, is the promotion of conflict competence and the reduction of destructive conflict behavior.

2) How does NCIP impact the students' perception of their learning environment in terms of classroom climate and integrated learning process?
A major goal of CRE and NCIP is the creation of a caring and positive classroom climate to support learning.

3) How are teachers integrating CRE into their curriculum and classroom culture?
Many teachers indicated that it would be valuable for them to learn more in subsequent years about how these practices are used by teachers. The result for the education and CRE practitioner will be a much richer sense of "best practices" which they can use to inform their own work.

4) What factors are helping/inhibiting teachers in the integration of CRE in their curriculum?
>***a) How are teachers responding to school/administration resource or support problems?***
>***b) How is team development and process impacting teachers?***
>***c) How is school structure impacting teachers?***
>***d) How are available resources from NCIP (integrated lessons, modeling from site coordinators, paid time to develop lessons, etc.) impacting teachers?***

This question is a continuation of an important question that was a major focus in the Phase 1 research. It is clear that these processes of change need to be considered in terms of a serious attention to process evaluation of the change dynamic.

Research Methodology
Each site developed its own specific implementation of the NCIP curricular infusion and integration. However, all sites worked within general guidelines.

Design
The research used a pre-test/post-test control group comparison design where the independent variable was teaching condition with three levels (NCIP returning teachers, NCIP new teachers, and control teachers). Returning and new NCIP teachers were trained

with a review of the conflict management basics and an elaboration of the curricular infusion techniques. The Site coordinators met regularly with the teachers.

Sampling

Four middle schools participated in this project. Their selection was based on their previous involvement with the project. Due to constraints imposed by the schools, none of the sites was allowed to use random assignments of students to classes. Only predetermined, in tact classes could be sampled.

Measurement

For Research Question #1: *"What are NCIP's impacts on students' emotional competence and conflict competence?"* Four measures were used to assess students' conflict orientation, emotional management, perspective-taking, and hostile attribution.

Conflict Orientation:
Students were given two conflict management scenarios and were asked to respond to open-ended questions that tapped into their conflict orientations. Data were coded using a category system developed and tested in Phase 1 of the NCIP project.

Emotional Management:
The "Dealing with Conflict" questionnaire was developed to measure a students' ability to manage their own emotion and take the emotional perspective of the other during conflict.

Perspective Taking:
Perspective taking was measured using a self-report version of the Interpersonal Negotiation Strategies interview protocol with closed-choice and open-ended items which reflect various strategic responses corresponding to the four levels of social perspective coordination: impulsive, unilateral, reciprocal, and collaborative.

Hostile Attribution:
In order to measure hostile attribution, students were asked to respond to the vignettes presented in the perspective-taking measure. They were presented with four response options that represented different levels of hostile attribution (e.g., purposive/internal, purposive/external, reactive/internal and reactive/external) and asked to choose one.

For Research Question #2: *How does NCIP impact the students' perception of their learning environment in terms of classroom climate and integrated learning process?* Two sources of data helped answer this question, the Classroom Life survey and student focus group interviews.

Classroom Life Survey (CLS):
The Classroom Life Survey is a twenty-four-item survey measuring five factors: safety, student support, teacher support, cohesion, and constructive conflict management.

Student Focus Groups:
Although the specific details of the student focus group interviews differed by site (and no student interviews were possible in the California site), the general purpose of these interviews was to talk with students in NCIP classes about what their learning experience in that class had been like.

For Research Question #3: *"How are teachers integrating CRE into their curriculum and classroom culture?"* and For Research Question #4: *"What factors are helping/inhibiting teachers in the integration of CRE in their curriculum?*

> *a) How are teachers responding to school/administration resource or support problems?*
> *b) How is team development and process impacting teachers?*
> *c) How is school structure impacting teachers?*
> *d) How are available resources from NCIP (integrated lessons, modeling from site coordinators, paid time to develop lessons, etc.) impacting teachers?"*

Three sources of data provided information to answer these questions: site coordinator interviews, teacher interviews, and activity logs.

> Site Coordinator Interviews:
> Site coordinators were the people responsible for providing training, tutoring, resources, and general program implementation guidance throughout Phase 2.
> Teacher Interviews:
> Informal teacher interviews took place at the beginning of Phase 2 when researchers observed the initial training sessions provided to returning and new NCIP teachers. In the post-test periods individual and group teacher interviews were conducted.
> Activity Logs:
> Activity logs that reported on a monthly basis the specific activities that were being done in their classrooms.

Data Collection

A pre-test was administered in September/October 2000, approximately 4 weeks after the beginning of the school year. The first post-test was conducted in February 2001 and the second post-test was conducted in May 2001.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis:
Internal consistency reliability was determined for the questionnaires.3 x 3 x 2 MANOVAs were performed to determine the impact of Teaching Condition (returning NCIP, new NCIP, and Control classes), Test Time (pre-test, post-test one, and post-test two), and student gender (male v. female) on emotional management, perspective taking, hostile attribution, and classroom climate.

Open-ended responses to the conflict scenarios were content analyzed. Resulting nominal data were subjected to chi squared analyses to determine the relationship between category use in Teaching Condition and Test Time.

Qualitative Data Analyses:
Data from teacher interviews, student interviews, and site coordinator interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes. Observational field notes were analyzed as information to support program implementation conditions.

General Findings

NCIP Impact on Emotional Competence and Conflict Competence:

♦ NCIP **did not significantly influence students' emotional compete**nce. This lack of a finding is most probably due to a weakness in the Emotional Management measure used.

♦ NCIP **demonstrated a limited, but positive influence, on students' tendency to use hostile attributions.** Although such an effect was found for one site, it was not replicated in other sites.

♦ NCIP **had a moderately strong, positive impact on students' perspective taking**. In several sites, students in NCIP classes showed an increased tendency to take the perspective of the other when choosing strategies for dealing with conflict.

♦ NCIP **demonstrated a limited, but positive influence, on students' use of problem solving strategies** when dealing with their own conflict and a willingness to intervene to help others in conflict.

NCIP Impact on Classroom Climate and Student's Learning Environment:

♦ NCIP **had a very strong, positive impact on classroom climate**. As expected, across sites, students in NCIP classes taught by returning, experienced, NCIP teachers consistently reported more positive climate (overall and in terms of the dimensions of Teacher Support, Student Support, Cohesion, Safety, and Constructive Conflict Management) than students in classes taught by new NCIP teachers. However, students in either NCIP class perceived much more positive climate than students in control classes. NCIP impact on classroom climate increased throughout the year while perceived climate in control classes usually became notably more negative throughout the year.

♦ NCIP **had a profound influence on students' perceptions of their learning environment** as reflected in student interviews. Among the most important improvements noted by students were the following:
  ➢ Students felt empowered as learners.
  ➢ Students took more responsibility for their own learning.
  ➢ Students felt learning was more socially relevant and connected with "real life".
  ➢ Students learned effective ways of working with others.
  ➢ Students felt respected by teachers, and in turn, respected teachers more.
  ➢ Students learned how to handle conflict constructively in class and school environments.
  ➢ Students emphasized respectful and accepting behavior toward other students.

> ➢ Students felt a sense of community within the classroom that enhanced the learning process.

<u>Teacher's Integration of NCIP Concepts into Curriculum:</u>

- When the goals of NCIP are clearly presented, there is strong evidence that teachers are capable of integrating these concepts and practices in their ongoing curricula.

- There is clear evidence of a learning curve for teachers, indicating that it takes sustained effort for a teacher to progress to optimal levels of integration and infusion. However, it is also clear that teachers can effectively mentor other teachers to achieve these levels.

- Teachers in most sites were able to develop complex and valuable integrated lessons for use in ongoing curricula (mostly English and Language Arts). While lessons in other disciplines were developed, it was more difficult, especially for the disciplines of Math and Science.

<u>Factors that Enhanced or Inhibited NCIP Programs and Progress</u>

- Lack of time to work together as a team continues to be one of the greatest challenges to NCIP teachers.

- Lack of developed integrated lesson materials, especially for the disciplines of Math and Science, continue to hamper learning efforts for teachers.

- The regular presence of skilled Site Coordinators was a determining factor in the success, or lack thereof, of the NCIP program across sites.