We investigated the effects of descriptive feedback and reinforcement on the acquisition and exhibition of social perceptual skills in three students with identified learning disabilities and social perceptual deficits. The students rated their teacher's affect based on six emotions, and received feedback regarding the accuracy of their ratings plus reinforcement for accurate ratings. Descriptive feedback and reinforcement resulted in a mean gain of 66.00% in the students' social perceptual skills, with a mean gain on the first day of treatment of 64.33%. These findings have implications for preservice and inservice teacher-training programs. Methods of teaching social skills generally, including social perceptual skills, should become standard in the curriculum for teachers of students with learning disabilities.

KEY WORDS: social perception; learning disabilities; teaching; corrective feedback; reinforcement.
disabilities have severe and unique learning problems that result in significant academic difficulties.

Research in the past two decades reveals that these students also experience a variety of problems in social perception with consequent social skills deficits (Bruno, 1981; Bryan, 1977; Bryan & Bryan, 1981; Gerber & Zinkgraf, 1982; Jackson, Enright, & Murdock, 1987; Reiff & Gerber, 1990; Sisterhen & Gerber, 1989). Researchers have used several methods to identify social perceptual deficits. Bruno (1981) and Gerber and Zingraf (1982) measured social perceptual skills of students with learning disabilities using the Test of Social Inference (TSI) (Edmonson, Dejung, Leland, & Leach, 1974). They found that students with learning disabilities were less capable than their nonhandicapped peers at interpreting pictures of social situations. Bryan (1977) used the short version of The Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) (Rosenthal, Hall, Dimatteo, Rogers, & Archer, 1979) to measure social perceptual skills of students with learning disabilities. She also found that scores for students with learning disabilities were significantly lower than other students' scores.

There are at least two problems with research into the social perceptual deficits of students with learning disabilities. First, these students almost invariably have attentional deficits (e.g., Ross, 1976) which may adversely affect their performance during standardized testing. Second, measurements of social perceptual skills are often obtained using artificial stimuli in laboratory settings. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to nonclinical situations in which students make and use social perceptual judgments (Maheady & Maitland, 1982).

That students with learning disabilities experience both academic and social deficits is evident. However, there is considerable evidence to suggest that social skills difficulties may cause or contribute to the academic deficits (Brophy & Good, 1974; Good and Brophy, 1987; Willis & Brophy, 1974). Willis and Brophy's (1974) findings support this theory. They found that teachers' reactions to their students were based primarily on teacher perceptions of student behavior. According to Willis and Brophy, "The three major variables involved seem to be the students' general level of school success, the degree to which they reward teachers in their personal contacts with them [emphasis added], and the degree to which they conform to classroom rules" (p. 528). Teachers spent less time with students who failed to provide rewarding, interpersonal contact, even when they knew that these students needed extra help. Furthermore, teachers inaccurately perceived these students as having low academic ability.

Willis and Brophy's (1974) findings suggest that students who do not accurately perceive and respond appropriately to their teacher's affect are at risk both academically and socially. This presents particular problems