

INCREASING SOCIAL SKILLS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH
THE USE OF LITERATURE AND ROLE PLAYING

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & Pearson Achievement Solutions, Inc.

Field-Based Master's Program

Chicago, Illinois

January 2008

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ABSTRACT

Four teacher researchers focused on the lack of students' proper social skills for this action research project. In the classes of four teacher researchers, the students were coming to school lacking proper social skills. Because of this, teachers were spending time allocated for the curriculum, on discipline and the instruction of social skills. Therefore, the teachers instituted a project whereby the students would receive social skills education through the use of literature and role playing. This study was completed in two 1st grade classrooms with a total of 46 students, one 3rd grade classroom with 23 students, and a fourth/fifth gifted class with a total of 20 students. There were a total of 89 participants in the study from January 22nd to May 18th, 2007.

The teacher researchers found that their students were displaying unfavorable behaviors such as; being disrespectful to both adults and peers, not being responsible for daily work, making poor choices, and being uncooperative. The three ways the evidence was documented was through a student survey, a teacher survey, and an observation checklist. Based on the student survey, observation checklist, and teacher survey, it was found that the majority of the students in the teachers' schools and classrooms needed to improve on the social skills of integrity, respect, cooperation, and responsibility.

The teacher researchers decided to incorporate literature and role playing to help encourage their students use positive social skills. With clearly defined goals, literature can be a highly effective aide in social skill development (Cartledge, 2001). The teacher researchers collected children's literature that coincided with the four social skills that needed to be improved upon. Along with literature, it was found that role playing can also promote communication and teach acceptance of each others differences (Harriott, 2004). Teachers should always model, practice, and role play expected behaviors (Elliott, 2001; Frey, 2000). The teacher researchers instituted role playing into the classroom after the literature on a specific skill was taught.

The results of this study were varied. Little to no positive change was found by the teacher researchers from pre- to post-observation. However, a minimal decrease in the frequency of disrespectful and uncooperative behaviors was found. On the other hand, there was a dramatic increase in the occurrences of poor integrity and irresponsibility. The teacher researchers felt that had the intervention occurred at the beginning of the school year rather than towards the end, the results could have been different.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Students of the teacher researchers in first, third, fourth, and fifth grade had problems with social skills in the classroom. The teacher researchers believe that the lack of social skills in the classroom hindered their ability to learn. Evidence of the students' deficiency in the social skills necessary was documented by teacher observation checklist, classroom surveys, and teacher surveys.

Immediate Context of the Problem

Four teacher researchers conducted this action research at three different sites. Site A was a public elementary school comprised of first, second, third, and fourth grade students. One teacher researcher at this site taught at the third grade level and the other teacher researcher taught at the fourth grade level. Site B was a public elementary school comprised of kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. The teacher researcher at Site B taught at the first grade level. Site C was a public elementary school where the documentation and intervention was being conducted in a first grade classroom. The teacher researcher at this site taught at the first grade level. Most of the statistical data in the following sections was referenced from the sites' respective websites.

Site A

Site A had a majority of Caucasian students, with a smaller percentage of minority students, according to the Interactive Illinois Report Card, 2005, and shown in Table 1 below. This site's total enrollment was 396 students.

Table 1

Student's Ethnicity by Percentage

	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Asian/Pacific Islanders</u>	<u>Multiracial Ethnic</u>	<u>Native American</u>
School	51.8	27.8	12.9	3.5	3.0	1.0
District	50.1	24.1	18.7	4.0	2.8	0.3
State	56.7	18.3	20.3	3.7	0.7	0.2

The percentage of students with limited-English skills, “those eligible for transitional bilingual programs” (p.1) was 4.3% in comparison with the district’s 6.0%. The percentage of students who are considered low-income was 36.4%. “Low-income students come from families receiving public aid; live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children; are supported in foster homes with public funds; or are eligible to receive free or reduced priced lunches” (p.1). The mobility rate was 8.3%, and this was based on “the number of times students enroll in or leave a school during the school year” (p.1). The school attendance rate was 94.8% in comparison with the states 93.9%. The chronic truancy rate was 0.0% (Site A District; n.d.).

According to the *Illinois Student Report Card*, (Site A District; n.d.) Site A’s district employed 137 full-time certified staff, 82.5% of them being female and 17.5% male. Table 2 below illustrates that the majority of the teachers in this district were Caucasian.

Table 2

Teacher's Ethnicity by Percentage

	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>Asian/Pacific Islander</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Native American</u>
District	97.1	2.2	0.7	0.0	0.0
State	84.3	1.2	4.5	9.9	0.2

Site A's Interactive Illinois Report Card, 2005, stated that the average teaching salary for the district was \$49,035 in comparison with the states average of \$55,558. In this district, the average teaching experience was 11.3 years. Furthermore, 59.1% of teachers held a bachelor's degree and 40.9% of teachers held a masters degree or above. At the district level, the ratio of students to teachers was 19.7:1. The average class size of first and third grade, as shown in Table 3, was comparable with the district and state.

Table 3

Average Class Size

	<u>Grade 1</u>	<u>Grade 3</u>
School	25.5	23.3
District	25.8	21.4
State	21.5	22.3

Site A's curriculum focused on the core areas of math, science, language arts, and social science. As reflected in Table 4 below, the reading instruction for Site A took place for an average of 130 minutes a day, contrasting the 60 minutes a day as noted on the Interactive Illinois Report Card, 2005. Please note that the reading instruction in Site A was closely related to the state's reading instruction requirement, rather than the school's requirement.

Table 4

Average Time Devoted to Teaching the Core Subjects (Minutes per Day)

	<u>Math</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>Language Arts</u>	<u>Social Science</u>
School	60	30	60	30
District	60	32	90	32
State	58	30	146	31

For the 2004-2005 academic year, 71.4% of the elementary students met or exceeded the Illinois Learning Standards according to their overall performances on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). Table 5 below shows the percentage of students who have met or have exceeded standards on the ISAT in grades three and four.

Table 5

ISAT Performance by Percentage

	<u>Grade 3</u>		<u>Grade 4</u>
	<u>Mathematics</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Science</u>
School	85.1	67.4	62.2
District	91.2	72.6	69.6
State	79.2	66.6	71.4

As referenced in the Interactive Illinois Report Card, 2005, “The Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE) was administered to students in state-approved transitional bilingual programs” (p.6). The district had performed at 70% which exceeds the states 49%. These percentages reflected reading, math and science scores.

The school had one principal, one administrative assistant/secretary and another administrative assistant/health clerk, and the teaching staff consisted of 24 certified staff and 10 classified staff. Maintenance staff consisted of one head custodian and four night custodians. In

addition, there were two food service coordinators and five playground supervisors. The school also had one speech/language pathologist, one school psychologist, one resource teacher, two social workers, one occupational therapist, and one reading specialist. Site A's administrators and staff consisted of 44 females and 4 males. Site A was made up of 48 total staff which included 46 (95.8%) Caucasian, 1 (2%) Hispanic, and 1 (2%) African American.

The diversity of Site A made this a well-rounded school and school district. This school was unique in many ways; it housed the only Second Chance Program in the district, which was a Therapeutic Day School for students with special needs. The Parent Teacher Organization at Site A sponsored many events throughout the year that helped raise money for the school. Some of the schools programs consisted of; an after school reading/math tutoring program, Young Rembrandts, a yearly talent show, intramurals, French club, garden club, student council, student of the month and good bee of the week.

The village of Site A was formed about 20 years ago and was located in a middle to lower middle class suburb of a large urban area. Site A was a two story building surrounded by homes, baseball fields and an airport. There were 28 classrooms with multiple computers, a television monitor with a DVD/VHS player, and a listening center. Site A also had a separate computer room, which housed 27 computers, a LCD projector, and one printer. There was a separate gymnasium that housed a stage, a multipurpose room, a lunchroom and a library. A playground with equipment and a baseball field was located in the back of the school.

We, the teacher researchers at Site A, had difficulty with off-task behavior, which has been shown through teacher observation and classroom assessments. We perceived that this problem was occurring for several reasons. No staff development opportunities or workshops specific to this problem were received. Therefore, implemented strategies that would help rectify

this situation were not applied. The exposure to classroom management and cooperative learning strategies would markedly increase student progress in this area.

Site B

Site B had a total enrollment of 508 students, while the district's enrollment was 1,130. Enrollment for Site B included students from kindergarten through third grade. According to the Site B District, (n.d.) the majority of the students were Caucasian with a small percentage of minority students, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Student's Ethnicity by Percentage

	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Asian/Pacific Islander</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Native American</u>	<u>Multiracial Ethnic</u>
School	72.2	14.6	5.7	5.5	2.0	0.0
District	72.2	15.0	5.3	5.3	1.8	0.0
State	56.7	18.3	3.7	20.3	0.2	0.7

The low-income rates at Site B were 5.3% compared to 6.1% for the district. The students identified with Limited English Proficiency made up 7.5% while the districts were 4.6%. There were 6.1% of students considered low income in the district. The mobility rate was 26.7%, compared to 18.9% for the district. Site B had an attendance rate of 94.5%, while the district had 94.8%.

According to Site B District, n.d. there were 62 full-time teachers in Site B's entire district. It was not reported how many were only at Site B, however according to teacher researcher observations there were 36 full-time teachers with 4 paraprofessionals during the 2005-2006 school year. The teaching staff of the entire district was 100% Caucasian with 96.8% being female and 3.2% being male. The average teaching experience was 8.4 years for the

district, with an average salary of \$44,430. Teachers with bachelor's degrees made up 54.8% of the district while those with a master's degree or above made up 45.2% (Site B District, n.d.). The district's student-teacher ratio was 17.9:1 and the student-administrator ratio was 282.5:1. The average class size in kindergarten was 21.5, first grade was 26.7, second grade was 27, and third grade was 25.6 during the 2005-2006 school year.

Site B had one superintendent who oversaw three schools. Serving under the superintendent were two principals. Site B was administered by one of the principals. Administrative support consisted of two secretaries, one food service coordinator, and one custodian. Academic support included one special education coordinator, two special education teachers, two Regular Education Initiative teachers, two reading specialists, one English Language Learner (ELL) teacher, two speech therapists, four paraprofessionals, and five lunch/recess monitors. Special Education District of Lake County employees included one occupational therapist, one hearing itinerant, two social workers, and two psychologists. General education teachers included 4 kindergarten teachers, 7 first-grade teachers, 6 second-grade teachers, and 5 third-grade teachers. As the population grew, it was projected that, for the 2006-2007 school year, kindergarten, second, and third grades would be adding one classroom per grade level. Site B also employed one teacher for each of the following subject areas: computers, physical education, art, and music. There were two librarians in the library.

The core subjects taught in kindergarten through grade three consisted of mathematics, science, English/language arts, and social science. According to Site B District, n.d. for grade three, time devoted to teaching core subjects in the targeted school is represented in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Average Time Devoted to Teaching the Core Subjects (Minutes per Day)

	<u>Math</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>English/ Language Arts</u>	<u>Social Science</u>
School	60	30	170	30
District	60	30	170	30
State	58	30	146	31

Kindergarten was the exception with 300 contact minutes devoted to students per week (Building Principal, personal communication, June 27, 2006).

The students in the district took the Illinois Standards Achievement Test annually. Reading, writing, and mathematics were tested in grades three and five while science was tested in grade four. In Table 8, the overall performance of third graders was reported for the 2004-2005 school year.

Table 8

ISAT Performance by Percentage

	<u>Grade 3</u>		<u>Grade 4</u>
	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Mathematics</u>	<u>Science</u>
District	68.3	79.7	91.7
State	66.6	79.2	71.4

In addition, students who were enrolled in the comprehensive ELL program took the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English exam. The overall performance for the 2004-2005 school year reported that the targeted district had 75.0% of the students meeting or exceeding the Illinois Learning Standards, compared to 49.3% for the state.

The targeted school also took part in an annual grade level standardized test developed by the Scholastic Testing Service, Inc. Table 9 shows the breakdown on performance scores by grade level. The benchmark score for each grade level was the grade level plus .8 (which indicated the month, April, of the school year when the test was administered). Thus, the benchmark score for first grade would be 1.8; for second grade 2.8; and for third grade 3.8.

Table 9

Scholastic Testing Service, Inc. Benchmark Scores

	<u>Language</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>Social Science</u>
Grade 1	2.2	2.4	1.9	2.1
Grade 2	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.1
Grade 3	3.9	4.2	3.9	4.1

Site B was unique due to a large nature center that was on school grounds. This nature center is an educational tool in that it was used to teach students about plant growth and animal habitats. Each classroom was assigned a garden area to observe and maintain throughout the school year.

Site B was located at the intersection of two rural streets on a large area of grassland purchased by the district many years ago. Construction had been in progress during the last two years and should culminate at the end of 2006 resulting in a beautiful, large campus that encompasses all three of the schools located in the district (one primary building, one elementary building, and one middle school building). Site B's building was a single story brick structure accommodating students in grades kindergarten through third grade. The targeted site welcomed students and families into a large spacious office, which included a principal's office, lunch coordinator's office, workroom, nurse's station, and staff restroom. The building was broken up into grade level pods, wherein all grade level classrooms were clustered together and shared a

student restroom area, and a large common area where classes were invited to work with one another. Site B had a well-stocked library, one computer laboratory, a cafeteria with kitchen, conference room, teacher’s lounge, music room, and an art room enclosed by a floor to ceiling glass wall.

With much construction and subdivision additions within Site B’s district limits, school population had dramatically increased. All grade level classrooms had increased as well as class size, resulting in off-task behavior of students with poor social skills. Lack of staff development has led to inadequate teacher training in classroom management.

Site C

The elementary school in this site had a student body population of 678 students, representing many different ethnic backgrounds. The school percentages of ethnicity appear to reflect the district’s percentages. However the ethnic backgrounds vary drastically from the state. See Table 10 below for percentages.

Table 10

Racial/Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment by Percentage

	<u>n</u>	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Asian/ Pacific</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Multiracial</u>	<u>Native American</u>
School	678	83.0	7.4	3.1	2.8	2.7	1.0
State	2,062,912	56.7	18.3	3.7	20.3	0.7	0.2

Of the school’s total population of 678, 12.5% came from low-income families. The school had a 0% limited-English-proficient rate, which differed from the state rate of 6.6%. It had an 11.7% mobility rate, which was close to the state’s rate of 16.1%. The attendance rate of Site C was

94.7%, which was very similar to the 93.9% of the state. Site C had a 0% chronic truancy rate. The state had a 2.2% chronic truancy rate.

The school district of which Site C was located employed a total of 165 teachers. The district had four elementary buildings, one of which was grades pre-kindergarten through one, and the other three were grades two through five. The district also had one middle school building. Of the 165 teachers; 98.8% were Caucasian, and 1.2% were African American. 83.9% of the teachers were female and 16.1% were male. The average teacher salary in Site C's district was \$44,113 compared to \$55,558 for the state. Within the district the average years of teaching experience was about ten. About 39% of the teachers in the district had bachelor's degrees and about 61% had a master's degree and above. For the district the average student to teacher ratio was about 19:1. The average class size was approximately 21 students. In the 2003-2004 academic school year, \$4,154 was spent on instructional expenditures and \$7,498 on operating expenditures, per pupil. Instructional expenditures as defined in the Illinois State Board of Education, 2005, "...includes the direct cost of teaching pupils or the interaction between teachers and pupils. Operating expenditures per pupil includes the gross operating cost of a school district excluding summer school, adult education, bond principal retired, and capital expenditures" (p. 3). These expenditures per pupil were lower than the state averages of \$5,216 and \$8,786, respectively.

The elementary building at Site C had a traditional self-contained curriculum with heavy emphasis on the core subjects: math, reading, sciences, and social studies. Site C's student's overall performance on all state tests was 89.1% for 2004-2005 which was higher than the district's percentage of 75.5% and the states percentage of 64.9%.

Site C had one principal, one assistant principal, one nurse, three secretaries, nine kindergarten teachers, 13 first grade teachers, 2 first grade transitional teachers, two multiage teachers, six early childhood teachers, two physical education teachers, one music teacher, one strings teacher, four speech pathologists, two enrichment teachers, one occupational therapist, one psychologist, one kindergarten skill builders teacher and two power reading teachers, three custodians, four cooks, three recess supervisors, and 16 paraprofessionals.

At this school there were some special programs. There was an after school art program, developmental kindergarten, transitional classes, kindergarten skill builders, enrichment, and a power reading program.

The elementary building at Site C opened in 2002. It was a one-story building that was organized in villages, or pods. There were 36 classrooms, two gymnasiums, one computer laboratory, two music rooms, and offices for the speech pathologists, psychologist, and other supporting staff.

Site C has gone through much growth in recent years due to a number of subdivisions being built around the community. As a result of this the district has tried to pass two referendums in recent years. Unfortunately, both referendums failed to pass and therefore, the classroom size continues to rise. With larger populations in each classroom an increase in off-task behavior is occurring. Students are showing a lack of social skills in the structured classroom setting more and more as the teacher is tied down with an increased number of students.

Local Context of the Problem

Sites A, B, and C were within 20 miles of each other in a northeast section of Illinois. All sites were approximately 50 miles from Chicago (MapQuest, 2006). Due to the demographic similarities of Sites A, B, and C, one community will be described. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the population as of the year 2000 was 10,027 residents. The median family income as of 1999 was \$65,064. The median population age was 37.1 years old.

The majority of the population was Caucasian with a small percentage being part of a minority ethnicity as shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11

Population's Ethnicity by Percentage

<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Some other race</u>	<u>African Americans</u>	<u>Two or more races</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>American Indian</u>	<u>Pacific Islander</u>
85.3	13.6	6.1	4.5	2.2	1.5	0.3	0.0

Residents of the community who had obtained a high school degree or higher were 84.1%. Of that percentage, 14.9% had obtained a bachelors degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the average household size for 2000 was 2.77 and the average family size was 3.21. The median household income as of 1999 was \$56,553. The community had 72.0% of its population in the labor force. The percentage of families below poverty level was 3.5%. According to City-Data.com (n.d.) the unemployment rate is listed below in Table 12.

Table 12

Unemployment rate by Ethnicity and Percentage

	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other Races</u>	<u>Two or more races</u>	<u>Hispanics</u>
Males	2.9	8.1	0.0	10.3	11.7	5.0
Females	2.5	0.0	0.0	6.0	9.9	5.5

The predominant occupation in this community, according to City-Data.com (n.d.), was manufacturing (19.9%), education, health, and social service (15.6%), retail trade (11.2%), professional, scientific, management, administration, and waste management (10.9%). According to the Illinois State Police (2004), the total crime incidents reported by the County Sheriff's Department, in 2004 were 15,667. Theft makes up the majority of the crimes. There was a decrease of 1.7% of reported crimes from 2003. Site A, B, and C are in communities without police departments; therefore, the information was taken from the County Sheriff's Department.

According to the community website (Village of Site A, 2006), the community dates back to 1908 when the railroad lines from Chicago to Milwaukee were first discussed. In the early 1920s the land was bought and subdivided by the F.H. Bartlett Co. of Chicago. In 1949 the village had a school district and fire protection district. Another community wanted to annex a large portion of this village; however, the residences fought to save it and were successful. In 1987 they discussed incorporating this community and after two years a referendum passed and it became a reality. The village was on the map in 1989. The area of the village had many forest preserves and parks that provided recreation for the residence, including little league teams. The village was expanding with many new housing and retail developments.

According to the district website, Site A District (n.d.), Site A included four elementary schools and one middle school. There was one superintendent and five principals in Site A's

district. The mission of the district was “Learners are Leaders.” There was at least one computer lab in each elementary school and numerous computer labs in the middle school. Each classroom also had access to several computers. Approximately 60.1% of the district revenue came from local property taxes, 3.1% of the revenue came from other local funding, 33.9% came from the state, and 2.9% came from federal funding (Site A District, n.d.).

The population of Site A has increased over the years and as a result the classrooms are becoming over crowded and this leads to students with off task behaviors. The demographics of Site A leave the school with little money to spend on staff development to educate the teachers on how to deal with these issues.

Site B was comprised of three schools: one primary building (kindergarten through third grade), one elementary building (fourth through sixth grade), and one middle school (seventh and eighth grades). The primary and middle school each had a building principal and the superintendent of the district was also the principal of the elementary building. The mission statement was “To foster excellence in education so that its students will be able to reach their full potential and enhance their quality of life in an ever changing society” (Site B District, n.d.).

The total revenue generated for the 2003-2004 school year was \$8,391,302. Local property taxes made up 70.1% of the funding for the district, which was more than the state average of 57.0%. (Site B District, n.d.). According to teacher researcher at Site B, between 2001 and 2003, the district attempted to pass a building referendum. In the fall of 2003, it was finally a success and a new building will be built and ready for occupancy in the fall of 2006. Technology at Site B’s primary building consists of one computer lab and one computer connected to the Internet in each classroom.

Population of the northeast suburbs had grown in the last number of years. Therefore, the class sizes had grown, resulting in lack of social skills and off task behavior from the students. As a result of increased student population, the districts money went to the students, leaving little money for staff development and future education of teachers to deal with the issue of classroom management.

Site C was comprised of four elementary buildings and one middle school. This community fed into one local high school. The mission statement was, “The mission of the District Educational Foundation shall be to solicit funding from all viable and legal sources and to generate funding from various foundation sponsored activities. All funds shall be used to supplement and enhance educational opportunities for all students of the Community Consolidated School District.” (District Site C, n.d.). Sixty-seven and a half percent of the revenue came from local property taxes. The 2002 total school tax rate per \$100 was \$2.58 (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2005). As stated before the 2003-2004 instructional expenditure per pupil was \$4,154 and the operating expenditure per pupil was \$7,498 (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2005). At Site C there was a computer lab for all students and teachers to access. Each classroom had two to four computers in it.

After looking at the demographics of the community the teacher researcher for Site C saw that there was no direct impact on the students’ social skills.

National Context of the Problem

Across the nation, teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to complete the required curriculum while also dealing with the lack of social skills in today's youth. Students lack the ability to follow directions, work cooperatively, and complete work independently (Barton-Arwood, 2005). Additionally, teachers can no longer assume that proper manners are being modeled and taught in the home. Family roles are being allocated to the schools when it comes to teaching morals and values (Bulach, 2002; Burns, 2003). As more and more households consist of two working parents, and or, single-family homes, children are left to their own devices. This includes multi-media: television, radio, and video games. Students view over 200,000 violent acts through the media by the age of 18 (Munoz, 2002). As these extenuating circumstances influx the classroom, the instruction of social skills can no longer be pushed aside. Instead, social skills need to be pushed to the forefront and taught explicitly through literature and role playing.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Evidence of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to improve social skills of students through literature and role playing. The student research participants included 46 first grade students, 23 third grade students, 14 fourth grade students, and six fifth grade students, for a total of 89 students. The three ways the evidence was documented was through a student survey, a teacher survey, and an observation checklist. The student survey was given and collected from the students in one day. The teacher survey was distributed on Monday, January 22nd, 2007 and returned within the two weeks of documentation by Friday, February 2nd, 2007. The observation check list was used daily for 30 minutes, for the two weeks of documentation.

Student Survey

The purpose of this instrument was to see how students felt they and their classmates exemplified the eight character traits that included: integrity, honesty, acceptance, responsibility, trust, cooperation, perseverance, and respect. A total of 78 students received the student survey in all four-teacher researchers' classrooms. The rate of return was 88% (n=78). The survey was distributed to all students who were present on the day the teacher researchers chose to distribute the survey from the dates of Monday, January 29th, 2007 through February 2nd, 2007. Each teacher handed out the survey to their students and explained the different traits so that students could make informed decisions about how to correctly and appropriately complete the survey. The student survey consisted of two flowers. One of the flowers was labeled "class" and the students were to color the petals according to how they felt the class, as a whole was. The other was labeled "you" and the students colored these petals according to how they felt they were

individually. Each flower petal was labeled with the eight character traits. The students were to color the petals based on the color code described by the teachers, as well as on the worksheet; yellow is very good, orange is pretty good, and red is not so good. When completed, the students anonymously placed the surveys in the teacher’s in-box. Refer to Appendix A.

The student survey of 78 students showed that the majority of students in the four teacher researchers’ schools felt “pretty good” or “not so good” about their own integrity (55%, n=43), respect (42%, n=33), cooperation (45%, n=35), responsibility (44%, n=34), and honesty (44%, n=35). Refer to Figure 1 below.

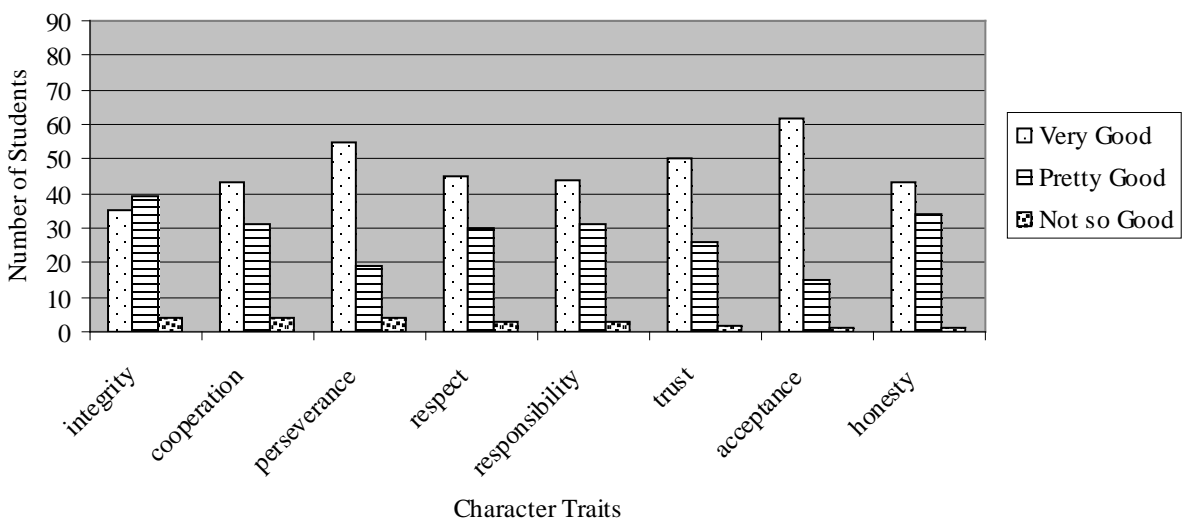


Figure 1: Student Survey of Self (n=78)

The majority of students (n=78) in the four teacher researchers' schools felt pretty good or not so good about their class' integrity (73%, n=55), respect (69%, n=44), cooperation (58%, n=45), responsibility (68%, n=53), honesty (67%, n=52), and trust (62%, n=48). Refer to Figure 2 below.

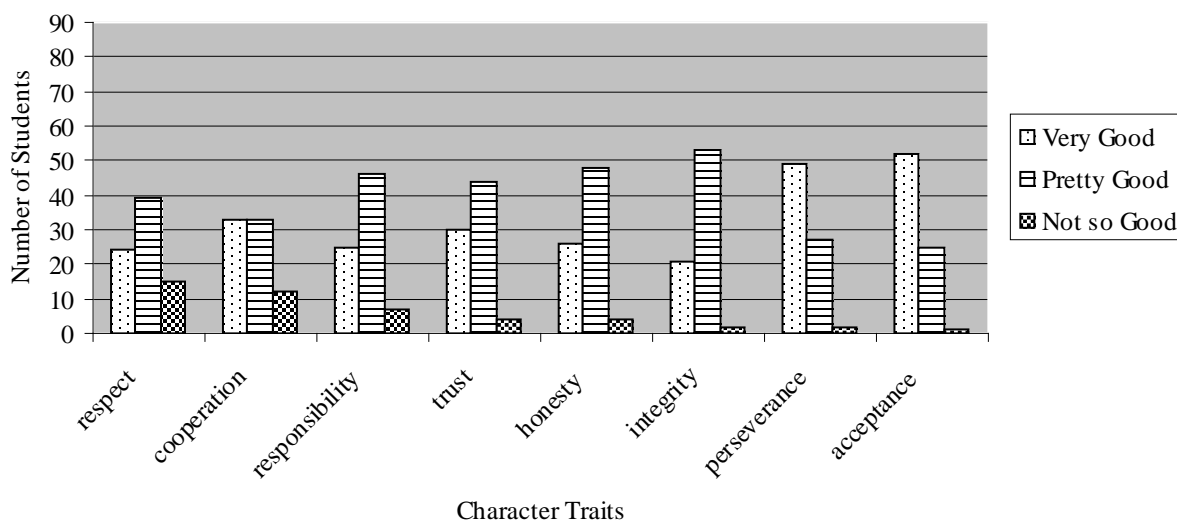


Figure 2: Students Survey of Class (n=78)

Observation Checklist

The purpose of the observation checklist, taken from, Friday, January 29th, 2007 to Friday, February 9th, 2007, was to identify the behaviors that occurred most often in each teacher researchers' classrooms. The character traits were chosen after much discussion amongst the teacher researchers about reoccurring issues in the classroom that spawned from certain behaviors. The behaviors that were observed included: being irresponsible, disrespectful, uncooperative, not accepting, distrustful, makes poor choices, dishonesty, and lack of perseverance. The four teacher researchers used the observation checklist for approximately 30 minutes each day for a two-week period. The students were observed to see how many times they did not show good character. The teacher researchers used the eight character traits of:

integrity, honesty, acceptance, responsibility, trust, cooperation, perseverance, and respect, to monitor which skills were not being used. This checklist can be found in Appendix B.

Of the incidences observed (n=249) in a two-week period, there were four major negative behaviors (90%, n=223) observed in the classroom, note *Figure 3*. These behaviors included disrespect (30%, n=75), uncooperative (22%, n=55), poor integrity (22%, n=54), and irresponsibility (16%, n=39). The remaining negative behaviors (10%, n=26) observed in the classroom were poor perseverance (7.6% n=20), not accepting (2%, n=5), dishonesty (.4%, n=1), and distrustful (0%, n=0). Between week one and week two there was a 24% difference in frequency because of school cancellations due to inclement weather. The number of incidences during week one was 132, and the number of incidences during week two were 117.

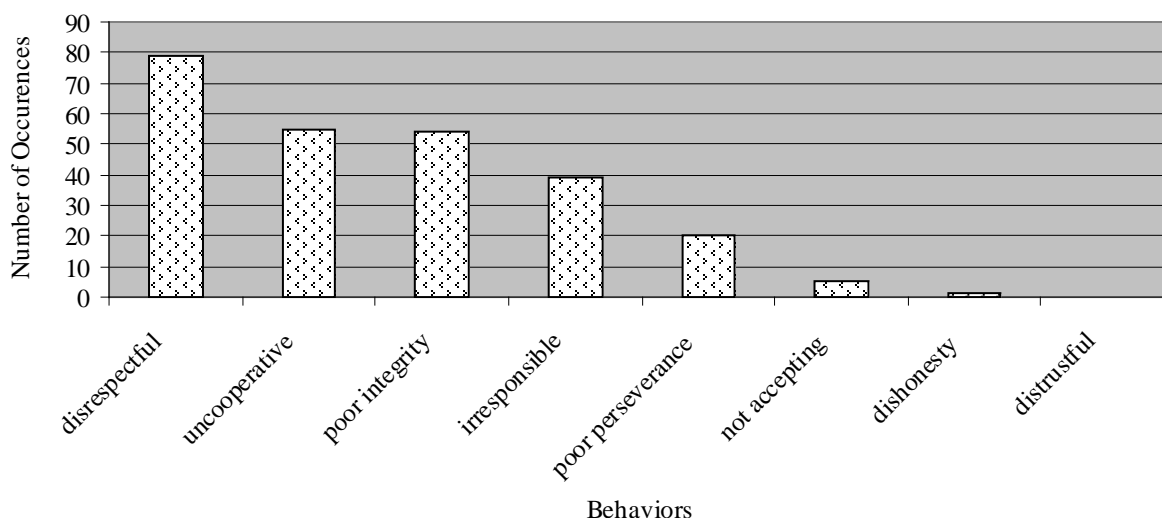


Figure 3: Observation Checklist (n=249)

Teacher Survey

The purpose of the teacher survey was to poll how the teachers of the four sites felt about the social skills of the students in their classrooms. Behaviors surveyed included; irresponsibility, disrespect, being uncooperative, not accepting, distrustful, poor choices, dishonesty, and lack of

perseverance. The survey was distributed January 29th, 2007 by the four teacher researchers at their respective sites. The teachers had two weeks to complete the survey and return it anonymously to the teacher researchers' mailbox. There were 81 surveys distributed and 50 were returned for a return rate of 62%. The survey consisted of eight likert scale questions. The scale consisted of four ratings ranging from major problem, problem, occasional problem, and no problem. There was also one open-ended question. This survey can be found in Appendix C.

Of the character traits surveyed, responsibility (44%, n=22) and respect (42%, n=21) seem to need the most improvement in their classrooms. The majority of teachers found each of the other character traits to be a problem below 14% of the time. Refer to Figure 4 below.

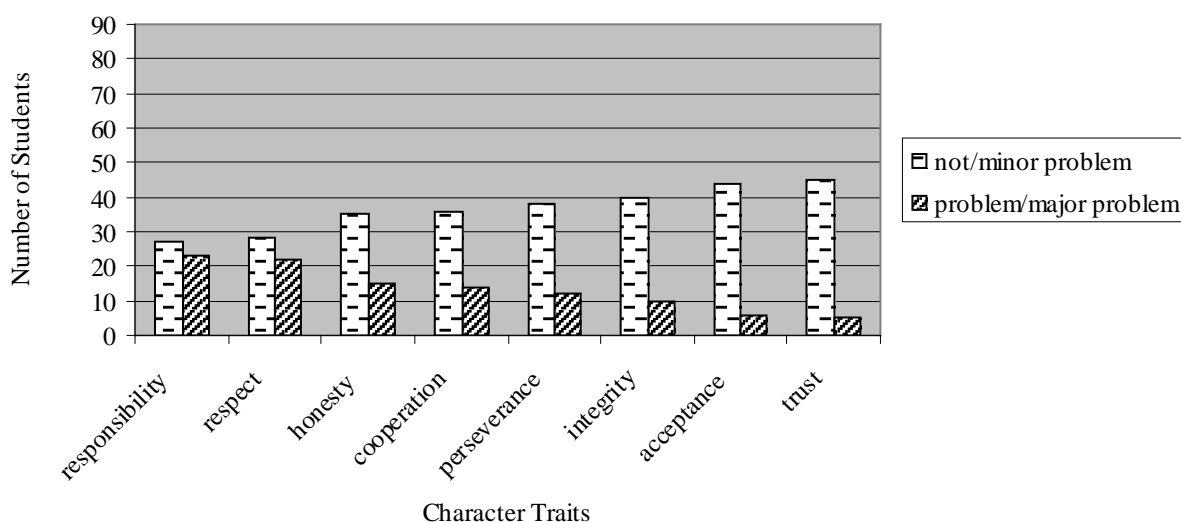


Figure 4: Teacher Survey (n=50)

The teacher survey included one open-ended question, which asked the teacher if they felt their students come to school with the necessary social skills to be productive members of their classroom. The teachers were asked to explain their responses. Answers from the open-ended question were compiled and put into a table.

To summarize, some teachers felt that students had positive social skill interactions if they were taught these skills in the beginning of their schooling, at home, or it became a learned behavior from their peers. On the other hand, most teachers saw that negative social skill interaction among students had such an affect on their schooling due to a lack of teaching social skills at a young age. Along with this, lack of parent involvement and language barriers also contributed to their social skills deficiencies. Refer to *Table 13* below.

Yes	No
If they have had preschool/kindergarten, they can handle situations with ease.	The language barriers with ELL students show a lack in social skills.
The majority of second graders know the basic concepts of sharing, turn taking, and respect.	Students coming into school without preschool, kindergarten or even being with other small children definitely have a difficult time with social situations.
Students with a proper home-life and a strong support system at home seem to have the necessary skills.	Not the children who have had no exposure to other children or social situations.
The children are prepared from being in a kindergarten environment.	Most do not understand school etiquette, such as turn-taking and not interrupting.
They either have it when they get to me or they learn it from their peers.	They do not know basic kindness, manners, courtesy, and communication skills. They use mean words and do not help others.
Many are respectful.	At Pre-K, they don't always understand at such a young age.
They respect one another and are willing to include everyone.	Kindergarten is usually their first social experience so they aren't ready.
Social skills are present when you have group discussions in kindergarten and first grade.	They need to learn physical problem solving skills for pushing, hitting, yelling and just being aggressive.
Most have adequate social skills and work in groups of all sizes.	A lot of children get away with poor behaviors at home and expect it to continue at school.
They express themselves politely.	There is a lack of parent involvement and no modeling responsibility for their actions.
Most kids are responsible and don't bully.	There are few social outlets in their extracurricular lives.
Children exposed to a structured environment where social skills are needed, are ok.	Children are affected by poor social skills of others.
	There is a big difference between home and school language such as interrupting, not

	waiting their turn, and not working together.
	Family dynamics- Children who are raised by older siblings have no coping skills unless there is a pre-school advantage.
	Gifted students have a hard time fitting in.

Table 13

Summary

After examining the three tools listed above, it is clear that of the eight social skills investigated, there are four skills found in the teacher researchers' classrooms and sites that need further instruction. These four skills include respect, responsibility, cooperation, and integrity. As a result of these findings, these will be the four social skills that will be focused on throughout the remainder of our research.

Reflection

In the past, students came to school more prepared and ready to learn. They already had proper social skills due to the fact that more households consisted of two parents in which the mother stayed at home. Today, more students arrive to school without the necessary social skills to become productive members within a structured classroom environment. The responsibility that used to be on the household is now pushed onto teachers and schools. However, due to the rigor of state testing, social skill instruction has been moved aside as teachers must spend every moment on academic curriculum. Students without social skills have difficulty concentrating on the academic aspects of the school day, and therefore, are struggling to stay at grade level.

Through our research we have found that there are four major social skills that reoccur and need improvement in the teacher researchers' classrooms. These four skills include cooperation, respect, responsibility, and integrity. The students felt their classmates as well as themselves are not as cooperative, respectful, responsible, and showing integrity as they could be. Because of this we have decided to try to improve and enhance these character traits.

The results of our findings that students would benefit by learning ways to improve their character, correlate with the research found that social skills in schools today are an issue that teachers need to address. The literature has found that by using literature and role playing, student's social skills will improve. This will in turn improve academic achievement.

Probable Causes

Children are entering school without the social skills necessary to become members of a productive classroom environment. Basic skills are missing. These skills include: following directions, working cooperatively, and working independently (Barton-Arwood, 2005). Without these skills, trying to teach children proves to be difficult. Students are lacking these skills in the classroom because of several outside factors. These factors include, but are not limited to: issues attributed to socioeconomic status, parent involvement at home, diversity, culture, and media. Along with these outside factors, the classroom environment itself, at times, does not nurture the development of social skills. Some of the issues within the classroom that impede the growth of social skills include peer relations, competition amongst students, classroom management, and simply not teaching the social skills. Not only are students deficient in appropriate social behaviors; their behaviors are becoming more negative. Students are more apt to bully others, show aggression, have low academic achievement, display off-task behaviors, and lack motivation. Another issue facing the classroom is the push towards inclusion. Students who have special needs lack social skills due to their disabilities. With all of these factors coming into play, the classroom environment suffers. In the paragraphs that follow, research shows why these factors are socially impacting students.

Social and emotional behavior problems are based on a lack of social skills (Freeman, 2003). One negative behavior that is being displayed in the classroom is poor listening skills

(Gut, 2002; Practer, 1998; Rutherford, 1998). Students also have shown an inability to respond to questions without offending others (Rutherford, 1998). Students lack the ability to follow directions, work cooperatively, and independently (Barton-Arwood, 2005). In addition, students have difficulty understanding social cues, cannot adjust to routine changes, and misjudge facial expressions (Gut, 2002). Also, students do not make an effort to initiate conversation (Harriott, 2004). Lastly, problem solving and negotiating skills are lacking in students (Jalongo, n.d.; Practer, 1998). These antisocial behaviors put students at a risk for academic failure (Elliott, 2001). It is important to note, that as students age it is more difficult to treat their antisocial behaviors (Lane, 1999). Students entering school without the ability to behave socially are at risk of dropping out in the long run due to low academic performance (Brigman, 2003; Elliott, 2001).

Another negative behavior that students are displaying is the failure to initiate and maintain social contacts (Gilles, 2003; Rutherford, 1998). Students need to improve social relationships because making friends involves social interactions and the understanding of verbal and non verbal communication (Goodwin, 1999; Harriott, 2004).

According to Burns, a key to positive relationships and building character is good manners and etiquette. In both adults and children, basic manners and proper etiquette are no longer used. To that end, children do not have appropriate manners, social skills, and respect for adults (Burns, 2003). With this lack of respect towards adults, children are not obtaining the appropriate social skills.

Research shows that students' experiences with their parents' impact them socially. Family roles are being allocated to the schools when it comes to teaching morals and values (Bulach, 2002; Burns, 2003). It has also been found that many of the behaviorally challenged children come from families that are deprived of many things in life such as proper nutrition,

broken and inconsistent households, and lack of proper behavior being modeled (Amatruda, 2006). As a result, some parents do not become involved because they feel incompetent, not welcomed due to security, and students' resist parent involvement as they get older. Parents do not understand that it is their role to become involved in their child's education (Berkowitz, 2005). Parents are not the only cause for the lack of social skills in students.

Media is another outside factor that has been shown to impact students' socially. Media and culture play a big role in teaching poor behavior, which also influences students' ability to use the behavior that is appropriate for the situation (Burns, 2003). Students view over 200,000 violent acts through the media by the age of 18 (Munoz, 2002). Children copy the lack of values they see in many of today's celebrity role models. Often, children are learning to disrespect others by following negative adult role models in their lives. Adults give children the impression that it is appropriate for children and adults to refrain from discussing issues in the everyday world. Therefore, children are in need of positive influences in their development (Kinnamon, 2003).

In addition, diversity plays a role in students' development of social skills. Teachers educating students in today's classroom are facing more diverse populations than in the past. This diversity includes culture, race, socioeconomic level, ethnicity, family composition, gender, previous experience, as well as, ability level (Harriott, 2004). Increasing racial and cultural diversity in schools creates a challenge. Prejudice, inter-group conflict, ethnocentrism, and racism is occurring more often causing anxiety amongst students (Salzman, 2001). It has been shown that in urban school settings absenteeism, weapons, pregnancy, and discipline issues are common because of socioeconomic level, broken homes, truancy, and mobility rate. These

factors relate to most urban schools having a fearful, disorderly atmosphere (Shann, 1999). Outside factors are not the only reason students lack social skills.

The classroom environment can also affect students' social skills. Some classrooms do not have a sense of community therefore creating a negative classroom atmosphere (Gilness, 2003). The conflicts within the classroom cause tension between students and staff (Amatruda, 2006). The competitive nature of school is also a hindrance for students acquiring social skills. Historically, competition is at the core of education. Students that are instructed to work independently may feel compelled to compete against classmates. This competition instills inadequacy in lower-achieving students (McCracken, 2005). Character education is taught in the classroom to improve social skills; however, when the character traits are reviewed year after year it becomes monotonous for students (Bulach, 2002). Rather than review, students who participate in social skill role play activities and share their own personal experiences and reactions to hypothetical situations, will enable other students to practice problem solving, therefore providing positive modeling of pro-social behavior (Frey, 2000).

Research shows that the methods used by teachers can, at times, result in a negative learning environment. Some of the techniques that result in an unconstructive atmosphere includes: assertive discipline, dictatorship, aggressive and coercive behavior, lack of belief and minimal expectations, reliance on rewards and punishment, and an uninteresting and repetitive curriculum (Frey, 2000; Ulucci, 2005). Teachers are using these techniques due to a lack of training, understanding, and experience in social skill instruction. It is difficult for a teacher to understand that developing character in children is complex because students do not come to school prepared with basic social skills (Berkowitz, 2005). Teachers and administrators need to examine how to teach cooperative learning strategies successfully, by including social skills

instruction (Sonnier-York, 2002). Teachers focus more on academics rather than character development (Berkowitz, 2005). They are not as involved as they should be in helping children become morally aware (Gilness, 2003). Schools are failing to teach students the social skills necessary to become successful in school and later on in life (Barton-Arwood, 2005).

Along with the teacher, the students have a role in creating an affective classroom environment; unfortunately, some factors prevent this from occurring. One factor is that students lack self-control and cooperation; therefore, they underachieve in school and have disciplinary issues. Also, students do not understand that different teachers have different expectations. What is fine for one teacher is not fine for another and the children become confused (Lane, 2003). Another factor is the poor organization of group work in the classroom. Therefore, group work becomes ineffective because of students bickering, lack of participation, off-task behavior, high ability members taking over, low-achieving members falling behind, and students not knowing how to interact effectively with others (Johnson, 1989).

Besides students' behavior affecting the classroom environment, it can also effect their academic achievement (Lane, 1999). One of the factors contributing negatively to academic achievement is a lack of motivation, which results in the loathing of school (Brim, 2000; McCracken, 2005). Another factor that can affect academic achievement is bullying. Bullying is a main reason for school violence (Bulach, 2002). Many children make others feel uncomfortable on purpose and diminish their self worth by teasing (Elliott, 2001; Gilness, 2003). When looking at behaviors, we also need to look at the attitudes that have become a disruption in the classroom (Freeman, 2003). Disruptions such as talking out of turn, not following instructions, and not interacting with peers are common in classrooms. Students may display inappropriate behavior to escape from a task that is outside of their academic ability. Therefore

curricular expectations are mismatched with current student skill levels, and have been shown to be associated with the reoccurrence of undesirable classroom behavior (Anderson, 2005). Peer rejection in the early years is directly related to anti-social classroom behaviors. Students that act out are often removed from the academic setting; which in turn, puts these students at a disadvantage (Park, 1998).

Students are removed from the classroom because of their aggression. This aggression can be caused by many different factors. Students may become aggressive because of limited cognitive ability, inconsistent and abusive home lives, social-emotional skill deficits, and poor academic achievement (Frey, 2000; Munoz, 2002; Xinyin, 1997). Students that are aggressive early on are likely to become more aggressive and detrimental behaviors escalate (Munoz, 2002). Aggressive behavior in childhood predicts later delinquency, substance abuse, depression, school dropouts, and early parenthood (Frey, 2000).

Besides regular education students displaying poor social skills, special education students are struggling as well. This is becoming a problem for students in special education because students with disabilities are included in the general classroom setting for greater portions of the school day. Regular classroom teachers and students are not used to having students who are different or have special needs (Harriott, 2004). Another problem is that students who are unidentified are underserved which results in behavioral issues, and social skill development (Brim, 2000; Lane, 1999). Many children, both with and without disabilities, have difficulties with social issues and are more likely to be referred to the intervention team for support services (Amatruda, 2006; Givner, 2004; Harriott, 2004). It is far more difficult to provide instructional experiences and activities aimed at the unique academic needs of special education children in a regular classroom setting. The main challenge is “how” to provide the

instruction while maintaining the integrity of the traditional academic instruction (Reisburg, 2003). Students with learning disabilities need work with social skills such as giving and receiving feedback, listening, sharing, and trusting (Goodwin, 1999; Gut, 2002).

In conclusion, students and teachers are facing several problems that result in students' social deficiency. Outside factors have a major impact on students' social skills; not only on their preparedness upon entering school, but throughout their schooling. Traditionally social skills were taught in the home; now the burden is being placed on the schools. To that end, teachers are unsure of the appropriate way to teach this subject. Another problem facing the regular education classroom is the inclusion of special needs students. Until there is a compromise between the home and school, children's negative behaviors may escalate. Some of these factors are beyond the teachers' control. Therefore, teachers must focus on what they can do in the classroom to combat students' lack of social skills.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

It has been found that students are lacking the social skills needed to succeed in school and in life; however, there are many solutions to overcome these deficiencies. One way to improve students' social skills is to involve the whole educational community; parents, teachers, and students. Maintaining a positive atmosphere within the classroom has also been proven to increase pro-social behavior. To ensure a positive classroom environment, the teacher should acknowledge the child's ideas; promote communication, and cooperative learning. In order for teachers to incorporate this effectively, they need to have the proper training. The administration needs to provide ample opportunities to learn effective techniques. As stated before, cooperative learning is a valid option to teach and practice social skills. Through cooperative learning, students can learn from others, have a positive attitude towards classmates, and school as a whole, and improve peer relationships. Besides cooperative learning, teachers can also use direct instruction and modeling to improve social skills. The classroom environment should immerse the students in the desired skills through literature and posters, as well as other visual materials. Literature plays an important part in all classrooms, so it is relatively easy to incorporate social skill instruction using appropriate literature. Using literature helps students to empathize with characters when they are having difficulties. This way, students can see some positive ways to deal with problems they may be having. Along with using literature, role playing is another form of teaching social skills in children. Through role playing students can act out ways to improve social skills in a safe environment. With this practice, the student will be able to take a skill and

put it into real life situations. In the following paragraphs, research shows why these solutions are effective in the classroom.

Research shows that involving everyone- teachers, parents, and students, helps to develop good character in children. It is also shown that school success comes directly from the involvement of the parents (Berkowitz, 2005; Bulach 2002). Therefore, to shape the social behavior of children, students, teachers, and parents should meet at the beginning of the year to make goals about appropriate behaviors being taught at home and school (Burns, 2003; Elliott 2001). Prior to a parent meeting, teachers should send a survey to the homes of the children entering the classroom, to gather information about the children in social situations, in order to help guide the planning for the upcoming year (Jalongo, n.d.). Both teachers and parents need to be more aware of students' social difficulties, as their difficulties interfere with academics (Park, 1998). When parents are involved in their child's life, both academically and personally, the child will have a better chance at success and moral development in life. Parents must nurture good character to positively contribute to their child's moral integrity by setting high expectations in a loving and caring home (Berkowitz, 2005).

In addition, teachers should invite parents to become involved at school through nonacademic avenues such as potlucks, cultural presentations, and morning greetings. Teachers should also create a parent resource center in their school with a room for parents to become educated and feel welcome. Along the same line, the teacher should implement small-group parent meetings, which educate parents on the methods being taught to the children. Additionally, teachers could create school event nights to help their students show pride in their work, which will make the students more likely to coax their parents to participate in their school lives (Berkowitz, 2005).

Besides involving parents, teacher training is very important. Ongoing teacher training through in-services and workshops will help educate teachers on how to address students' social needs in a positive way (Barton-Arwood, 2005). In order to modify negative behaviors, many teachers training courses in recent years have devoted great attention and a variety of active and cooperative learning strategies and techniques, which include the interaction between teacher and student (Bandiera, 2006). To improve social skills and academic achievement, interventions should be made by professionals, teachers, and parents that will prevent poor social behavior (Xinyin, 1997). Social skills' training is often provided to increase positive interactions among students and teachers (Gilles, 2003).

Another solution for the deficit of social skills in children is the creation of a positive classroom atmosphere, a sense of community. Teachers should give students a chance to have their ideas acknowledged and used in the classroom to give them ownership and a sense of belonging (Gilness, 2003). To further ownership and a positive atmosphere, students need more freedom to structure their environment. This freedom allows students to stimulate concentration through movement, and the ability to choose where they would like to do independent work (Brim, 2000). In addition, teachers can create a supportive classroom community by incorporating activities that promote communication, small group activities, multicultural projects, and lessons that teach acceptance of each others differences (Harriott, 2004). By creating a more caring environment, academic achievement is boosted and anti-social behavior is reduced (Shann, 1999). It is important that teachers view self-control and cooperation as important skills in creating classroom success (Givner, 2004). Creating and maintaining a positive classroom environment/community is one way to improve students' social skills.

Educators need to know effective strategies and programs to teach listening, attending, and proper social skills all year long (Brigman, 2003). Intervention programs need to be lengthy to change the climate of the school. For example, Second Step is a violence prevention program for kindergarten through middle school students that increases pro-social behavior. It emphasizes the importance of observation, self-reflection, performance, and reinforcement in maintaining good behavior. This program concentrates on empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management (Frey, 2000; Munoz, 2002). Another program, Project Improve, is a one-day workshop that educates teachers about how to include a positive learning environment in their classrooms, therefore promoting positive behavior. This project focuses on 12 key concepts which include: replacement behavior, skill deficits, performance deficits, modeling, coaching, reinforcement-based strategies, behavioral contracts, differential reinforcement of low rates of behavior, differential reinforcement of other behavior, differential reinforcement of incompatible behavior, time-out, and generalizations (Barton-Arwood, 2005). Many schools also have pre-referral teams. A pre-referral team works together to generate ideas and strategies to help students who are having a difficult time in a general educational setting (Givner, 2004).

Cooperative learning is another factor that is taken into account when looking at different effective instructional methods. Cooperative learning is an approach, which involves learning from others, as well as learning by helping others. Cooperative learning provides both skill exposure and practice for students who lack social acceptance and at the same time offers new learning opportunities for students with disabilities. Successful cooperative learning relies on instructors who carefully attend to the needs of the group. Cooperative learning can be effective in promoting academic achievement, peer interaction, and positive attitudes in school. Cooperative learning has been shown to produce higher achievement on questions involving

higher level thinking and more positive relationships among students (Anderson, 2006; Harriott, 2004; Rutherford, 1998). In addition, cooperative learning can hold students accountable for their individual learning and the groups learning towards one common goal, as well as making positive group interactions resulting in improved social skills (McCracken, 2005; Salzman, 2001; Sonnier-York, 2002). When positive cooperative efforts are made, they increase students' efforts to achieve and improve the quality of their relationships with classmates (Johnson, 1989).

Within the classroom, teachers can use cooperative learning groups to build a community of learners. Cooperative learning helps students become accepted members of the classroom practice with students who lack social skills (Harriott, 2004). Using cooperative learning in a classroom setting allows students to feel more comfortable and takes the pressure off students with ADHD due to shared responsibilities (Brim, 2000). In addition, teachers should include all different types of cooperative learning activities and students will show improvement in social relationships, self-esteem, and overall enjoyment of school (Goodwin, 1999). Cooperative learning is a solution in a competitive classroom because each student contributes equally and each student plays a role in a group setting. Additionally, cooperative learning groups can be set up for stronger students to aide lower students, again resulting in a positive interaction (McCracken, 2005). Socially competent students work with inclusion students that are less proficient in language and communication skills to enhance productivity by the lower achieving students (Harriott, 2004).

Schools do have a responsibility for socializing students in the values of caring, sharing, and helping (Sonnier-York, 2002). Acquiring social skills can contribute to academic achievement, positive peer relations, inclusion in effective learning opportunities, and family harmony. Teachers should use classroom opportunities that may arise to practice the related

social skill (Harriott, 2004). Several strategies are available to provide students with opportunities to display their skills (Gilles, 2003). Strategies include: highlighting the problem with direct instruction, modeling a variety of strategies or seeking student input to solve problems, and providing a sample of these strategies for organization and discussion (Frey, 2000; Gilles, 2003; Rutherford, 1998). Continuous cuing and reinforcement is necessary for new learned behaviors. The importance of new skills should be explained and displayed on posters and bulletin boards (Johnson, 1989). By applying problem solving skills and anger management strategies that are taught, aggressive behaviors will be reduced (Frey, 2000).

Social skills apply to all children including special education students. Before entering the regular education classroom, special education students need to be well versed in the teachers' expectations (Lane, 1999). Certain modifications should be made for special education students including, but are not limited to: allowing more time for accuracy, breaking down assignments, and altering task difficulty making it less demanding for the individual (Anderson, 2005; Brim, 2000). It is plausible to allocate time for social skill instruction when students are grouped homogeneously. Special education students should be self-contained so that their goals are simplified (Reisberg, 2003).

Once the students know the appropriate social skills, they need to be able to apply them. The following are possible implementations that could be utilized within a general education classroom. Social skills that are expected should be clearly stated and taught explicitly (Lane, 2003). Social skills should be included in every part of the day, including lunchrooms and hallways. Social skills should be taught with both teachers and peers in a responsive classroom approach. It is best to spend the first 16 weeks of school working on social skills. Match the classroom and routines to the students' developmental levels. Include a morning meeting and

manipulate the classroom to create opportunities to promote social skills (Elliott, 2001). Enable students to become “peer enforcers” of certain traits. Catch students modeling appropriate behaviors (Bulach, 2002).

Along with students modeling suitable behaviors for each other, it is necessary for the teacher to be the main role model within the classroom. The teacher should always model, practice, and role play expected behaviors (Elliott, 2001; Frey, 2000). Some skills that teachers should model are acceptance, concern, and respect for each student (Frey, 2000). Response shaping happens through feedback and reinforcement from teachers and peers (Freeman, 2003). As basic as it sounds, the extent to which a teacher “walks the talk”, the more the students absorb the social skills curriculum (Frey, 2000).

Implementing a character education curriculum such as Character counts, or a similar tool, is important when it comes to developing pro-social behavior and instilling core values in elementary students (Kinnamon, 2003). Teachers need to make students aware of morals right from the start (Gilness, 2003). The ultimate plan is to teach students what to say and how to act and then show them how to use simple pro-social behaviors that can influence the impressions they can make on others. This has been shown to improve acceptance in all students both with and without disabilities. It is especially important to teach these skills at school since many children do not receive adequate social skill training at home (Bulach, 2002; Burns, 2003; Gut, 2002). By teaching character traits as part of daily instruction, teachers should model the specific positive behaviors they would like to see in their classrooms. Teachers must help students develop decision-making skills by orally using critical thinking skills to solve problems as a class (Gilness, 2003; Resiberg, 2003). Values are not only taught by what teachers say, but by their tone of voice along with body language (Kinnamon, 2003). Many steps are needed to provide

students with opportunities to use appropriate behaviors with other adults and children. Courtesy should be taught in proper ways to address others with respect and to reinforce how others respond to politeness. Teachers should always respond to respectful behaviors with encouragement, and practice behaviors that focus on forgiveness, sympathy, and kindness (Bulach, 2002; Burns, 2003). Although most social skills are acquired, teachers need to know when to appropriately intervene (Jalongo, n.d.)

A solution found to promote positive acquisition of social skills in the classroom is the incorporation of literature (Cartledge, 2001; Minchew, 2002; O'Sullivan, 2004). Literature has advantages because it enables the reader to look at the inner thoughts, intentions, reasons, and emotions of a particular set of behaviors. It can also help students develop empathy, not only for characters in books, but also for others in real life situations (Cartledge, 2001). Teachers need to select books that have pro-social behaviors modeled and incorporate in-depth discussions with other activities. Social stories help students to see what is happening and why (Gut, 2002; Minchew, 2002). Introducing social skills through literature is attractive to students because it provides modeling and helps to reinforce skills once they have been taught. The following are six steps to incorporate social skills through literature: present the story, clarify the story concepts, clarify the skill, enact the skill, practice the skill, and maintain the skill (Cartledge, 2001).

Educators need to include culturally diverse stories from around the world. It is important to include stories from third world countries as well as from the five major racial/ethnic groups in the United States. Our society is increasing in diversity; therefore, it is imperative for students to recognize, respect, and appreciate all groups of people. It is beneficial for the social development of minority students to be immersed in literature from their culture. Selecting literature that empowers both males and females is also beneficial for proper development.

Social skill instruction needs to be direct and explicit. Literature is one tool that can accomplish this. With clearly defined goals, literature can be a highly effective aide in social skill development (Cartledge, 2001).

Yet another solution found to promote emotional well being and social skills is dramatic role play (Elliott, 2001; Freeman, 2003). Role playing in the classroom makes for a good learning environment. Techniques are given to help children connect with and accept one another. Behaviorally struggling students express positive behavior through creativity and imagination (Amatruda, 2006).

One way to introduce role playing is through friendship grouping in which students work together to set rules and goals for the group. Students cooperate to play a game of rapport and to build trust. Students then imagine they are in another place and share with the group. In the end, students compliment and encourage each other (Coppack, n.d.).

In the teaching of social skills, a solution such as sharing is practiced through role playing in which students apply steps to complete successful sharing. To practice perspective skills, students participate in role playing scenes that incorporate common social problems; and then they share personal experiences and reactions to hypothetical situations. Teachers who provide students more opportunities to role playing and solve real classroom problems tend to have the most success at promoting social competence (Frey, 2000).

In the end, it has been shown that students are entering school socially ill equipped to become productive members of the classroom atmosphere. There are many factors that affect their behaviors socially; however, solutions have been found that will increase students' abilities to interact socially within the constructs of the classroom. Some solutions that were taken into account include the involvement of students, parents, and teachers, creating a positive classroom

community, teacher training, and altering instructional methods. Of the possible solutions, it has been noted that using literature and role playing to increase students pro-social behaviors has made a profound difference overall. Through literature that incorporates morals, values, and real world situations, students can develop the social skills necessary to become effective members of society.

Project Objective and Processing Statements

Selecting literature that models pro-social behavior has been shown to increase social skills (Gut, 2002). To that end, the teacher researchers utilized the observation checklists to select the four-targeted skills most frequently observed. The observation checklists from all four of the teacher researchers' classrooms showed that: respect, responsibility, cooperation, and integrity were the four social skills that needed the most work. The teacher researchers used the four social skills chosen to select children's picture books that correspond. They also chose role playing scenarios that correlate with each of the four selected skills.

Prior to the interventions, the teacher researchers had to do the following:

- The teacher researchers will collaborate to develop one mini-unit for each of the four social skills selected.
- The teacher researchers will find books to correlate with the four social skills selected.
- The students will be required to write reflection journals based on the targeted skills at the end of the two-week period.
- Students will participate in role playing scenarios developed by the teacher researchers that incorporate the social skill studied.
- Students will publish a children's picture book based on one of the four-targeted social skills as a culminating activity.

Project Action Plan

The Project Action Plan was a guide for the teacher researchers so that they would be organized and prepared for the upcoming weeks of action research. By referring to the action plan, the teacher researchers stayed on target while at their assigned site.

Pre-Week One (January 22-26, 2007)

- ❖ Make copies of pre and post observation checklist
- ❖ Make copies of pre and post student survey
- ❖ Make copies of teacher survey
- ❖ Make copies of parent consent letter
- ❖ Send parent consent letter home

Pre-Documentation Week One (January 29-February 2, 2007)

- ❖ Pass out teacher survey
- ❖ Have students complete student survey
- ❖ Teacher completes observation checklist while observing students

Pre-Documentation Week Two (February 5-9, 2007)

- ❖ Collect teacher surveys and analyze data
- ❖ Analyze results of student survey
- ❖ Continue observation checklist
- ❖ Analyze observation checklist to choose/narrow down to four social skills

Week Three (February 12-16, 2007)

- ❖ Introduce social skill
- ❖ Class discussion
- ❖ Introduce literature related to social skill
- ❖ Journal response

Week Four (February 19-23, 2007)

- ❖ Create small group/whole class role play activity
- ❖ Practice role play activity
- ❖ Present role play activity
- ❖ Journal response

Week Five (February 26-March 2, 2007)

- ❖ Introduce social skill
- ❖ Class discussion
- ❖ Introduce literature related to social skill
- ❖ Journal response

Week Six (March 12-16, 2007)

- ❖ Create small group/whole class role play activity
- ❖ Practice role play activity
- ❖ Present role play activity
- ❖ Journal response

Week 7 (March 19-23, 2007)

- ❖ Introduce social skill
- ❖ Class discussion
- ❖ Introduce literature related to social skill
- ❖ Journal response

Week 8 (April 2-6, 2007)

- ❖ Create small group/whole class role play activity
- ❖ Practice role play activity
- ❖ Present role play activity
- ❖ Journal response

Week 9 (April 9-13, 2007)

- ❖ Introduce social skill
- ❖ Class discussion
- ❖ Introduce literature related to social skill
- ❖ Journal response

Week 10 (April 16-20, 2007)

- ❖ Create small group/whole class role play activity
- ❖ Practice role play activity
- ❖ Present role play activity
- ❖ Journal response

Week 11 (April 23-27, 2007)

- ❖ Hand out rubrics stating the requirements for the cumulating activity
- ❖ Pre-write, brainstorm, and edit group or personal social skill story

Week 12 (April 30-May 4, 2007)

- ❖ Peer edit, teacher edit, publish, and share social skill story
- ❖ Assess stories based on rubric

Post-Documentation Week 13 (May 7-11, 2007)

- ❖ Students complete student survey
- ❖ Teacher completes observation checklist while observing students

Post Documentation Week 14 (May 14-18, 2007)

- ❖ Analyze the results of student survey
- ❖ Continue observation checklist
- ❖ Analyze observation checklist
- ❖ Compare results of pre and post documentation

Methods of Assessment

The purpose of the observation checklist was to tally the number of times the students displayed negative social skills. This information was important to the teacher researchers because it indicated the students' abilities in the four different social skills chosen. The observation checklist was used for a two-week period from Monday, May 14, 2007, to Friday, May 25, 2007.

The observation checklist recorded the total times the class, as a whole, displayed negative social skills. During each day, the teacher researchers made a tally mark in that day's column. This allowed the teacher researchers to see how many times the students displayed the four negative social skills. The results of the post-documentation observation checklist were compared to the data collected on the pre-documentation observation checklist. The pre-documentation observation checklist was used from January 29th to February 9th, 2007. The post-documentation observation checklist was used from May 7th to May 18th, 2007.

The researchers used a student survey to establish how students felt about eight different social skills including: responsibility, respect, cooperation, acceptance, trust, integrity, honesty, and perseverance. This survey was used in 2 first grades, 1 third grade, and 1 fourth and fifth grade gifted classroom. This survey was used for pre-documentation during the week of January

29th to February 2nd, 2007. This survey was also used during post-documentation during the week of May 7th to May 11th, 2007. The result of the student survey during pre-documentation was then compared to the results of the post-documentation student survey.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

The teacher researchers felt that their students were entering the classroom lacking the appropriate social skills necessary to be productive members of the classroom. This study was instituted in the teacher researchers' classrooms with the purpose of promoting positive social change within their students by incorporating literature and role playing activities. Prior to the implementation the teacher researchers completed a teacher survey, observation checklist, and student survey. The implementation was completed by 46 first grade students, 23 third grade students, 14 fourth grade students, and six fifth grade students, totaling 89 students. The study was executed from January 16th, 2007 to May 18th, 2007. During post-documentation, the researcher's completed the observation checklist and student surveys again so as to see any changes that may have occurred due to the intervention.

Historical Description of the Intervention

During pre-week one, we made copies of our pre- and post-observation checklists, pre- and post-student surveys, teacher surveys, and parent consent letters. We also sent home letters of consent to our students' parents. Throughout the week, the parent consent letters returned gave authorization for their child to participate in the project. Nothing negative happened that week. Everything seemed to run smoothly. We were excited about the implementation of the project.

During pre-documentation week one, we distributed the teacher surveys, our students completed the student surveys, and we filled out the observation checklists while observing the students in class. There was a quick return rate on the teacher surveys and many had positive comments to add. The students were very honest and took their time in filling out their student surveys. This was also a good time to preview the character traits for the students. Completing

the observation checklist did not interfere with our everyday routine as we anticipated it would. On the other hand, we did not receive as many teachers' surveys as we had hoped. The student surveys took much longer than we had anticipated because we had to explain and describe each character trait. At times, we found the observation checklist to be difficult to fill out considering that some behaviors fell under two or more character traits. We also felt that a small number of students in each classroom were repetitive in their negative social behaviors. We all filled out the observation checklists at different times of the day, during different activities, so some day's students may have displayed different behaviors. This gave us a good overview of what traits needed to be worked on if certain behaviors were constantly a problem throughout the day.

For pre-documentation week two, we collected the teacher surveys and analyzed the data, analyzed the results of the student surveys, continued the observation checklists and analyzed them to narrow down to the four social skills we would be concentrating on throughout the intervention. As a group, the data concluded that we should focus on responsibility, cooperation, respect, and integrity. While analyzing the data from the teacher surveys, we realized that all teachers have the same difficulties in their classrooms regardless of grade level. From the observations checklists we were able to see the four emerging social skills that needed to be improved upon the most. As a whole, we felt that a negative aspect of the teacher survey was the fact that many teachers did not follow the directions as far as returning them to the teachers' mailboxes and some did not complete the entire survey. Another negative aspect was when we collapsed the results of the student surveys. It was time consuming and a bit confusing at times. Due to inclement weather and a national holiday, the observation checklists were only completed three out of five days. During the inclement weather, the kids seemed to be more off-task than usual. The consensus from the teacher survey was that students with negative extenuating factors

outside of the classroom lacked appropriate social skills within a structured environment. On the student survey, we found that the students rated themselves in a more positive light than they rated the class as a whole.

During week three, we introduced responsibility, held class discussions, read children's literature, and the students wrote journal responses. All of the students enjoyed hearing stories read aloud to them and were able to make text-to-self connections. All of the students also really liked writing about times they have been responsible. A negative that we all noticed was that some students have a difficult time sitting still and paying attention during read alouds; and these are the students who need to be listening the most. It was very interesting to see that our students were able to describe what responsibility looks like, but they were quick to be irresponsible and not realize it, at the same time.

Throughout week four, we placed our students into small group or whole class role-playing scenarios. They practiced and presented the role-playing to the class. Afterwards, students wrote journal responses. Our students really had a fun time participating in the responsibility role-playing activities. They were able to differentiate between responsible and irresponsible behaviors. It seemed like the same students who were consistently off-task, had a difficult time cooperating. This was a great activity to use to allow students to take ownership of the role-playing. It was also a good activity for students to reference back to when making decisions about responsible behaviors.

Week five was filled with the introduction of the second social skill, which was cooperation, class discussions, literature related to cooperation, and student journal responses. On the positive side, students seemed to easily grasp the concept of cooperation. They also

understood that if they cooperated they were able to accomplish much more. We all felt that this week ran smoothly.

During week six, the teachers once again created small group or whole class role-playing scenarios about cooperation. The students practiced and presented role-playing to the class. The students also wrote journal responses. We mixed up the students in the groups this week and found that they really worked as a team to produce their cooperation role-playing. Again, it became frustrating when we had to continuously remind the same off-task students to cooperate. We found it interesting that our higher achieving students had such a difficult time with social skills. They had trouble cooperating because they just wanted to be the best one in the group rather than work as a team.

All through week seven we focused on the third social skill, which was respect. We introduced respect, had class discussions, read literature pertaining to respect, and the students wrote journal responses. We noticed that the students were learning to use the social skill vocabulary in their everyday conversations. The students practiced respect while listening to their classmates read their journal responses out loud.

Throughout week eight, the students practiced and presented role-playing scenarios that focused on respect and wrote journal responses. The children really loved being creative, and we thought they made more of a connection when they invented the role-playing scenarios themselves. Although they benefited from the role-playing experience, they disrespected each other while their classmates were presenting. We all wondered if our students' behavior would have been different if it wasn't the week before spring break.

Week nine brought the introduction of integrity. We read literature, had class discussions, and wrote journal responses about having good integrity. Our students were beginning to

understand that integrity meant making good choices and encompassed most social skills. We all agreed that it was difficult to find one book solely about integrity. We realized that we could really use any children's book to point out good and bad choices being made.

During week 10, our students again practiced and presented the final role-playing scenarios centered on integrity. As the students become more and more accustomed to participating in role playing, they seemed to take less time and the students seemed to take more from them. The transition from one group's performance to the next was more seamless as well. We all agreed that our students enjoyed participating in role playing, and wondered how they would do with reader's theater.

For week 11, we had final discussions with our students about the four social skills we had been learning about over the past several weeks. We also introduced the idea of creating social skill stories aimed around the skills we had discussed. We completed a brainstorming session and did a group write first. Then students were placed into groups to begin their rough drafts for their social skill story. Throughout the week, the students got together in their groups and worked on writing their stories. We all felt that the students worked well together in composing their stories. However, this process was incredibly time consuming especially for the younger students.

During week 12, the students continued working and completed their social skill stories with their small groups. Then each group worked on publishing and illustrating their final drafts. When all of the groups were finished, the groups shared their stories aloud to the class. We all found that the students enjoyed reading their stories aloud, and that they took pride in their accomplishments. The students that made up the audience did a nice job listening and showing respect. Upon reflection, we felt that it was encouraging that the students learned how to show

respect while their classmates were performing. On the negative side, the completion of all four social skills stories were very time consuming, especially at the end of the school year.

During week 13 and 14, we completed the student surveys and the teacher observation checklists. Completing both the student survey and the observation checklists seemed easier the second time around. The students independently completed the survey. However, it was quite disheartening to see students coloring their flowers orange and red after the interventions. Also, the observation checklists did not seem to improve as compared to the pre-observation checklist. We hoped this is because there was only a couple more weeks of school and our students had summer fever.

The first intervention included providing our students with children's literature that coincided with the four chosen social skills. The four social skills included: responsibility, cooperation, respect, and integrity. Each teacher researcher was responsible for choosing appropriate grade level literature to read aloud to the students covering the particular social skills.

The second intervention was journaling. Each teacher researcher provided the class with a prompt about the particular literature or trait discussed on that day. Journaling was done twice a week after the literature was read. See Appendix E for student work samples.

The third intervention was role playing. Role playing was done as a conclusion to reading the literature and journaling about the four social skills. The teacher researchers with older students allowed them to create scenarios to role playing. Where as, the younger students role playing was prompted by the teacher researchers.

As a third grade teacher researcher at Site A, I learned a lot during the duration of this project. The first and most important thing I have learned is that these implementations should be

put into practice at the beginning of the school year. This is when the students are fresh and new and have not yet settled into a routine. When this project started, the students were comfortable with each other and with me, so they did not really embrace it as I think they could have. I do know that they have learned and implied the social skills, but it was not automatic, it only occurred occasionally. On the other hand, the students knew that their social skills could have been better and they showed this in their surveys. As a teacher researcher, this project has changed me and the way I teach. I think that in order for students to get the most out of school they need to have the proper social skills. I believe that this needs to be incorporated into the curriculum and as a teacher I will make every effort I can to include these types of activities into my daily plans. I think that this will not only help the students while in my class, but also throughout school and life because these are skills that all people need to succeed.

As a fourth and fifth grade teacher researcher at Site A, I noticed that doing this research project on how literature and role playing can affect social skills enabled my individual class to become more socially inept than an average class. I saw that most kids with a good upbringing and solid education were already socially prepared. Students, who were not, had more behavioral issues that played a role in how they acted socially. I found that tying in a book about social skills, especially respect and responsibility; brought to life more discussions and social interactions during role playing activities.

There were a few things I, teacher researcher at Site B, learned after researching and implementing specific strategies concerning pro-social behavior in my classroom. First, and foremost, I know it is imperative to teach and model social skills in the classroom on a daily basis. From both my past and present experiences with primary-age children, I have found it to be easier and more beneficial to teach social skills: such as respect, responsibility, perseverance,

cooperation, acceptance, honesty, and trust through literature, modeling, and role playing, at the beginning of the school year. Children are able to relate to the characters in the stories and are able to connect to their own lives. It was obvious that my students were more apt to understand examples of pro-social behavior when they were encouraged and praised when they modeled positive behaviors. In the end, they seemed more aware of the characteristics in both themselves and their peers. As a teacher, I will continue to influence their behaviors in a positive way and guide them along the way to become a citizen with good integrity.

As a first grade teacher researcher at Site C, I feel that the implementation of this project has been an enlightening experience. During the interventions, my students were able to make connections with their own behaviors. However, once the discussion ended, some students returned to making incorrect decisions socially. I have learned that the proper management and time needs to be taken into account at the beginning of the year, and that expecting first graders to make alterations halfway through the year is too difficult for them. Had I completed these interventions at the beginning of the year, the results may have been different. From this project, I have taken with me the ability to find areas in which there are difficulties in my classroom, and how to go about making changes to produce the most positive learning experience for my students.

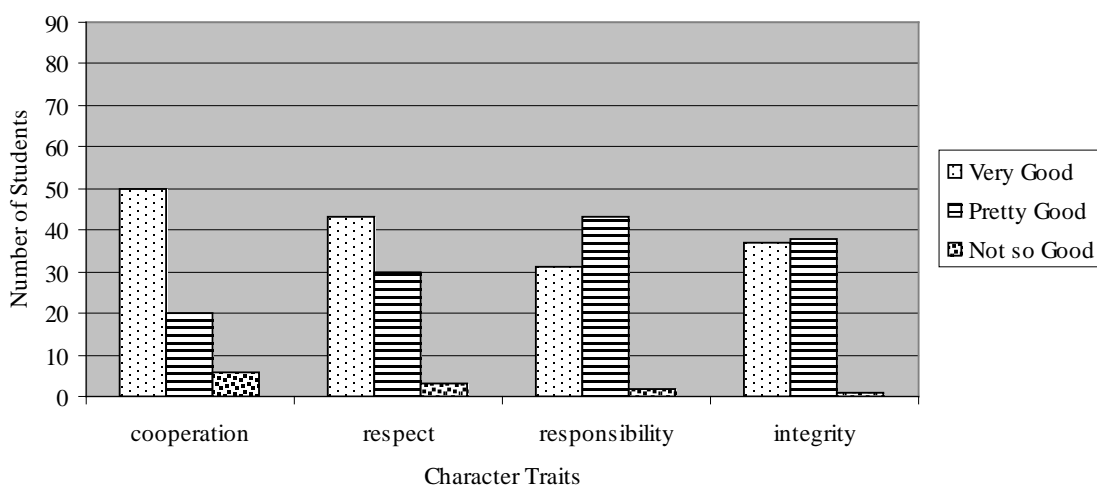
Presentation and Analysis of Results

Student Survey

The purpose of this instrument was to see how students felt they and their classmates exemplified the eight character traits, which included: integrity, honesty, acceptance, responsibility, trust, cooperation, perseverance, and respect after the interventions. A total of 76 students received the student survey during the week of May 7th through 11th, 2007 in all four-teacher researchers' classrooms. The percent of return was 86% (n=76). The survey was distributed to all students who were present on the day the teacher researchers chose to distribute the survey. Each teacher handed out the survey to their students and explained the different traits so that students could make informed decisions about how to correctly and appropriately complete the survey. The student survey consisted of two flowers, one for themselves and one for the class, labeled with the eight character traits inside the flower petals. The students were to color the petals based on the color code described by the teachers, as well as on the worksheet; yellow is "very good", orange is "pretty good", and red is "not so good". When completed, the students anonymously placed the surveys in the teacher's in-box. Refer to Appendix A.

Student Survey: Self Assessment

The student survey of self was completed by 76 students, showed that the majority of students in the four teacher researchers' schools after the intervention felt pretty good or not so good about their own integrity (51%, n=39), respect (43%, n=33), cooperation (34%, n=26), and responsibility (59%, n=45). Please see Figure 6 below.



Students Survey of Self Post Intervention (n=76)

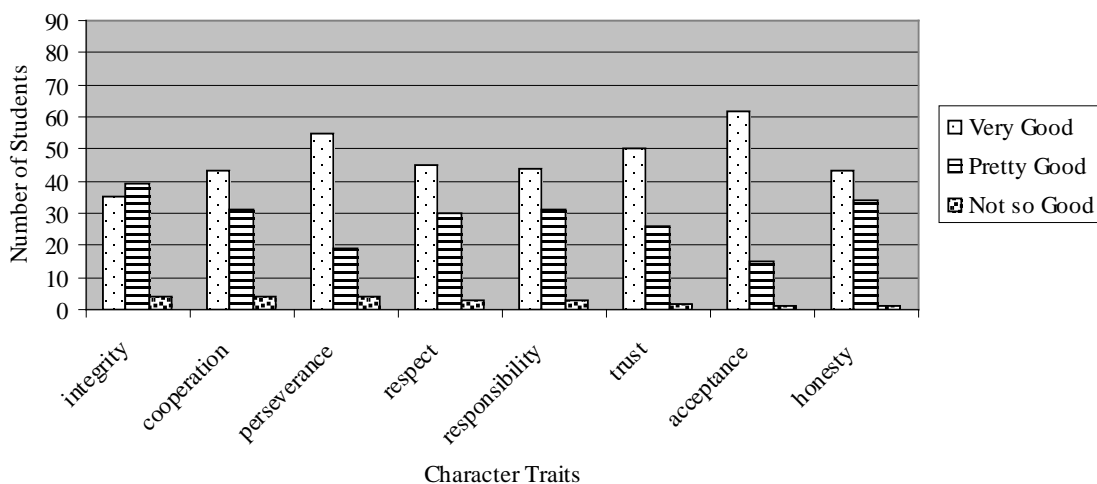
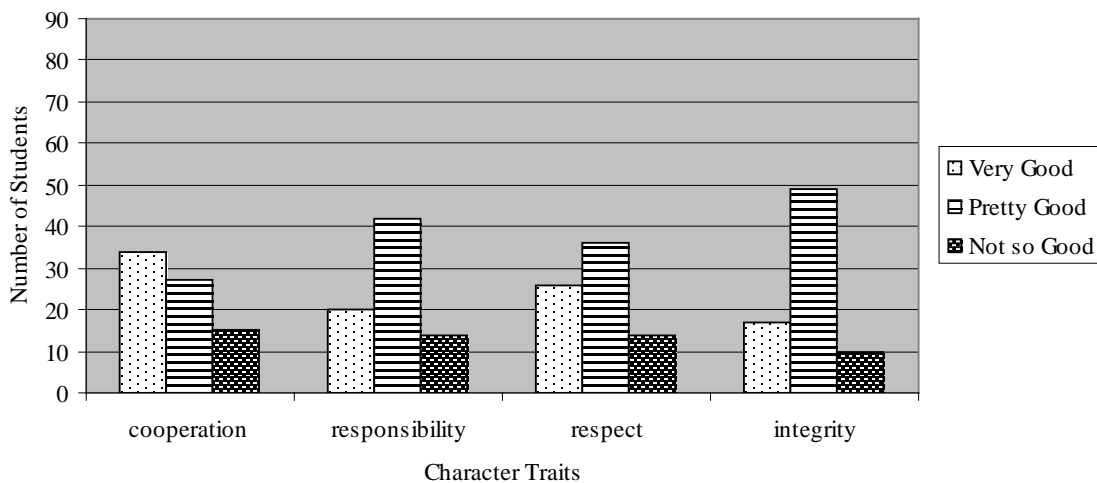


Figure 6: Student Survey of Self Pre Intervention (n=78)

As seen in the post documentation figure above, the four character traits that received intervention are ordered from those that the most students felt “not so good” about to the character traits were the least amount of students felt “not so good about”. Over all, the post intervention surveys showed there was an increase in the feeling of “not so good” and “pretty good” between pre intervention and post intervention which means that the students felt they were not as good at portraying these character trait as they were before the intervention. This occurred with the character traits of respect (43%, n=33) with a less than 1% and responsibility (59%, n=45) had a difference of 36% increase between pre and post intervention. There was a decrease in feeling of “pretty good” and “not so good” between pre and post intervention that means the students felt they portrayed this character trait better than they did before the intervention. This occurred in the character traits of integrity (51%, n=39) with a difference of 10%, and cooperation (34%, n=26) with a difference of 35%.

Student Survey: Class Assessment

The majority of students (n=76) in the four teacher researchers' schools felt pretty good or not so good about their class' integrity (78%, n=59), respect (66%, n=50), cooperation (55%, n=42), and responsibility (44%, n=56). Refer to Figure 7 below.



Students Survey of Class Post Intervention

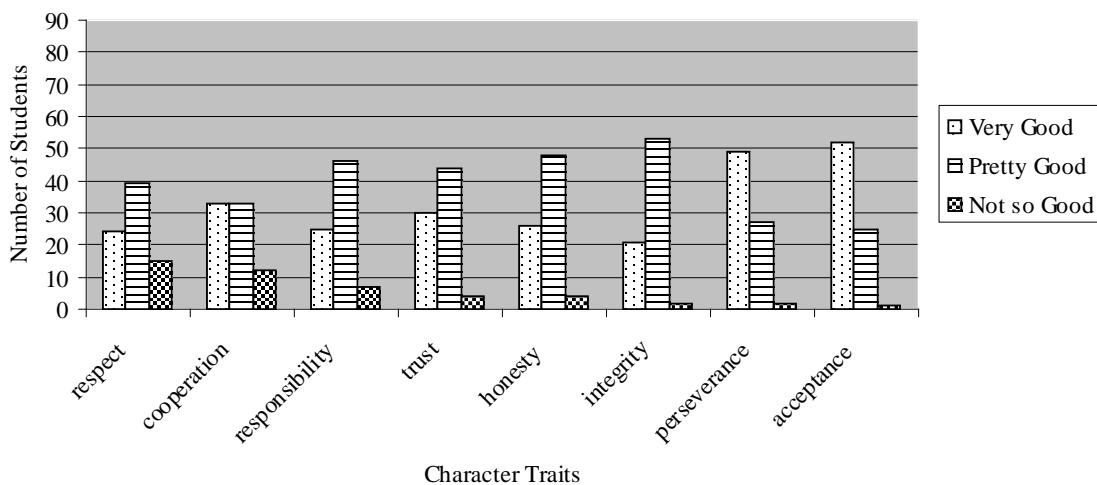


Figure 7: Student Survey of Class Pre Intervention

As seen in the post documentation figure above the four character traits that received intervention are ordered from those that the most students felt “not so good” about to the

character traits that were the least amount of students felt “not so good about”. Like the student survey of self the results were mixed. There was a decrease of feelings toward “pretty good” or “not so good” for the character trait cooperation. This means that the students felt their class as a whole improved portraying this character trait from pre documentation to post documentation. The decrease in “pretty good” and “not so good” means there was an increase in feeling “very good” about the character trait. However, there was an increase in the number of students feeling “pretty good” or “not so good” in the character traits respect, integrity, and responsibility. This means the students felt that their class, as a whole, portrayed these character traits more negatively between pre documentation and post documentation. The increase in “pretty good” and “not so good” means that there was a decrease in feeling “very good” about the character traits. The character trait with a decrease in negative feelings was cooperation (55%, n=42) with a decrease of 7%. The character traits with an increase in negative feelings were respect (66%, n=50) with a 14% increase. Then came integrity (78%, n=59) with a 7% increase. Last was responsibility (42%, n=56) with a 6% increase in negative feelings.

Observation Check List

Of the incidences observed (n=297) in a two-week period from Monday, May 7th through Friday, May 18th, there were the same four major negative behaviors (92%, n=272) observed in the classroom as in the pre-intervention. These behaviors included disrespect (23%, n=69), uncooperative (17%, n=51), poor integrity (29%, n=85), and irresponsibility (23%, n=67). Between week one and week two there was a 36% difference in frequency because of school end of year activities such as field trips. The number of incidences during week one was 171, and the number of incidences during week two was 126.

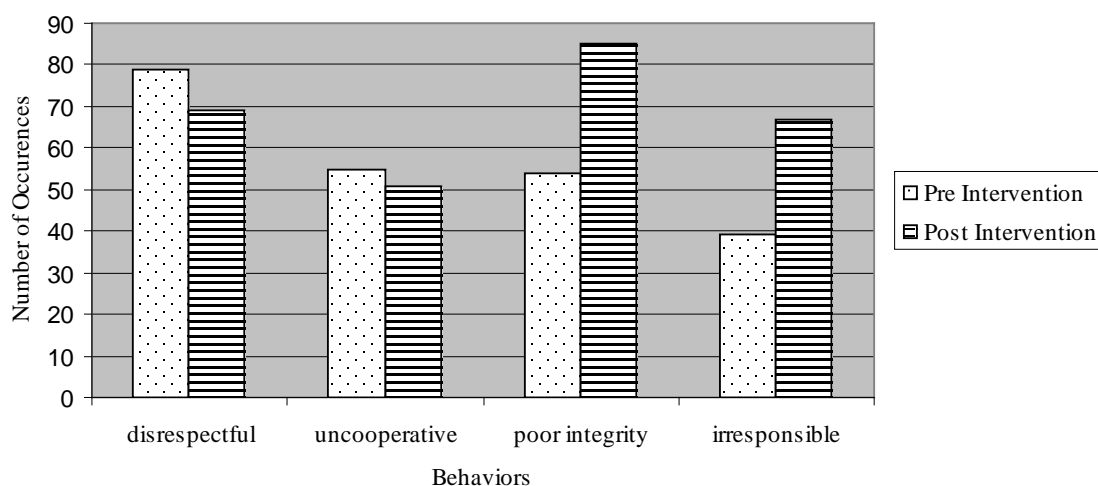


Figure 8: Observation Checklist

As seen in the figure above the results of the four character traits that received intervention between pre documentation and post documentation were mixed. The four character traits that had the most number of occurrences pre observations were the same character traits that had the most number of occurrences post observations. Two of those negative behaviors had a decrease in the number of occurrences, they were, being disrespectful (23%, n=69) with a decrease in frequency of 9% and being uncooperative (17%, n=51) with a decrease in frequency of 8%. On the other hand as seen in the figure above the other two negative behaviors that received interventions increased in frequency. These behaviors are poor integrity (29%, n=85) with a 57% increase, and irresponsibility (23%, n=67) with a 72% increase. The other behaviors had a minimal change and were not part of the interventions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, little to no positive change was found by the teacher researchers from pre- to post-observation. However, a minimal decrease in the frequency of disrespectful and uncooperative behaviors was found. On the other hand, there was an increase in the occurrences of poor integrity and irresponsibility. The results of the post students' survey showed no notable change.

The teacher researchers feel that completing the post-observations at the end of the school year played a major role in the increase of negative behaviors. The end of the school year brings about many distractions: field trips, assemblies, field day, and end of year assessments. Straying away from the regular routine brings about negative behavior as well. As educators, we know the importance of establishing routines and expectations from the start of the school year. Therefore, another factor that may have had an impact on the results was that the interventions were instituted in the middle of the school year instead of at the beginning of the year. Consequently, students rely on routines and are easily set off course if their routines change, making it hard to incorporate a new curriculum and activities.

Another result worth noting was the lack of positive growth from the most insubordinate students. As teacher researchers, we initially chose to research the possibilities to improve our students' social skills in the realm of the classroom. This was brought about by a select number of students from year-to-year that lacked the appropriate social skills necessary to become positive members of a classroom community. Now, after the research, the teacher researchers are saddened that the interventions used did not impact these select students. However, the students that were less socially inept from the beginning of the intervention seemed to gain further insight in the vocabulary and proper use of the skills introduced. The teacher researchers conclude that

the factors outside of the classroom that handicap certain students are too severe to make proper adjustments within the classroom.

The teacher researchers have concluded that, overall, these interventions and this research showed that there was no increase in our students' social skills. The underlying factors stated above contributed to the lack of growth in our students socially. The teacher researchers feel that, had the research been done at a different time of year, the results may have been dramatically different.

The teacher researchers recommend that the interventions be introduced from the very beginning of the school year. Also, rather than focusing on only four of the social skills, the teacher researchers would teach all eight. A concentration on one skill per month with the integration of journaling and class meetings will hopefully provide the proper support students need. The teacher researchers would also display literature in their classroom libraries that coincide with the social skills introduced. Also, an incorporation of a social skills wall wherein students are rewarded for positive behaviors would be displayed in the classroom.

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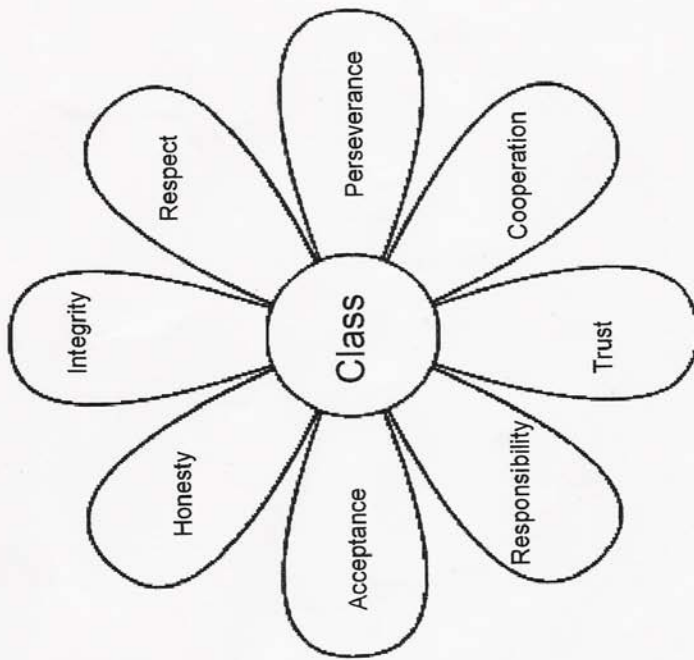
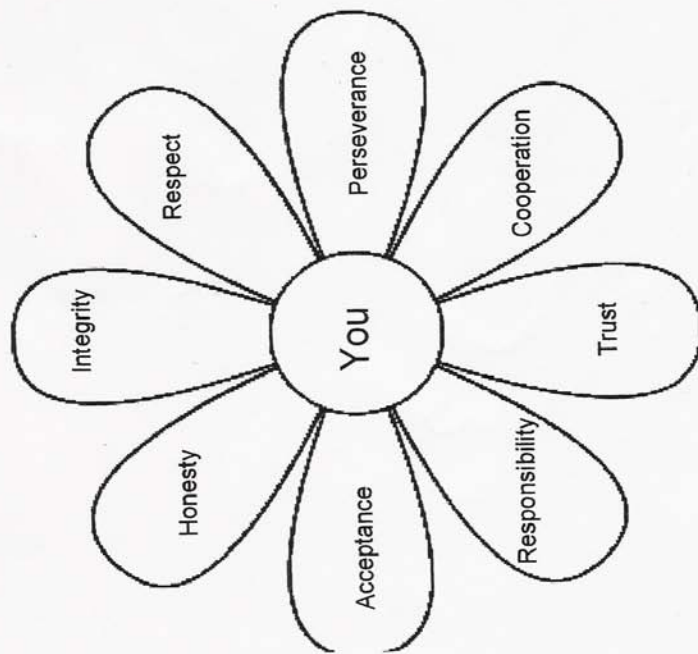
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APPENDICES

How I Feel I Am Doing....

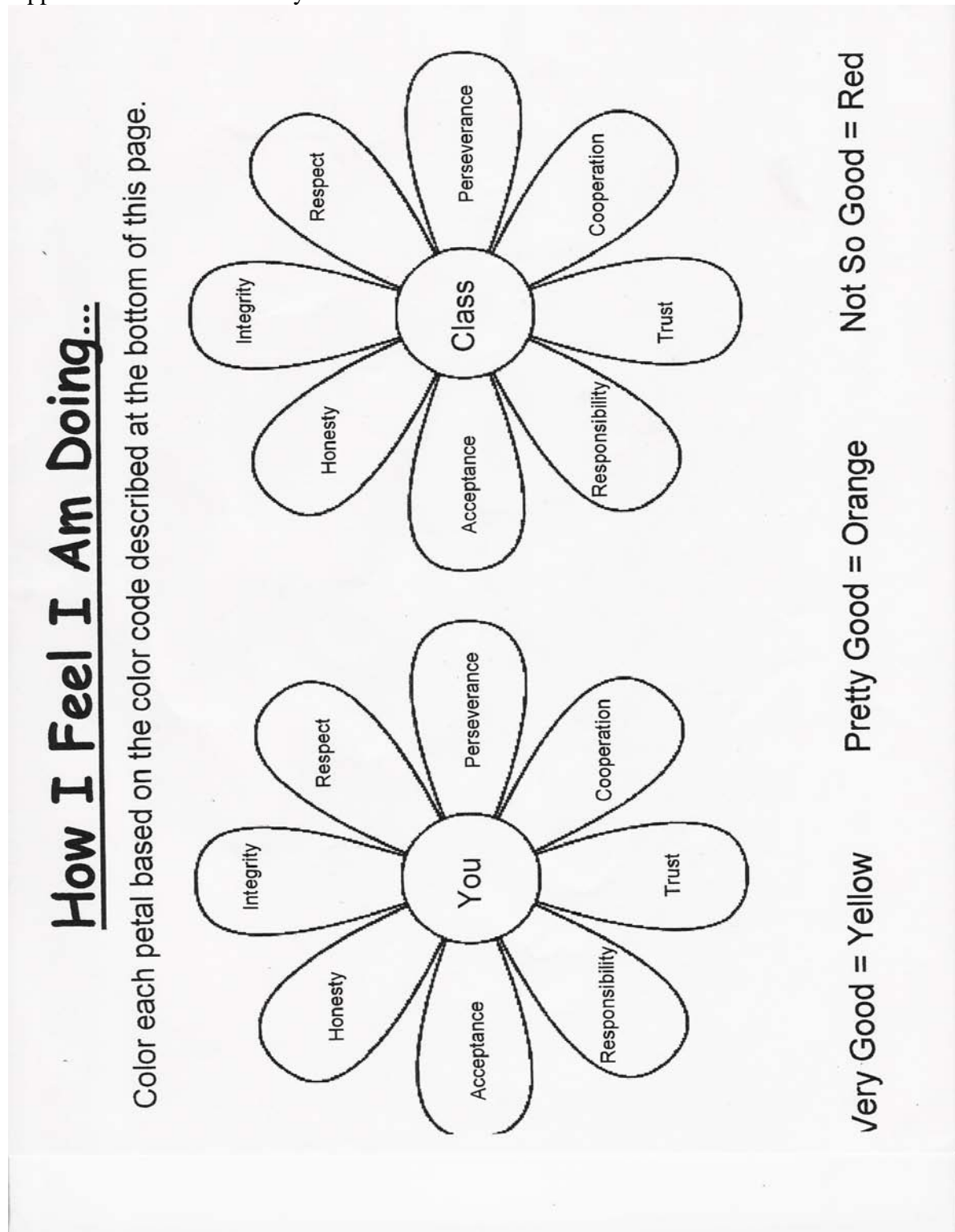
Color each petal based on the color code described at the bottom of this page.



Very Good = Yellow

Pretty Good = Orange

Not So Good = Red

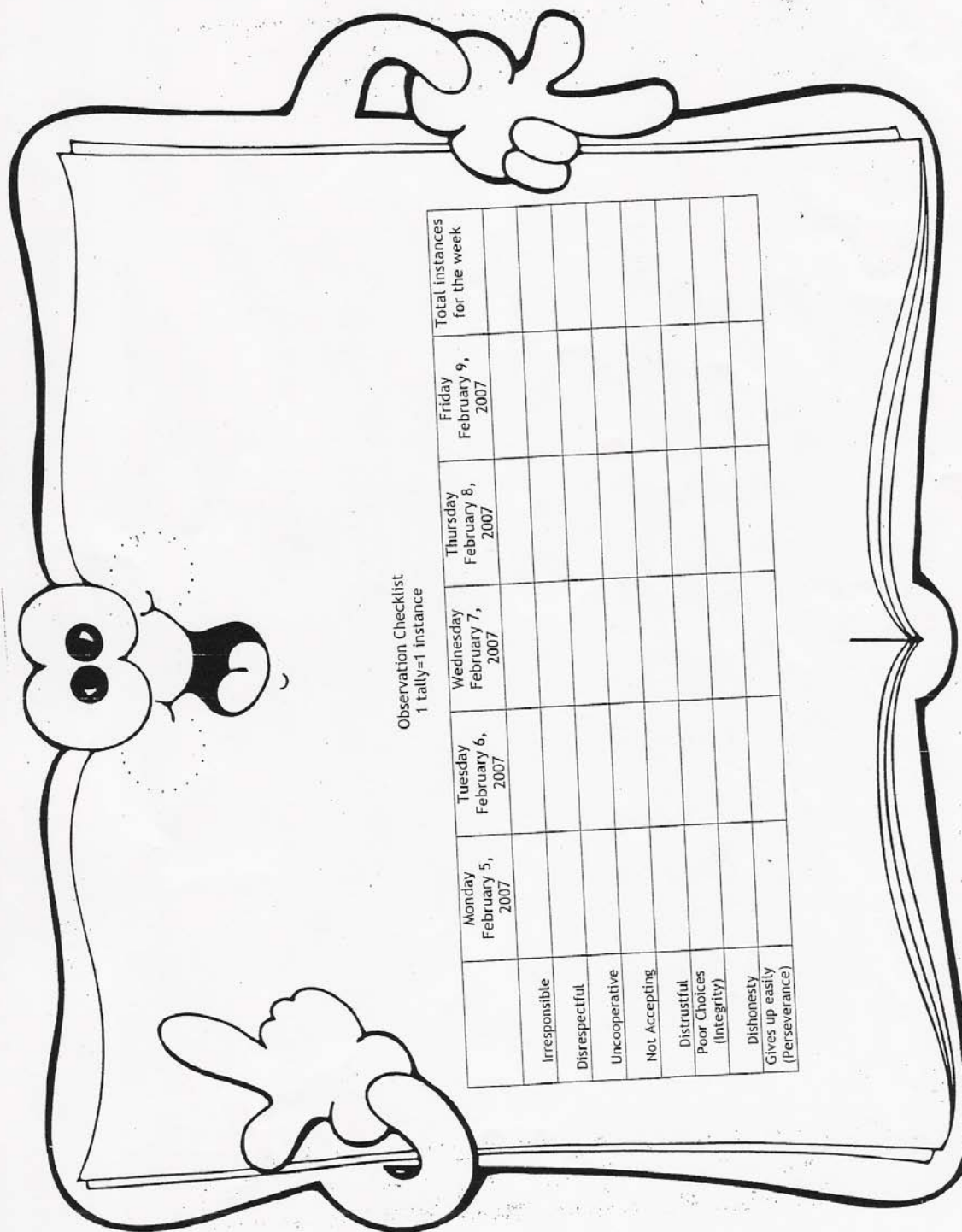


Appendix B: Observation Checklist Pre Documentation

Observation Checklist
1 Tally=1 instance

	Monday January 29, 2007	Tuesday January 30, 2007	Wednesday January 31, 2007	Thursday February 1, 2007	Friday February 2, 2007	Total instances for the week
Irresponsible						
Disrespectful						
Uncooperative						
Not Accepting						
Distrustful						
Poor Choices (Integrity)						
Dishonesty						
Gives up easily (Perseverance)						

Appendix B: Observation Checklist Pre Documentation



Observation Checklist
1 tally=1 instance

	Monday February 5, 2007	Tuesday February 6, 2007	Wednesday February 7, 2007	Thursday February 8, 2007	Friday February 9, 2007	Total instances for the week
Irresponsible						
Disrespectful						
Uncooperative						
Not Accepting						
Distrustful Poor Choices (Integrity)						
Dishonesty						
Gives up easily (Perseverance)						

Appendix C: Observation Checklist Post Documentation

Observation Checklist
1 tally=1 instance

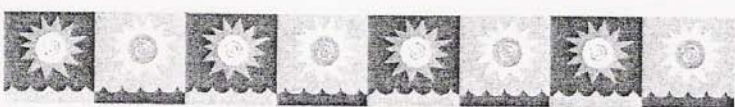
	Monday May 7, 2007	Tuesday May 8, 2007	Wednesday May 9, 2007	Thursday May 10, 2007	Friday May 11, 2007	Total for the week
Irresponsible						
Disrespectful						
Uncooperative						
Not Accepting						
Distrustful						
Poor Choices (Integrity)						
Dishonesty						
Gives up easily (Perseverance)						

Appendix C: Observation Checklist Post Documentation

Observation Checklist
1 tally=1 instance

	Monday May 14, 2007	Tuesday May 15, 2007	Wednesday May 16, 2007	Thursday May 17, 2007	Friday May 18, 2007	Total for the week
Irresponsible						
Disrespectful						
Uncooperative						
Not Accepting						
Distrustful Poor Choices (Integrity)						
Dishonesty Gives up easily (Perseverance)						

Appendix D: Teacher Survey



Increasing Social Skills of Elementary Students Through Literature and Role Playing

Please take a moment to anonymously complete the following survey and return it to Colleen Aubrey's mailbox no later than Friday, February 2, 2007.

Thank you for your support!

1. Do you feel your students come to school with the necessary social skills to be productive members of your classroom? Please explain.

2. The responsibility of students in your classroom is...

Not a Problem					Major Problem
1	2	3	4	5	

3. Respect for self, others, and property in your classroom is...

Not a Problem					Major Problem
1	2	3	4	5	

4. Cooperation amongst students in your classroom is...

Not a Problem					Major Problem
1	2	3	4	5	

5. Student's acceptance of one another in your classroom is...

Not a Problem					Major Problem
1	2	3	4	5	

6. The level of trust amongst students in your classroom is...

Not a Problem				Major Problem
1	2	3	4	5

7. Students showing integrity in your classroom is...

Not a Problem				Major Problem
1	2	3	4	5

8. The honesty of students in your classroom is...

Not a Problem				Major Problem
1	2	3	4	5

9. Students show perseverance in your classroom is...

Not a Problem				Major Problem
1	2	3	4	5



Today I was
responsible because
I remeberd to bring
my presidit book and
I got a priz!

What Respect means to me:
It means when you do what your parents tell you to do. Also it means if a friend says give me my space you would show respect and leave the person alone. Showing care towards others. Also treating people the way you want to be treated. Listen to someone that is talking. Respect also is to be kind

What I can do to
be the best person
I can be is getting
to school on time, not
staying up late, getting
homework done, not
getting my clothes dirty,
trying my best on
a test and trying
not to fail, turning
in my reading log,
not forgetting stuff
at school, and last
take a.R. tests. That's
what I can do to
be the best person
I can be.

Extra stuff
not lying
be kind
listen to others
tell the truth
make good choices
don't get mad about little
things

AMANDA

are play is called the fourth
grade lullies

Characters are

Harrie = melody

Jack = lull

Amar = lull

Amar = D. J.

Amar = lull

Sorry
Miss Payne
.....

One day there were
kids who were working
on a ~~school project~~
when Amar came up
with an idea...

Amar

I think mr. potato
head should be an
our project

~~Harrie~~

~~Go right who cares
about a silly potato~~

Harrie

Amally

Go I agree
I have a great idea
make me should put a
sign on it saying
Amar's silly

~~Amar~~

~~Ammon listen to me
we should do this~~

F

ABINATIA

Zach As they sat over there amar had another great idea...

amar guys I have an idea guys I have an idea ~~amar~~ amar guys guys

Jake sure I'll listen amar

amar but I want the others to hear

~~amar~~ what amar

amar ya what amar

amar were busy what

Zach as they listen far about 5 mins they walk away and amar sits down

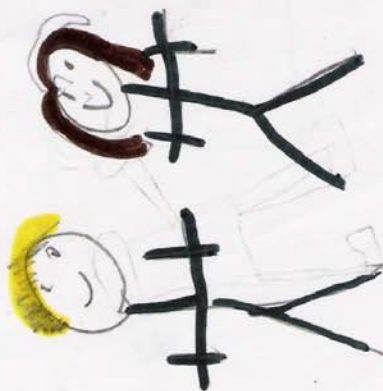
Jake and cries as Jake comes in guys you are really mean and very bad.

bullies were working on integrity I don't see any of that. now say sorry to amar or to the principal with you. all sorry

Valerie and Teagen
get intrudule.



onec d pond time
their was valerie
and Tedgdn.



They were going
to the car pet to
read a story.



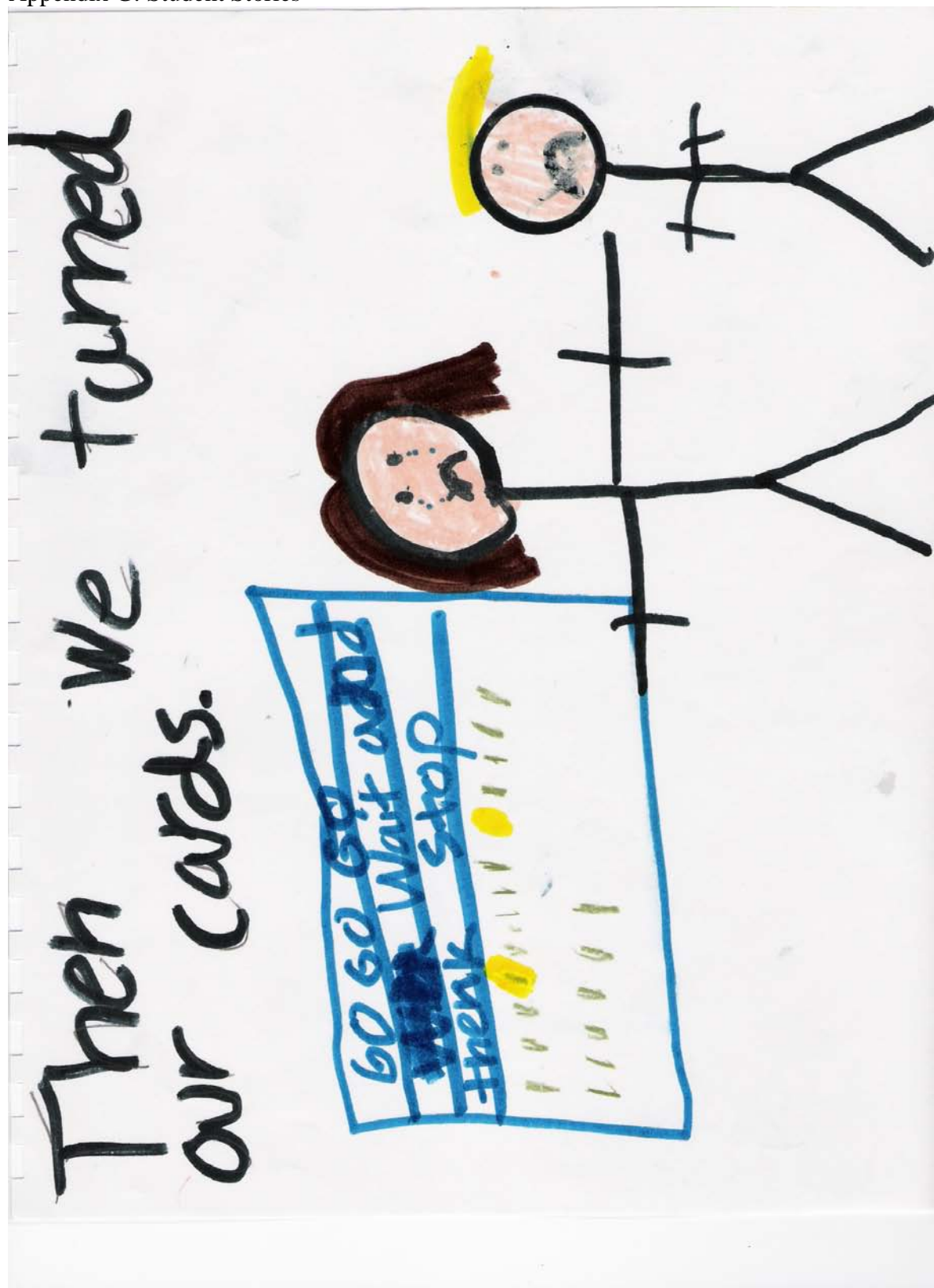
Then we started
to talk.



They our teache
r said stop
but we did
not stop

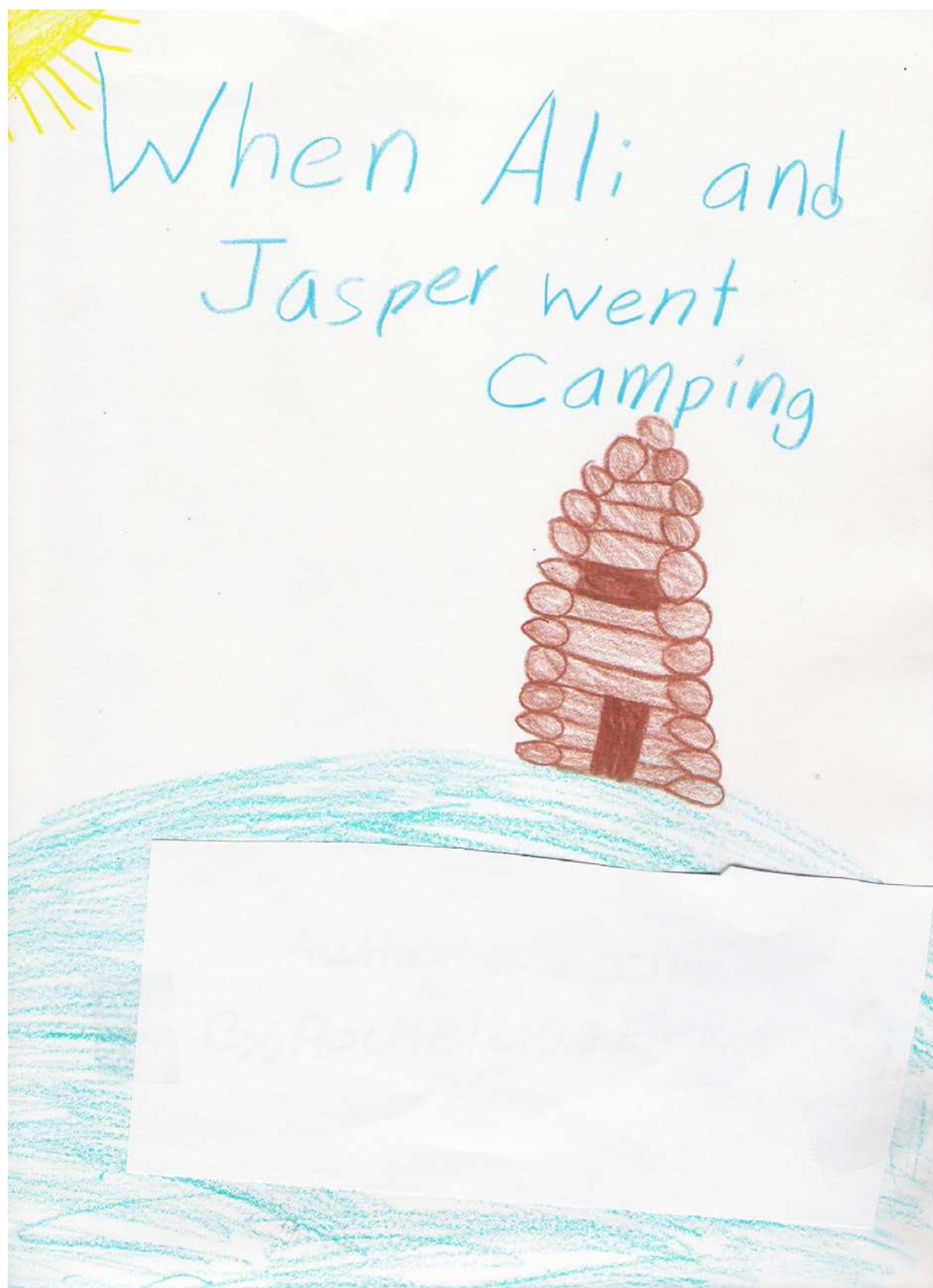
Then she from
 moved us away
 each other.





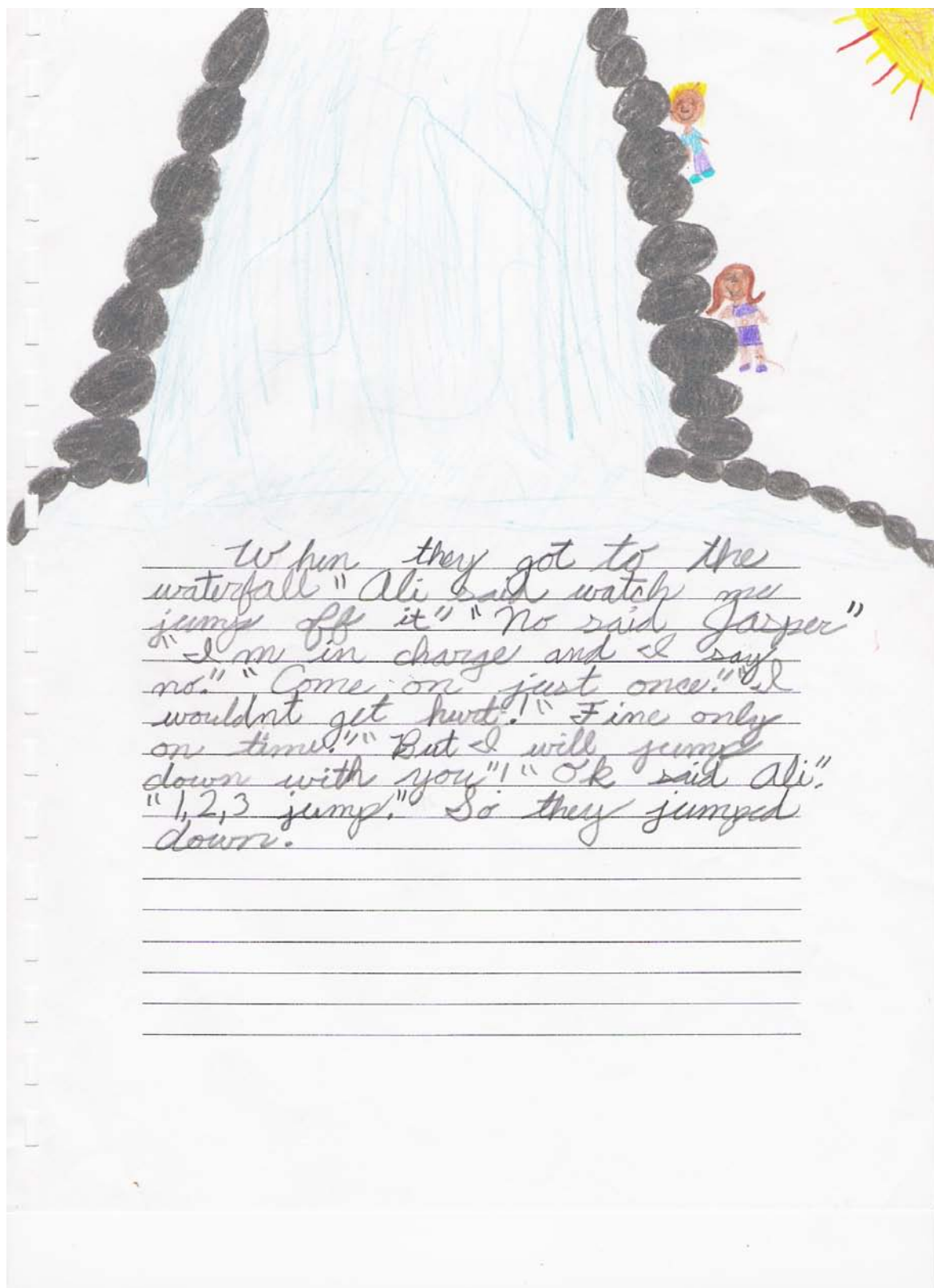


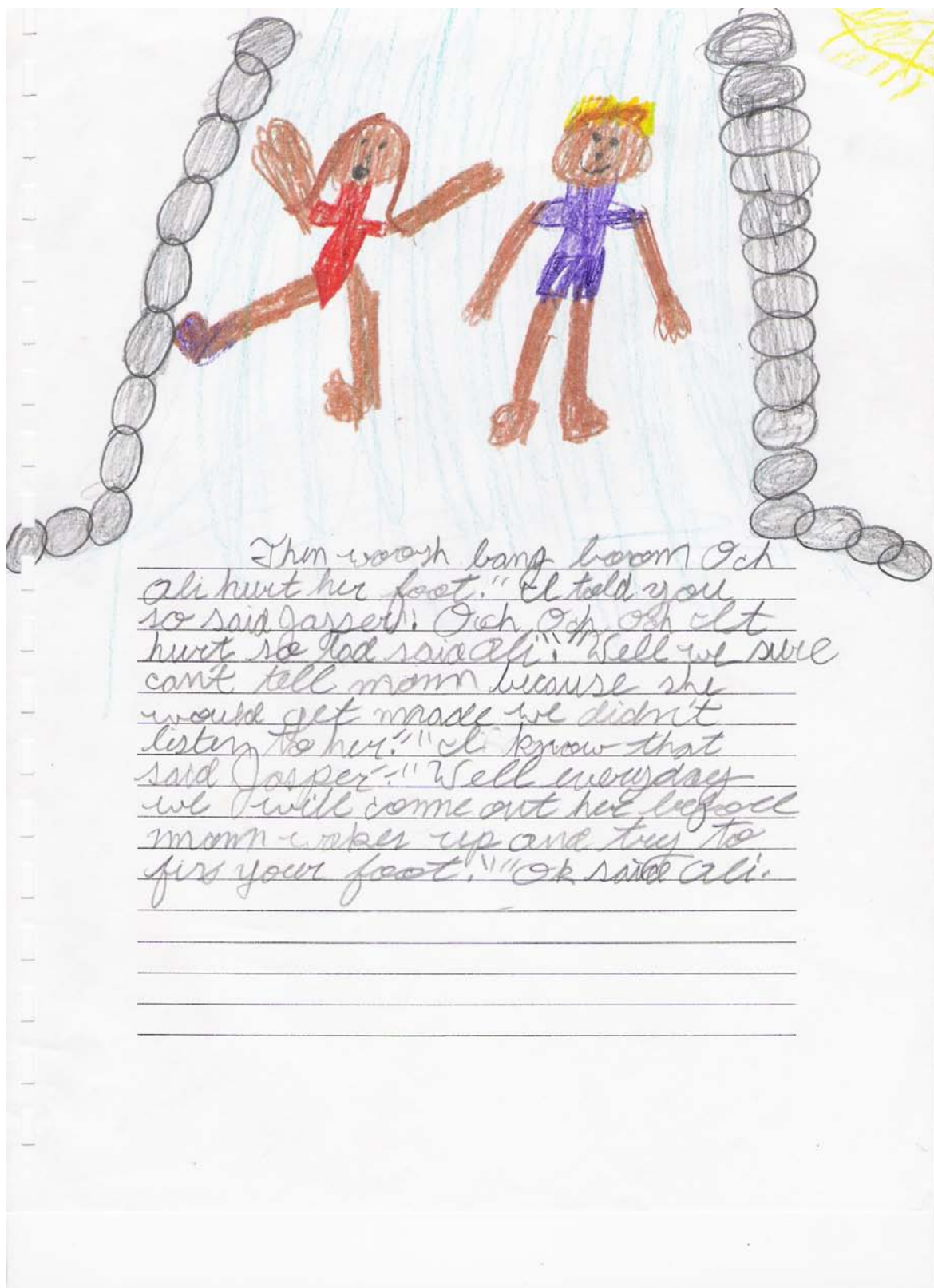
Appendix G: Student Stories

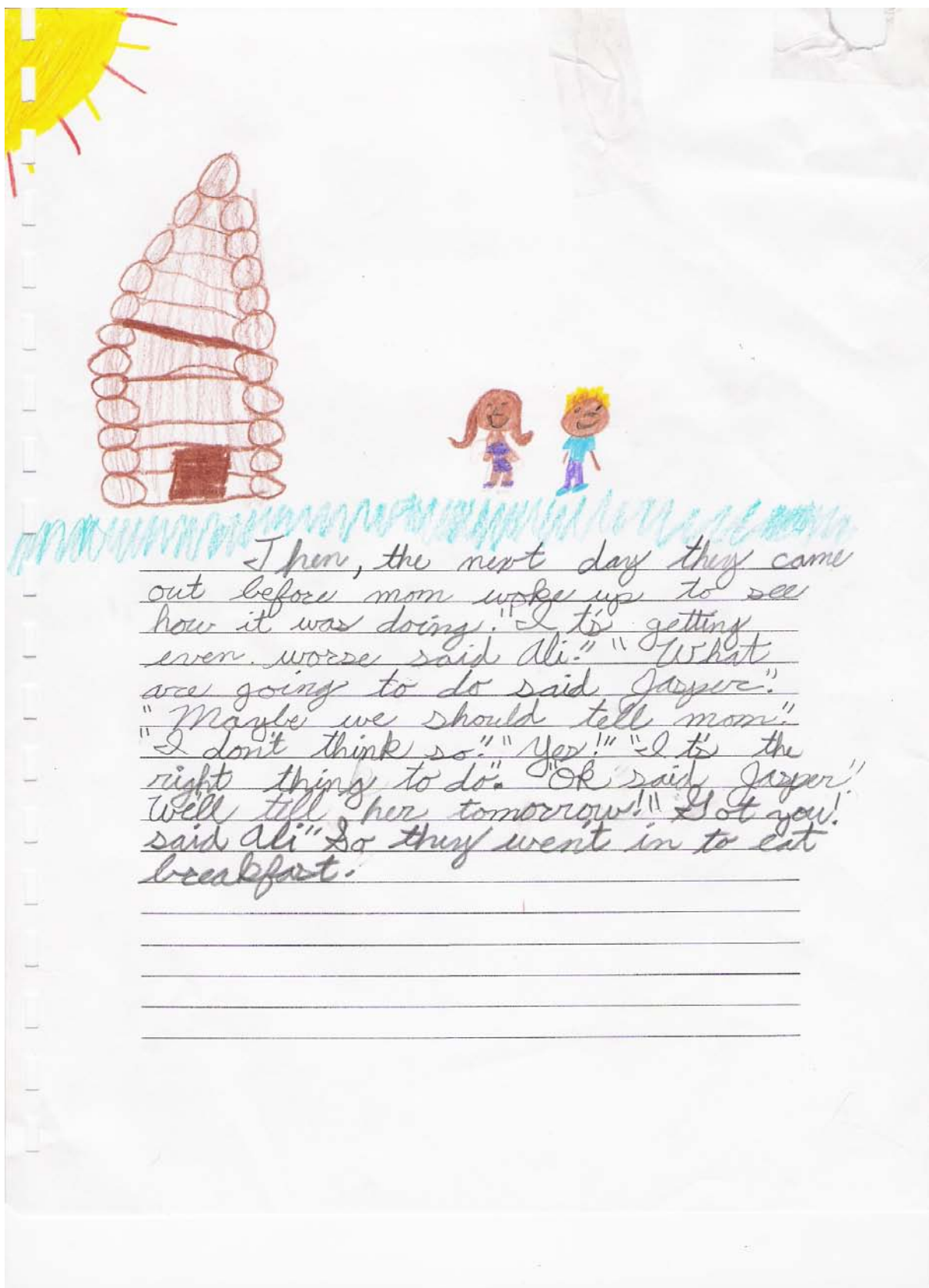




One hot Friday afternoon
in Oklahoma Jasper, Ali and
their mom were driving to Montana
to camping. When they got there, they
had beautiful log cabins and green
fields, lake, and a close by
waterfall. They got in the cabin
"Mom told Jasper he had responsibility
over Ali." Jasper replied "Ok".
The children asked if they can go
to the waterfall. "Mom said yes
but don't jump off it." "Ok they
replied."









The next day when mom woke up Jasper went up to her. "Mom said Jasper when we went to the waterfall we disbrayd you and jumped of the waterfall and when we jumped off all hit her foot on a rock and broke it!" "I'm very proud of you said Mom!" "For what said Jasper?" "For telling the truth!" "Then every body drove back to Goksharmpa. When they took Ali to the doctor they always listend to mom for the rest of there life"

The End

The Vase

One day Trent and his little sister Maia were playing outside. They were playing catch with a ball. All of a sudden there were clouds in the sky and it started pouring rain. "AHHH!!" said Maia. "Hurry up and get inside before you get soaked!" said Trent. "Okay!" said Maia. They were a long way away from the door so they had to run as fast as their legs could take them. When they got inside they were soaked. "Mom and Dad aren't home yet so just go upstairs and change, but then come back down and we can play in the living room," said Trent. "But what if we break mom's favorite vase?" asked Maia. "It's okay we will be VERY careful!" said Trent, "and if we do break it we could blame it on Hazel!" "but Hazel is just a puppy, how could she jump on the mantel?" asked Maia. "She

could have jumped from the couch!" said Trent. "Well I don't know but okay!"

(Later)

"Hey this IS fun playing catch in the house!" said Maia.

"See I told you!" said Trent.

Next thing you know Trent threw the ball and it hit the vase.

"UH-OH TRENT!" said Maia.

"OH-NO!" "When mom and dad get home I'm in BIG trouble!" said Trent.

(Mom and dad got home)

"Hi kids we're home!" said mom.

"MOM MAIA BROKE YOUR VASE!"

Maia was speechless. "MAIA JEAN

YOU ARE GROUND!" yelled dad, "GO

TO YOUR ROOM!" Okay so Trent felt

bad now. "Okay, okay come back down

Maia" said Trent. "Mom, . . . dad. . . .

I broke the vase not Maia."

"son, thank you for showing integrity by telling the truth but I don't

think your going to see that ball

for a while. . . and you can help me

pick out a new vase for mom tomorrow!"

Writing Rubric for a Social Skill Story

Name: _____

	<u>Not Included</u>	<u>Partially Included</u>	<u>Included</u>
Social skill learned	0		2
Appropriate title	0	1	2
Cover and illustrations	0	1	2
Character /s	0	1	2
Setting	0	1	2
Problem	0	1	2
Solution	0	1	2
Correct capitalization	0	1	2
Correct punctuation	0	1	2
Correct spelling	0	1	2
Correct letter formation	0	1	2
Complete sentences	0	1	2
Written legibly/neatly	0	1	2

(Point system is under the discretion of the individual teacher)

Score: _____/26

Percentage: _____%

Grade: _____