

**Impact of Lesson One  
Summary of Findings 2006  
Intercultural Center for Research in Education (INCRE)**

***Introduction***

Lesson One is an innovative social and emotional based educational program that helps children in grades pre-kindergarten through five develop the life skills and internal discipline necessary to learn and thrive in today's society. For over 30 years, Lesson One has been working with educational staff and families nationwide and the program model has repeatedly received positive recognition and national attention.

**Program Model**

Lesson One is a non-profit educational organization that was formed in 1976. The mission of Lesson One is to help children and adults take control of their lives by teaching fundamental life skills, skills that the founder believes are as vital as the ABC's and 123's.

Following the logical progression of a child's development, Lesson One brings experiential activities and games into the classroom to teach children in grades pre-Kindergarten through five the life skills of self-control, self-confidence, responsibility and consequences, thinking and problems solving and cooperation. These skills develop out of Lesson One's Pledge for Success, the foundation of the program that teaches participants the importance of respect, listening, diversity and trying one's best.

Lesson One takes a three-step approach to teaching the identified life skills. First, the program defines each skill in terms that children and adults can understand and internalize. Second, it provides children with an opportunity to test the newly acquired skill first-hand through experiential activities. Lastly, Lesson One gives adults and children the chance to share how they use the skills so they are afforded the opportunity to learn from each other. The combination of defining, experiencing, and sharing the Lesson One learnings enables children to internalize the skills for success both socially and academically.

The Lesson One program offers comprehensive training to the classroom teachers and the administration so they are completely familiarized with the program before implementing it into the school. Training begins with an experiential and activity oriented workshop that introduces the life skills to the staff, while focusing on the 'Art of Teaching', which places an emphasis on the integration of knowledge, technique, effective communication, discipline, and creativity. The skills are then integrated into the school culture through classroom modeling by Lesson One educational consultants and a series of interactive games and activities. Lesson One provides teachers with all of the tools and materials that they need to successfully integrate the ABCs of Life into the school culture.

**Evaluation Plan**

Since its inception, the Lesson One program has received positive national attention. It was chosen as a model for safe and drug-free schools by the White House and has been featured on Dateline, World News Tonight and Parade Magazine. Throughout its history, the Lesson One program has been shown to have a positive impact on the participating classrooms and overall

school environment. Impact evidence to date has shown successful results through controlled studies on two separate occasions. One study completed in February of 2002 showed that the students who participated in the Lesson One program received higher life skills ratings from their teachers after the program than did students in the comparison group. The other 5-year study involved a federally funded safe and drug-free school project entitled PeaceZone that utilized the Lesson One skills to reduce violence in Boston elementary schools. According to the program evaluation conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, students receiving instruction through the program reported an increase in the level of classmates' pro-social behavior that was greater than the increase reported by students in schools with similar student populations that did not receive PeaceZone instruction. For example, both boys and girls participating in the program reported that they were victimized significantly less after the program was implemented in their school (initial results, Year 4: boys,  $t=1.645$ ,  $p<.10$ ; girls,  $t=2.173$ ,  $p<.03$ ). In addition, boys in the program schools reported perpetrating significantly less violence against other children in the school ( $t=1.612$ ,  $p<.10$ ).

To longitudinally verify the positive impact of Lesson One, the Intercultural Center for Research in Education (INCRE), a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational evaluation and development organization, was retained by Lesson One to determine the impact of the program at four sites throughout the country. Each selected school has been implementing Lesson One for at least five years. The four elementary schools in the sample and the year each initiated using Lesson One strategies is shown below:

School	Community	Year started Lesson One
Struthers Elementary	Struthers OH	2000-01
S. Lexington Elementary	Lexington NC	2000-01
Foster Elementary	Ventura CA	2000-01
Aster Elementary	Colville WA	2001-02

At each site, extensive phone interviews were conducted with the administrator or key contact at each school and supporting academic, attendance and office referral data were collected and analyzed. Below are the findings collected during the spring 2006 evaluation. Overall program findings are presented first, followed by individual summaries from each of the participating programs.

***Overall Findings***

After collecting systematic data from each of the four participating locations it quickly became evident how strongly each of the sites endorsed the Lesson One program and what a positive impact the model has had on the students, staff and overall school culture. Regardless of the schools' location, reason for seeking out the program or the student population served, Lesson One greatly benefited each school and the staff members strongly supported the program model.

At each of the four locations, administrators and staff reported that students greatly benefited from their involvement in Lesson One. Through the program the youth were able to improve their self control, problem solving abilities and self confidence. Students' responsibility and accountability for their behavior and learning also increased. For example, at the Aster School in

Colville, Washington the principal shared how his very young students were already taking a more active role in their commitment and approach to learning because they had an increased feeling of responsibility and ownership in their classrooms. The feeling of being an active member of the learning community and a swelling of school pride was also felt by students at the other schools through the Lesson One program because they were able to help establish classroom expectations and rules and contribute to the positive school environment through their actions and behavior. Finally, increases in student attendance and academic achievement were documented by the participating schools since the implementation of Lesson One, as well as decreases in office referrals. Administrators and other school staff directly attributed these changes to the positive impact of the Lesson One program.

Staff at each of the participating schools also benefited from their involvement in Lesson One. Not only were they able to gain from the improvements in their students' behavior and attitudes, they themselves were able to acquire new instructional strategies and behavior management skills. Because of these improvements teachers felt more empowerment within their classrooms and they believed they had more time on task during lessons because they had fewer behavior management issues to address. Teachers also reported a strong sense of community being fostered through the Lesson One program, both at the classroom and school-wide levels. For example, at the Struthers School in Ohio, staff shared how Lesson One really helped to establish a sense of community among the teaching staff once four elementary schools were merged into one. Moreover, because Lesson One was not seen as an add-on to the school's programming, but rather a supportive tool, the model merged well with the current curriculum and standards and it was not viewed by the staff as an additional requirement.

Each of the four programs included in this study reported that Lesson One had a positive impact on their schools' overall culture and social emotional climate. At each of the locations the Lesson One program was adopted school-wide and fully integrated into the culture of the school. Students and staff completely accepted and internalized the program and even to this day components of the Lesson One program are implemented on a daily level including the use of self control time, the promotion of the Pledge of Success and Trying Your Best and the sharing of program success stories among the teachers and students. Because Lesson One extends outside of the schools to each of the students' homes, families are also able to benefit from their child's participation in the program. Families experience the improvements in their children's social skills and behaviors first-hand in their homes and they are able to learn about the philosophy and strategies of Lesson One so they are able to incorporate these skills within their families. Moreover, because the school staff report that the program has a beneficial impact on the students, staff and overall school, parents are also able to benefit from this overall transformation and in many cases become more actively involved in their child's school community and educational career.

It is clear that the schools that have participated in Lesson One have all greatly benefited from their involvement in the program. Positive impacts have been felt by students, parents and school staff alike and overall school transformations have taken place. The Lesson One program has permeated these different educational settings and the fact that the program model was initially implemented at these four locations five to six years ago and continues to be used on a regular basis further endorses the strength and benefit of the Lesson One program.

## **Summary of Findings from S. Lexington Elementary School in Lexington North Carolina Implementation of Lesson One – 2000-2001 School Year**

Ms. Jackie Miller, the principal of the S. Lexington Elementary School, was interviewed in March 2006 to learn more about the implementation and impact of the Lesson One program on her school. Below is a summary of findings from the March 2006 phone interview.

### **School Environment and Attraction to Program**

The S. Lexington Elementary School is located in Lexington North Carolina, a growing city located in the center of Greensboro, Winston-Salem and High Point NC. The school serves 457 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup>, as well as 40 special needs students ages 5-21. S. Lexington is a Title I school with 90% of the student population eligible for free or reduced lunch. The student population is approximately 42% African American, 24% Hispanic and 34% Caucasian.

Lesson One was brought into the S. Lexington Elementary School in year 2000 to address behavioral issues, promote students' self confidence, build a sense of community and enable students to see their own personal importance. According to the principal, before Lesson One was brought into the building the social and emotional climate of the school was challenging because there were very high levels of principal and teacher turnover and a multitude of student behavioral issues. The school had three different principals in four years, between seven and eight teachers leaving each school year and office referrals were reaching a high of 1,400 per year.

### **Implementation of Lesson One**

The Lesson One program was initially introduced into the S. Lexington Elementary School during 2000 with comprehensive follow-up trainings taking place during the 2001, 2002 and 2003 school years. The program was integrated into all grade levels (pre-K – 3<sup>rd</sup>) and every student and teacher was trained on the program model. Weeklong trainings were held at the school each time the Lesson One program staff visited and every teacher was trained on the model and philosophy, as well as behavior management techniques for their classrooms. According to the principal these in-class trainings not only allowed the teaching staff to gain the confidence they needed to use the program but they enabled the teachers to feel, "If the Lesson One staff can successfully use this program with my students and in my classroom, so can I."

Ms. Miller highlighted during the March 2006 interview how vital the buy-in and acceptance of the teaching staff was for the success of the Lesson One program. In her opinion the teachers were the true stakeholders in the functioning and implementation of the model. She supported this belief when she reported, "Lesson One is so powerful at S. Lexington Elementary because the teachers made the decision to bring the program in and make it a school-wide method." According to the principal, because Lesson One was not an add-on to the school's curriculum but rather a supportive tool for the classroom, teachers and students, the program merged well with the current curriculum and standards. It was not viewed as an additional requirement by the staff and it integrated seamlessly into the school's programming.

Each year the impact of the Lesson One program model extended outside of S. Lexington Elementary to each of the students' homes. Parents were fully educated on program strategies and the language used within the classrooms so they were able to use the model within their own homes. The principal pointed out how parents really appreciated the Lesson One program not only because their children's social skills were improving, but because many of the parents worked multiple jobs and long hours and were unable to consistently instill these vital skills themselves. According to Ms. Miller, students also shared their learnings from Lesson One at the community level by educating others on the model and discussing the positive impact the program had on them and their school. The principal pointed out how this connection between the school, community and students' homes really helped to enhance the growth and acceptance of Lesson One from year to year.

**Impact of Lesson One**

The students, staff and overall environment of the S. Lexington Elementary School have all greatly benefited from their involvement in the Lesson One program. Since the program was implemented the students have shown more responsibility and problem solving skills and improved self confidence. For example, according to the principal students were able to make better eye contact, speak in a clearer more articulate manner and walk the halls with more confidence. Moreover, the students played a more active role within the school community and took greater ownership and pride in their school. As Ms. Miller stated, "Through the Lesson One program the children have learned to respect diversity and develop people skills and they are able to demonstrate self-confidence and feel a sense of community within the building...Through the Lesson One program the students learned the basic belief that they should treat others the way they want to be treated."

Students' attendance and behavior have also improved since the implementation of Lesson One. As can be seen in Tables 1 and 2, student attendance increased 3% in just one school year from 95% to 98% and dramatic decreases in the number of student office referrals were observed since 2000. Referral rates steadily declined from a high of 1,400 in 2000 to just 4 during 2006.

Table 1  
Student Attendance Rates for 2004 and 2005

	School Year	
	2004-05	2005-06
Rate of Attendance	95.0%	97.8%

Table 2  
Number of Student Office Referrals

Year	# of Referrals
2000	1400
2003	125
2004	10
2005	8
2006	4

\* Note- Data not available for 2001 or 2002 at the time of this report

The principal also reported significant increases in students' academic performance since Lesson One was incorporated. Table 3 shows the percentage of grade 3 students at S. Lexington School who demonstrated proficiency (achievement level III or above) on Reading and Mathematics standardized assessments between Spring 2001 and 2005.

Table 3  
Percent Proficient End of Grade 3 Reading and Mathematics Assessments

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Reading	54.3%	68.0%	70.1%	68.9%	75.3%
Mathematics	65.9%	53.0%	84.1%	77.8%	82.0%

As shown in Table 3, successive cohorts of grade 3 students at the school demonstrated significant improvements in reading and mathematics achievement after Lesson One was introduced in 2000. The principal ascribes these gains primarily to the improved school climate, greater time on-task, improved student behavior and increased sense of community and purpose in the school.

Lesson One also positively impacted the teaching staff and overall school culture at S. Lexington School. Teachers not only benefited from the improvement in their students' behavior and attitudes, they themselves acquired new instructional strategies and classroom management skills through their participation in the program. Ms. Miller pointed out, "The Lesson One program has given the teachers the skills they need to work successfully in their classrooms. The program has empowered them with an approach that focuses on positive interactions, rather than punitive." School-wide changes also occurred because of the implementation of Lesson One. A cultural shift in the social and emotional climate took place throughout the entire school and a strong sense of community was cultivated through the program. The principal reported, "Lesson One is implemented in the school building from one end to the other, including the developmental wing, and it has really caused a positive change. The building is just phenomenal with how teachers work with the students, parents and their peers and there is a real sense of community." According to the principal, annual surveys completed by parents regarding teacher performance and outreach further supported this improvement by revealing increasing approval ratings and program satisfaction. As Ms. Miller highlighted during the March 2006 interview, apparently in years past many families became frustrated with their interactions with the teaching staff; now however families feel much more confident communicating and working with their child's

teacher and actively participate in school events. As can be seen in Table 4, participation at parent nights, as well as other school visits, increased substantially from the 2004 to 2005 school year. Eighty-one additional people visited the school during lunch, while school visitors and attendance at parent nights increased by 231 and 249 people respectively.

Table 4  
Number of Visitors to School Event for the 2004 and 2005 School Years

	2004-05	2005-06	Increase
Lunch Visitors	354	435	81
School Visitors	1097	1328	231
Parent Nights	267	516	249

When asked if the school achieved its goals of building a strong sense of community and improving students' behavior, self confidence and ability to recognize their personal importance through the Lesson One program the principal confidently replied yes. Ms. Miller stated, "We definitely achieved the goals we were aiming for, beyond a shadow of a doubt, and the change went beyond just a decrease in office referrals...By just walking through the hallways of the school one is able to feel a positive change in the overall school environment. Lesson One has built a new culture and sense of community and has really helped the school to turn around."

**Current Status of Lesson One**

Although S. Lexington Elementary was able to provide Lesson One professional training for several years in a row, the school staff is now responsible for maintaining the program on their own. The principal reported that due to the program's strong presence in the school, the continued endorsement of the program and the effective and thorough training of the teaching staff, Lesson One is still firmly rooted in the school's overall environment and is regularly being used on a daily basis in the classrooms and the entire school.

## **Summary of Findings from EP Foster Elementary School in Ventura California Implementation of Lesson One – 2000-2001 School Year**

Ms. Marie Alviz, the school guidance counselor at the EP Foster Elementary School, was interviewed in March 2006 to learn more about the implementation and impact of the Lesson One program on her school. Below is a summary of findings from the March 2006 phone interview.

### **School Environment and Attraction to Program**

The EP Foster Elementary School is located in Ventura California, an urban community located on the coast of CA. The school serves 550 students in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 5, many of whom come from migrant and/or homeless families. One hundred percent of the EP Foster students are eligible for free or reduced lunch and the student population is comprised of approximately 60% Hispanic, 39% Caucasian and 1% Other students.

Lesson One was brought into the EP Foster Elementary School in year 2000 to address serious behavioral issues including gang activity, disciplinary issues and an overall rundown environment. Surprisingly, high amounts of social and emotional issues were also being faced at the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten levels around poor self-control and boundary breaking. According to the school guidance counselor, before Lesson One arrived the school was “dilapidated” “out of control” and “facing major behavioral and disciplinary problems.”

Although different programs were brought into EP Foster before Lesson One to address the serious social and emotional issues facing the school, many of these interventions were simply seen as temporary solutions that did not get to the root of the problem but rather just covered them up. Once Lesson One was researched and brought into the school it was seen by the staff as different because it provided a “uniform program that empowered the children and the teaching staff” and “provided the skills necessary to really make a change.”

### **Implementation of Lesson One**

The Lesson One program was implemented at the school in the spring of 2000 and additional trainings were held in 2001 and 2004. The program was integrated into grades 1 through 5 and all students and teachers in these grade levels received a weeklong training on the Lesson One program model. Because Lesson One was seen as such a priority in the school all new staff members who were not formally trained on the program received a weeklong individual training with the school’s guidance counselor to ensure they were educated on the program and able to implement it into their classrooms successfully. According to the EP Foster guidance counselor Lesson One integrated into the school’s current curriculum and standards well because it was seen as a complementary classroom strategy rather than a separate curriculum.

Unfortunately because of funding limitations the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms did not receive training on the Lesson One program. The EP Foster staff does however plan to schedule an additional training session during the 2006-2007 school year and they aim to include every grade level. This training will be especially important for the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes to participate in because they have not complete any formal training, are facing various behavioral issues and the earlier these social skills are implemented the better.



The Lesson One program model extended outside of the EP Foster Elementary School to each of the students' homes because families were completely informed about the program model. Families learned about Lesson One through parent workshops, parent classes and school events. They were also provided with the language and resources used throughout the program in the hopes that they would incorporate them within their family. According to Ms. Alviz many families fully endorsed Lesson One and reported using program terms like 'doing your best' or 'self control time' at their homes. Many also had the Skills of Life posted on their refrigerator so the family was able to reference them easily. Parents reported that their child's participation in the Lesson One program at school and home was a huge benefit to their child and their overall family because it provided them with vital social skills they needed to be successful in life and helped to create an overall positive atmosphere.

### **Impact of Lesson One**

The students, staff and overall environment of the EP Foster Elementary School have all greatly benefited from their involvement in the Lesson One program. Since the program was implemented the students have displayed improved social skills and behavior management and have increased their academic achievement. As the guidance counselor explained, "The Lesson One program is fantastic because it not only teaches the students the skills necessary to succeed in life; it shows them that the school staff really cares about their well-being." She went on to explain, "I really feel our kids will have an advantage in life because of the skills they learned through Lesson One...I only wish all of the other middle schools our students fed into would implement the Lesson One program so students were able to continue in the program and further refine their social skills." A teacher in the school further supported the positive impact of the Lesson One program when she shared with Ms. Alviz, "I attribute a great deal of my student's success to Lesson One. I feel that the self-control and responsibility taught through this program is a necessity rather than an 'add on' in schools today. For math in particular, where focus and practice are most needed, the skills from Lesson One were largely responsible for almost tripling the number of students at grade level in my 5th grade class."

Students' attendance, test scores and behavior have also improved since Lesson One was implemented in the school. According to Ms. Alviz, "Before Lesson One was implemented EP Foster was pegged as one of the lowest performing schools in the district and now it is half way up the ladder." Table 5 shows how student attendance had a slight increase from 95% - 96% over the course of several years, while Table 6 reveals how student achievement data dramatically increased for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in language arts and mathematics.

Table 5  
Student Attendance Rates

Year	% Attendance
1999	95%
2000	95%
2001	95%
2002	95%
2003	95%
2004	96%
2005	96%

In 2001, only 9% of the EP Foster 4<sup>th</sup> graders and 15% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders were advanced or proficient in language arts, while almost half achieved proficiency in 2005 (44% and 48% respectively). Similar trends were also seen in mathematics with only 11% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders and 17% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders being advanced or proficient in 2002 compared to 31% and 61% in 2005.

Table 6  
Percent of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Graders Achieving Advanced or Proficient in Language Arts and Math

Grade Level	Advanced or Proficient in Language Arts		Percent Increase	Advanced or Proficient in Math		Percent Increase
	2001	2005		2002	2005	
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	9%	44%	35%	11%	31%	20%
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	15%	48%	33%	17%	61%	44%

Substantial decreases in the number of student suspensions were also seen since 2000. Rates declined sharply from a high of 29 in 2000 to an average of 2 suspensions per year after Lesson One was fully implemented in 2001 (Table 7). The school guidance counselor further supported the observed decline in office referrals when she stated, “Before Lesson One there were many gang and negative behavior issues in the school. It was not surprising to see 7 or 8 students in the office for fighting each day. Now you rarely see that.”

Table 7  
Student Suspension Rates

Year	# of Suspensions
2000	29
2001	18
2002	0
2003	4
2004	2
2005	2

Lesson One positively impacted the teaching staff and overall school culture at the EP Foster School. Teachers not only benefited from the improvement in their students' behavior and attitudes, they themselves acquired new instructional strategies and behavior management skills that greatly benefited their classrooms. Ms. Alviz explained that before Lesson One, classrooms were faced with constant disruptions from rambunctious behavior and how a lot of important class time was wasted addressing these issues. Because the school was one of the lowest performing schools in the district, classes could not afford to waste this precious time and really needed to focus and improve student performance. With the help of Lesson One teachers found they were able to use the full class time because the students were able to behave, focus and change gears when needed and this in turn allowed for more time on task during lessons. According to Ms. Alviz, "The teachers attributed these changes to Lesson One because the program provided a constant message to try your best, use self-control and all the positive messages to do well." Overall the EP Foster teaching staff found Lesson One to be very helpful to them, their classrooms and students. When asked if they wanted to continue the Lesson One program in the future all unanimously agreed that they would.

School-wide changes also occurred because of the implementation of Lesson One. Cultural changes took place throughout the entire school and in each individual classroom. The school guidance counselor reported, "The culture of the school has changed because of Lesson One. Kids come in and immediately go to seats for self control time...Even people from outside the school comment on how different the school is compared to other and I feel great pride in this achievement." Regarding Lesson One's overall impact on the school, one teacher's comment further supported the beneficial effect of the program when she shared with the school guidance counselor, "Lesson one gives our school a common language. Using the Pledge as a tool every morning to share our lives is a great way to start the day."

Finally, Ms. Alviz also pointed out how Lesson One positively impacted her personally because the program allowed her to focus her attention on the students that really needed help rather than spending all of her time addressing behavior issues in the school. "Children rise to the top if they are in need of services because it is so rare to see problems. Now I am able to focus on the neediest students versus all of them." When asked if the school achieved the goals they aimed to accomplish through the Lesson On program Ms. Alviz confidently reported, "Absolutely, we wanted the students to be happy, successful, self confident and disciplined and the skills taught through Lesson One have allowed us to achieve this."

### **Current Status of Lesson One**

Lesson One is seen as a high priority in the EP Foster Elementary School and has become a regular component of the school's culture. The program is used throughout the school day and is even regularly extended outside of the school to each of the students' homes through the education of all families on the program. With the acceptance of the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms because of funding, all of the school staff have been officially trained on the program and fully support the incorporation of the model within their classrooms. If funding allows, the EP Foster staff plan to conduct a full Lesson One training during the 2006-2007 school year for staff in every grade level in order to further endorse the program within the school and refresh the teaching staff.

## **Summary of Findings from Struthers Elementary School in Struthers Ohio Implementation of Lesson One – 2000-2001 School Year**

Ms. Betty Washington, the principal of the Struthers Elementary School, was interviewed in March 2006 to learn more about the implementation and impact of the Lesson One program at her school. Below is a summary of findings from the March 2006 phone interview.

### **School Environment and Attraction to Program**

The Struthers Elementary School is located in Struthers Ohio, a small suburban community. The school serves 760 students in kindergarten through grade 4, including four special education classes. The student population is approximately 98% Caucasian and just over half of the students receive free or reduced lunch.

Lesson One was brought into four elementary schools in Struthers during the 2000-2001 school year, right before they were merged into one school. Through the Lesson One program the administrative staff aimed to build a sense of community, common expectations and one unified approach to discipline and behavior management among all of the teaching staff before all were brought together under one roof. To reinforce the program model, Lesson One was reintroduced during the 2001-2002 school year once the four buildings were merged into one.

The overall social and emotional climates of the schools were stable before Lesson One arrived and few behavior issues existed. Through incorporating the program the staff was more focused on developing a sense of community, a uniform behavior management approach for all of the teachers and students and implementing a program that allowed the students to acquire problem solving skills and self control. In addition, the staff aspired to have the students develop a sense of accountability for their behaviors and actions, independence in their ability to resolve conflicts effectively and a feeling of ownership in the school by helping to set goals and expectations.

### **Implementation of Lesson One**

The Lesson One program was brought into the Struthers Elementary School during the 2000-2001 school year and reintroduced the following year once the four schools were merged into one. The program was integrated into each grade level (K-4<sup>th</sup>) and every student and teacher was trained on the model. Trainings were run in each classroom by the Lesson One staff and lasted one week. Additional time was provided to teachers during dismissal time if they needed to be refreshed on the program or particular Lesson One concepts.

According to the principal, because Lesson One was not an add-on to the school's curriculum but rather a supportive tool for the classroom, teachers and students, the program merged well with the current curriculum and standards. It was not viewed as any additional requirement by the staff and it integrated seamlessly into the school's programming.

Each year the Lesson One model extended beyond of the Struthers School to the students' home because parents were fully educated on the program and provided with the language used within the classrooms by the teachers and students. In addition, the goals and impact of the program model were regularly discussed with families during PTA and other school-based meetings. This level of communication allowed families to use the Lesson One strategies within their own home

as well as to further reinforce the program skills learned by the students. The principal pointed out how this school home connection really helped to perpetuate Lesson One further within the school, students and participating families.

### **Impact of Lesson One**

According to the principal, Lesson One has had a very positive impact overall on the school environment, students and staff at Struthers. The program was adopted school-wide and was fully integrated into the culture of the school, something the principal found key to the program's success. The students and staff fully accepted and internalized the program and because Lesson One was integrated throughout the school building it was reinforced throughout the entire school day. To this day components of the Lesson One program are implemented daily including the reading of the Pledge of Success during morning announcements, the use of self control time, the emphasis on Trying Your Best and the sharing of program success stories among the teachers and students. The principal summarized the positive impact of Lesson One by saying, "Lesson One has really been a positive thing for our school because it has become part of the school's overall culture, the classrooms and the students and teachers. Now all of the students are clear on what is expected of them in the school and how to have self control." In addition speaking about unifying the four schools into one, the principal also reported, "Lesson One has been great because overall expectations have been set and are clear and everyone is playing the game the same way by using the program."

Students and staff have also greatly benefited from the Lesson One program. According to Ms. Washington through the program students were able to improve their self control and problem solving and conflict resolution skills. In addition, the youth were able to contribute to the establishment of the classroom rules and expectations and thus feel like an active member of the classroom community. As the principal stated during the March 2006 interview, "Through the Lesson One program the students are a vital part of the classroom community. They are the ones making the rules and helping to set the expectations, it is really their world. The Lesson One model is completely child-centered." As for the teaching staff, they were able to benefit from the improvements in the students' behavior in the classrooms and the new Lesson One teaching strategies. Moreover, because the program was brought in when four schools merged into one it helped to establish a unified approach among all of the teachers on discipline and behavior management and it helped to instill a sense of community.

Although Lesson One has had a very positive influence at the Struthers School, the principal admitted that the program model was not fully embraced by the staff when it was first introduced. Initially many of the teachers were resistant because they were overwhelmed with moving into their new unified school and the commitment required to implement the program model. However, once teachers began to see how easy it was to use Lesson One and the positive changes that occurred in the students and school community, they became strong advocates of the program and freely adopted it into their classrooms. The principal shared the example of how even at the kindergarten level teachers were able to see students using conflict resolution and self control and dialoguing with one another to remedy situations rather than defaulting to the teacher to resolve every issue.

While Ms. Washington believes the buy-in of the principal and all of the teaching staff is key to the success of the Lesson One program in the school, she feels the commitment of the teachers at the kindergarten level is especially vital. In her opinion it is the kindergarten teachers who are the ones who integrate these essential social and emotional skills and instill them in the children early on. By introducing these skills at the kindergarten level children are able to acquire them at the start of their school career and use them throughout their elementary, middle and high school experiences in order to support and guide their learning and development.

The impact of the Lesson One intervention is clearly evident from the declining number of disciplinary actions at the Struthers School. Table 8 shows the total number of out of school suspensions per 100 students beginning in 2000-01, the year that Lesson One was implemented.

Table 8: Struthers Elementary Suspensions per 100 students

School Year	No. of in-school Suspensions per 100 students
2000-01	8.9
2001-02	4.0
2002-03	1.7
2003-04	0.8
2004-05	1.4

The number of suspensions declined dramatically after the Lesson One intervention in 2000-01 and has stayed consistently low, which illustrates the sustained impact of the intervention.

**Current Status of Lesson One**

After six years the Lesson One program is still fully functioning in the Struthers Elementary School and is used on a daily basis. Low teacher turnover and well trained staff have helped to sustain the program from year to year and ensured the continued use of the model. According to the principal however, because funding has been limited for the retraining of the school staff on the Lesson One program it is losing some of its intensity in the school. In addition, the principal fears that the upcoming retirement of many veteran teachers will further impact the functioning of the program in the years to come. A follow-up training on the Lesson One model would greatly benefit this location in their efforts to sustain the program and maintain regular use of the materials and strategies by their staff. Because the principal and teachers strongly endorse Lesson One and have seen the positive impact of the program first hand for the last six years a refresher workshop should be readily accepted.

## **Summary of Findings from Aster Elementary School in Colville Washington Implementation of Lesson One – 2001-2002 School Year**

Mr. Jaron Jensen, the principal of Aster Elementary School, was interviewed in April 2006 to learn more about the implementation and impact of the Lesson One program on his school. Below is a summary of findings from his April 2006 phone interview.

### **School Environment and Attraction to Program**

The Aster Elementary School is located in Colville Washington, a small suburban community. Aster is a pre-K - 1<sup>st</sup> grade school serving approximately 280 students, 26% of which are special needs. The student population is almost 100% Caucasian and about 55% of students receive free or reduced lunch.<sup>1</sup>

The social and emotional climate of the Aster School was challenging before Lesson One was implemented. The school was plagued by a multitude of socio-emotional issues and disciplinary concerns. As the principal of the school pointed out during the April 2005 interview, “I almost left after my first year in the school because there were so many behavioral issues. I was seeing at least 3-5 children every day on a slow day and I was constantly in contact with parents and teachers trying to teach the children how to settle down, learn, and listen.”

According to Mr. Jensen the Aster School aimed to achieve three main goals through the implementation of the Lesson One program: decrease behavioral issues; teach students appropriate social skills and prepare students to be active, successful and independent learners. The principal highlighted how vital it was for the students to not only behave in a socially appropriate manner but also “learn how to be good learners in order to succeed in life.” Even though his pre-K through 1<sup>st</sup> grade students do not participate in standardized testing until 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the principal believes it is his staffs’ responsibility to prepare students to be focused, independent, strong learners so they are successful in the classroom and are prepared for the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) assessment when the time comes.

### **Implementation of Lesson One**

Lesson One was brought into the Aster School five years ago by the previous administrator in the hopes of improving the social and emotional climate of the school. Mr. Jensen was starting his first year in the school the year the program was introduced and it was not until his second year when Lesson One was officially implemented. When asked how he felt about adopting a social emotional-based program he did not originally select the principal admitted he had his doubts about the program at first and the impact it could have on the school. Once he learned more about Lesson One’s approach and philosophy however, he explained, “I became more accepting of the model and ultra passionate about incorporating it into the school’s overall culture.” Since seeing the impact of the program firsthand over the last few years he has become even more dedicated to the success of Lesson One in his building and a strong advocate of the program overall.

In total three trainings were conducted at the Aster School and during each session the teachers and students received a one-week training on the program in their classrooms. The principal

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<sup>1</sup> Percentages represent data from 2004-2005 and were collected on the WA OSPI website.

commended the training model used by the Lesson One staff because it role modeled the program skills for the teachers and students, rather than simply instructing them on how to implement the program as a whole. The principal believed this was critical to the programs success in his school because he felt these social skills needed to be experienced sequential and built upon and not simply taught as a whole concept to the staff and students. The principal also appreciated how the Lesson One staff assessed each classroom's needs and designed training sessions around them and how Jon Oliver, the program's founder, periodically checked in on the school's progress and was readily accessible when needed for additional support.

In addition to highlighting the strengths of the Lesson One training model, the principal also shared how 'very intense and highly emotional' the trainings were at times for his staff. Although the program was seen as a great addition to the classroom, the teaching staff still felt that it required them to alter their current teaching and classroom management techniques, fully embrace the philosophy of the Lesson One program and ultimately forfeit some control in their classrooms. According to the principal it took three to four years before all of the teaching staff embraced the Lesson One program and fully incorporated it into their classroom consistently.

To ensure the programs school-wide use and the teachers' regular implementation of the Lesson One program, the principal periodically walked through classrooms to observe the model in action and discuss different methods of using the program with the teaching staff. In addition, Mr. Jensen provided training to all new staff members on the Lesson One model when they were hired so they were able to successfully use the program in their classrooms.

Because the Lesson One program is such an integral part of the school culture, every year during parent orientation each family is given a copy of the Lesson One program materials and Jon Oliver's book, *Lesson One: The ABC's of Life, The Skills We Need but Were Never Taught*. Families are informed that this is one skill area the school will be working on throughout the year with their children and that families are encouraged to incorporate the program at home. To further aid in the adoption of the program, when new social skills are introduced to the children at the school, the teaching staff informs parents so they can stay up to date and reinforce the new skill within the home environment. Regarding parents' involvement in the Lesson One program, Mr. Jensen reported how easy it was to work with families if a behavioral situation arose with a child because they were completely aware of the goals of the program and he and the staff were able to simply reference the appropriate chapter in *The ABC's of Life* book to address the issue.

### **Impact of Lesson One**

Lesson One has had a very positive impact on the Aster students, staff, overall school environment and even the families of participating children. Improvements in the students' behavior and approach to learning have been observed by the principal since the very first year the program was implemented and continue to be seen each year since. According to Mr. Jensen the program "provided very positive, real life skills to be adopted by the students" and "taught the students to take responsibility for their actions and behavior."

Disciplinary issues have decreased since Lesson One was brought into the school. Initially the principal was seeing three to five referrals on a 'slow day' at the start of the program and now only one or two children visit the office per week. The principal associates this decrease to the



teachers managing their classrooms more effectively and the students being equipped with the skills necessary to interact appropriately and problem solve with the support of the teachers. Improvements in the students' behavior in the overall school environments have also been seen since the start of the program. For example, the principal shared how he is able to call all 280 students to attention in 5 seconds during an assembly or event; something he directly attributes to the impact of Lesson One.

Students' commitment and approach to learning have also improved since Lesson One was implemented. The principal feels this is because the program has allowed them to feel responsible and accountable for their own classroom behavior and learning. Even though he admits these concepts are very challenging for young children to comprehend and implement, he feels the Lesson One approach is designed to allow students even at the lower grade levels to be able to understand and adopt the model. In addition, because the Aster teachers are instilling these social skills school-wide at such as young age the students are learning them early on and successfully carrying them through to the upper grade levels. As Mr. Jensen pointed out however, the hard work of the Aster staff through the Lesson One program is short lived unfortunately because the school only goes up to 1<sup>st</sup> grade and students are constantly transitioning onto a new school with their newly acquired social skills. Furthermore, each year the teaching staff is again faced with the challenge of a new incoming pre-kindergarten class, many of which lack proper social skills.

Finally, improvements in the students' academics have been linked to the influences of the Lesson One program. According to the principal during his first year in the school only 60% and 67% of the first graders were reading and writing on grade level where as at the end of last year 74% and 89% were. Table 9 also displays improvements in the overall academic performance of Aster students' on the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) state-level test since implementation of the Lesson One Program. The WASL is administered in grades 4, 5, 7, 8 and 10 and assesses students on reading, writing, math and science. Science results are not displayed below because this subject area is not tested until grade five.

Table 9  
Number of 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Who Achieved a Proficient Rating on the  
Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in 2001 and 2005

Subject	# of Proficient Students in 2001	# of Proficient Students in 2005	Percent Increase
Reading	70.0%	85.2%	15.2%
Writing	40.0%	53.2%	13.2%
Math	55.7%	68.5%	12.8%

As can be seen in the table, the number of students who received a proficient rating increased between 13 and 15 percent in all three areas from 2001 to 2005. Although these achievement increases can not be directly correlated to Lesson One, the principal believes the program has positively influenced the students' academic performance and overall school environment enough that he attributes some of this improvement to the impact of Lesson One.

Changes in the staff and overall school environment were also identified by the school principal during the April 2006 interview. He reported, “There has been a complete mind, culture and paradigm shift in the school because of Lesson One and this is incredibly challenging to achieve.” He went on to explain that although all of the teaching staff aimed to improve students’ social and learning skills they each took a different approach to achieving this rather than one uniform method. According to Mr. Jensen, “the Lesson One program allowed a consistent learning environment to be developed throughout the building and provided the entire school with a set of clear, consistent expectations, skills and tools for all to follow.” The program also “allowed the teaching staff to remain positive throughout the approach vs. being punitive with the students.”

### **Current Status of Lesson One**

After 5 years the Lesson One program is still fully functioning in the Aster School. The low teacher turnover, regular training of new staff on Lesson One and whole school implementation has allowed the program to be sustained from year to year. The principal’s full endorsement of the program has also helped to reinforce the buy-in of the staff and student population and to perpetuate it from year to year.