EFFECTS OF THE *9 ESSENTIALS SKILLS FOR THE LOVE AND LOGIC CLASSROOM*® TRAINING PROGRAM ON TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR STUDENTS BEHAVIOR AND THEIR OWN TEACHING COMPETENCE: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

Charles Fay, Ph.D.

Introduction

Over the past thirty years, severe disruptive behavior among American youth has evolved from a relatively minor concern, shared by only a few educators and parents, to a major day-to-day crisis experienced by many. Veteran teachers continually report that the students entering their classrooms today are vastly more challenging than the ones they taught as recently as a decade ago. Clearly, both educators and the general public view child discipline as one of the most challenging and important issues facing today's schools (*American Educator*, 1995-96; Elan, Rose & Gallup, 1996; Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998). Mirroring these concerns has been research documenting significant increases in the frequency of behaviors ranging from minor disruptions (Walker, Colvin & Ramsey, 1995) to fatal violence (Koop & Lundberg, 1992; Rutherford & Nelson, 1995).

There is no doubt that educators and parents are experiencing ever-increasing needs for practical ways of preventing discipline problems, teaching pro-social behavior, and promoting responsibility. Research has shown that punishment-based approaches actually increase disruptive behaviors (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Mayer & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1991). Further, approaches that fail to provide clear behavioral limits and consequences have also yielded less poor results (Mayer, 1995). Out of dissatisfaction with many traditional approaches, concerns over the increasing numbers of at-risk students, and requests from parents and educators throughout the United States, the *Love and Logic* theory and set of discipline techniques was developed (see Cline & Fay, 1990; Cline & Fay, 1992; Fay & Funk, 1995; Fay & Cline, 1997). At the theoretical core of this approach is the idea that success for children of all ages rests on a balance of unconditional compassion, firm behavioral limits, and logical consequences.

The primary goal of the Love and Logic program is to give parents, educators, and others working with children practical strategies for reducing behavior problems, increasing motivation, and building assets which contribute to life-long responsibility and resiliency. Benson, Galbraith and Espeland (1995) in their study of 270,000 students grades six through twelve, observed a number of resiliency factors, or "developmental assets" which help children avoid academic failure, emotional problems, criminal behavior, substance abuse, and other negative outcomes. Similar findings have been obtained by others studying the phenomenon of resilience in children (see Garmezy, 1985; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Werner & Smith, 1992). The Love and Logic theory and set of techniques give specific and practical tools for building the following assets:

Developmental Assets Addressed by the Love and Logic Program

1. Highly supportive and loving families and schools.

2. Parents who establish open communication with their children.

3. Positive parent-teacher relationships and parent involvement.

4. Positive school climate.

5. Appropriate standards for behavior at home and school (i.e., limits).

6. Positive school and parental discipline.

7. Positive relationships between children and adults other than parents.

8. High achievement motivation and aspirations.

9. Learning to use empathy with others.

10. Decision-making skills.

11. Self-esteem.

12. Hope, or a positive view, of the world and the future.

Theoretical and Empirical Roots of the Love and Logic Program

The theoretical and empirical roots of Love and Logic stem from two areas: (1) studies examining basic principles of learning and conditioning, including cognitive or social learning theories (e.g., Bandura, 1977; Pavlov, 1927; Rescorla, 1988; Thorndike, 1905; Skinner, 1953; Watson & Reyner, 1920) and (2) research examining human emotional needs and their relationship to motivation (e.g., Glasser, 1969; Maslow, 1954; Ng, 1980; and Rogers, 1961)

Supporting Theory and Research

The *9 Essential Skills for the Love and Logic Classroom* program is guided by five basic principles, each firmly grounded in research:

1. Preserve and enhance the child's self-concept.
2. Teach children how to own and solve the problems they create.
3. Share the control and decision-making.
4. Combine consequences with high levels of empathy and warmth.
5. Build the adult-child relationship.

A key component of the program involves giving parents and educators a firm rationale for each of the above principles, as well as practical tools for following them.

Preserve and enhance the child's self-concept.

The *Love and Logic* program teaches that each and every intervention or technique must be designed in a way to preserve or enhance the child's self-concept. Research has clearly shown that one's view of self has significant motivational influences on behavior and cognition (Harter, 1986). Further, Bandura (1977) proposed that self-efficacy beliefs stem directly from one's cognitive appraisal of task difficulty, one's abilities, and whether effort or struggle will yield success. The *Love and Logic* program focuses heavily on engineering situations that encourage children to struggle with solvable problems, receive guidance from adults, achieve success, and attribute their success to effort. Weiner (1979) observed that these types of internal attributions to effort or struggle are key to developing high levels of achievement motivation.

Teach children how to own and solve the problems they create.

A key concept guiding the *Love and Logic* program is the idea that children develop problem-solving skills only when two conditions exist: (1) they are required by the adults around them to think about and solve the problems they create; and (2) these adults teach problem-solving skills through modeling and instruction. Regarding this first condition, Kerr and Bowen (1988) argued that one of the most important tasks for individuals and systems is to develop clear boundaries regarding problem-ownership. When parents or educators own problems that should be solved by children, and when children take on adult problems, the health of the family or school system suffers. Everyone is involved in everybody else's problems, and nobody has the energy to deal with their own. In contrast, when adults solve their own problems, and guide children to do the same, the system functions smoother (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Foster, Prinz & O'Leary, 1983) and those within it have more opportunities to develop self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Regarding the second condition above, when parents and educators model solving their own problems, and guide children to do the same, children begin to learn these crucial skills. Spivak and Sure (1974) in their pioneering research on social problem-solving, have noted that modeling and direct instruction are key strategies for teaching problem-solving skills. Similar propositions have been made by Bandura, 1976; Bandura & Jeffery, 1973; Cormier & Cormier (1991). The *Love and Logic* program gives parents and teachers specific guidelines for using modeling, direct instruction and feedback to teach the following problem-solving process:

1. Identify and define the problem.
2. Brainstorm solutions.
3. Evaluate each solution.
4. Implement the solution chosen.

For research supporting this problem-solving model, see D'Zurilla (1986), as well as Cormier & Cormier (1991).

Share the control and decision-making.

The *Love and Logic* program emphasizes healthy control as a basic human emotional need, and it provides specific parent and educator strategies for enhancing children's perceptions of control. Supporting this approach is research showing that shared control enhances general levels of cooperation (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Glasser, 1969), people's ability to cope with stressful situations (Glass, McKnight, & Valdinardo, 1993; Glass, Singer, Leonard, Krantz, Cohen, & Cummings, 1973; Rodin, 1976), academic motivation (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, & Snapp, 1978; Sapona, Bauer, & Philips, 1989; Slavin, 1985) and physical health (Langer & Rodin, 1976; Schulz, 1976).

Combine consequences with high levels of empathy and warmth.

The *Love and Logic* program is based on a unique combination of research conducted by behavioral psychologists, as well as studies examining the essential components of helping relationships. From the early work of Thorndike (1905) and Skinner (1953), educators posited a very simple relationship between behavior and its consequences. Behaviors yielding positive consequences tend to increase in frequency, whereas those producing negative consequences tend to diminish. From this basic "Law of Effect," a variety of programs applying behavioral principles to school discipline were developed. Anecdotal feedback from educators across the country, as well as outcome research, has shown that a focus on behavioral principles and consequences alone has the following limitations:

1. Fails to prevent behavior problems.
2. Fails to teach appropriate replacement behaviors.
3. Contributes to student withdrawal, avoidance, or retaliatory aggression.

Researchers examining the behavior change process have repeatedly observed that the rigid application of behavioral principles to human relationships is insufficient for long-term positive change. In contrast, when such principles are combined with high levels of trust, empathy, and warmth, students are more likely to be cooperative and to copy pro-social behavior modeled by adults (Egan, 1990; French & Raven, 1959; Ng, 1980; Rogers, 1958; Strong, 1968). The *Love and Logic* program places strong emphasis on teaching parents, educators, and other adults how to model healthy behavior, provide logical consequences, and do both in a very warm, empathic way.

Build the adult-child relationship.

Pivotal components of the *9 Essential Skills for the Love and Logic Classroom* teacher training program are strategies designed to enhance teacher-student relationships and create a positive school climate for all students. Research has clearly demonstrated that at-risk students who lack positive relationships with their teachers and other adults at school display more disruptive behavior, are more likely to disengage from academic activities and are likely to drop-out before they graduate (Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan, & Mac Iver, 1993; Finn, 1989). Other research has shown significant improvements in behavior, academic achievement, and on-time attendance

when students experience caring relationships with their teachers and when the overall school climate feels supportive (Baker, Terry, Bridger, & Winsor, 1997; Finn, 1989; Kramer-Schlosser, 1992; Swartz, Merten, & Bursik, 1987).

Although limited empirical research has been conducted on the Love and Logic parent and educator training programs, the limited data available at this time appear promising. One study, conducted at the Livingston Family Center in Michigan, examined the effects of *The Becoming a Love and Logic Parent* program with parents going through divorce court, as well as parents with children involved in the Juvenile Justice system (Hayek, 2000). Results revealed significant reductions in the use of illegal substances, in parent-child conflict, and general negative child behavior. Similar results were obtained by La Rosa et al. (2001).

Applying Love and Logic in an elementary school, Weir (1997) observed high levels of teacher "buy-in" and use of the program in this school. After implementing this program: (a) 87% of teachers reported having more effective tools for managing student behavior; (b) 84% reported improved relationships with their students; (c) 68% reported decreased time spent managing behavior disruptions; (d) 71% reported increased time spent teaching curriculum; and (e) 82% reported having more control over discipline. Weir also observed a 48% decrease in the number of main office referrals for discipline during the first year this school applied the *Love and Logic* program.

Using single-subject methodology, Mckenna (1997) examined the effects of one Love and Logic technique on a nine-year-old female student's academic motivation, personal hygiene, classroom behavior, general demeanor, and self-concept. Outcome measures included teacher ratings, teacher anecdotal observations, and student's performance on the Pierrs-Harris Self-Concept Scale. For a period of nine weeks, two teachers applied the "One-Sentence Intervention," an approach to enhancing student-teacher relationships by systematically noticing and encouraging unique student strengths and interests. Teacher ratings and anecdotal observations revealed: (a) improved personal hygiene; (b) an elevated frequency of positive peer and adult interactions; and (c) increased rates of homework completion. Pre and post test scores on the Pierrs-Harris Self-Concept scale revealed a statistically significant 16-point improvement over the course of intervention.

The current investigation was undertaken to gather pre and post test data from a significantly larger sample of teachers than studied in these earlier evaluations.

Method

Subjects were from nine hundred, sixty-three (963) to one thousand, nineteen (1,019) parents in several states, representing a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic groups.

Each subject participated in the *9 Essential Skills for the Love and Logic Classroom curriculum*. Each course was presented over a nine week period, with one session conducted per week. Each session lasted approximately two hours.

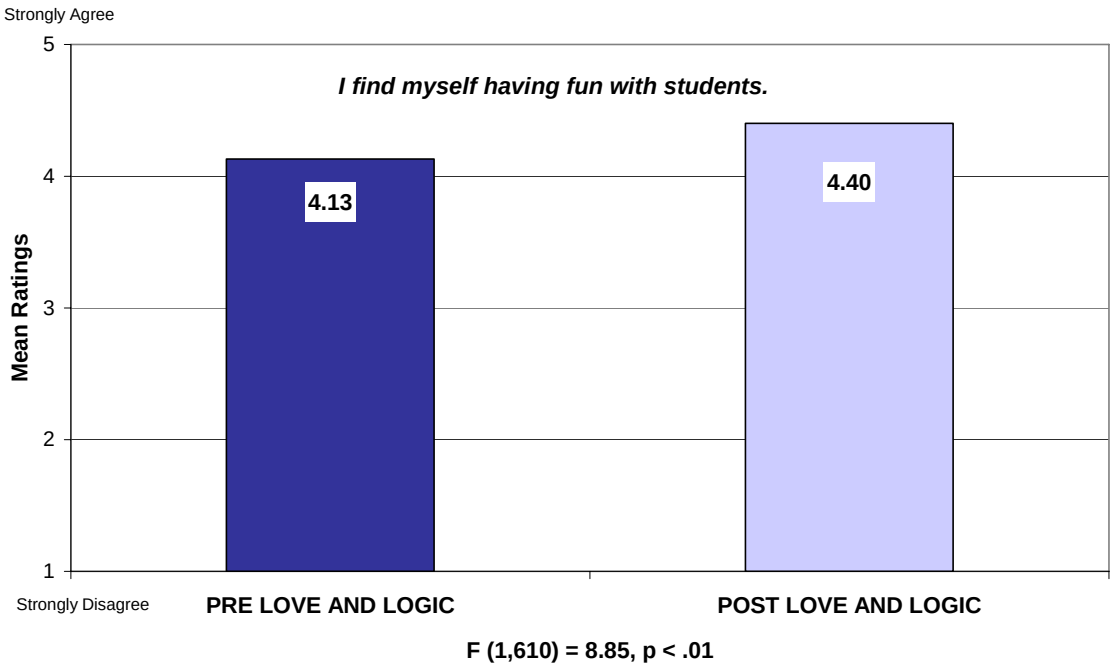
Before the first session, each participant completed the "Before Program" questionnaire (See appendix A). This questionnaire was designed to assess pretest perceptions of their teaching competence, stress, and their students' behaviors.

After the final course session, participants complete the "After Program" questionnaire, to assess any posttest changes in perceived teaching competence, stress, and their students' behaviors. This questionnaire was identical to the "Before Program" measure.

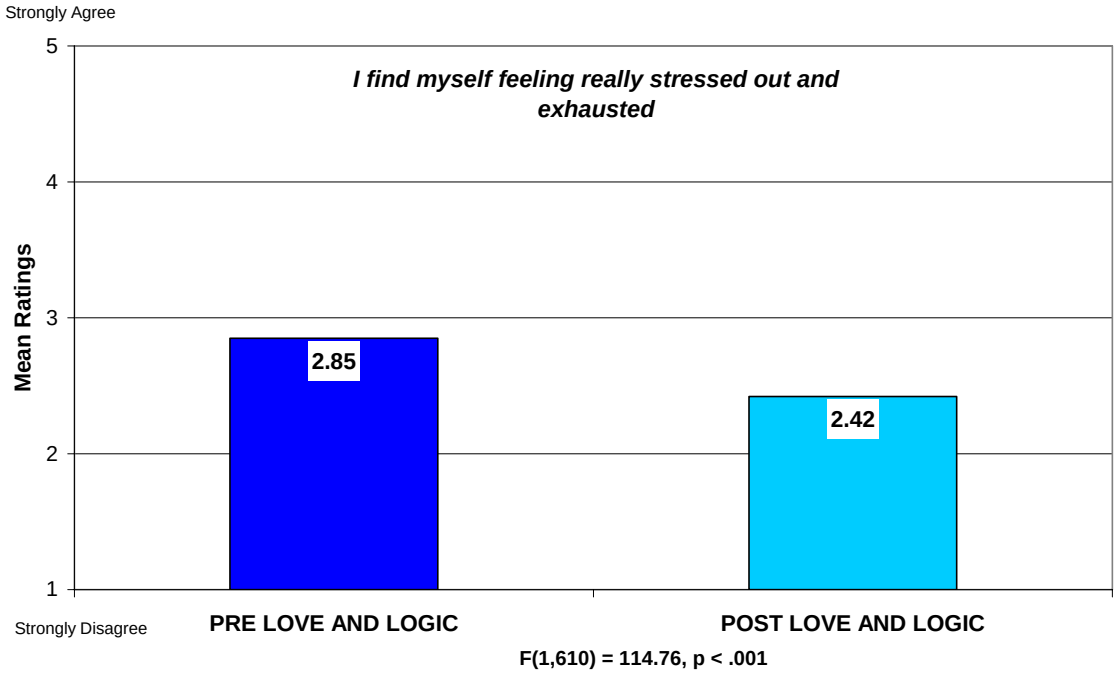
Based on nearly two decades of positive anecdotes from teachers participating in this program, it was hypothesized that statistically significant improvements would be observed on each of the scales assessing teachers' perceptions of their students' behaviors, as well as their own teaching competence.

Results

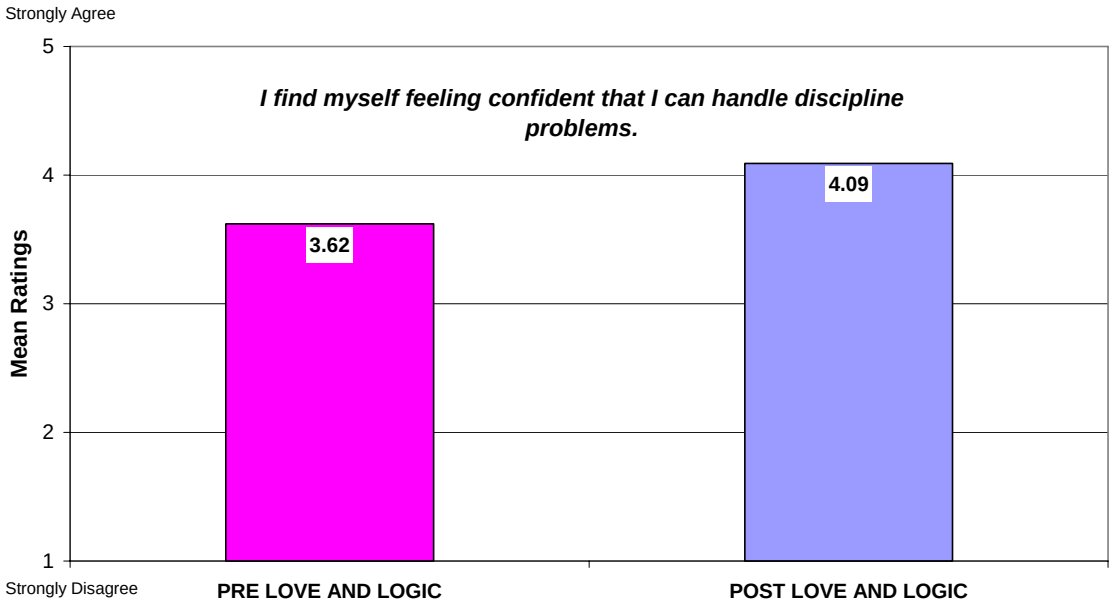
Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) analyses were conducted to examine pre and post test mean differences for each of the ten scales assessed. To maintain the family-wise error rate at the .05 level, the Tukey procedure was employed.
These results are summarized below:



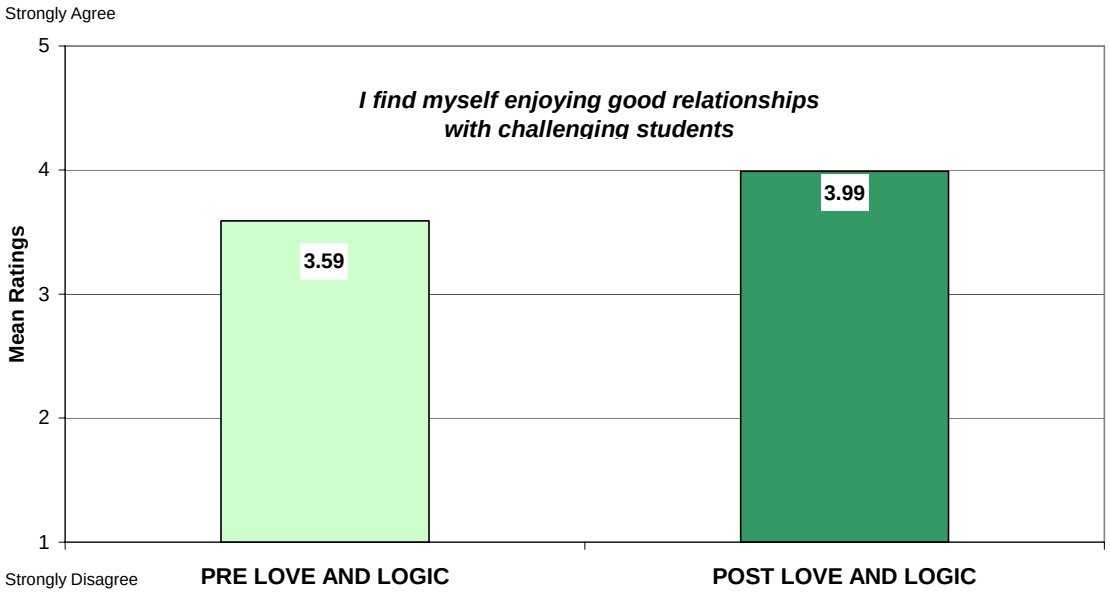
F (1,610) = 8.85, p < .01



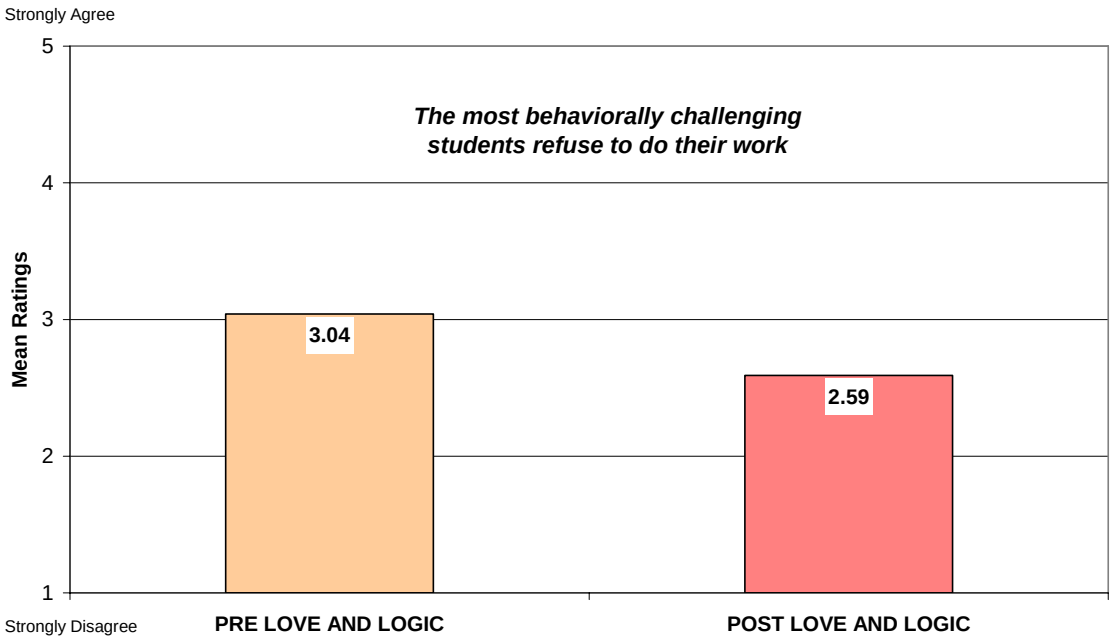
F(1,610) = 114.76, p < .001



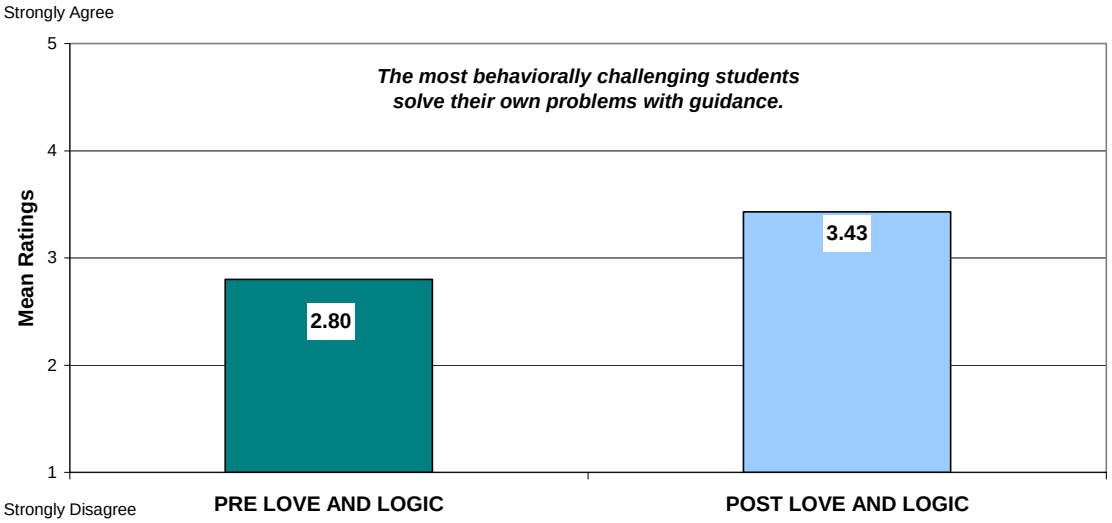
F(1,612) = 163.33, p < .001



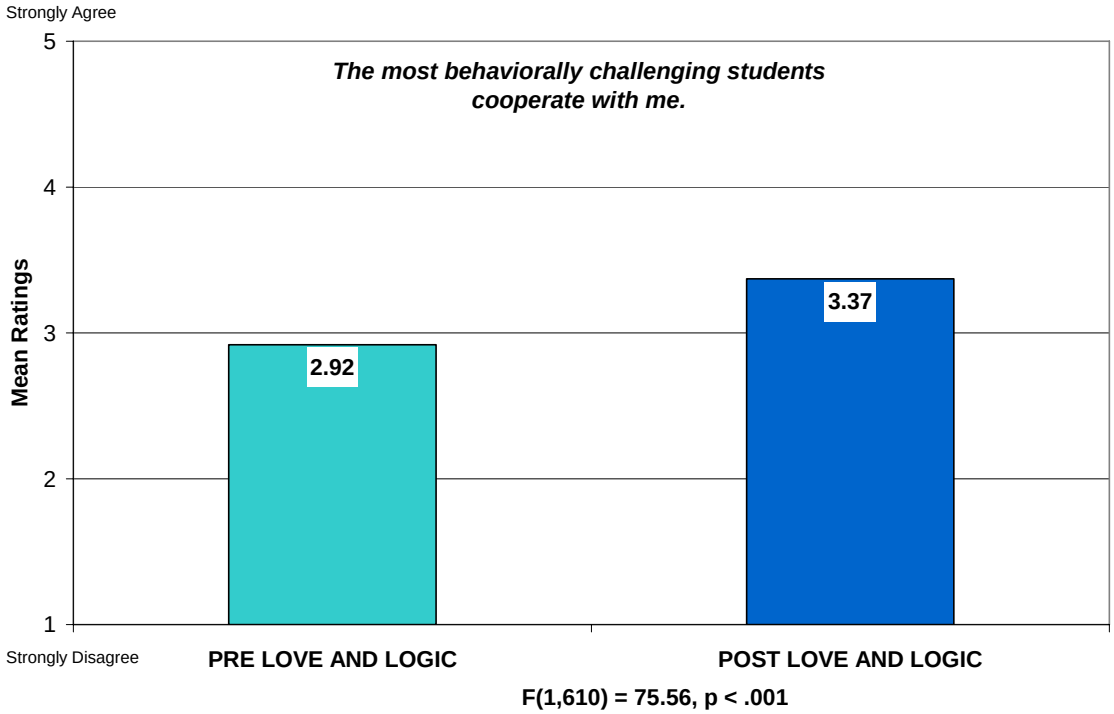
F(1,612) = 104.03, p < .001



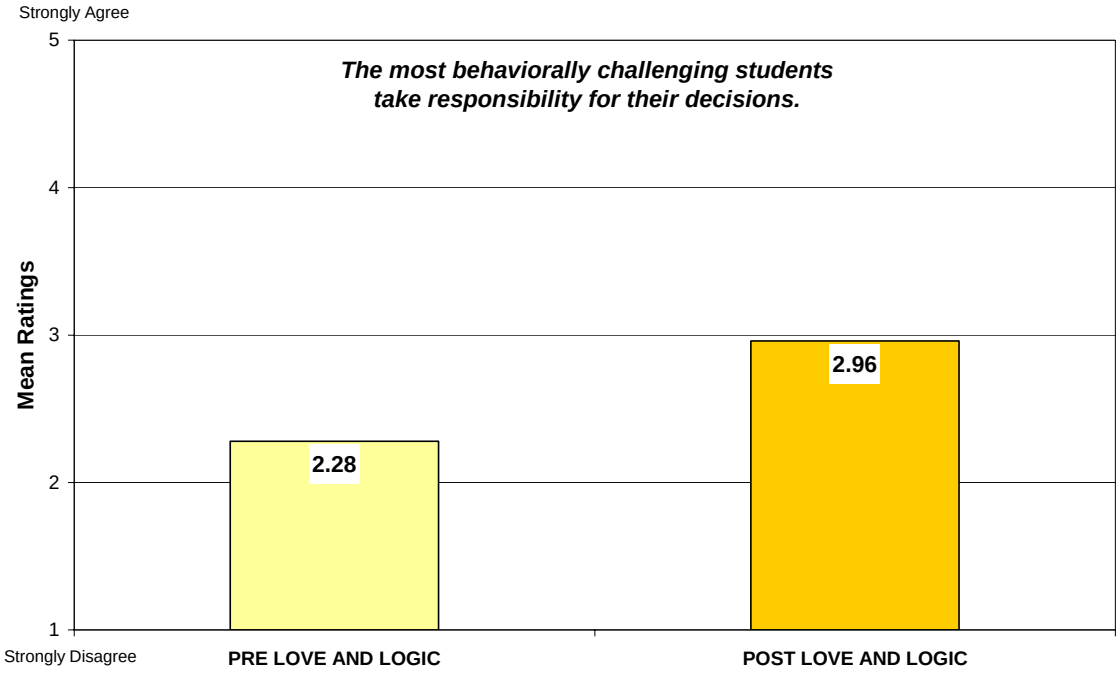
F(1,589) = 73, p < .001



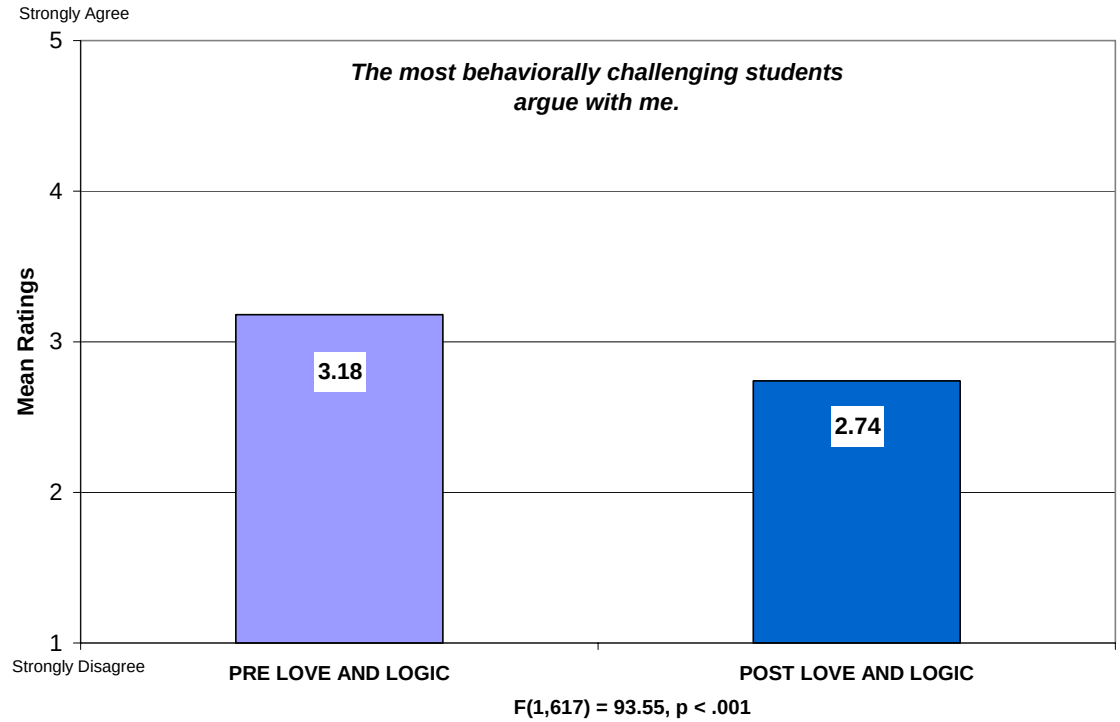
F(1,598) = 165.51, p <.001



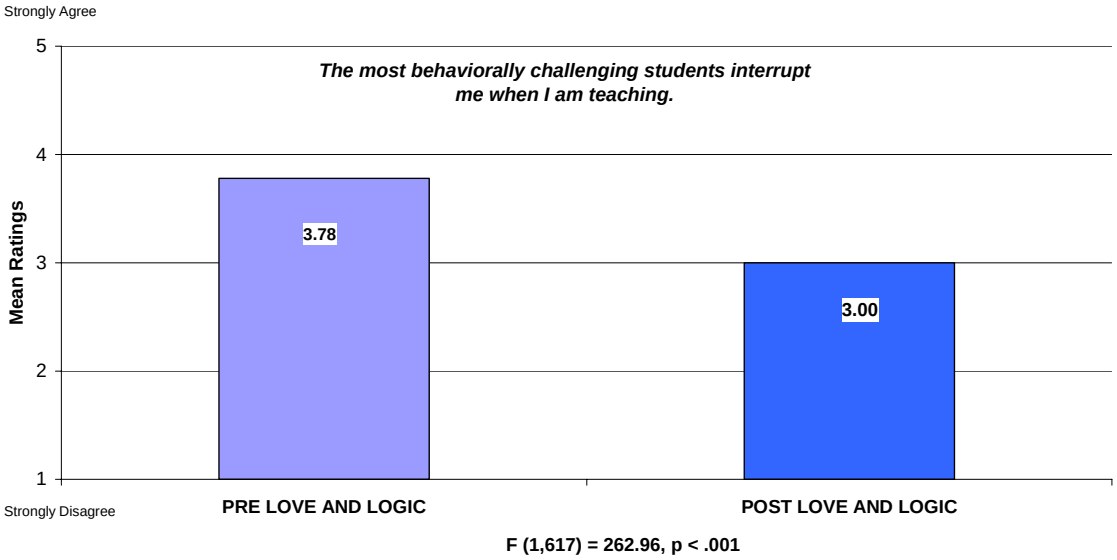
F(1,610) = 75.56, p < .001



F(1,610) = 149.58, p < .001



F(1,617) = 93.55, p < .001



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Appendix A

Nine Essential Skills for the Love and Logic Classroom®

Before Program Questionnaire

Thanks for joining us! Soon you'll be hearing plenty of practical skills for preventing hassles with challenging students, teaching responsibility, and lowering your blood pressure in the classroom.

Will you help us by completing the following questionnaire? The information you provide will NOT be shared with anyone, and your participation is completely voluntary.

If you choose to participate, we will also ask you to complete a similar questionnaire after the last class. To help us match your first and second questionnaires, please include your name (or code) in the following blank: _____

General Information

What is your position or job title? (circle one)

Regular Ed. Teacher Special Ed. Teacher Counselor Social Worker

Psychologist Administrator Paraprofessional

Other: _____

What grade level(s) do you work with? _____

How many years of experience do you have? _____

Circle how much you agree with the following statements:

The most behaviorally challenging students…

argue with me

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree **Strongly Agree**

often misbehave in ways that interrupt my teaching or other work

Continued on next page

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

cooperate with me when I ask them to do something…or stop doing something

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

take responsibility for their poor decisions

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

refuse to do their school work

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

solve their own problems with my guidance

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Circle how much you agree with the following statements about yourself:

As an educator, I find myself…

having fun with students

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

being really stressed-out and exhausted by the end of each day

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Continued on next page

feeling confident that I can handle discipline problems

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Strongly Disagree **Strongly Agree**

enjoying good relationships with challenging students

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

By the time you complete this program, what question or questions would you most like answered? (Include this in the space below.)

Nine Essential Skills for the Love and Logic Classroom®

After Program Questionnaire

Thanks for participating in our class!

On the first day, you completed a questionnaire that asked you some questions about how your students act and how you feel as an educator. To evaluate the effectiveness of this program, we'd appreciate your help once more.

Again, the information you provide will NOT be shared with anyone, and your participation is completely voluntary.

To help us match this questionnaire with your first one, please include your name (or code) in the following blank: _____

General Information

What is your position or job title? (circle one)

Regular Ed. Teacher Special Ed. Teacher Counselor Social Worker

Psychologist Administrator Paraprofessional

Other: _____

What grade level(s) do you work with? _____

How many years of experience do you have? _____

Circle how much you agree with the following statements:

The most behaviorally challenging students…

argue with me

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree **Strongly Agree**

misbehave in ways that interrupt my teaching or other work

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Continued on next page

cooperate with me when I ask them to do something…or stop doing something

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

take responsibility for their poor decisions

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

refuse to do their schoolwork

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

solve their own problems with my guidance

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Circle how much you agree with the following statements about yourself:

As an educator, I find myself…

having fun with my students

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

being really stressed-out and exhausted by the end of each day

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

feeling confident that I can handle classroom discipline problems

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree **Strongly Agree**

Continued on next page

enjoying good relationships with challenging students

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Identify the most valuable thing you learned in this class, and explain why you feel this way:

(Optional) Describe a situation you handled successfully with Love and Logic.