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The Effects of Teaching Social Skills on Students' Behavior: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to measure the affects of teaching social skills on students' behavior. Social skills instruction was implemented through morning meetings at the beginning of the school day for about 30 minutes, 2-3 days a week. Students worked on such skills as effective communication, teamwork, collaboration, and good listening, etc. This was a qualitative study therefore, information collected on the students included field notes, student completed self-evaluations, and a final survey. Overall, the data shows that most students improved their behavior and felt that morning meeting help create a more positive, comfortable class environment.

Key Words: Inclusive Classroom, Morning Meeting, Social Skills, Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS)

Introduction

Today, a majority of students with learning and behavior problems are included in the general education curriculum. In these general education classrooms there is a focus on improving and remediating students' academic skills, but little to no focus on their social skills (Fenty, 2008). However, learning is a social experience where conversational activity has an important role in the construct of knowledge. Learning how to listen, ask good questions, share thoughts and ideas, respect others opinions, and examine situations from a number of perspectives is equally as important in a child's development as academics (Gardner, 2012). Social skills are interwoven with cognitive and intellectual growth. Therefore, they are skills essential to academic achievement and should be modeled, experienced, practiced, extended, and refined within classroom lessons and activities (Fenty, 2008). For my original research project, I studied the effects of teaching social skills on students' behavior through classroom observations and student completed self-evaluations.

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Literature Review

Today, a majority of students with or at risk for learning and behavior problems are included in the general education curriculum. In these classrooms there is a focus on improving and remediating students' academic skills, but a lack of focus on social skills (Fenty, 2008.) This is unfortunate because learning is a social experience where conversational activity has an important role in the construct of knowledge. Learning how to listen, ask good questions, share thoughts and ideas, respect others opinions, and examine situations from a number of perspectives is equally as important in a child's development as academics (Gardner, 2012.) Social skills are interwoven with cognitive and intellectual growth. Therefore, they are skills essential to academic achievement and should be modeled, experienced, practiced, extended, and refined within classroom lessons and activities (Fenty, 2008.)

Vygotsky brought awareness to the idea that community is a social construct made of individuals in the same space at the same time. It must be noted that community is not something that just happens; it must be created (Gardner, 2012.) However, many teachers are hesitant to devote any academic time to social skills development, which can greatly improve a classroom's community and atmosphere. This results in teacher's relying on pullout programs and special education services, which occur in isolation and therefore, do nothing to benefit the students' interactions as a whole or build a sense of safety and comfort in the classroom. Social skills instruction should be incorporated into the academic curriculum and there are a myriad of ways this can be accomplished (Fenty, 2008.)

In order for a classroom to run smoothly and efficiently, there must be behavioral expectations and routines established. Educators must decide how they expect their students to

act in and outside of the classroom. For example, they may expect their students to be respectful of others and the classroom materials, use their manners, communicate effectively and use their listening skills by making eye contact, speaking clearly, and staying focused on the person speaking, etc. Next, the teacher must identify which student's exhibit these desired social behaviors and which do not. Although, it is important to involve the entire class in social skills instruction, some students may need extra guidance and attention.

Morning meeting is a great way to incorporate behavioral lessons because it involves practicing social skills and helps create a sense of community in the classroom. It establishes a daily ritual that allows students to greet one another, share life stories, build trust and respect, and transition into the day's activities (Bruce, 2006.) In Kriete's, *The Morning Meeting Book*, it breaks down the components of the practice. The "Greeting" portion allows children to learn and practice the elements of a respectful greeting. It also encourages children to greet classmates that are in different friend groups and of different genders. During this time, the teacher can model positive and respectful ways of greeting others. The "Sharing" portion is very important because it takes on two roles: the one of sharing and the one of listening. The "sharing" portion allows students to learn to speak clearly and confidently, as well as use a strong voice; the "listening" portion allows students to learn how to listen, form questions, and see things from another perspective. This is a time when social skills such as taking turns, looking at the speaker, and asking appropriate questions can be taught and discussed. The "Team Building" or activity portion is a group activity that encourages cooperation, inclusion, and it can be related to the curriculum. The "News and Announcements" portion engages and provides students with important information to prepare them for the happenings of the day (Bruce, 2006.)

Meaningful morning meetings start with careful planning- decisions need to be made on the components involved, the physical environment, materials used, and positive behavior supports (Bechtel, 2002). While the components of Morning Meeting vary in different classrooms, many of the following activities were included in one or more classrooms: attendance, greeting, music and chants, calendar, daily schedule (including special class events), weather or season, cognitive lessons, games, and exercise or gross motor imitation. A special place should be established within the classroom for the morning meeting sessions. Some teachers like to have a carpet in the shape of a circle for children to sit on during this meeting time or seat students in an organized semi-circle. Teachers must consider how to continually reinforce positive behaviors throughout the meeting and the day. Specific reinforcement phrases may include "I really like the way you're sitting," "Good eye contact," "Thanks for raising your hand" and "Thank you for looking when your name is called." The teacher will also need to establish procedures to redirect inappropriate student behavior. In some classrooms students are taught to recognize and use silent signals to communicate. For example, they are provided with the "take five" symbol, which reminds them to think about and correct their actions. Photos or charts are also used to prompt appropriate behavior and can be paired with verbal praise when the child corrects their actions (Bechtel, 2002).

In the article, "Morning Meeting and Science-A Winning Combination," the author, Cynthia Gardner, wrote about a personal experience that she had with morning meeting. Although teachers often think morning meeting is only meant for the younger grade levels, it is very beneficial for kids in kindergarten all the way through sixth grade. Gardner wrote:

"Fifth grade is an interesting time for students. They are undergoing physical changes, looking more to their peers for acceptance, and beginning to question who they are. Kriete's model emphasizes

the important social skills of cooperation, responsibility, empathy, and self-control—all skills that are much needed by the pre-adolescent child. I introduced Morning Meeting the very first day of school and clearly defined the purpose of each component. Throughout the year, I discovered that Morning Meeting was the perfect vehicle for introducing social skills. I often invited the school guidance counselor to participate in our Morning Meeting to assist students with reinforcing these skills. She also met with the children to address concerns that individuals had and, as a community, helped them develop the skills to resolve them. Morning Meeting became a critical part of our day. If ever we had a school event that disrupted our morning, the children were very disappointed and insisted that we meet later in the day!" (Gardner, 2012, pg. 62)

So, not only was morning meeting beneficial to Gardner's students, it seemed that it was something they really enjoyed and looked forward to. It is important to take advantage of all teachable moments, both social and academic, using effective instructional strategies. For example, picture teaching your students how to be a good listener the same way you would teach them how to do addition. Hook the students and explain why the lesson is important; then explain the skills involved in mastering the concept. Then show students how they can exhibit skill mastery. Finally, have students practice the new skill with supervision and provide feedback. It is also important to connect social behaviors to academic skills. For example, during guided reading students take turns reading aloud, so it becomes necessary for others to quietly listen and be patient. This creates an opportunity to teach the skill of “waiting your turn” and to practice it often. When planning your academic lessons, consider the social behaviors essential to student learning and try to incorporate the instruction of those skills (Fenty, 2008.)

Although some teachers may wish to focus simply on reading, writing, and arithmetic, even after hearing about such beneficial activities as morning meeting, there have been studies that show social skills have an effect on academic performance. In the article, *Patterns of Early Reading and Social Skills Associated with Academic Success in Elementary School*, researchers discuss findings regarding the contribution of early social skills to later academic achievement. Using data from the national Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Kindergarten Cohort, researchers found that most kindergartners with a combination of low to average reading skills

and higher levels of social skills performed better on 5th grade academic assessments than children with similar reading skills but lower levels of social skills during kindergarten. This study goes to show that social skills have a powerful impact on students' academic performance (Cooper, 2014.)

All in all, when social skills are incorporated into daily practices in a general education classroom, all students can become successfully included. By managing and teaching social skills, a positive academic atmosphere is created. It is important to remember that social skills and academic skills can be interwoven in order to create a respectful, positive classroom community in which all students have the opportunity to prosper both socially and academically.

Methodology

For this action research project, the question at hand was: How does social skills instruction affect students' behavior? This was a qualitative study based off of classroom observations and student completed self-evaluations. Before the research began, a thorough review of the literature relating to this topic was conducted to help guide the researcher in finalizing data collection and analysis procedures. The literature review helped to determine the best ways to create a positive classroom community, instill in students a sense of self-confidence, help them express their feelings and thoughts in a healthy and mature manner, and teach important social skills to students. It also provided the researcher with results from similar studies and assisted them in understanding the affects it can and should have on the students. Before beginning the data collection, approval was obtained from the IRB.

This action research study took place in a Title 1 School that consists of grades kindergarten through 5th grade. There are 728 students and 39 full time teachers in the school. The student body make up is as follows: 63% of the students identify as White, 22% identify as Black, 11% identify as Hispanic, and 3% identify themselves as Asian. Specifically, the study was implemented in a fifth grade, inclusive class that has a total of 22 students- 13 males and 9 females. Twenty students took part in the study. The LD student is not in the General Education classroom during our morning meeting time and therefore, did not participate. The other student participated in our activities, but no data was collected on him because a signed permission form was never received from his parent/guardian. Of these 22 students there are 2 male students with Emotional Disabilities, 1 male English as a Second Language (ESOL) student, 1 female student with Learning Disabilities (Down's syndrome), and 5 gifted students (SCOPE). In order to implement successful methods for teaching social skills to a diverse group of students,

information was collected from a handful of academic databases about the procedures and methods used in Morning Meeting.

Morning Meeting can be made part of the daily routine in general and special education classrooms to help foster a positive and comfortable environment. The main purpose of this meeting time is to develop a sense of community and make each child feel like an important member of that community. To reach this goal, the researcher engaged a majority of the 5th grade class in morning meeting activities for approximately 30 minutes at least twice a week. The morning meeting process was slightly modified for this 5th grade class due to the fact that there were already certain routines in place when the research began. Their meeting consisted of three steps: greeting, an activity, and a discussion. Greeting time was always kept brief, just a simple “good morning” between the teacher and students. This way, the students had more time to spend on the activity and discussion portions of the meeting. During activities, skills such as teamwork, communication, and listening were worked on. These activities were followed or preceded by discussions on topics such as the impact our actions have on others, staying positive, focusing, being respectful, etc.

Before the study began and as it progressed, student observations were made and field notes were taken on the learning and behavioral traits of each student. Students completed self-evaluations at the beginning and end of the study, as well as a survey at the end of the study in order for the researcher to observe and record any changes/progress. The elementary school in which this study was conducted uses a school wide management plan that incorporates a color-coded behavior system. At the start of each school day, all children are “on green” meaning they are being responsible, respectful, and productive members of the classroom. They will remain

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“on green” throughout the day, unless they exhibit poor behavior (i.e. calling out, talking back, picking on others, destroying class property or the property of others, etc.). If they are asked to change their color once, the student will move their clip to yellow, which is a warning. If the student is asked to move again, they will move their clip to orange and their consequence will be to walk laps at recess, if they move to blue they will fill out a “Stop and Think” form. Lastly, if they move to red they will be sent to the principal’s office. The researcher kept records of how many students were “on green” and the other colors at the end of each school day. It was the researcher’s hope that as social skills instruction progressed more students would consistently be “on green” by the end of each school day. The following Chart was used to take notes on each student and record their overall behavior according to the BPIS plan (see table 1).

Table 1

Used for field notes.

Student #	Male or Female	Notes	BPIS "Color"

The other piece of data collection was the Self-evaluations completed by the students.

One self-evaluation form was completed before social skills instruction began and then one evaluation was completed at the end of the study. The first time students were given the evaluation, I read them the directions, and read each statement aloud to the class. If need be, I clarified what the statement meant and answered any questions that the students' had. The second time they completed the evaluation, they read and filled it out completely on their own, but were

encouraged to ask if they needed any statements clarified. I assisted students that required help. The morning meeting survey at the end of the research study period helped the researcher determine the students' feelings and opinions on morning meeting and what effect they felt it had on the class, as well as themselves. The survey required the students to answer 3 questions about morning meeting. The self-evaluation asked the students to rate themselves based on 18 statements in the following four categories: Quality producer, effective communicator, life-long learner, Responsible Citizen, and Self-Directed Individual. The 4 ratings were based off of the Likert Scale. Students checked off 1 for never, 2 for seldom, 3 for usually, or 4 for always. A copy of the evaluation and short survey are attached in the Appendix.

Data Collection

Prior to the start of my research project, I created a class chart in which I filled in the students' numbers, gender, and notes on each of them regarding their personalities and academic abilities. At the end of the study, I added a section in which I recorded their overall "color" during the study period according to the BPIS Plan.

Student #	Male of Female	Notes	BPIS "Color"
1	Male	<p>Diagnosed: ADHD</p> <p>Very talkative student, he has difficulty staying on task, even for short periods of time.</p> <p>Can be a distraction to the other students.</p> <p>Needs continual reminders about making eye contact, listening and responding appropriately to the teacher.</p> <p>Does okay academically, but struggles to complete and turn in assignments on time.</p>	<p>More often than not, he is on yellow or orange for his actions/behavior.</p>
2	Male	<p>Extremely quiet student. Very shy.</p> <p>Does fairly well academically. Strengths are in reading/ writing. Weakness is in math.</p>	<p>Consistently on green.</p>
3	Male	<p>Kind and respectful student. Gets along well with others.</p> <p>Does well academically (SCOPE).</p>	<p>Consistently on green.</p>
4	Male	<p>BSP student (ED)</p> <p>Can be a kind and respectful student, but has difficulty staying calm and patient when he is struggling or needs help. Sometimes gets along</p>	<p>When he is in the general ed. classroom</p>

		<p>with others, but can be on the defensive if feeling upset or frustrated about something.</p> <p>Needs guidance when it comes to controlling his feelings and actions.</p>	<p>he is usually on green, because if a problem or situation arises he goes to the BSP room.</p>
5	Male	<p>Very kind and respectful student. Shares and gets along well with others. Patient.</p> <p>Does well academically (SCOPE).</p>	Consistently on green.
6	Female	<p>Kind and respectful student. She is very helpful and will try and support other students when working in groups. However, she likes to know what's going on with everyone and on occasion has issues with tattling.</p> <p>Does well academically (SCOPE).</p>	Consistently on green.
7	Male	<p>Usually a respectful student, however on occasion he does not think before he acts. Overall, kind and works fairly well with others.</p> <p>Does okay academically, but struggles with completing/ turning in assignments on time.</p>	<p>On occasion he has been on yellow/orange.</p> <p>He has been put on blue before for his behavior in encore classes.</p>
8	Female	<p>Very sweet, kind, and respectful. Gets along well with others. Always listens and does as she is told.</p> <p>Overall, a very good student.</p>	Consistently on green.
9	Female	<p>This student struggles with how to appropriately handle situations/problems with peers. Has difficulty communicating effectively with others and staying calm. Is not always polite or respectful.</p> <p>Does okay academically, but struggles some.</p>	<p>Sometimes on yellow/orange. If a problem arises usually she is spoken to by me</p>

			or the mentor teacher.
10	Male	<p>This student easily becomes frustrated with himself and has difficulty appropriately handling how he feels. He often becomes angry/flustered and reacts by yelling, whining, or hitting himself. He often has a negative attitude and needs to be encouraged to stay positive, as well as calmed down.</p> <p>Does best with positive, but firm reinforcement.</p> <p>He does decently academically, but has a lot of difficulty completing and turning in assignments on time.</p>	<p>Usually on green.</p> <p>Personally talked to/worked with if struggling.</p>
11	Male	<p>Very Respectful, polite, and well-mannered student. He is kind and works well with others.</p> <p>He does fairly well academically.</p>	Consistently on green.
12	Female	<p>A respectful and kind student. Works well with others. Listens and follows directions.</p> <p>Does pretty well academically.</p>	Consistently on green.
13	Female	<p>A respectful and kind student. Gets along well with others.</p> <p>Does well academically, but struggles to keep up (pace) with the others students. Often worries over her work.</p>	Consistently on green.
14	Male	<p>BSP student (ED)</p> <p>Has trouble staying focused and listening to directions. However, he means well and is respectful and kind.</p>	Consistently on green.
15	Female	<p>Is a kind student and gets along well with others. Respectful. Does not always recognize when it is appropriate to talk or be quiet.</p> <p>Does well academically (SCOPE).</p>	Consistently on green.
16	Female	<p>She is a respectful and kind student.</p> <p>Does pretty well academically, but really struggles with completing and turning in assignments on time.</p>	Consistently on green.

17	Male	He is a kind and respectful student. Gets along well with others. Looses focus on occasion, but does pretty well academically.	Consistently on green.
18	Male	Very respectful and kind student. Gets along very well with others and is patient. Does well academically.	Consistently on green.
19	Male	Is usually respectful, but does not always think before he speaks or acts. Does pretty well academically.	Usually on green, but sometimes he is moved to yellow.
20	Female	Kind and respectful student. Listens and follows directions. Works well with others. Does well academically (SCOPE).	Consistently on green.

At the start of the research period, each of my fifth grade students completed a self-evaluation. The students were asked to consider how well they act and perform as communicators, learners, citizens, and responsible individuals in the classroom and around the school. For each statement, the students ranked themselves as a 1 for never, 2 for seldom, 3 for frequently, and 4 for always. Below are my students' initial opinions of their actions (Appendix A).

How Do You See Yourself?

Directions: Give yourself a 1 for Never; a 2 for Seldom; a 3 for frequently; and a 4 for Always.

Quality Producer	1	2	3	4
I work successfully as a team member.	1 student	1 student	11 students	7 students
I produce quality projects, assignments, and/or performances.	0 students	3 students	3 students	14 students
I use materials effectively and appropriately.	0 students	1 student	1 student	18 students
I meet due dates and turn work in on time.	0 students	5 students	9 students	6 students
I go above and beyond.	1 student	4 students	6 students	9 students

Effective Communicator				
I effectively communicate thoughts and ideas.	0 students	2 students	13 students	5 students
I make positive contributions to lessons/discussions.	0 students	4 students	10 students	6 students
I deal with problems, arguments, or fights in a positive way.	1 student	3 students	11 students	6 students
Life Long Learner				
I know who to ask for help and information.	0 students	1 students	3 students	16 students
I know how to find and use a variety of resources.	0 students	0 students	0 students	20 students
I am flexible and creative when necessary (good problem solver).	1 student	4 students	9 students	6 students
Responsible Citizen				
I demonstrate personal responsibility for attitude, actions, words, and work.	0 students	3 students	10 students	7 students
I follow rules and directions.	0 students	2 students	9 students	9 students
I make positive contributions to the classroom and community.	0 students	3 students	10 students	7 students
I demonstrate respect and understanding for others and myself.	0 students	2 students	4 students	14 students
Self-Directed Individual				
I show maturity and responsibility by making healthy, safe, and wise choices.	0 students	3 students	7 students	10 students
I set goals and follow through with them.	2 students	3 students	13 students	2 students
I start work; stay on task, and complete assignments without being reminded.	1 students	4 students	5 students	10 students

After taking part in the study by participating during morning meeting (20 meetings), which focused on skills including, but not limited to teamwork, effective communication, listening skills, and respect, students evaluated themselves as follows.

Quality Producer	1	2	3	4
I work successfully as a team member.	1 student	0 students	8 students	11 students
I produce quality projects, assignments, and/or	0	0	9	11

performances.	students	students	students	students
I use materials effectively and appropriately.	0 students	1 student	6 students	13 students
I meet due dates and turn work in on time.	0 students	2 students	8 students	10 students
I go above and beyond.	1 student	2 students	10 students	7 students
Effective Communicator				
I effectively communicate thoughts and ideas.	0 students	0 students	11 students	9 students
I make positive contributions to lessons/discussions.	0 students	1 student	12 students	7 students
I deal with problems, arguments, or fights in a positive way.	2 students	1 student	9 students	8 students
Life Long Learner				
I know who to ask for help and information.	0 students	0 student	3 students	17 students
I know how to find and use a variety of resources.	0 students	0 students	4 students	16 students
I am flexible and creative when necessary (good problem solver).	0 students	0 students	9 students	11 students
Responsible Citizen				
I demonstrate personal responsibility for attitude, actions, words, and work.	0 students	3 students	6 students	11 students
I follow rules and directions.	1 student	1 student	9 students	9 students
I make positive contributions to the classroom and community.	0 students	1 student	9 students	9 students
I demonstrate respect and understanding for others and myself.	1 student	1 student	8 students	10 students
Self-Directed Individual				
I show maturity and responsibility by making healthy, safe, and wise choices.	0 students	1 student	7 students	12 students
I set goals and follow through with them.	0 students	1 student	11 students	8 students
I start work; stay on task, and complete assignments without being reminded.	0 students	1 student	9 students	10 students

For the most part, according to the self-evaluations, students felt that they made improvements by positively changing their behaviors and actions. The researcher will further

discuss these changes in the Discussion and Implications section. At the end of the research period, students were also asked to complete a short survey about morning meeting and its impact on them and the class. Below is a chart listing the general responses of the 20 students partaking in the research study.

Question	Response 1: Yes.	Response 2: Somewhat.	Response 3: No.
Do you enjoy taking part in morning meeting?	18 students	2 students	0 students
Do you feel that morning meeting has improved the classroom community?	20 students	0 students	0 students
Has morning meeting made a positive impact on you personally?	9 students	11 students	0 students

Discussion and Implications

I would like to start by reviewing the results of the students' self-evaluations. Taking a look at the first section "Quality Producer," it asked students to reflect on how they work as a team member and if they feel they do their best on schoolwork and assignments. The first survey responses are listed in red and the second survey responses are listed in blue.

Quality Producer	1	2	3	4
I work successfully as a team member.	1 student/ 1 students	1 student/ 0 students	11 students/ 8 students	7 students/ 11 students
I produce quality projects, assignments, and/or performances.	0 students/ 0 students	3 students/ 0 students	3 students/ 9 students	14 students/ 11 students
I use materials effectively and appropriately.	0 students/ 0 students	1 student/ 1 student	1 student/ 6 students	18 students/ 13 students
I meet due dates and turn work in on time.	0 students/ 0 students	5 students/ 2 students	9 students/ 8 students	6 students/ 10 students
I go above and beyond.	1 student/ 1 student	4 students/ 2 students	6 students/ 10 students	9 students/ 7 students

Although this section is more academically based, it can still be observed that there were some improvements in how the students perceived themselves. In the "I use materials effectively and appropriately" and "I go above in beyond" sections, results decreased for some students, which I found interesting. At first, I was a little bit surprised by the result, but it makes sense that after implementing these meetings in which we discuss appropriate behaviors, students would better recognize what is right and expected and whether or not they act that way. For example,

I've found myself saying and asking questions such as "Do we need to have our scissors out right now?" This is often followed by "Then please put them away and stop playing with them. Now is not the appropriate time to have them out." We've also discussed good listening skills on more than one occasion and talked about having good eye contact, focusing, and not fidgeting while someone is speaking. Therefore, students are better able to recognize when they are acting in an appropriate way and when they are not.

Students responded to section two, "Effective Communicator," as follows. Again, first survey responses are in red and their second survey responses are in blue.

Effective communicator	1	2	3	4
I effectively communicate thoughts and ideas.	0 students/ 0 students	2 students/ 0 students	13 students/ 11 students	5 students/ 9 students
I make positive contributions to lessons and discussions.	0 students/ 0 students	4 students/ 1 student	10 students/ 12 students	6 students/ 7 students
I deal with problems, arguments, and fights in a positive way.	1 student/ 2 students	3 students/ 1 student	11 students/ 9 students	6 students/ 8 students

I was pleased to see that the first two sections of this portion of the survey showed student improvements. Effective communication is something that I incorporated into a great deal of our morning meetings. We often practiced skills such as eye contact, listening, responding appropriately, and speaking clearly and calmly. One communication/ listening lesson that I used was the "Lego Game" (Appendix C). We began by reviewing the following concepts- teamwork, collaboration, communication, and concentration. We talked about what they look like and why they are important. Next, I explained that our activity would require us to practice all 4 concepts. The students were divided into pairs. Each pair received a bag of 10-16 blocks.

Then they divided them between one another so that each of them had the same amount. With a divider between them, one partner (Partner A) built something with the blocks. Once Partner A was finished building, he or she was ready to explain how to build the block figure to their partner (Partner B) using only verbal cues. During the entire activity, neither partner was allowed to look at the other one's figure. Once Partner B completed the figure, Partner A looked the figure over to see if there were any mistakes. Then they had the opportunity to reverse the roles. Partner B built the original figure and then explained how to build it to Partner A so that they could attempt to recreate it. Having concluded the activity the students talk about and answered the following questions: What made this activity difficult? What did you do to help your partner build the correct figure? What would you do differently next time? How did you use teamwork, concentration, communication, and collaboration during this activity? My students really enjoyed this lesson. It was clear to see once we started that they really understood what it takes to work well with someone else and communicate effectively.

Another great game we played to work on these skills was the "Communication Game." Before we began the game, we discussed what good communication looks like and why it's important. Then I had the students make a circle around the room and I explained the directions. One student would start with the ball, they would decide who they wanted to pass to, say that person's name, make eye contact with them, and then pass the ball. The next student would do the same and so on and so forth until everyone had the ball once. Then I explained that this would be our pattern and we practiced again. Next, I told the students that as we passed the ball, we would try and pick up the pace, and eventually, we would add in more balls so that more than one person was making a pass at a time. Before we began again, I asked the kids what we would need to do in order to get to that point- they responded appropriately sharing ideas such as stay

focused, make eye contact, no goofing off, say the person's name clearly, etc. The students' did all right with activity, although it was difficult for some of them to stay focused. However, they truly loved it and even request to play the "Communication Game" during recess now.

The next section of the survey focused on how students can help themselves be a better learner and problem solver. The problem solving section was where I was really looking to see improvements. Before morning meeting and behavioral lessons were implemented on a regular basis, students responded as follows: One student stated that they were never a flexible or a good problem solver, 4 students stated that they were not often a good problem solver, 9 students recorded that they are usually a good problem solver, and 6 students stated that they always are good problem solvers. At the end of the study it appears that students felt that their ability to be flexible and problem solve improved. Zero students stated that they were never or seldom problem solvers, 9 students stated that they usually are, and 11 students stated that they are always flexible, good problem solvers.

Life Long Learner				
I know who to ask for help and information.	0 students/0 students	1 students/ 0 students	3 students/ 3 students	16 students/ 17 students
I know how to find and use a variety of resources.	0 students/0 students	0 students/ 0 students	3 students/ 4 students	17 students/ 16 students
I am flexible and creative when necessary (good problem solver).	1 student/ 0 students	4 students/0 students	9 students/9 students	6 students/11 students

In the next section, students had to reflect on how they feel as responsible citizens of their school and classroom. During morning meeting we discussed responsibility for our words, actions, and attitude. For example, one lesson I taught was on making a positive impact on their

peers, their school, the community, and the world. After our greeting, I read the students "One" by Kathryn Otoshi. It is a very simple book that discusses some very big and important concepts including acceptance, tolerance, and what it means to stand up, make a difference, and count. After reading the story, we discussed the meaning and lesson behind it and the students came up with ideas on how they can make a difference. They came up with many ideas including giving someone a compliment, donating money and food to the homeless or other charities, and helping their classmates when they don't understand an assignment. Then students were given the writing prompt: What can you do to stand up, make a difference, and have a positive impact in your classroom, school, community, or the world?

In all of my lessons I incorporated the importance of listening, following directions, and being respectful by constantly demonstrating my expectations and holding my students to a specific standard. When students fell short of my expectations, I spoke with them individually and addressed the skills they were lacking such as making eye contact and responding appropriately when asked to do something. I would have them practice the skill as I spoke to them and remind them why it's important. I was pleased to see that for the most part, students felt that for them, these skills had improved. For students that did not improve, or responded more negatively, I think that now they have a better understanding of what these skills are and realize whether they hold themselves to these expectations or not. I believe that it is helping them become more self-aware and think about how they can improve and be better.

Responsible Citizen				
I demonstrate personal responsibility for attitude, actions, words, and work.	0 students/0 students	3 students/ 3 students	10 students/ 6 students	7 students/ 11 students

I follow rules and directions.	0 students/ 1 student	2 students/ 1 student	9 students/ 9 students	9 students/ 9 students
I make positive contributions to the classroom and community.	0 students/ 0 students	3 students/ 1 student	10 students/ 9 students	7 students/ 9 students
I demonstrate respect and understanding for others and myself.	0 students/ 1 student	2 students/ 1 student	4 students/ 8 students	14 students/ 10 students

The last section, "Self-Directed Individual" focused on acting maturely and being a focused independent individual. Students appear to feel like they have shown improvements. This could be partially due to my study and our discussions, but they are also going to be 6th graders soon and going to middle school. Therefore, many of them are realizing and recognizing the changes ahead and what they will have to do to succeed next year.

Self-Directed Individual				
I show maturity and responsibility by making healthy, safe, and wise choices.	0 students/ 0 students	3 students/ 1 students	7 students/ 7 students	10 students/ 12 students
I set goals and follow through with them.	2 students/ 0 students	3 students/ 1 students	13 students/ 11 students	2 students/ 8 students
I start work, stay on task, and complete assignments without being reminded.	1 students/ 0 students	4 students/ 1 student	5 students/ 9 students	10 students/ 10 students

Based off of the responses to the survey, it seems that students enjoyed our morning meetings and feel that it has improved the class community. I feel that the activities I had my 5th

graders take part in encouraged them to truly focus on teamwork and respect, which can build trust among them. The questions and some responses on the survey included:

Do you enjoy taking part in morning meeting?

"Yes, morning meeting is fun. Sometimes we get to play games like the communication game!"

"Yes, we get to do fun activities and learn how to be better people."

"Yeah, Miss G. brings life to our class and never teaches anything blandly."

18/20 students responded, "Yes" to this question. 2/20 student's responded

"sometimes/somewhat."

Do you feel that morning meeting has improved the classroom community?

"Yeah, we all work together during morning meeting and talk about how to be more responsible."

"Yes, we all try to be nicer to each other and help our classmates."

20/20 students responded, "Yes" to this question.

Has morning meeting made a positive impact on you personally?

"Yes, it's taught me to try and be a better, nicer person."

9/20 students responded, "Yes" to this question. 11/20 students responded "somewhat."

Overall, I believe that morning meeting has had a positive impact on my class and the students. When I have my very own classroom, I would like to implement this in order to help establish and create a positive, comfortable classroom environment. I believe that Morning meeting could have a greater impact if made part of the daily schedule and completed every day. Unfortunately, as originally planned for my research, I was not able to implement it every morning. I was always able to hold a meeting on Mondays and Thursdays and on occasion could

on Tuesdays, but due to word study and the DARE program, we did not always have the time to incorporate our meetings into the daily schedule.

Appendix A

How Do You See Yourself?

Directions: Give yourself a 1 for Never; a 2 for Seldom; a 3 for frequently; and a 4 for Always.

Quality Producer	1	2	3	4
I work successfully as a team member.				
I produce quality projects, assignments, and/or performances.				
I use materials effectively and appropriately.				
I meet due dates and turn work in on time.				
I go above and beyond.				
Effective Communicator				
I effectively communicate thoughts and ideas.				
I make positive contributions to lessons/discussions.				
I deal with problems, arguments, or fights in a positive way.				
Life Long Learner				
I know who to ask for help and information.				
I know how to find and use a variety of resources.				
I am flexible and creative when necessary (good problem solver).				
Responsible Citizen				
I demonstrate personal responsibility for attitude, actions, words, and work.				
I follow rules and directions.				
I make positive contributions to the classroom and community.				
I demonstrate respect and understanding for others and myself.				
Self-Directed Individual				
I show maturity and responsibility by making healthy, safe, and wise choices.				
I set goals and follow through with them.				
I start work, stay on task, and complete assignments without being reminded.				

Appendix B

Survey: Morning Meeting and Socio Drama

1. Do you enjoy taking part in Morning Meeting? Why or Why not?
2. Do you feel that Morning Meeting has improved our class community/helped to create a more comfortable, positive atmosphere?
3. Has Morning Meeting made a positive impact on you personally?

Appendix C

Lego Game Lesson Plan

Objectives:

Students will know what good communication, collaboration, concentration and team work looks like and how they can successfully practice these skills.

Students will understand the importance of working as a team, sharing, being respectful, and speaking clearly, calmly, and confidently.

Students will be able to practice these important social skills while playing a game.

Procedures:

1. Gain the classes attention and begin the lesson by discussing the following four concepts: teamwork, collaboration, communication, and concentration. Discuss what they look like and why they are important.
2. Then explain to the students that they are going to participate in an activity that requires them to practice all 4 concepts.
3. Divide students into pairs and give them a bag of 10-16 blocks.
4. Instruct students to divide their blocks up equally between one another.
5. Pass out a divider to each pair and instruct them to put it up in between one another.
6. Then explain the directions-With a divider between them, one partner (Partner A) builds something with the blocks. Once Partner A is finished building, he or she will explain how to build the block figure to their partner (Partner B) using only verbal cues. Neither partner is allowed to look at the other one's figure. When Partner B completes the figure, then Partner A can look the figure over to see if there are any mistakes. Then they can reverse the roles- Partner B will build the

original figure and then explain how to build it to Partner A so that they can attempt to recreate it.

7. As students work, observe how they are doing, answer any questions, and assist any pairs that need extra guidance.
8. As the activity begins to come to an end, explain that once partners have had an opportunity to build and explain a figure, they will debrief (Worksheets with the following questions: What made this activity difficult? What did you do to help your partner build the correct figure? What would you do differently next time? How did you use teamwork, concentration, communication, and collaboration during this activity?)
9. Explain that they need to discuss and record their ideas, then hand in their worksheet.
10. After all students complete the activity, discuss their answers to each of the questions as a whole class.

Materials:

-Dividers

-12 bags of 10-16 blocks

-pencils

-Worksheets

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