Through the Eyes of Experience:

Perceptions of Three Educators About a New Life Skills Curriculum

for Hard-to-Reach Youths and Adults

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the research question: “What are educators’ perceptions of a new interactive life skills curriculum called Tackling the Tough Skills: A Curriculum Building Skills for Work and Life™?” I interviewed three educators who teach hard-to-reach audiences using the Tough Skills curriculum (pseudonyms used): 1) Barb, 26, a white female in St. Louis who has used the Tough Skills curriculum with both males and females, youths and adults; she has worked with adults transitioning from welfare to work, adults in a construction trades program, and high school juniors and seniors; 2) Charles, 58, an African-American male extension educator from New York who has used the curriculum for about a year with male prisoners in a county jail and federal prison; he recently began using the curriculum with youths in the county jail; and 3) Melissa, 37, an African-American female in the St. Louis area who is youth coordinator for a nonprofit organization offering employment services and vocational skills training to youths and adults; she chose the Tough Skills curriculum as a primary resource for periodic high school workshops and for individual counseling targeted at in-school and out-of-school youths. I conducted the first interview in person and the other two by phone. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, then analyzed to look for emergent categories and themes. Themes emerging from the three interviews include: 1) the curriculum is improving the lives of men and women, youths and adults, in many different life situations; 2) interactive role plays and activities help to interest and engage participants in active learning; 3) the curriculum is effectively teaching the concept of responsibility, which is especially hard to teach; 4) not all hard-to-reach audiences respond to the curriculum; and 5) the length of educational program and the amount of time educators have to teach the curriculum affect a program’s ability to teach attitude, responsibility, communication and preparing for the workplace concepts.
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**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

**SIGNED EDUCATOR CONSENT FORMS**
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_Tackling the Tough Skills: A Curriculum Building Skills for Work and Life™_ is a fun, interactive life skills curriculum and resource that helps hard-to-reach adults and teens prepare for success in work and life. The curriculum addresses five key pre-employment skill areas: 1) attitude, 2) responsibility, 3) communication, 4) problem solving/decision making, and 5) preparing for the workplace.

The book was written by Rosilee Trotta, urban youth and family specialist with University of Missouri Outreach and Extension, St. Louis, Missouri.

How _Tackling the Tough Skills_ Came to Be

The curriculum was written in response to national changes in welfare policy. After August 22, 1996, when the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act was signed into law, workforce development changes began moving large numbers of people from the welfare rolls into the workplace. In the St. Louis metropolitan area, 6,000 to 7,000 welfare recipients began this transition before May 1997.

Although the mandate to reduce welfare rolls was clear, the method of how to do that was not. State agencies responsible for moving large numbers of people into the workplace were looking for ways to accomplish this transition efficiently and effectively.

A recurring theme that emerged in focus groups, conducted by University Outreach and Extension during the developmental phase of the curriculum, was that individuals making the transition from welfare to work were more likely to lack “soft skills” than job capabilities. Employers repeatedly stated the need for workers with good
attitudes, a sense of responsibility, an ability to get along with others, and a willingness to learn.

The challenge Rosilee faced was to develop a curriculum that addressed these soft skills holistically. Importantly, the curriculum also needed to be able to engage audiences that could be resistant to learning. Rosilee realized the audiences using this curriculum would be struggling with a variety of learning and life issues. Many would be high school dropouts with negative school experiences. Some would be struggling with poor self-esteem. Others might consider themselves victims, with little power to influence their own lives.

In response, Rosilee wrote *Tackling the Tough Skills*. The purpose of the book was to help people transition smoothly to work, retain employment, and to successfully cope with work and family issues. Although originally targeted for adults transitioning from welfare to work, Rosilee also envisioned the curriculum being viable for at-risk teens, although for a different purpose: to teach them critical life skills that would increase the likelihood they would choose to remain in high school and graduate.

With more than 30 years of experience working with hard-to-reach audiences, Rosilee knew the curriculum needed to be fun and highly interactive to keep the interest of participants. And that is what she strived to write.

From November 1998 through June 2000, the curriculum was piloted as part of University Outreach and Extension’s WorkWays™ program in St. Louis to increase job-readiness skills and to improve skills leading to self-sufficiency. WorkWays classes were offered in three-week sessions, with each session consisting of five days per week, six hours per day.

Funded by the Missouri Department of Social Services through the Division of Family Services (DFS), almost all participants were mandated to attend. Most had
dropped out of high school and came with an attitude of not wanting to be in the class.

Out of 193 adults who attended the three-week educational program using the *Tackling the Tough Skills* curriculum, 145 completed.

During the course of the WorkWays program, both qualitative and quantitative evaluations were conducted. At the end of the program, the WorkWays staff praised the curriculum. One educator stated, “I think that the curriculum was wonderful. It addressed things that our participants had never talked about, as well as things they knew needed improvement. It allowed them to search themselves and get ‘better.’”

One participant commented: “Three weeks is not long enough. I walked away with a lot more than I came here with. And that is going to keep me going for the rest of my life because now I know how to handle certain issues that I didn’t know how to deal with before.”

Due to reorganization of DFS, the agency made very few referrals to the program during the second year, resulting in Rosilee’s decision, as director of the program, to end operation of the education program, effective June 30, 2000.

*Tackling the Tough Skills* was published in July 2000 by the University of Missouri to make it available to other outside agencies and organizations working with hard-to-reach audiences.

My involvement with *Tough Skills* relates to my position as East Central Region Information Specialist with University Outreach and Extension. I manage media relations, communications and marketing for extension programs in the St. Louis metropolitan area. I was involved in the development of the publication, serving as production editor, typesetter and designer.

I developed a website (http://outreach.missouri.edu/tough-life-skills) in the summer of 2000 that has served as an effective marketing tool. Educators are able to
order the book online or through traditional methods. I also produced marketing materials that have been distributed nationwide.

To date, nearly 400 books have been sold in 44 states, Washington, D.C., Canada, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Holland. We have heard repeatedly that purchasers of the book recommend it wholeheartedly to colleagues, making “word-of-mouth marketing” a key to continuing sales.

I have been excited to see the development and growth of *Tackling the Tough Skills*. I also have been interested in finding out what types of experiences educators have had with the curriculum. As an adult education doctoral student at University of Missouri-St. Louis, I conducted this qualitative study in conjunction with my second qualitative research class.

For this study, I decided to interview three educators who have used the curriculum. My hope was to be able to better understand how educators are using the curriculum with various audiences, as well as to find out how participants have responded to the curriculum, looking through the eyes of the educators themselves.

**Preparation**

*Interview Process*

**Interview #1: Barb**

*Selection of educator.* When I began the study, the first person I knew I wanted to interview was Barb. (*All educator names are pseudonyms.*) She was one of two educators hired by University Outreach and Extension to teach the *Tough Skills* curriculum in the WorkWays program and served in that role from November 1998 to June 2000.

I knew Barb well and had worked with her in connection with my doing WorkWays publicity. After the WorkWays program ended, new opportunities to use the
Tough Skills curriculum emerged with other Extension programming in the St. Louis area. Since December 2000, Barb has been teaching a 10-week evening course featuring the Tough Skills curriculum to adults who are unemployed, dislocated or interested in the construction trades. In the spring of 2001, she began using the curriculum to teach seniors in a St. Louis city high school, expanding the program to include juniors in the fall of 2001.

Research questions. Initially, I developed 15 questions for the interview (see Appendix A). In class, I received helpful feedback on this first set of questions from a small group of students. I subsequently revised questions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 14; I eliminated questions 11, 12, and 13. The resulting set of questions for Interview #1 contained 12 questions (see Appendix B).

Interview. I interviewed Barb in person for one hour in my office on February 12, 2002. During the interview, I felt some of my questioning seemed repetitive. I also thought I needed to ask a few more questions toward the beginning about audiences and history of using the curriculum. So I decided to revise the questions before my second interview.

Interview #2: Charles

Selection of educator. The person I chose to interview second was Charles, an extension educator in New York who had called Rosilee in December 2001, asking if she had written any more materials. He said he was using Tough Skills exclusively with inmates in a local county jail and had just been asked to offer the program to local federal prisoners as well.

Rosilee did not have his phone number, but I was able to locate him through the Internet in connection with his position as an extension community educator.
Research questions. I revised the questions from my first interview by: moving question 7 up as question 2; adding question 3; deleting question 4; revising wording on question 5, deleting question 6; revising wording on question 8; revising questions 9 and 10 to be less directional; and revising wording on question 11 (see Appendix C for Interview #2 questions).

Interview. On April 1, 2002, I interviewed Charles by phone. I thought most of the questions worked well, but decided to change one question before the final interview.

Interview #3: Melissa

Selection of educator. For the third interview, I talked to Melissa, who had attended one of Rosilee’s train-the-trainer sessions in St. Louis in May 2001. After receiving feedback from Melissa after the training session that the curriculum was very helpful, Rosilee suggested Melissa as a possible person to interview.

Research questions. Following the second interview, I revised only question #10 in preparation for the third interview. Instead of asking, “Can you think of any stories or anecdotes that illustrate how the Tough Skills curriculum has affected your students,” I reworded the question as: “Can you think of any specific incident in class related to one of your students that illustrates how the Tough Skills curriculum has affected your students?” The previous question was vague and did not specifically ask about the classroom experiences.

Interview. On April 16, 2002, I talked to Melissa by phone using Interview #3 Questions (see Appendix D). I had some technical difficulties trying to record this interview. I was able to complete the interview, but I had to keep switching between regular and speaker phone modes to avoid the feedback I was getting for some reason from my cell phone.
Biases/Expectations

My Biases/Expectations as Researcher

I chose three educators whom I knew had positive feelings about the curriculum. I wanted to know more about their experiences and exactly what they had found most effective and helpful about the curriculum. My intent in the study was not to interview someone who did not like the curriculum or who had hardly used it. Consequently, the reader should realize that I selected educators whom I already knew had expressed positive feedback about the curriculum previously.

On the other hand, I tried to pose open interview questions that permitted the educators to respond in whatever way they wanted to answer. So if any educator had negative things to say in the interview, the questions were flexible enough to permit that.

I thought the first question worked well to learn what seemed important to the educators without directing them in any particular way: “I understand you’ve been using a new curriculum called Tackling the Tough Skills in some of your programming. Could you tell me about your experiences using the Tough Skills curriculum so far?”

Educator Biases/Expectations

Regarding any biases of the educators toward me, I think Barb (Interview #1) was favorably biased toward me due to our previously having worked together on the WorkWays program. I had not had any connection with the other two educators before I contacted them to ask if they would be willing to be interviewed, so I was not aware of any potential bias that may have existed.

The design of my study also attempted to understand how participants have reacted to the curriculum, but I relied on the educators to provide that insight. So the fact that the educators might have had biases about the participants should also be recognized.
Categories

In the three interviews, I identified five major categories: 1) Educator, 2) Participants, 3) Curriculum, 4) Classroom, and 5) Small Talk. Within the Educator category, I found four sub-categories: a) Emotion, b) Opinion, c) Background/Experience, and d) Teaching Expertise. Under Participants, I identified two sub-categories: a) Participant Reaction, and b) Type of Participant. Within the Curriculum category, I identified two sub-categories: a) Tough Skills Content, and b) Other Classroom Resources.

A summary of categories follows (see Appendix F for categories and color coding of interview transcripts):

1. Educator
   a. **Educator’s emotion**: statements showing emotion of educator about the curriculum.
   b. **Educator’s opinion**: educator’s belief about the curriculum that is factual in nature.
   c. **Educator’s background/experience**: information about the educator’s background, experience or position.
   d. **Educator’s teaching expertise**: statement pertaining to educator’s expertise or experience in teaching.

2. Participants
   a. **Participant reaction**: ways participants reacted to the Tough Skills classes and/or curriculum, according to the educator.
   b. **Type of participant**: people who have participated in classes using the Tough Skills curriculum.
3. **Curriculum**

   a. **Tackling the Tough Skills**: pertaining to the *Tough Skills* curriculum content.

   b. **Other classroom resources**: other resources mentioned by the educator that are unrelated to *Tough Skills*.

4. **Classroom**: pertaining to the way the class is organized or structured to teach

5. **Small talk**: extraneous conversational remarks.

I coded all the interviews according to these categories. However, I chose to report below my findings related primarily to the three categories of Educator, Participants and Curriculum. I considered those the most important in terms of my research question.

*Interview #1: Barb*

*Educator*

At 26, Barb is the youngest of the educators I interviewed. But having worked with the *Tough Skills* curriculum for nearly four years—with about half that time in a program that taught welfare-to-work audiences for six hours a day—she was the most experienced with the curriculum of the three educators I interviewed.

Barb also was the only educator with experience teaching *Tough Skills* to both males and females, as well as to both teenagers and adults.

With a B.A. in Psychology, Barb is currently pursuing a masters degree in counseling at a local university and expects to graduate within the year.

Since I have known Barb since 1998 when she first started teaching *Tough Skills*, the one-hour interview in my office was enjoyable for us both, I think. We both have
worked closely with Rosilee, the author, and have discussed the curriculum on several occasions before.

Given our past work relationship and the amount of emotional investment we both have made in *Tough Skills* during the past few years, I was somewhat apprehensive before the interview that I would be able to maintain some objective distance as a researcher when we talked, and later, that I would be able to write my findings in an objective way. I also was concerned about not keeping her too long, since I knew she had set aside about an hour for the interview before heading for another appointment.

During the interview, Barb’s face lit up repeatedly and her hands gestured frequently as she expressed her excitement and enthusiasm for the *Tough Skills* curriculum. When she was first hired to teach the curriculum in 1998, she remembered reading it for the first time: “I read through it and just, you know, I remember thinking, ‘Yes, (laugh), this is so good.’ And I was able to see myself in some of the examples, and see myself and say, ‘You know, this is a great idea.’”

She used the word “neat” to describe the curriculum several times, such as the following reference when she was talking about how practical the book is:

> You know, it’s something that’s fun. I’m not just a talking head up there. You know, I’ve got this neat curriculum that uses a tool that’s so useful, they can take the skill, you know, whereas maybe they don’t see how mathematics works in their daily life. Or they don’t see how Romeo and Juliet is pertinent to their daily life. I mean we might be able to see that, but they can say, “Ok, if someone is standing there with their hands on their hips, and their nostrils are flaring, they are not happy! They are not happy!” (laugh) So they can use that information to their own benefit.
Participants

*Both adults and youths.* Significantly, Barb viewed *Tough Skills* as being helpful to anyone, regardless of age or situation:

Well, I have used the curriculum to work with welfare-to-work clients, as well as the Construction Trades Academy, which is with juniors and seniors in high school, and an adult component as well. So as far as using the curriculum, I’ve used it with a lot of different kinds of people. And, I guess the experience that I’ve had from it the most is that everybody seems to get something from it. They are able to draw on it—apply it to their own lives, um, no matter who they are, no matter if they’re a 60-year-old welfare recipient, or a 16-year-old high school student. So, I think that’s probably the neatest experience that I’ve had with it. I don’t think very many curriculums are designed where they’re appropriate for really anybody.

Barb had a very positive view of the effectiveness of *Tough Skills*, saying that she had observed that the curriculum empowered participants in her classes:

I think that the curriculum gives people a lot of power because I’ve heard them say, “After I went through this, I have the confidence to go on an interview. I have the practice to go do that. I realize that *I* could make a change with people in my life. *I* could make a change with a mother who’s a difficult person to be around. I realize that *I* could say things differently. *I* could make I-statements.” I remember one girl saying, “She’s my mom, and I wanted to blame her so much. But I realized that maybe *I* could be doing something else to make the situation better.”
Her answers to my questions were full of stories of incident after incident in the classroom, recalling ways she had observed the curriculum impacting learners. She made 42 references to the types of participants and their reactions to the *Tough Skills* curriculum, more than double the number mentioned by either of the other two educators. Given her depth of experience with so many types of learners and classroom situations, I had the feeling she was really trying to recapture as many stories as she could to describe what impact she has seen the curriculum have on learners.

On two occasions, she took time to think about questions for about 15 seconds before responding that she really could not think of anything more than she had already answered. For example, when I asked if she had found some things helpful with the curriculum she wasn’t expecting, she hesitated for 15 seconds and then replied: “I really like the curriculum, and I guess none of it really surprises me. It’s a while ago that I started, and nothing is coming necessarily to mind. None of it is a surprise. It’s all useful stuff.”

At one point, I asked if she thought *Tough Skills* affected teens and adults differently. From Barb’s viewpoint, whatever differences exist in the ways these two audiences react seem to be based on the differences that exist due to age and experience, not in qualities or characteristics of the curriculum.

For example, Barb talked about activities they do in the fifth and final chapter of the curriculum on Preparing for the Workplace. She said her description of the participants’ response was the same for both adults and teens: They both enjoy learning practical skills “they can take home and use right away,” Barb said, such as communication skills, anger management and the opportunity to do interviews:

> At the very end of the curriculum, we practice interviewing. We do mock interviews, and we break down the resume. We break down the cover
letter. We break down the interview process. And I think that it just gives them confidence. That’s something that I’ve heard a lot about. “Oh, wow, these are the questions that they might ask? That’s why I was so afraid to go on an interview because they—What would they ask? I never knew what they were going to ask me.”

When I asked if that was a response she has had from adults, she responded, “Both.” Then I asked if there was anything different about the way teens and adults reacted to the curriculum, and she pointed to the difference in experience between adults and youths:

I think that the adults just obviously have more years and more experiences to draw on, and sometimes it’s maybe a little bit more apparent. Maybe they get the concept a little more quickly. Because they have their childhood, and all of their friends, and their spouse or their significant other, and their children. A lot of the adults who have children are able to incorporate parenting ideas.

Youths. Referring once to juniors and seniors she currently teaches one hour per week in a city high school, she said “they’re very self-absorbed, and they don’t have the other responsibilities.” A little later, she said some of the youths are not ready to really look at themselves: “Some of them aren’t at the point, certainly. Some of them aren’t even coming to class all the time. That makes a big difference, too. Continuity and consistency.”

On many occasions, however, Barb said she has seen teenagers give immediate feedback that they have not only learned a skill, but can apply it:
They will let me know things that really impact them. They’ll say, “I’m paying attention to this now,” you know. . . . My high school students, they just said last week, they’re like, “Oh, she’s gettin’ mad ’cause you guys are talking, look at her body language!” (laugh) It’s neat to see that they’re aware of it now, they’re paying attention, and it’s like, if they’re paying attention to me, they’re paying attention to their other teachers, perhaps, and their bosses and their parents and their siblings and their friends.

Curriculum

General. Barb referred to some aspect of the Tough Skills curriculum 16 times during the hour-long interview. Of the five chapters in the curriculum, the only section she did not mention by name or activity was Chapter 4, Decision Making/Problem Solving.

When asked what type of feedback she has received from participants about the curriculum, Barb said the response from participants has been mostly positive:

I don’t get—In all the people I’ve presented this to, the feedback is never particularly negative. It’s a lot of positive feedback. And I think everybody is touched by something, you know, maybe a little bit different.

Barb said that whatever negative feedback she has received has been from people who, for one reason or another, refuse to look for ways the curriculum might help them:

The only negative comments I get—it seems to be when people are really not open to looking at themselves. And it’s like, “Oh, I didn’t need that. I don’t need this. I didn’t get anything from this.” And I think that closes a
door, but there are always going to be some people that aren’t ready to look.

Attitude (Chapter 1). Sections related to the Attitude chapter were mentioned six times, including references to the “Self Talk” exercise and self esteem. She explained the Self Talk activity this way:

I’m in a counseling program and my background is psychology. And one of the neatest things is that there’s an exercise called “Self Talk” in the Attitude section. It’s cognitive behavioral psychology. It’s changing your thought patterns, you know, figuring out what are the negative thought patterns, what are the detrimental thought patterns and seeing how you can flip-flop those to something that’s more positive, more useful, more effective for—and challenges the participant or student to think where they have these negative thoughts in their life. That’s a great, that’s a great piece.

Barb views the Attitude chapter as applying to many types of people:

The Attitude section, I think, touches a lot of people who say, “Oh, gosh, you know, I was looking at the world like everybody was out to get me, and that made me feel more powerful.” And that’s probably more of an adult statement. “It made me realize, you know, I could make a difference, I could make the change, you know, that I was focusing on the wrong person, or the wrong people.”
Responsibility (Chapter 2). One of the five main Tough Skills’ objectives is to teach individuals responsibility, a daunting task. Barb identified the Responsibility chapter—which includes such concepts as having a choice, respect, commitment, and change—as one that participants find especially challenging about the curriculum. She brought up concepts in this section six times also.

She mentioned one activity in particular called the “Respectometer,” that requires participants to think about their own learning experiences as children when they cried, argued, made a mistake, and so forth. Participants are asked to assign a “happy” or “sad” numerical value, ranging from –100 to +100, to their childhood experiences. Then participants are asked to assign values to how they would currently react in various situations. Barb said this activity is especially difficult for the adults:

> With the adult students, I think that when they have to look over themselves, perhaps how they were treated as children using the Respectometer. “How were you treated when you spilled your milk?” Or “How would you treat your child?” And you have to take a really hard look at who you are—sometimes that can really be challenging.

Barb mentioned the Responsibility section specifically as challenging to participants. “Sometimes you get some resistance because, again, you have to think about what you’re not doing,” she observed.

Barb’s experience with the curriculum presents evidence that the content helps participants learn how to take responsibility, but it may take a period of time for participants to realize how the information applies to themselves. She recalled one woman’s experience in the three-week WorkWays program, which helped individuals transitioning from welfare to work:
I had one lady that—she had two children, and they were out of wedlock. And she had given a third baby up for adoption, and just felt that was really the best thing to do, but was still pinning a lot of blame. She came back a few weeks after the program was over and she said, “You know, this helped me own my decision. This helped me own that.”

Other participants have told Barb they continued to use what they learned in *Tough Skills* after the classes were done:

And sometimes it’s after the programs are over, like when I’ll speak to somebody, just to see how they’re doing, just to do follow-up. And they’ll say, “Gosh, I’m still using, you know, such and such from the Attitude section.” Or, “I realize this is my responsibility.” You can tell that it’s really impacted them.

Barb recalls the delayed impact *Tough Skills* had on one woman who had difficulty taking responsibility for her own actions:

Sometimes it may take a couple days. I remember one woman told me— She was receiving welfare benefits, and she had several children, and they were living with her mother. And she couldn’t keep jobs because she couldn’t get along with any of her managers. They were all “ridiculous,” they were “unrealistic.” She would use words like that. And, you know, same thing with her husband. He was “unrealistic.” And he didn’t do this, and he didn’t do that. And he wasn’t this, and he wasn’t that. And she wasn’t taking a look at herself at all. And by the end of—it really took more toward the end of the program that she said, ‘Well, I’m seeing some
things that I can do. I’m seeing that by doing my resume, you know, I’m not blaming—She said, “I can open up the paper and start blaming those employers. Well, they’re not going to hire me because they’re going to be prejudiced, or they’re going to be this way or that. And I’m realizing, well, it’s easier to do that sometimes.”

**Communication (Chapter 3).** Barb said the curriculum teaches many practical skills that she has found participants can apply immediately to their lives. For example, one activity in the Communication chapter deals with body language role plays, which encourage participants to observe and interpret different types of body language through role playing situations. “Almost everybody has just a great time with those,” Barb said. She described how they practice the skill:

We talk about how a message, when someone’s trying to communicate something verbally, that only a portion of it is the actual words, only a portion of what they say has to do with tone and inflection, and the majority has to do with their body language. And so we practice—we have a sheet where there are clues as to someone’s looking up and to the left, that it means something. And people tend to really get into this, and they’ll think up, you know, their own examples. A lot of times I’ll have somebody just walk down the street, and I’ll have them show me somebody who’s really confident. How would somebody who’s very confident walk down the street? And then we’ll say, well, how would somebody who’s frightened that they’re going to get mugged walk down the street? And they’re not saying anything, just to give that really vivid example. It’s useful to be able to read your boss’ body language, or a co-
worker’s body language, you know, hey, when to back off. Or hey, do you need help? Or is there a problem?

Preparing for the Workplace (Chapter 5). In addition to Barb’s comments pertaining to this section that I already mentioned, she talked positively about the curriculum’s holistic approach in tying together work and the rest of a person’s life:

I know this isn’t about work, but, really, there are so many things that hold people back from being effective in the workplace. And without saying that to them, so often they’re able to see the incorporation between work and life. And that’s what’s so neat about this curriculum is that it helps people be better in every aspect of their life. It’s a holistic approach.

Interview #2: Charles

Educator

I wish distance would not have prevented me from interviewing Charles in person. I would have liked to have met him! A 58-year-old community educator with the Cooperative Extension Service in New York, he said, “I’m Black,” when I asked him his race.

He has used Tough Skills for about a year with inmates at two county jails run by the state. Since the beginning of 2002, he also has been working with federal prisoners in a separate section at one of these facilities, and he recently began working with teens in one of the jails as well. He described his work as mainly in “jails and halfway houses and institutions,” working with “inmates and recovering alcoholics and addicts.”

In our initial half-hour phone interview April 1, 2002, and again in a brief follow-up interview May 13, 2002, Charles explained his past and how he came to be where he is today. His path has been a painful one, going down roads he wishes he had never
traveled. For about 25 years, from the early 1970s to the late 1990s, he spent time in prison for an offense that remained unspecified. I felt awkward, like I was prying into his personal affairs, when I asked questions about his background. But he was forthright in talking about his past during the second brief phone conversation:

Now, Roxanne, there’s a large gap, OK? In employment for me. There’s a line of many years, I spent time in state prisons and rehabs and stuff like that, you know? Yeah, and I didn’t have any gainful employment since the early ’70s, you know? A lot of time spent in prisons and jails. Yeah.

When he returned to the workforce in 1997, he worked for an office for the aging, then at a children’s home for two years. On May 1, 2000, he started working in his current job as an educator.

Not having met him in person, it is difficult to paint a picture of Charles from only the deep voice I heard over the phone. But it seems obvious from his many stories in the interview that he is a deeply caring, committed individual who is passionate about his work. And he seems to be trying to make up for a lot of lost time.

Participants

Each week, Charles uses the *Tough Skills* curriculum in classes that impact the lives of 48 male prisoners. The classes run in six-week cycles. So every six weeks, Charles begins talking again about attitude with four new classes of 12 inmates each.

You might think Charles’ personal experience as a prisoner would have made it easy for him to relate to the inmates right from the start. Although I’m sure that’s true to an extent, Charles’ account of his initial teaching efforts at the jails—using traditional curriculum on such topics as nutrition and parenting—shows he wasn’t well received:
I remember the first time that I was assigned to go into the jails, and we talked about things like making money, and parenting, and nutrition and stuff like that. And I noticed the guys really weren’t, uh, interested. I found them looking out the window and talking to each other, and, you know, we have a cycle of 6 classes. The first class, you know, the guys come there, 12 in a class. The next week, I noticed there was about four guys who would come to the class. And by the third week, I was sitting in there by myself because of the lack of interest, you know.

Charles said he talked to his supervisor about the situation, and she suggested they buy the *Tackling the Tough Skills* curriculum she had recently heard about from colleagues, since it was intended to use with hard-to-reach audiences. With *Tough Skills* as a resource, he found the inmates responded much differently:

So (my supervisor) told me to try this. So I took (*Tough Skills*) back up. And with that, um (2 seconds) like I said, we started out with 12. The second week, uh, there’s 12 there. The third week there’s 12 there. And there’s a waiting line now. *We have waiting lines.*

Incredibly, the state inmates’ enthusiasm for the *Tough Skills* program has been so great that word-of-mouth marketing seems to be in action even in the prison! A group of federal prisoners—housed at one of the state prisons where Charles has offered his *Tough Skills* classes for the past year—somehow heard about Charles’ work and requested he bring the class to them! Here is how he explained it:

And when I first started working it was with the state. Then the federal inmates got wind of (Charles), you know, coming up there with Tackling
the Tough Skills, and beyond that, they talked to the captain of the prison and said, “Listen, we want to (1 second) heard about this Tackling the Tough Skills, and, you know, we’d like to get involved.” So now, not only am I going up to work with state inmates, but I’m also presenting it to federal inmates and to youths in the facility also. (2 seconds) So, um (2 seconds) there you are.

Curriculum

General. Charles said he does not have time to cover all the curriculum in the six-week sessions, but he tries to present as much as possible. During the interview, he mentioned chapters or related sections of the curriculum 25 times, the most references of the three educators.

The nature of the county jail means inmates move in and out frequently. Many men may not be in the jail very long at all, which makes Charles’ task challenging:

I really—I wish I could have enough time, more time, you know, working with these guys to get through more of this stuff. But this is a county jail, and they might be there for, you know, two months, or they might be there for two weeks, you know.

He said he uses material primarily from the chapters on attitude and responsibility, with some role plays from the chapters on communication and preparing for the workplace as well.

About the curriculum, Charles was very enthusiastic about its effectiveness with the prison inmates:

It has been a wonderful—an excellent resource, you know? It’s an excellent resource. And then, you know, we talk about stuff like resources.
They want to get themselves better so they *can* go out, you know, and become better dads, you know. After they start liking themselves and trusting themselves, you know. Um. They go out and they really try, you know, because they start to respect themselves.

*Attitude (Chapter 1).* Charles said he begins each six-week session of classes talking about attitude. He explained how he approaches the topic using the curriculum:

You start off with like the power of one, and you talk about the attitude, and they’ll tell you—I always use it as (2 seconds) my first lesson. Attitude is a state of mind. And what I try to do is get the guys to see that, um, attitude is mainly—it affects everything that we do in our lives, you know. Every person who comes across us, who comes across our path (sigh), and how positive attitude far, far, far outweighs the negative attitude, you know. How people are more drawn to you if you are of an attitude that’s positive.

At first, Charles said he usually encounters tough attitudes from the inmates. But by using the *Tough Skills* material, as well as telling about his own personal prison experience, he meets their negative attitudes head-on and melts them down:

And the guys, you know (2 seconds), first of all, they will try to put on this attitude, acting like they’re tough and stuff like this, you know. And I told ’em, I said, “Man, this is the same thing that’s probably got us to where we are right now, you know.” And if you notice that I’m using the word “we,” because I include myself with this population because, like I tell the guys, “I was once wearing these striped uniforms, black and white
and orange uniforms, like you guys, because of my attitude, you know.

And, uh, how it’s taken a change in my attitude to help the prison system.
And it meant me, you know, disclosing my past and stuff, and how my
attitude affected my life and everybody else’s life I came in contact with.
How I made some bad, uh, choices and some bad decisions, you know.

One exercise Charles said he uses from the attitude chapter is called “Tales From the Crib.” This activity asks participants to write down messages they heard as children about such things as their behavior, appearance, and intelligence. Then he asks them to write down what they think the truth actually was. Charles said the activity really hooks their interest:

And it’s so surprising that talent (2 seconds) that most inmates possess.
(couple words couldn’t understand) One guy was telling me he could juggle. I didn’t believe him. He had some pieces of paper and he started juggling. And it just blew my mind, you know. But they don’t tend to, uh, appreciate this in themselves, you know, because they’ve been talked to, you know. I’ll be talking about, from “Tales from the Crib,” you know. We go into the stuff, talkin’ about the tales we heard since we were kids and how they (1 second) more or less form their psyche, and what people think of us.

They talk about all this stuff in there, and the guys are no longer looking out the window. They’re interactive in the group, you know, and it’s great to see these guys. And I hate when the six weeks are up, and they hate it too. And they always say, “Hey, can we come back, man? Can we sign up for you again?” (laugh)
The men’s usual way of reacting to life’s situations seems to change after they have attended Charles’ class:

Well, you know what? Every morning when they come in, I ask the guys—each and every one of ’em, I take time to ask them, “How was your week? How was your past week?” And you’d be surprised at how these guys answer. “Before, I would have handled something in a much different way,” you know what I’m saying? And these guys, they can say they’re really plugging in to this curriculum, Tackling the Tough Skills. It’s like a Godsend, you know.

Responsibility (Chapter 2). When I asked Charles if there were any parts of the curriculum that were especially challenging for the participants, he pointed to the section on responsibility:

Uh (1 second), yeah. And you know what part that is? That is, um, being responsible (1 second), responsibility and change. You know because—here we are, I mean, we’re in, uh, a prison setting—a jail setting—and these guys are the last ones to say, “I’m taking responsibility for my actions.” It’s always her fault, the children’s fault, the probation officer’s fault, the parole officer’s fault, you know. And for them to be responsible for their actions is—it was kind of hard, you know. It was hard to get through, to break through.

Communication (Chapter 3). A number of activities in the curriculum focus on role plays, with participants assuming various roles and acting out situations. Charles said one thing he didn’t expect was how much the inmates enjoy this activity:
You know, these guys really like to role play, you know what I mean? They really like that part, you know, the addendums. We set up little role plays and stuff like that. And it gives them a chance to actually visualize how they might be perceived by someone else? You know, and that really brings it altogether. Like they ask, “Man, is that what I look like when I’m trying to communicate? And I’m not listening? And I’m looking out the window?” And stuff like this. Yeah, it comes on pretty heavy to ’em, and I really didn’t expect that.

Summary of Charles’ perspective

Charles repeatedly expressed his appreciation for the curriculum:

It’s a, it’s a wonderful curriculum. It goes right to the point, it goes right to the point of where they’re at right now in their lives. Instead of talking about budgeting your money and becoming a good parent, stuff like this, first of all. (few words can’t understand) Let’s not put the cart before the horse. Let’s get the horse well first before we show good parenting, and work on ourselves. This is about you, and not about your wife, your employer or your past. This is about working on you . . . .

One of the most striking parts of the interview for me was toward the end. When I asked him if there was anything else he wanted to add, he took the opportunity to thank Rosilee and me for the curriculum and what it had meant to him personally:

You know what you could do? Roxanne, I’d like to thank you and Rosilee for this stuff right here because it really made my life better. And you
know, it sounds like I’m trying to be—you know. But it made life a lot better for me because I learned right along as I was presenting this to the guys. It makes me say, “Wow! Yeah!” So I want to personally thank you.

*Interview #3: Melissa*

*Educator*

My interview with Melissa, a 37-year-old African-American educator who uses *Tough Skills* with teen audiences in the St. Louis area, was the shortest of the three interviews at 24 minutes. Due to time constraints, I conducted and taped this interview over the phone as well.

Some technical difficulties occurred during part of the interview when my cell phone kept cutting in and out, so she had trouble hearing me at times. Consequently, I had to switch from the speaker phone format, which allowed me to tape record her voice, to regular phone mode, in which I could not tape what she said. So this interview was a bit frustrating to both of us due to the technological problems.

Melissa has a B.S. in Marketing and had worked 3½ years in social services as a case manager prior to coming to her present supervisory position. During two of these years, she said she worked with welfare-to-work clients. She also worked in youth education for a year prior to that.

Melissa was very positive about the curriculum, but she has had more limited experience with it than the other two educators. Having moved into her job in July 2001, she trained the other three staff after attending a training taught by Rosilee Trotta in May 2001 at the local community college:

Well, at the training I had gotten at the Forest Park College. I, uh, took them the curriculum. Actually, I taught the staff basically what was taught
to me so that I—so that the staff would be educated from this curriculum
in case the staff wanted to use it.

And so I trained the staff on that particular curriculum. I also, in
order for me to train them, I had to read the material very thoroughly in
order for me to actually facilitate a training on that.

Participants

Melissa serves as youth coordinator for a nonprofit organization that contracts
with the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) to recruit in-school
and out-of-school youth, ages 14 to 21 years of age, for job readiness training. She said
her agency provides three to five workshops during the school year at four schools in the
St. Louis area. Each workshop lasts one to two hours. Counseling is also offered:

Well, um, (1 second) we use the Tough Skills in a group setting, where we
just actually facilitate in a group. And we also, perhaps, use some of the
materials on an individual basis because we do work with out-of-school
youth as well, and sometimes we have to work with the youth in our
offices and do some counseling, and, um, teach them how to get a job.

Of the three educators, Melissa mentioned only five comments that related to
participants. Given the fact she and her staff offer short workshops in the schools only
three to five times per school year helps to explain the more limited examples she
provided related to their use of Tough Skills.

Consequently, she has had far less time to interact with the teens than either of the
other two educators I interviewed.
She said her agency plans to use *Tough Skills* again with the students they are assigned during the next school year.

*Curriculum*

*General.* Melissa commented about different aspects of the curriculum four times in the course of the interview. She said the format of the curriculum made it easy to use with the students:

> Basically, all the information that was available, such as the addendums, would allow us to be able to facilitate the class step by step, and was very helpful. We didn’t have to really go far to search for a way to teach the class. The information was there for me to actually teach the program.

She said she thought “pretty much the whole curriculum was a good curriculum,” adding that “it’s very flexible” for adults or youths.

When I called her a second time to check on a few facts, she clarified that they use each *Tough Skills* chapter as a separate workshop in the schools. During that second interview, she also said that “body language, listening skills, and speaking skills are key,” and that “lots of times the youths have difficulty identify what the teacher expects of them.”

*Attitude (Chapter 1).* Melissa said the sections in the addendum with quotes and layed-out materials provided helpful resources to use on how to deal with your attitude:

> Everything in terms of what we need to identify what to use, everything was pretty much covered, such as the attitude, the communication part, a segment of that was key to us working with our youth. Um. Behavior
modification, how to behave, you know, whether it’s in the school setting
or the job setting, it was very helpful.

The students seem to benefit the most from the attitude and communication
sections, Melissa said. Those materials help them deal with problems with teachers in
particular:

Well, I think the enjoyment of how to deal with attitude because a lot of
‘em might have problems, um, with their teachers, how to relate to their
teachers, or on the part of having a good communication is key because a
lot of times, they don’t understand what the teacher is wanting from them.
So that was more helpful.

Melissa said she planned to do a short evaluation of the program at the last
session of the school year in May, when she and her team of educators would ask the
students what they thought of the workshops. But they “really haven’t gotten any
feedback so far. We’re waiting to get results as far as them having to at least increase one
grade level, and then they used the Tough Skills, that may have had some impact on it,
but we don’t have that feedback yet on that.”

*Communication (Chapter 3).* In addition to the sections used on attitude, Melissa
said they have also used communication skills, “and that’s pretty much what we used so
far.”

*Overall Themes*

Each of the educators I interviewed in this study has had unique experiences using
the *Tackling the Tough Skills* curriculum with his/her particular audiences.

As an educator, Barb has worked with both male and female teens and adults. She
has taught primarily female adults who are transitioning from welfare to work, as well as
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primarily male adults who are exploring work options in the construction trades. She has also worked with both male and female high school students in an alternative construction trades program, designed to help keep them in school until they graduate.

Charles, an ex-offender who is now a committed educator, is using his own life experience to better understand and meet the educational needs of current prisoners. He has taught some of the toughest individuals any educator could possibly work with: adult male prison inmates at both state and federal institutions. In addition, he has worked with teen offenders in a county jail.

Melissa has worked with male and female high school youths to help teach them pre-employment skills that will help them be successful not only in school, but in summer jobs and later employment.

As educators, all three have confronted challenges in both attracting the attention of hard-to-reach individuals and overcoming attitudinal barriers put up by their respective audiences.

All three are using the *Tackling the Tough Skills* curriculum as a resource to help them be more effective in reaching their target audiences.

I think there are some commonalities among the three that stand out as overall themes emerging from this study:

1. **The Tough Skills curriculum is improving the lives of men and women, youths and adults, in many different life situations.** Many of these people are considered hard-to-reach or difficult audiences who typically do not respond to more traditional type of educational curriculum.

2. **The interactive role plays and activities in Tough Skills help to attract the interest of participants and engage them in active learning.** For hard-to-reach audiences in particular, these role plays and activities seem to be helping to meet
deep-felt needs and to open the door to discussing topics that many of these participants have never learned. These activities also appear to help break down existing barriers between participants and others in their lives relating to attitude, responsibility and communication in particular.

3. Evidence from this study indicates that Tackling the Tough Skills is effectively teaching the concept of responsibility to hard-to-reach individuals. This is despite the fact that the concept of responsibility seems to be one of the most difficult to teach and the most challenging for participants to tackle.

4. Not all hard-to-reach audiences respond to Tackling the Tough Skills. The only negative comments Barb said she has received about the curriculum came from individuals who were “really not open to looking at themselves.” The limitations of this study restricted learning anything about those individuals that would help to explain their resistance. Perhaps future research could explore this area more fully.

5. The length of educational program and the amount of time educators have to teach Tackling the Tough Skills affect a program’s ability to teach attitude, responsibility, communication and preparing for the workplace concepts. This study provides a glimpse of a comparison of educational experiences using Tough Skills in the intensive three-week WorkWays program, in which participants met for six hours daily; the six-week classes offered in a prison setting, in which inmates attend two-hour classes once a week; and a periodic workshop setting, in which high school students attend a one- to two-hour workshop three to five times a year.

The evolution of attitudes about assuming responsibility, which Barb said happened to several individuals in the WorkWays program, is significant, I think, because it points to the participants’ need for time to “let things sink in.” Even Charles’ description of the change in attitudes among prison inmates shows the
benefit of repeated educational experiences over time with the same instructor. Both these situations are in contrast with the less-detailed accounts that Melissa provided based on three to five workshops, held for one to two hours, spread out over an entire school year.

Reflection

I recognize some limitations of this study.

First, it would have been better to have been able to personally interview each educator, rather than having to rely on phone interviews for two of them. That would have permitted me to get to know both Charles and Melissa better and to have better understood their particular situations. I also would have liked to have been able to observe both of their teaching styles and their classes in action. When Barb was with Extension’s WorkWays program, I was able to observe her in the classroom.

Second, I think my position at University Outreach and Extension and my strong involvement in editing and designing the publication, developing the website, as well as creating numerous marketing materials, may cause some readers to assume my own biases have interfered with my ability to be objective in conducting this research project. That may be true to an extent. However, I think my depth of knowledge about the history of the curriculum, and of the contents of the curriculum itself, actually enhanced my ability to produce a more in-depth study than I would have otherwise been able to produce. I also was looking for both positive and negative feedback about the curriculum to assist Rosilee in determining ways to strengthen it. I did not hear any negative feedback from the educators.

Third, I am pleased with the diversity of educational experience with *Tough Skills* that I was able to learn about by talking with these three educators. I think the variety of
participants that they teach in their classes or workshops contributed to making this study
more comprehensive than it otherwise would have been.

For future study, I am interested in identifying educators who work with other
types of audiences to understand what their experiences with the curriculum have been. I
would also like to pursue a qualitative study that would enable me to interview the
educator as well as several participants in that educator’s classes. I am especially
interested in finding out more about what motivates individuals to want to learn, and how
*Tackling the Tough Skills* actually motivates participants to change their attitude or take
responsibility.

In closing, here is one more of Charles’ quotes that I did not include in the body
of the paper. I think Charles has described the real purpose of *Tackling the Tough Skills*
in a simple and effective way. His answer below is what he said he answered when
questioned by his fellow educators as to what he does in the prisons with the *Tough Skills*
curriculum:

> What I basically do is *prepare* the guys to *want* to eat healthy, and to want
> their families to *want* to eat healthy. It’s like the domino effect, you know,
> what affects me affects my family. You know, if I respect myself enough
to go out and get a job, you know, automatically my family is going to
benefit from it. So I deal with the real person, the first line stuff, you
> know. And I don’t go back to the nutrition and parenting and bunch of
> stuff like that, no. I try to prepare these guys so that they will *want* to go
out and budget their money, you know.
Appendix A

First Draft of Interview Questions (2/7/02)

**Overall Research Question:**
What are educators’ perceptions of a new interactive life skills curriculum called *Tackling the Tough Skills: A Curriculum Building Skills for Work and Life*?

**Interview Questions:**

1. I understand you’ve been using a new curriculum called *Tackling the Tough Skills* in some of your programming. Tell me about your experiences with the *Tough Skills* curriculum so far.

2. How did you become familiar with the curriculum?

3. What appealed to you initially about the curriculum?

4. Tell me about what parts of the curriculum stand out in your mind today.

5. What in the curriculum has been *most useful to you in your job*?

6. What feedback have you had from your participants about the curriculum?

7. Who are your audiences?

8. Have you found some things to be helpful that you *weren’t expecting*?

9. Tell me about the activities or exercises your participants seem to enjoy most.

10. Tell me about the activities or exercises that have seemed especially challenging to your participants.

11. Tell me about the parts of the curriculum that you consider the *most effective*.

12. Tell me about the parts of the curriculum that you consider the *least effective*.

13. If you were asked to describe the curriculum using three words, what would those be?

14. Tell me about any participant in your program who seemed to experience a change in attitude or perception as a result of your *Tough Skills* training?

15. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the curriculum?
Appendix B

Interview #1 Questions (Rev. 2/12/02)

**Overall Research Question:**
What are educators’ perceptions of a new interactive life skills curriculum called *Tackling the Tough Skills: A Curriculum Building Skills for Work and Life?*

**Interview Questions:**
1. I understand you’ve been using a new curriculum called *Tackling the Tough Skills* in some of your programming. Tell me about your experiences using the *Tough Skills* curriculum so far.

2. How did you become familiar with the curriculum?

3. What first appealed to you about the curriculum?

4. What, if anything, about the curriculum stands out in your mind?

5. Tell me about any part or parts of the curriculum that have been most useful to you as an educator?

6. Tell me about any feedback you’ve had from participants about the curriculum.

7. Who are your audiences or clientele?

8. Have you found some things to be helpful you weren’t expecting?

9. What do you think your participants especially enjoy about the curriculum?

10. What do you think your participants find especially challenging about the curriculum?

11. Can you share any stories or anecdotes that illustrate how the *Tough Skills* curriculum has affected your students?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the curriculum?
Appendix C

Interview #2 Questions (Rev. 4/1/02)

Overall Research Question:
What are educators’ perceptions of a new interactive life skills curriculum called Tackling the Tough Skills: A Curriculum Building Skills for Work and Life?

Interview Questions:
1. I understand you’ve been using a new curriculum called Tackling the Tough Skills in some of your programming. Could you tell me about your experiences using the Tough Skills curriculum so far?

2. Who are your audiences or clientele?

3. When did you start using the curriculum?

4. How did you become familiar with the curriculum?

5. What first appealed to you about the curriculum?

6. Could you tell me about any part, or parts, of the curriculum that have been most useful to you as an educator?

7. Have you found anything to be helpful you weren’t expecting?

8. Are there any parts of the curriculum your participants find especially challenging? If so, can you tell me about those?

9. Are there any parts of the curriculum your participants seem to especially enjoy? If so, please tell me about those.

10. Can you think of any stories or anecdotes that illustrate how the Tough Skills curriculum has affected your students?

11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the curriculum?
Appendix D

Interview #3 Questions (Rev. 4/16/02)

**Overall Research Question:**
What are educators’ perceptions of a new interactive life skills curriculum called *Tackling the Tough Skills: A Curriculum Building Skills for Work and Life*?

**Interview Questions:**
1. I understand you’ve been using a new curriculum called *Tackling the Tough Skills* in some of your programming. Could you tell me about your experiences using the *Tough Skills* curriculum so far?

2. Who are your audiences or clientele?

3. When did you start using the curriculum?

4. How did you become familiar with the curriculum?

5. What first appealed to you about the curriculum?

6. Could you tell me about any part, or parts, of the curriculum that have been *most useful* to you as an educator?

7. Have you found anything to be helpful you *weren’t expecting*?

8. Are there any parts of the curriculum *your participants* find especially *challenging*? If so, can you tell me about those?

9. Are there any parts of the curriculum *your participants* seem to especially *enjoy*? If so, please tell me about those.

10. Can you think of any specific incident in class related to one of your students that illustrates how the *Tough Skills* curriculum has affected your students?

11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the curriculum?
Appendix E

Educator Consent Form

February 12, 2002

Dear Educator,

I am a graduate student at University of Missouri-St. Louis and am taking a class to learn qualitative research techniques. I am employed as a communications specialist at University of Missouri Outreach and Extension and am in UM-St. Louis’ doctoral program in adult education. I am interested in learning more about your perceptions and opinions of Extension’s new life skills curriculum, *Tackling the Tough Skills*. **Would you be willing to talk with me for about 30 minutes about your experience with this curriculum?**

If you agree to talk with me, I want you to know:

- Your answers will be kept confidential.
- Your name will not be used in anything I write. Nor will the name of your organization.
- Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree, you may stop talking to me at any time.
- I would like to tape record the interview so that I can accurately record your answers.

In addition to the classroom use of this information, I would like to ask your permission to possibly use some of your quotes as part of Extension’s ongoing evaluation of the curriculum. If you agree to this use, I would submit the quotes to you for your review and explain at that time how the quotes would be used. The decision to use your quotes will be up to you. I will not use information from this interview without your consent.

I will be glad to answer any questions. If you would like to talk to my professor about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Stephen Sherblom, Assistant Professor, College of Education, 467 Marillac Hall, University of Missouri-St. Louis, (314) 516-6437, Sherbloms@umsl.edu.

If you agree to participate, please read the statement below and sign your name. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Roxanne Miller
Regional Information Specialist
University Outreach and Extension
121 S. Meramec, Suite 501
St. Louis, MO 63105
314-615-7607 (Office)
314-615-8147 (Fax)
MillerRT@missouri.edu

Consent Form

I have read this letter and understand its contents. I agree to participate voluntarily in this study.

(Your signature) ________________________________ (Today’s date)

(Please print your name)
Appendix F

Interview Coding Categories by Color

1. Educator
   a. **Educator’s emotion**: statements showing emotion of educator about the curriculum.
   b. **Educator’s opinion**: educator’s belief about the curriculum that is factual in nature.
   c. **Educator’s background/experience**: information about the educator’s background, experience or position.
   d. **Educator’s teaching expertise**: statement pertaining to educator’s expertise or experience in teaching.

2. Participants
   a. **Participant reaction**: ways participants reacted to the *Tough Skills* classes and/or curriculum, according to the educator.
   b. **Type of participant**: people who have participated in classes using the *Tough Skills* curriculum.

3. Curriculum
   a. **Tackling the Tough Skills**: pertaining to the *Tough Skills* curriculum content.
   b. **Other classroom resources**: other resources mentioned by the educator that are unrelated to *Tough Skills*.

4. Classroom: pertaining to the way the class is organized or structured to teach.

5. **Small talk**: extraneous conversational remarks.