

IMPROVING SOCIAL SKILLS IN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS  
THROUGH CLASSROOM MEETINGS

Kira Fetissoff, B.A.  
Jeannie Kry, B.S.  
Aryn Skilling, B.A.

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## ABSTRACT

In the action research project report the teacher researchers targeted 70 elementary students in third- and fifth-grade classrooms that demonstrated a lack of social skills necessary to work cooperatively in a classroom. The purpose of the project was to improve the social skills in children. The three teacher researchers who conducted this action research project taught at two different schools. One was a fifth-grade teacher and one was an art teacher at Site A, while the third teacher taught third grade in a bilingual program at Site B. The study was conducted February 11, 2008 through May 16, 2008.

In order to document poor social skills, the teacher researchers utilized three data collection tools: a parent survey, a teacher survey, and a student survey. The surveys were distributed, completed, and returned between the dates of February 11, 2008 and February 18, 2008. Data was also collected through the use of an observation checklist. The data revealed that students demonstrated a lack of respect, responsibility, cooperation, empathy, and self-control. The teacher researchers found that both teachers and parents agreed there was a common thread through the home and school, which was that the children were lacking the necessary social skills to successfully work cooperatively with others.

The teacher researchers used intervention activities from the book, *Tribes*, and classroom meetings. Each activity was designed to promote a specific social skill. The targeted five social skills were respect, cooperation, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. The teacher researchers chose two activities per social skill to focus on every two weeks during the 10 weeks of intervention strategies.

Although the students did seem to exhibit a higher level of confidence while participating in the activities, the teacher researchers did not notice a marked improvement in the students' social skills. The teacher researchers perceived a lower atmosphere of peer pressure allowing the students to enjoy the activities and feel more open to respond appropriately. Even though the students learned about respect, cooperation, responsibility, empathy, and self-control the teacher researchers did not feel that the children had enough time to be deeply impacted by the activities. The teacher researchers attribute this lack of success to the time of year that the project was implemented and feel that it would be much more successful if implemented at the start of the school year.

## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

#### General Statement of the Problem

The targeted elementary students demonstrated a lack of social skills necessary to work cooperatively in a classroom. The students demonstrated a lack of respect, responsibility, cooperation, empathy, and self-control. The teacher researchers distributed teacher, parent, and student surveys and used an observation checklist to record the behaviors of the students to establish evidence of the problem.

#### Immediate Context of the Problem

The three teacher researchers who conducted this action research project taught at two different schools. Two of the teachers taught at Site A; one was a fifth grade teacher and one was an art teacher. The teacher at Site B taught third grade in a bilingual program.

#### Site A

Two of the three teacher researchers conducted this study in an elementary school located in a mid-size city in southern Wisconsin. All of the information in this section was found in the Wisconsin's Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) 2006 on the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website unless otherwise noted. Based on WINSS 2006, with a total of 332 students, the female population of students of Site A was 49.7% (n=165), and the male population was 50.3% (n=167). The number of low-income students was just over half (n=167) of the student population. Low income students received a free or reduced lunch and breakfast. The attendance rate was 95.5% (n=317) with a truancy rate of zero. The annual residential turnover in the city where Site A is located was approximately 18.27% (n=3387) of the total population which was 18,536. Table 1 below shows that the majority of the students at

Site A were Caucasian. Although 40.7% (n=135) of the students were Hispanic, only 26% (n=86) were English language learners.

Table 1

*Racial/Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment by Percent*

<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>American Indian</u>
55.7	40.7	2.7	0.6	0.3

The teacher to student ratio for Site A was 12.6 to 1. A total of 28 teachers were employed at the elementary school in 2006. This number includes three part-time music, art, and physical education teachers. The teaching staff included 25 (90%) females and 3(10%) males. The Caucasian population was 26 (92%) and the Hispanic population was 2 (8%). In the school district the average of total teaching experience was 10.80 years. The average local teaching experience was 8.24 years. Of the 143 full-time teachers in the Site A school district, 45.5% (n=65) of the teachers have received their Master's degree or higher. Teacher financial earnings were as high as \$60,069 and as low as \$31,512 in the district.

The Site A elementary school academic program follows the allocated instructional minutes recommended by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Table 2 below shows the time allocated for each subject for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders per week. The students researched in this study came from a bilingual 3<sup>rd</sup> and a general 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. Students from a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade art class were also studied. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction allocates 90 minutes of art for 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Table 2

*Allocated Instructional Minutes for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Graders*

	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Grade</u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup> Grade</u>
Reading/English Language Arts	600	500
Mathematics	250	250
Social Studies	175	225
Science	150	175
Health	100	125
Physical Education	150	150
Art	90	90
Music	75	75
Total Minutes	1590	1590

The 2006 Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) scores for Site A were low compared to the district average and compared to the state average (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2007). Fortunately, the test scores have been steadily increasing from year to year. Table 3 below shows the 2006 fourth grade results for reading and math.

Table 3

*2006 Fourth Grade WKCE Test Results*

	<u>Site A</u>		<u>Site A District</u>		<u>State</u>	
	<u>Proficient</u>	<u>Advanced</u>	<u>Proficient</u>	<u>Advanced</u>	<u>Proficient</u>	<u>Advanced</u>
Reading	38	20	42	31	40	41
Mathematics	40	9	45	35	42	35

In 2006-2007, there was one principal at Site A. The school also had 28 general education teachers, one special education teacher, and one English as a Second Language teacher. Along with the general education teachers there were also many specialized teachers. The special teachers included one reading teacher, one keyboarding teacher, one guidance counselor, one art teacher, one physical education teacher, one music teacher, one librarian, one psychologist, and one speech teacher. Each of these specialists was considered part time because they spilt their time between two schools. Site A had one secretary and nine other non-certified staff members. These included five teacher aides, one lunch aide, one technical support aide, and two custodians.

Site A was home to the district's bilingual program. This program was available for Hispanic children in grades kindergarten through third. Site A is part of the national SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education) program for grades kindergarten through third grade. According to this program, the kindergarten through third grade classrooms cannot exceed 15 students. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes, not affected by SAGE, had an average of 23 students in each room. The school's one session of four-year-old kindergarten had an average of 15 students in the morning and afternoon sessions.

In 1972, an addition was added to the original Site A school, which was built in 1951. The school is a brick two story with linear design. The gymnasium, custodial office, computer room, library, teachers' lounge and work area, and the shared music/art room are located on the lower level, along with the three 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, three 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, and two 5<sup>th</sup> grades. The school's office, health room, and multi-purpose room, which also serve as the lunchroom and drama area, were located on the upper level. The four-year-old kindergarten class, the three five-year-old kindergarten classes, the three 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes, and the two 4<sup>th</sup> grades were also on the upper

level. This site included new playground equipment, swings, a baseball diamond, and five basketball hoops.

One unique attribute about Site A was its small size compared to the other elementary schools in the district. It had a very small teacher turnover rate. This school also hosted an early morning reading program, which linked community members with struggling readers in an effort to increase reading achievement. After school tutoring, SAIL (Student Achievement in Learning), was also implemented last year. Site A's PTO was extremely active. They did numerous fund-raiser activities throughout the year. Some of their proceeds have funded such activities as Family Fun Night, Pillow and a Movie Night, Dr. Seuss' Green Eggs and Ham Breakfast, The Fall Festival, Teacher Appreciation Breakfast, and the purchase of a rock climbing wall for the gymnasium.

### Site B

The third teacher researcher, a bilingual teacher, taught at Site B. Site B was an elementary school located in an urban fringe of a large city in the southeast corner of Wisconsin. The total student population of the kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade school was 753, 52.1% (n=392) boys and 47.9% (n=361) girls. Site B population was divided among African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students as seen in Table 2 below.

Table 4

### *Racial/Ethical Background by Percent of Site B*

<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Native Indian</u>	<u>Asian</u>
49.6	27.6	22.7	0	0

The percent breakdown of the ELL students was 36.1% (n=272) Spanish speakers, 62.4% (n=470) English proficient, and 1.5% (n=113) other language speakers. The percentage of the total student body that qualified for free or reduced-price lunches at Site B was 72.87% (n=549). Approximately 93% (n=700) of the student body attended school regularly, although 19% (n=143) had chronic truancy issues (Department of Public Instruction WINSS Successful School Guide, n. d.). Out of the faculty of 77 teachers, 6 (n=8%) were male and 71 (n=92%) were female, with the majority being Caucasian.

The average teaching salary in the district was \$48, 505. The average years of local teaching experience was 10.68 years and the average years of total teaching experience was 12.03 (DPI, WINSS Successful School Guide, n. d.). Of the teaching staff in the district, 19.7% held a Bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d., *Annual Estimates of the Population for Counties: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006*). The average class size was 19.1 students grades K-3 and 22.7 students grades 4-5.

The academic program consisted of the core subjects: mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies. For certain grade levels, there was more music and art time because of a state grant. Refer to Table 5 below.

Table 5

*Allocated Instructional Minutes for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Graders*

	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Grade</u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup> Grade</u>
Reading/English Language Arts	600	500
Mathematics	250	250
Social Studies	175	225
Science	150	175
Health	100	125
Physical Education	150	150
Art	90	90
Music	75	75
Total Minutes	1590	1590

Site B also offered a Dual Language/Immersion Program which was a method of instruction in which the regular school curriculum was taught primarily in Spanish in lower grades, and in English and Spanish at the intermediate level. The present Dual Language Immersion model employed Spanish and English for instruction, and adhered to the state's high expectations and standards for all students. It was an Additive/Enrichment Bilingual model in that it encouraged the development of language and academic skills in the students' first and second language.

There were two profiles of students in the Dual Language Program. One profile was the native English-speaking student who wanted to learn Spanish and was immersed in a Spanish-speaking environment for his/her content instruction. The other profile was the native Spanish-speaking student who was learning English as a second language while learning the content in his/her native language. Through progressive steps, students developed the skills of listening, speaking,

reading, and writing in both Spanish and English. This was accomplished through a Dual Language/Immersion Program for students, which emphasized the acquisition of a second language, high academic standards, cooperation with others, and the appreciation of each individual's uniqueness (Site B Unified School District, n. d.).

The 2006 Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) scores for Site B have gone slightly up and are higher in math than both the district and the state average (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2006). Fortunately, the reading test scores have been steadily increasing from year to year. Table 6 below shows the 2006 fourth grade results for reading and math.

Table 6

*2006 Fourth Grade WKCE Test Results*

	<u>Site B</u>		<u>Site B District</u>		<u>State</u>	
	<u>Proficient</u>	<u>Advanced</u>	<u>Proficient</u>	<u>Advanced</u>	<u>Proficient</u>	<u>Advanced</u>
Reading	38	22	42	38	40	41
Mathematics	47	17	46	29	42	35

The administrative staff at Site B included one principal, one assistant principal, and two secretaries. There was also one part-time nurse, one health information clerk, one full-time and one part-time social worker, one full-time and one part-time school psychologist, one full-time and one part-time counselor, three speech pathologists, four special education teachers, two special education aides, one library media center teacher, one part-time library media center aide, two literacy teachers, one full-time and one-half time physical education teacher, two art teachers, two music teachers, one ESL teacher, one resource teacher, one math resource teacher, and two band/orchestra teachers. There were also four lunchroom aides who were there for

breakfast and lunch. Additionally, the school had one daytime custodian with an aide and four evening custodians, for a total of 43 faculty and staff.

Based upon the teacher researcher's experience at Site B the following information was provided. Site B was known for its multitude of instructional models. There were currently five models in operation. They were Dual Language, Fine Arts, Early Childhood, HeadStart [*sic*], and EvenStart [*sic*]. They also used the Houghton Mifflin reading series and were a Title I school. Site B was also known throughout the district and state for its art and music programs. Site B opened three years ago when two schools combined as a way to save the district money.

Site B was a two-story building, with three pods containing 43 classrooms, four-year-old kindergarten through fifth grade. The office was located to the right of the main entry. The principal and assistant principal's offices were located in the main office, along with the nurse's office, and the four resource/literacy teachers' offices. The gymnasium was on the first floor in the middle of the building with the multipurpose room directly in front of it, which was also to the left of the office. The library media center was located on the opposite side of the building from the office. The custodian's office was to the left of the main entry, through the cafeteria and through the library media center. The art rooms were on the second floor by the third grade wing. The music rooms were located on the second floor by the fourth and fifth grade wing on the opposite end of the building from the office. There was one large playground with a small set of climbing equipment. The playground consisted of a grassy field, blacktop for basketball with two basketball hoops, and different types of games painted on the blacktop for the children to use.

### Local Context of the Problem

The three teacher researchers taught at two different sites with different demographics, causing the researchers to report each site separately. The following delineates the demographics of these settings.

#### Site A

The Site A research school was located in southeast Wisconsin close to the Illinois border. The city where the Site A research school was located had a total population of 7,148 according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The community had seen a slight increase in population between 2005 and 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Population for Counties: April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000 to July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006). The majority of the population was Caucasian with an average of 90.8% (n=6490). About 15% (n=1072) of the population was Hispanic. The median age in the Site A research city was 36.5 years of age. The median household income in the research city was \$40,924 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The percentage of families below poverty level was 4.7% (n=87) in 1999 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In the Site A community, 83.2% (n=4,099) had graduated from high school and 25.1% (n=1,235) had received a Bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The average household size in Site A was 2.33, which was slightly lower than the United States average of 2.5 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The employment rate was 70.0% (n=4,040) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Most of the people in the community worked in the manufacturing industry. Other top industries were educational, health and social services, arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Property crime levels in Site A tended to be higher than Wisconsin's average level. The same data showed violent crime levels in the community tended to be lower than Wisconsin's average level (Idcide, n.d.).

The community where Site A was located was established in 1837 (Site A Chamber of Commerce, n.d., *A Brief History*). The community was known for many attractions along the lake and the lake path. Residents and tourists enjoyed boating, hiking, golfing, and visiting specialty shops and galleries. The beautiful lake and seasonal festivals made the community a place of tourism (Site A Chamber of Commerce, n.d., *A Brief History*).

The Site A school was part of a unique two part school district that shared a superintendent. The three elementary schools and the one middle school shared a district. The high school was in another district, and had four other feeder schools. Both districts shared the same mission statement. The mission statement was as follows: “Honoring the unique talents of all, WE [*sic*], the Site A [*sic*] schools, families, and communities commit to providing EVERY [*sic*], student an excellent education that ensures the development of responsible respectful citizens and inspires life-long learning” (Site A School District Website n.d.).

A recent referendum was passed in 2006. Voters living in the Site A high school district decided to spend \$12 million to add 23 new classrooms, new space for the visual arts, a new wrestling room, a remodeled fitness room, and new roofing (Site A Newspaper, October 26, 2006). In January 1999, an \$18 million addition was completed that included remodeling of classrooms and administration area, added teaching space, a new library media center, six science labs, a technology center, a sports center, and guidance offices. Computers, televisions, and VCRs were added to every room. This construction nearly doubled the size of the school (Site A School District Website n.d.). A \$4.6 million referendum was passed in April of 2003 to improve the performing arts center and family and consumer education areas (Site A School District Website n.d.). The most recent tax rate for this district was \$3.98 per \$1000 of assessed value (Site A Newspaper, October 26, 2006).

The tax rate for the Site A school district was \$4.59 for every \$1,000 of assessed valuation. (Site A Newspaper, October 26, 2006). Voters in the Site A elementary and middle school district decided to approve a \$7 million referendum to add 37,500 square feet to one of the elementary schools, which include 20 new classrooms, an expanded library, space for music and art, and a full-service kitchen. These improvements were necessary due to the growing population of the community (Site A city newspaper, October 26, 2006).

Site A had a computer laboratory with 26 computers, and a library media center with seven computers. Each K-5 classroom had a total of 45 computers. Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade had two to four computers in each classroom. The 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades had five to six computers in each classroom.

#### Site B

Site B was located on Lake Michigan, approximately 30 miles from Milwaukee and 60 miles from Chicago. In 2005, the community had an estimated population of 95,440 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005, *American Community Survey*) and had grown by 5% in the first five years of this decade. Site B's community was 84% (n=80,170) Caucasian. The population also consisted of 8% (n=7,635) African Americans, 1% (n=954) Asian, and 7% (n=6,681) of the population identified themselves as other or mixed (IDcide, n.d.). There were approximately 7,008 foreign-born citizens living in the Site B school district. In this community, 85.7% (n=81,792) of adults earned a high school diploma while an additional 19.7% (n=18,802) received a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005, *American Community Survey*).

Of the approximate 95,000 people, 23,229 (n=24%) owned homes with a median value of \$149,000. The average income for Site B residents was \$41,902 (IDcide, n.d.) with an estimated

household size of 2.64 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005, *American Community Survey*). The U.S. Census Bureau stated that 68.7% (n= 49,705) of people 16 years and older were in the labor force. The top projected employment fields for 2008 were service related and manufacturing, while agriculture, fishing, and forestry occupations comprised the least amount (Site B County Website, n.d.). Site B's property and violent crime rates were approximately the same as the state's average level (IDcide, n.d.).

Site B was a diverse community with a rich history. The area boasted four nationally registered historic districts, a Site B History Center, art galleries, museums, and theaters. The community offered classes and workshops at local colleges, museums, art galleries, and theater groups (Site B County Website, n.d.). Site B offered many family-friendly outdoor activities (e.g., golfing, biking, fishing, boating, skiing, hiking, and much more). This city also had a minor league baseball and semi-pro football team (Site B County Website, n.d.) with an efficient trolley system to get people from place to place. In 1997, a delinquent industrial land site was turned into a visitor center with a promenade, public gathering place, an upscale residential neighborhood, and other visitor attractions (Site B Improvement Website, n.d.). The Site B school district had one superintendent, 24 elementary schools, six middle schools, one 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade charter school academy, four high schools, two high school charter schools, one high school Technology Academy, one special education center, three elementary charter schools, and a Head Start Child Development Center. This district was the third largest school district in the state. The mission statement of Site B school district was as follows:

The mission of Site B [sic] School District, an educational system which values our multicultural heritage, is to empower all students to reach their unique capabilities, contribute to our community, and compete in a global society by providing diverse

and challenging opportunities to learn through the collaborative efforts of students, families, community and staff. (Site B School District Website, n.d.)

To accomplish the district goals, the school's tax rate for the district was \$8.34 per \$1000 (Site B School District Website, n.d.). Due to the 40% increase in school population in the last 15 years, the school district passed a referendum in 2005 that included the building of a new elementary school, and the improvement of two high school physical education facilities and athletic fields (Site B School District Website, n.d., School Referendum). The targeted school had approximately 60 computers in two computer classrooms, and each of the 43 classrooms had between two and five computers. Each teacher in the district was issued a laptop computer for school use (based upon teacher researcher's observations).

#### National Context of the Problem

According to literature, the social skills of elementary students have declined (Beland, 2007; Elias & Weissberg, 2003; Utay & Utay, 2005). A person's ability to work cooperatively, be responsible and respected, have self-control, and possess empathy are considered valuable social skills that are not being taught and practiced in school (Denham, Hatfield, Smethurst, Tan, & Tribe, 2006; Johnson, Poliner, & Bonaiuto, 2005). Also, literature states that listening to others and cooperating, participating in a group, and managing emotions are all skills that need to be taught but students are not coming to class with these necessary skills (Johnson et al., 2005; Denham et al., 2006; Elias & Weissberg, 2003; Meier, DiPerna, & Oster, 2006; Schneider, 1996).

## CHAPTER 2

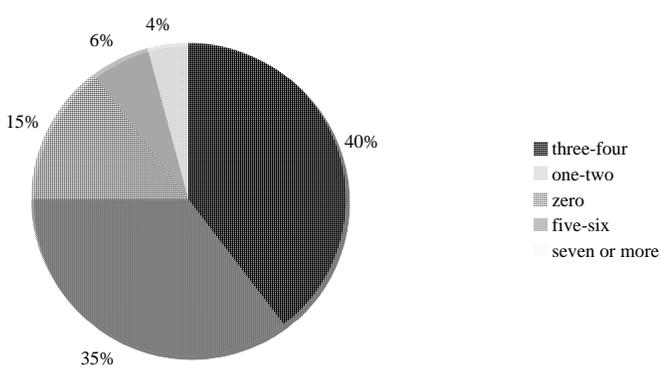
### PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

#### Evidence of the Problem

The purpose of the project was to improve the social skills in children. In order to document poor social skills, the teacher researchers utilized three data collection tools: a parent survey, a teacher survey, and a student survey. The surveys were distributed, completed and returned between the dates of February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 and February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Data was also collected through the use of an observation checklist. The student surveys were distributed to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at Site A, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students at Site B, for a total of 70 students.

Parent Survey

The parent survey was administered the week of February 11, 2008 to gain the parents' perspectives on their child's behavior during a typical week at home. The survey contained six questions concerning their child's behavior at home. The surveys were returned to the researchers' mailboxes in sealed envelopes during the week of February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 with 48 (69%) surveys being returned (Appendix A). On the parent survey parents were to rate their child's behaviors at home during a typical week using a Likert scale 0-7. The first question asked how many times a week their child forgot to do their chores. Of the choices given, 36 (75%) parents responded that their child forgot to do their chores 1-4 times a week (Figure 1).



*Figure 1: Forgetting Chores (n=48)*

Question 2 asked, “How often does your child say hurtful things to others?” Of the 48 parents who responded, 39 (81%) stated their child said hurtful things 0-2 times a week (Figure 2).

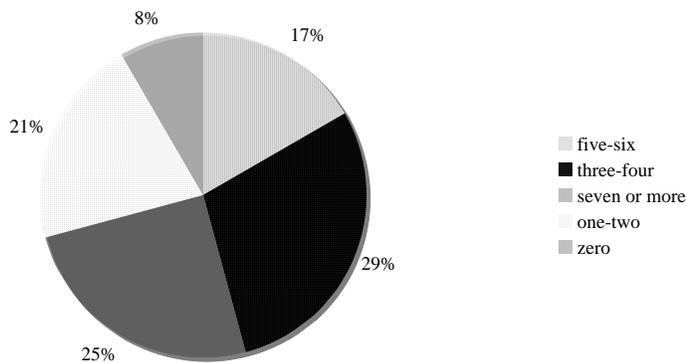


Figure 2: Times Hurtful Things were Said at Home (n=48)

In response to Question 3, 22 (46%) of the parents surveyed said their child talked back and argued at home 3-4 times a week, while 12 (25%) responded their child exhibited this behavior 7 or more times during the week (Figure 3).

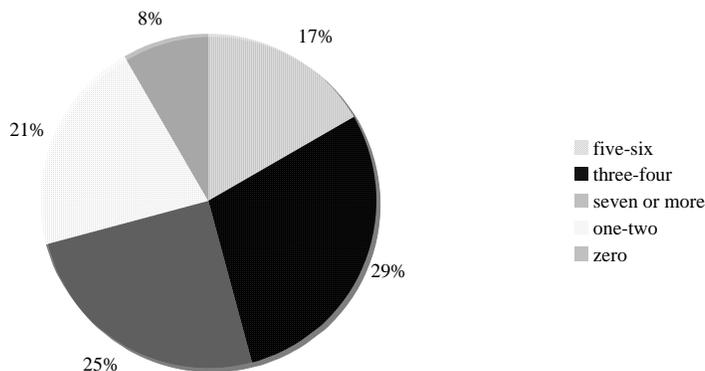


Figure 3: Times Child Talked Back or Argued at Home (n=48)

When asked, “How often does your child help others at home?” in Question 4, 20 (42%) of the parents responded that they note this behavior 5-6 times a week, while 15 (31%) said it happens 3-4 times a week (Figure 4).

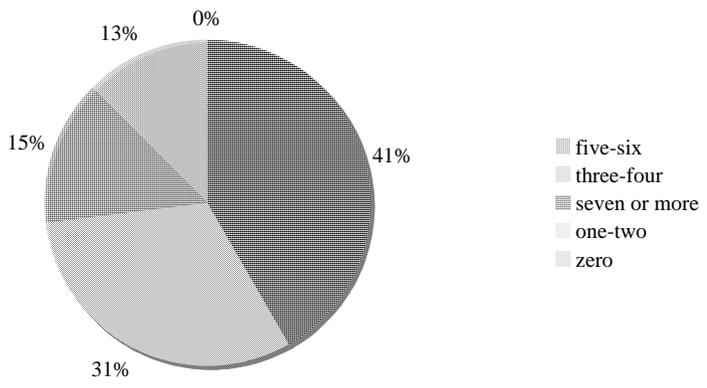


Figure 4: How Often Child Helped Out at Home (n=48)

Twenty parents (n=42%) indicated in their response to Question 5, that their child interrupted others 7 or more times a week (Figure 5).

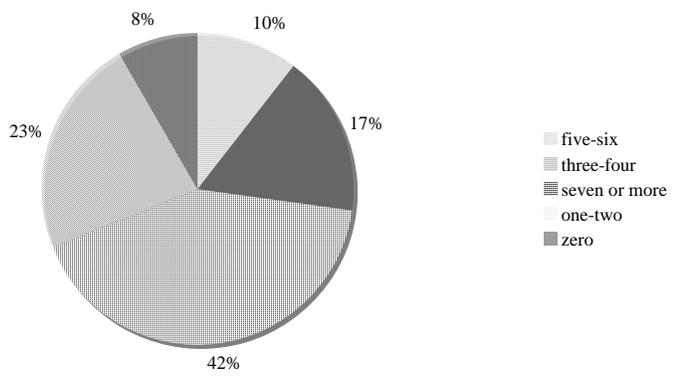
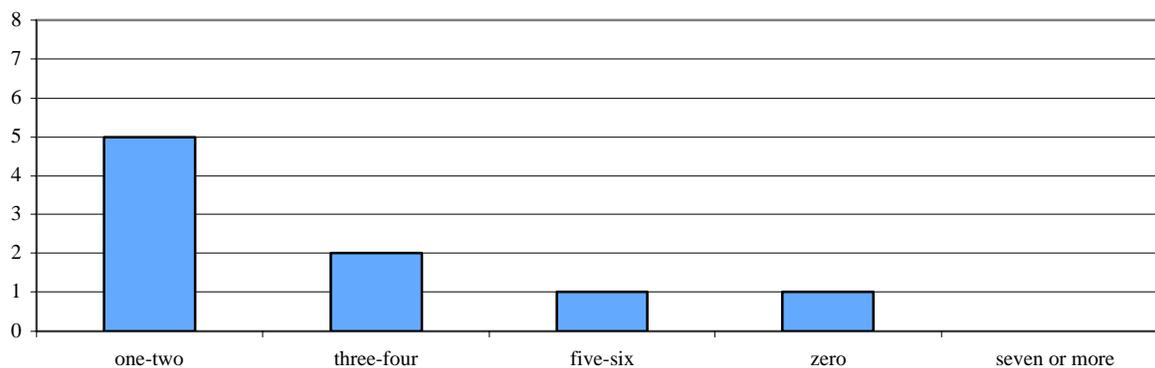


Figure 5: Interruptions at Home (n=48)

In Question 6, most parents wanted their child to improve their social skills by interrupting others less and by not arguing at home. Parents are also concerned about the lack of respect children exhibit at home.

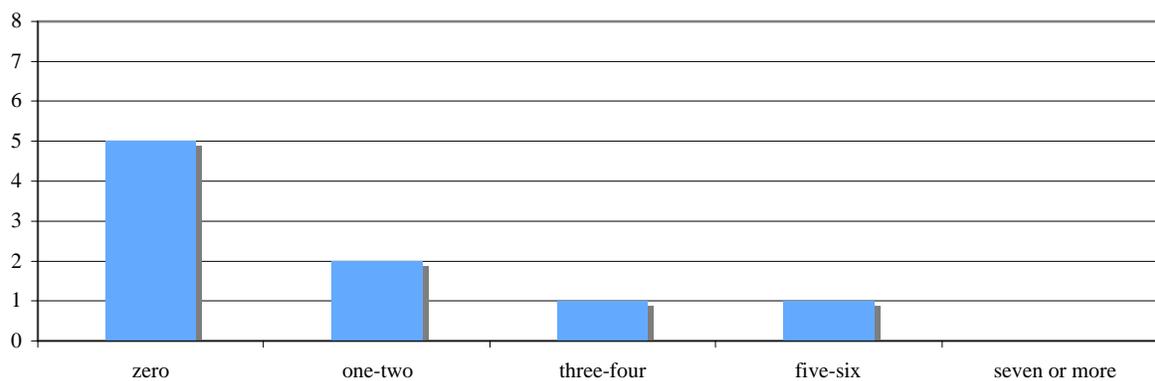
### Teacher Survey

The teacher survey was administered the week of February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to gain the art, music, and physical education teachers' perspectives on the student's behavior. The survey contained six questions concerning student behavior in their classroom. The surveys were returned to the researchers' mailboxes in sealed envelopes during the week of February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 with 9 (100%) surveys being returned (Appendix B). On the teacher survey teachers were to rate their student's behaviors during a typical week using a Likert scale 0-7. The first question asked to what extent did their children not complete an assignment or activity. Of the choices given, five (55%) teachers felt that their students did not complete an activity 1-2 times a week, while two (22%) felt that this behavior happened 3-4 times a week (Figure 6).



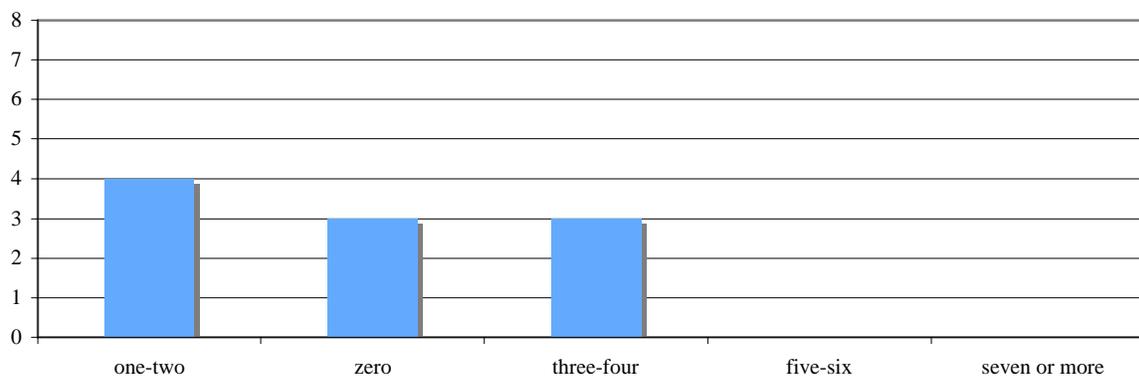
*Figure 6: Teacher Responses to Number of Incomplete Activities or Assignments (n=9)*

Question 2 asked, “How often does your class say hurtful things to each other?” Of those surveyed, five (55%) teachers felt that most of their students did not say hurtful things to one another, with two (22%) saying this happened 1-2 times a week (Figure 7).



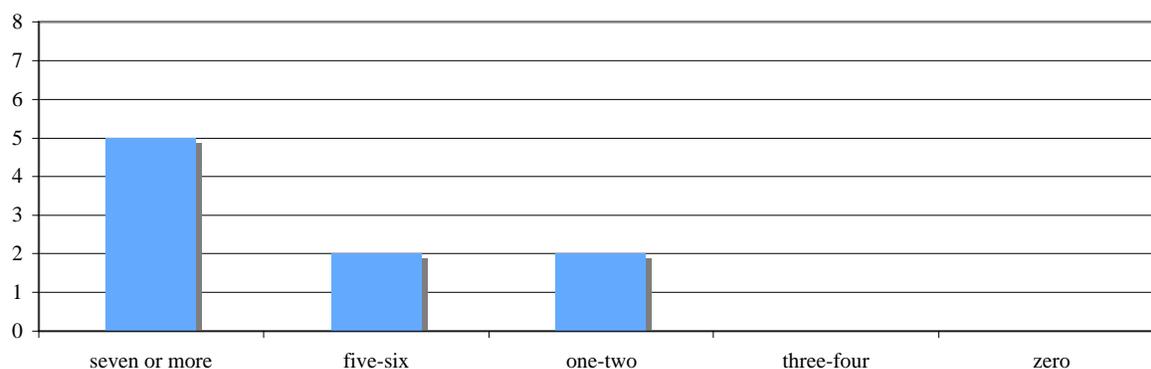
*Figure 7: Times Hurtful Things were Said at School (n=9)*

Question 3 asked the teacher if their students talked back or argued with others in the classroom. Of the nine responding teachers, four (44%) responded that this behavior occurred 1-2 times a week, and three teachers (33%) responded that this behavior did not happen in their classroom (Figure 8).



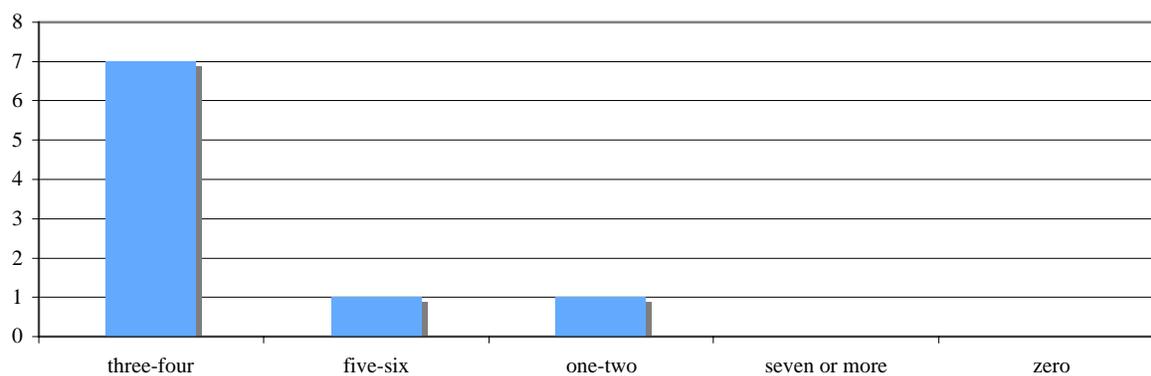
*Figure 8: Times Class Talked Back or Argued (n=9)*

In attempting to determine how often students helped each other in the classroom 5 (55%) teachers determined that overall the students were very helpful (Figure 9).



*Figure 9: How Often Children Helped Out in the Classroom (n=9)*

Question five asked teachers to what extent they felt children interrupted others when they were speaking. An overwhelming majority, 7 (77%) teachers felt this behavior occurred 3-4 times a week (Figure 10).



*Figure 10: Interruptions During Class (n=9)*

When asked what improvements the teachers would like to see in their class an overwhelming majority wanted to see their class exhibit better listening skills and show more respect for each other. In addition to this, teachers would like the children to take responsibility for their own actions.

### Student Survey

The student survey (Appendix C) was administered to a third and fifth grade class at Site A, and a third grade class at Site B to gather information from the 70 students about their behavior. The students were given the survey the week of February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The surveys were completed anonymously in class and returned to the teachers' basket. The survey contained ten questions and students were given a choice of answering always, sometimes, or never to respond to the questions. The students answered questions about their own behavior and also how they felt the teacher viewed their behavior.

Questions 1 and 2 asked the students to assess their self-control in class from their perspective and their teachers' perspective. Over half of the students, 47 (67%) felt they sometimes talked out in class and 48 (69%) felt that their teachers would agree (Figure 11).

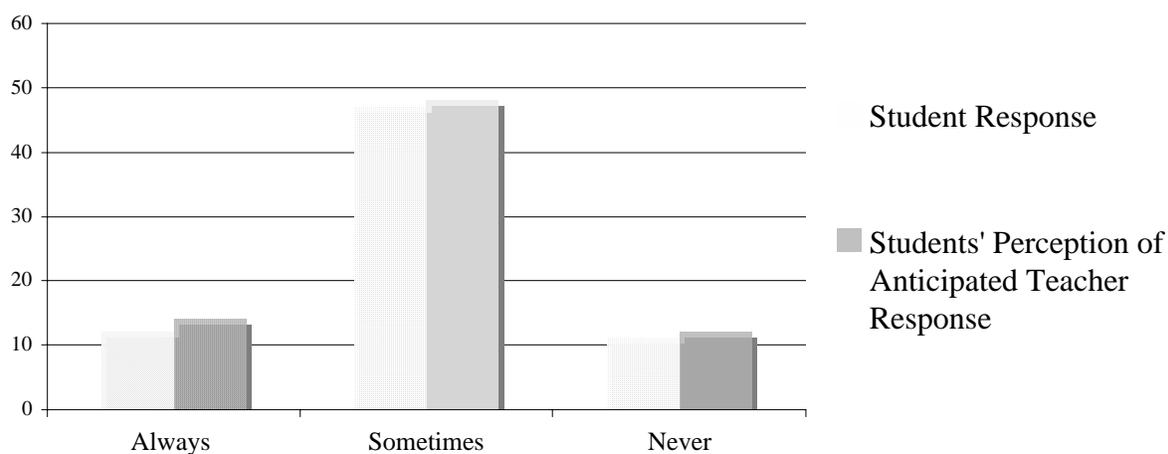


Figure 11: Self-Control (n=70)

In response to Questions 3 and 4, 42 (60%) of students responded “sometimes” for how often they completed their work on time, while 13 (19%) of students would say they “never” turned in their work on time (Figure 12).

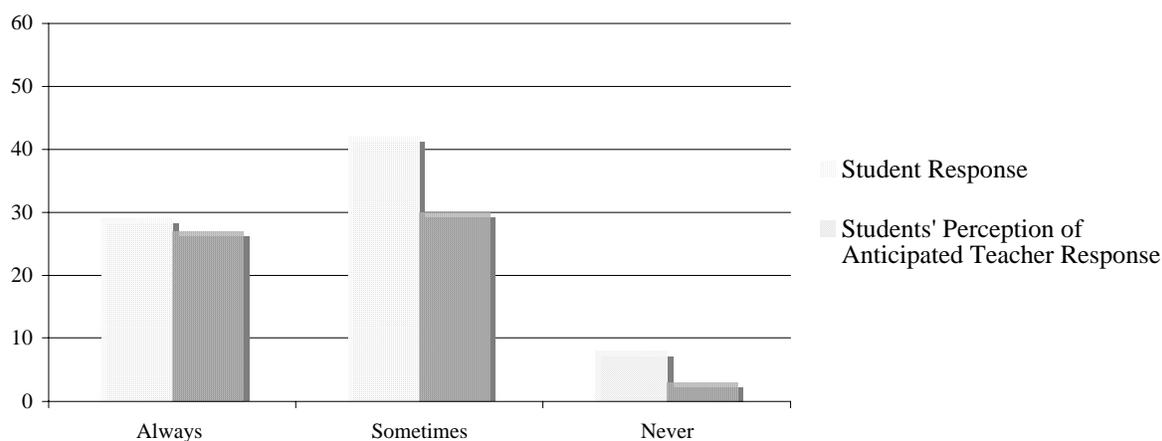


Figure 12: Responsibility (n=70)

When Questions 5 and 6 about empathy were asked 42 (60%) of students were “always” concerned about their classmates’ feelings and 36 (51%) of students thought their teachers would agree and respond with “always” (Figure 13).

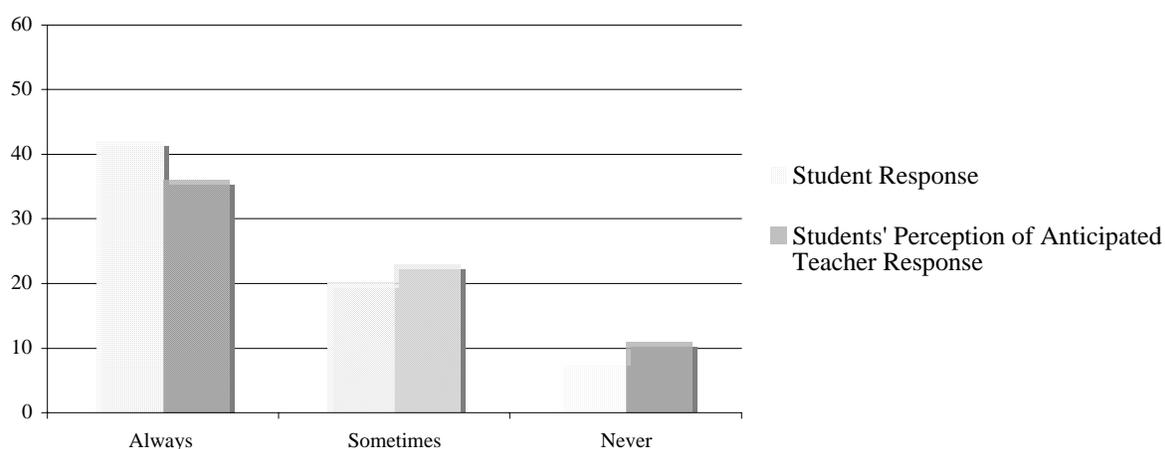
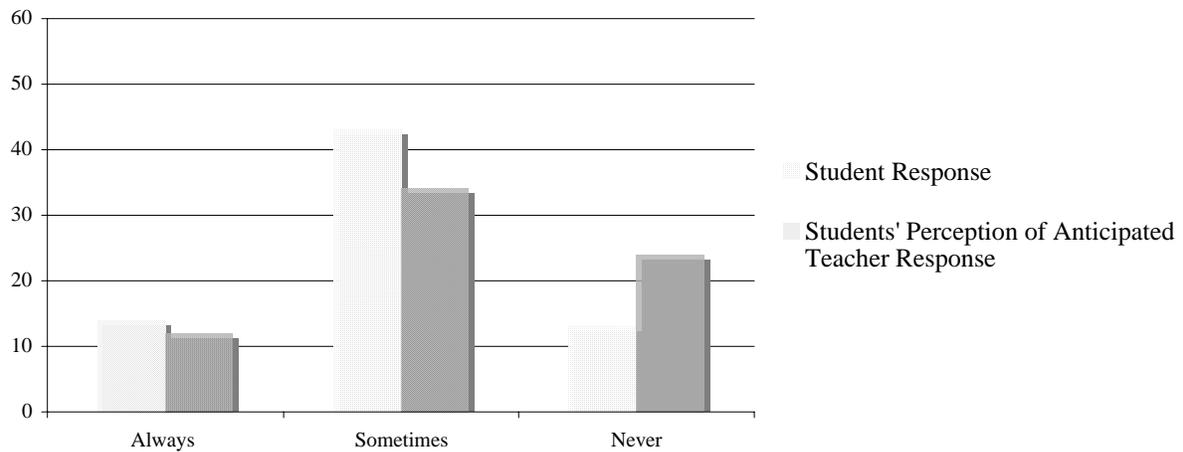


Figure 13: Empathy (n=70)

Questions 7 and 8 asked students to think about respect. Of the 70 students surveyed, 43 (61%) responded that they “sometimes” talked back or argued with others, while 34 (49%) thought their teachers would also agree and respond that they are “sometimes” disrespectful (Figure 14).



*Figure 14: Respect (n=70)*

When students were asked if they think they work well with others 39 (55%) believe that they “always” cooperate well with others. When asked if their teachers would agree, 33 (47%) of students believed their teachers would say they “always” cooperate (Figure 15).

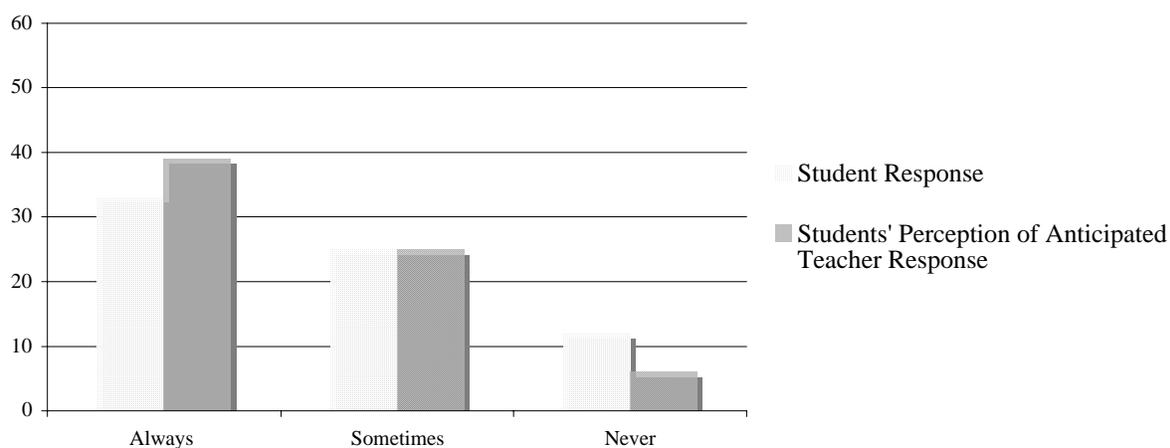


Figure 15: Cooperation (n=70)

#### Probable Causes

The purpose of the project was to improve social skills in children. There were nine teachers and seventy 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, together with their parents, who participated in the study that took place February 11, 2008 through May 16, 2008. The teacher researchers utilized three data collection tools: a parent survey, a teacher survey, and a student survey. After the surveys were completed, the teacher researchers used intervention activities from the *Tribes* book. Each activity was designed to promote a specific social skill. After teaching the skills, the children worked more cooperatively, valued and accepted individual differences, and had a positive regard for one another.

According to literature, the social skills of elementary students have become an issue (Beland, 2007; Elias & Weissberg, 2003; & Utay & Utay, 2005). A person’s ability to work cooperatively, be responsible and respected, have self-control, and possess empathy has been

considered valuable social skills and should be taught and practiced in school (Denham et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2005).

Classroom meetings and activities from the book, *Tribes* are an excellent way for children to practice their social skills. Listening to others and cooperating, participating in a group, and managing emotions are all skills to be practiced through games, role play, and discussion (Johnson et al., 2005; Denham et al., 2006; Elias & Weissberg, 2003; Meier et al., 2006; Schneider, 1996).

Review of the literature indicates that there are several causes for the lack of social skills in elementary students. Negative behavior that interferes with learning is on the rise (Elias & Weissberg, 2003). Beland (2007) points out there are behavior and school situations such as stress and anxiety that divide or exclude students. Off-task behaviors can be caused by students who engage in conversation with others when given directions or during teacher-directed instructions. Many of the behavioral problems stem from what is going on at home. Poverty, divorce, bad role models, and neglect can cause children to become disruptive in class (Atici, 2007). According to Meier et al. (2006), teachers have expectations of social behavior that are sometimes inconsistent. If teachers view students as incapable of acting or thinking on their own, students give up their independence, individuality, and initiative forming a self-fulfilling prophecy (Metzger, 2004). Warger and Rutherford (1997) state that teaching respect and responsibility is not enough; teachers need to break each down and teach the distinct skills and behaviors of each. Each should be taught as social skills.

Rathvon (1990) defines off-task behavior as students doing anything not appropriate to the task at hand. Students provoke others by making faces, teasing, laughing at each other, or by making noises verbally or physically. Students may interrupt the teacher during a lesson by

voicing disapproval and making inappropriate comments (Lo & Cartledge, 2004). Examples of problems that occur in the classroom are: noise, shouting, talking out of turn, inappropriate movement, disruptions, defiance, and inattention (Atici, 2007).

Elias and Weissberg (2003) note that a person who is lacking in social and emotional learning may not be successful in school and the workplace. They may also have trouble maintaining healthy relationships with family and friends. If a student has trouble saying what they really mean, controlling their impulsive actions, and making reasonable decisions, they may not be truly aware of their feelings. Students who have trouble expressing their feelings may find themselves in risky or grown-up situations that can cause anxiety, fear, and excitement. The students who are anxious, angry, or sad have a more difficult time solving problems and concentrating. These students are impressionable and they can often be swayed by their own need to be liked by others and to belong. Their actions and judgments affect relationships as well as their health. Children need the prompts to deal with the real-life situations before they occur so they have the ability to make difficult choices (Elias & Weissberg, 2003).

According to Bru (2006), young adolescents are more vulnerable to social comparison and place emphasis on competition. Beland (2007) agrees that labeling, stereotyping, isolation, facial expressions, and negative actions are all actions that set children apart. Children are expected to possess these critical social skills which are crucial to school success. According to Meier, et al. (2006), children need to get along with people who are different and need to respond respectfully in various situations.

Unfortunately, students are not learning respect. Teachers need to address race, ethnicity, religion, and gender to help students deal with stereotyping (NEA Today, 2006). According to NEA Today (2001), students need to learn how to respect others. Students are increasingly rude

and disrespectful to each other. Diligently teaching the social skills is not enough; children need to practice (Johnson et al., 2005). Shechtman and Leichtentritt (2004) wrote that children's behavioral problems are triggered by distorted thoughts and poorly-controlled emotional responses to stress. Wentzel (2003) found that in contrast to high-achieving students, the lowest-achieving students choose other types of social goals, such as to have fun, and to make and keep friendships, and generally are unwilling to try to conform to the social standards of the classroom.

Adolescents are more concerned with social issues than learning goals (Bru, 2006). Sometimes children need help with making friends. They may be lonely, depressed, have low self-esteem, or other health issues. They may show their frustration through anger instead of sadness. Teaching social skills to a child who is feeling rejected is vital (Utay & Utay, 2005).

Disruptive student behavior can be caused by divorce, substance abuse, frequent relocation, and other problems facing our society (Rathvon, 1990). Utay and Utay (2005) state that parents should make sure their children have the skills to effectively interact when they are negatively confronted, or when the rules suddenly change.

According to Scales (2002), adults are not doing very well with providing children and adolescents with support and guidance. Generations are not connecting as they should be, considering that teens and adults in the United States have much in common. There is a gap between what adults and children say is important for making relationships with each other and what they do about it. Adults are not taking the time to influence other people's kids positively. Children and youth are not engaging with adults outside of their own families. Most adults do not feel encouraged to be involved with other people's kids. Adults feel it's important to have positive connections with children and youth, but they don't make it happen on a regular basis

(Scale, 2002). In the past, kids had more opportunity for being nurtured. Now, our youth is becoming more detached and looking to their peers for acceptance (Brendtro, 2005).

Students need to develop better social skills in school (Kidron & Fleischman, 2006). Meyer, et al. (2006), feel that these critical social skills are crucial to school success. They need to get along with people who are different. They need to be able to spend free time appropriately, and respond in an appropriate fashion when they are bullied or teased by a peer.

According to Denham, et al. (2006), social skill interventions need to be taught to children with interpersonal and adjustment problems. Even with limited resources, schools are responsible for the improvement of their students' academics and social behavior. Schools are lacking the expertise to resolve these problems. Student behavioral problems ranged from verbal interruptions of teacher or student directions, to causing injury to oneself or another individual (Fairbanks, S., Guardino, D., Lathrop, M., and Sugai, G., 2007).

In order to reduce student behavior problems at school, teachers need to find ways for their students to practice their social and emotional skills throughout the day. Teaching social skills is often neglected in school (Johnson et al., 2005). Standards guide instruction, but it is the teacher's responsibility to make the content relevant to her students' lives because student behavior is determined by classroom instruction. A successful classroom learning community depends on positive behavior. How a teacher views her students translates into how much or how little students are involved in their own education. All students should be valued the same because children are quick to pick up on teachers' favoritism. Student misbehavior can be greatly reduced by having well planned lessons, exciting learning activities, relevant content, and student involvement (Metzger, 2004).

Without good lessons and a good classroom management plan, less instruction occurs. Teachers need to have an idea ahead of time what they want their classroom to resemble. Students can sabotage a classroom management system with their attitudes, emotions, values, and disrespect. A poor classroom climate can be out of control, disorganized, cold, and unfriendly. Teachers should make the children in their classroom aware of the consequences for poor behavior. The consequences should be both logical and natural and should be directly related to the misbehavior (Rancifer, 1995). Restless behavior is being reinforced when students get attention for their negative behavior. Bad habits continue unless the teacher provides positive reinforcement for good behavior (O'Grady, 1996).

There is an impaired relationship between teacher and student. Teachers' attitudes toward disruptive students are often negative and do not become positive even after reducing the disruptive behavior of the student (Rathvon, 1990). According to Shapiro (1993) teachers need to establish a positive social climate in their classrooms. In this positive social climate students should expect one another to do their best and should support one another. Students should share their influences and differences and communicate openly. Teachers are often wrong in their impressions of students' attitudes toward school, apparently because students hide many of their feeling from their teachers. The inaccurate impressions of such teachers hinder students' finding academic and behavioral success. The difference between classrooms in which students are achieving and those in which they are not is due to the amount of negative or positive interaction between the individual students, among the class as a whole, and between the class and the teacher. Social, emotional, physical, and academic problems may occur when a child does not have a caring school community that fosters a person's ability to form and maintain supportive relationships (Elias & Weissberg, 2003).

Educators' use of ineffective practices typically makes children feel incompetent or insults their integrity by failing to respect their families, cultures, and life experiences. Some practices lead teachers to create motivational inequity among students by allowing some children to feel successful and others to repeatedly experience failure. It becomes unfair when teachers reward only those students who remain motivated (Thorkildsen & Nolen, 1994).

When looking at the lack of social skills and off-task behaviors in elementary students, it is apparent that teachers, students, and parents need to work together by teaching the necessary skills that promote healthy social relationships, personal well-being and academic achievement. These skills include respect, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, self-control and problem solving.

The purpose of the project was to improve the social skills in children. There were nine teachers and 70 children, together with their parents, participating in the study that took place February 11, 2008 through May 16, 2008. The intervention activities we used were from the *Tribes* book. Each activity was designed to promote a specific social skill. After teaching the skills, the children worked more cooperatively, valued and accepted individual differences, and had a positive regard for one another.

According to literature, the social skills of elementary students have become an issue (Beland, 2007; Elias & Weissberg, 2003; & Utay & Utay, 2005). A person's ability to work cooperatively, be responsible and respected, have self-control, and possess empathy is considered valuable social skills to be taught and practiced in school (Denham et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2005).

Classroom meetings and activities from the *Tribes* book are an excellent way for children to practice their social skills. Listening to others and cooperating, participating in a group, and

managing emotions are all skills to be practiced through games, role-play, and discussion (Johnson et al., 2005; Denham et al., 2006; Elias & Weissberg, 2003; Meier et al., 2006; Schneider, 1996).

## CHAPTER 3

### THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

#### Review of the Literature

The literature review revealed a multitude of solutions to improve students' social skills. Practicing patience and being familiar with the student's home and school situation is important (Atici, 2007). It is believed that students need the proper social skills in order to be a part of the school's social environment (Meier et al., 2006). Students behave better when they have a genuine connection with their teacher and classmates. They must feel like they are part of the group, not alienated (Johnson et al., 2005). Shapiro (1993) found that students who work together like school more than those who are not allowed to do so. Also, when cooperative learning is successful in the classroom, there is better student participation, increased learning, enhanced student self-esteem, and a more positive classroom environment. Strahan, Hamilton-Cope, Hundley, and Faircloth (2005) found that students are more likely to succeed when they feel connected and care about the school.

Children must possess the skills and behaviors to effectively interact with another person and avoid socially unacceptable responses from them (Denham et al., 2006). In order to avoid the kind of decisions that result in unhealthy outcomes, children have to learn to sort out their feelings, communicate effectively, handle stress appropriately, and be able to respond to different social situations in a responsible and thoughtful manner (Elias & Weissberg, 2003). Students should talk about themselves to feel more secure and learn to trust (Logan, 2003). Children need a variety of experiences so that they can learn, accomplish, and interact successfully in many different situations (Elias & Weissberg, 2003). They need to work independently and in groups and make good decisions in both settings (Coloroso, 1997).

Teaching students how to have a strong work ethic is important. If teachers do not teach it, students will lack self discipline in the future. Lickona, (1996), believe that good work habits must be taught explicitly. Students should have goals to reach and they should be encouraged along the way. Children need to learn how to handle difficult situations without force or intimidation, and resolve conflicts. Conflicts need to be settled immediately or they can cause more problems in the future. Modeling the appropriate behavior is important (Lickona, 1996). Elias and Weissberg, (2003), say that teachers should also encourage children to role play a situation, which gives them the opportunity to use their skills and monitor their emotional reactions. Social skill activities should be coordinated with, and integrated into, the regular curriculum. Children need the skills to cope with their feeling and to make good choices (Elias & Weissberg, 2003). They also need to be socially aware. Recognizing a person's feelings, showing compassion, knowing that people are diverse, and empathizing with them are all aspects of being socially aware (Beland, 2007).

A home-school connection should also be fostered. Elias and Weisberg (2003) suggest that parents need to meet with the teacher, problem solve, monitor homework, and encourage a sense of pride in their child's school work and behavior. The key principles include family goal setting and planning, encouraging children's strengths, reducing stress, and increasing humor in the home, building empathy, and apologizing when there is a lack of emotional control (Elias & Weissberg , 2003). Professionals at school can work with parents and encourage them to be positive role models for their children. Utay and Utay (2005) state that parents need to realize that learning social skills takes time. They should reassure their children that they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and that the development of social skills is just one more thing that they will be learning.

Efforts from schools, families, churches, and communities are needed to help youth learn good values (Lickona, 1996). Brendtro and Long (2005) believe that all children need a feeling of belonging, mastery, and independence. According to Scales et al., (2002) adults should try to connect with youth outside of their own families. To build positive relationships, adults and youth should become involved in their community. It is important for both adults and children to develop helping behaviors. This includes being involved with religious activities, volunteering, neighborhood meetings and events. Simply reading, playing, and talking about important things together can create a positive relationship. When there is positive communication between parents and children there tends to be more engagement. Adults should discuss values and reinforce the importance of equality, honesty, and responsibility. In order for parents to foster a learning, and communicative environment, they should make their home welcoming, show interest and spend time with other people's children. Community leaders can initiate programs, policies, and events that encourage interaction between adolescents and adults. They can also find ways to celebrate the positive behaviors and relationships that result from the interactions between young people and adults. The sharing of these stories can encourage others to become involved (Scales, et al., 2002). Strahan et al. (2005) also suggest that parents and children also get to know the community.

According to Kidron and Fleischman (2006), a caring community environment should also be fostered throughout the school. Caring behaviors need to be modeled by everyone at the school. Pairing older students with younger students, involving parents, and community volunteers can create a caring community within the school (Kidron & Fleischman, 2006). Teachers are very influential in a child's social development, more so than was previously thought. A positive classroom climate can be created when a teacher stresses the development of

social skills. It was also found that fewer behavior problems arise and mutual respect increases when there is a positive classroom climate (Utay & Utay, 2005). Teachers must first create a positive classroom climate, complete with a strong sense of community and proper relations among members. Respecting students as valuable classroom assets promotes a sense of social responsibility (Gilness, 2003). Teachers who show that they care about their students build a better relationship with them (Atici, 2007). It is thought that teachers should use a soft voice, stand close to the student, and be at eye level when reprimanding students (Rathvon, 1990). It is important to facilitate social awareness by building relationships in a positive classroom environment and encouraging students to get to know one another (Beland, 2007). Bondy suggests students should feel safe to take risks, laugh, and trust one another and their teacher. They should be allowed to vent frustration about school and work with each other in order to find solutions to problems (Bondy, Ross, Galligane, & Hambacher, 2007). A positive learning community also needs self-awareness and self-management skills to be taught. Children need to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, to establish goals, and to manage their emotions. They need time to practice the skill and assess their progress (Beland, 2007). Shulka and Albin (2003) believe that if you teach social skills you will set the children up for success. Students will be less likely to be disruptive, there will be an increase in student success, and socially appropriate classroom behaviors will be encouraged when effective survival skills are taught.

Teachers have different perceptions of what social skills their children should possess at different grade levels, but all agree that children with academic competence were better equipped socially (Meier et al., 2006). The majority of elementary teachers view these eleven areas to be critical for school success: controls temper with peers, gets along with people, responds appropriately when hit, ignores peer distractions, responds to peer pressure, follows direction,

attends to instructions, cooperates with peers, controls temper with adults, uses free time acceptably, and uses time appropriately (Meier et al., 2006). Social and emotional learning is a process that includes goal setting, building relationships, problem solving, and decision-making (Beland, 2007). Two effective methods for social skill intervention are peer mentoring and skill training. Teachers need to model, coach, and teach problem solving techniques (Denham, 2006). Elias and Weissburg (2003) note that modeling the skill is not enough. Teachers also need to provide the students with activities for practice, give feedback, and provide the necessary prompts to help the children use their skills outside the classroom (Elias & Weissburg, 2003). The teacher's role is to help students internalize tolerance, acceptance, respect, and compassion, and learn that freedom is tied to responsibility (Larrivee, 2002).

As noted by Norris (2003), teachers are directly responsible for successful change in the classroom. These changes need to be purposeful and organized in order for the children to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary for success. A positive classroom climate, as well as a well-organized management plan affect the learning process. By recognizing emotions and knowing how to deal with them, students learn social skills. They learn the vocabulary to express their emotions and to realize that more than one emotion can exist at the same time. Children also need to be taught how to appropriately act when they are upset or angry with someone. They should be taught active listening and I-messages so that they can express how words and actions affect them (Norris, 2003). Rancifer (1995) believes that in order for teachers to create a positive classroom climate, the children need to be aware of the rules, procedures, and consequences. Lederhouse (1998) states that teachers need to make an effort to have students feel safe at school by establishing boundaries and creating an air of hospitality to create a space where connections could take place.

The teacher must be organized and have a set classroom management strategy. Teachers must also be a role model and be aware of the students' needs, show concern, express genuine feelings, provide differentiation, be consistent, and be motivating (Rancifer, 1995). The article, *Keeping Your Cool* (2007), offers tips for dealing with classroom management. The article suggests that teachers keep a positive attitude and think of stressful situations as challenges, not threats. Teachers should create a calm atmosphere through good time management and organizational skills. Teachers need to connect their instruction with the needs of the students. Engaging them and having them become involved, will cut down on negative student behavior (Metzger, 2004). Values can be taught through the curriculum. The connection makes sense to students. Finding stories that highlight values in literature, history, and science can be a very useful tool in teaching character education (Lickona, 1996).

Class meetings support moral development and are used to address problems, generate solutions, and discuss alternative ways to express anger, thus giving students a voice. During class meetings, guidelines should be enforced. These guidelines are to try to find a solution to the problem, listen without interrupting, and eliminate put-downs (Schneider, 1996). Class meetings are an excellent way for children to practice their social skills. The meetings are more successful when they have a desired learning focus. Listening to others, participating in a group, leading a discussion, and cooperation are all skills to be practiced (Johnson et al., 2005). Students are taught how to criticize an idea without attacking the person who gave it (Schneider, 1996). According to Norris (2003), class meetings help children feel comfortable expressing their views and making mistakes. Students need to know that their opinions are valued and respected and that any criticism they receive will be given in a respectful and constructive manner (Norris, 2003). Children need a positive, nurturing environment for social and emotional behavior to

improve (Johnson et al., 2005). Lickona (1996) states that the school must be a moral community. Caring relationships between teachers and students and between student peers are important to make everyone feel valued. When students are challenged to practice respect every day, it becomes part of their character. Teachers can have class meetings to talk about the good and bad things on students' minds. Encouraging students to get to know each other helps students make positive relationships (Lickona, 1996).

The researchers believe that teachers, students, and parents need to work together to understand ways in which positive social skills can be taught and modeled at home and at school. At home, parents need to realize that they are a major component in the success of their child's academic and social life. It is important for parents to communicate with their children and be good role models for them. At school, teachers need to do the same. They need to show they care and try to build relationships with their students. Teachers can help students understand that by conducting classroom meetings, following a classroom management plan, and showing appropriate classroom behavior, a more positive and productive learning environment can result. A positive and productive learning environment leads to happy and successful students academically and socially.

#### Project Objective and Processing Statements

As a result of social skill intervention during the period of Monday, February 11, 2008 through Friday, May 16, 2008, the students of Teacher Researchers A, B, and C were to improve their ability to work cooperatively, learn to value and accept individual differences, and have a positive regard for one another.

In order to implement the intervention the teacher researchers needed to:

- Create teacher, parent, and student surveys
- Distribute, collect, and evaluate the surveys
- Identify appropriate lessons in the *Tribes* book to implement each desired social skill
- Encourage class involvement and discussion

#### Project Action Plan

The purpose of this project was to create a better classroom environment by improving social skills through classroom meetings. The project action plan delineated the anticipated task for each week of the research project.

Week One (February 11, 2008)

- Notify and distribute the teacher survey
- Observe and record the students' off-task behavior using the observation checklist
- Send home parent permission forms
- Distribute parent survey

Week Two (February 18, 2008)

- Collect and evaluate the teacher surveys
- Distribute and evaluate student surveys
- Collect and evaluate the parent surveys
- Explain class meetings through the use of a "T" chart (sounds like/looks like)

Week Three (February 25, 2008)

- Develop cooperative learning groups
- Implement social skill of the week: respect
- Do "M&M Jar" lesson with whole group (from the article, "How Do You Help Students Build a Greater Sense of Respect for Each Other?")
- Lead discussion on validating others and group involvement

Week Four (March 3, 2008)

- Continue social skill from week three: respect
- Lead "Com Tag" activity ( *Tribes* p. 196)
- Validate peers' contributions

Week Five (March 10, 2008)

- Implement social skill of the week: cooperation
- Do “Tribal Portrait” (*Tribes* p. 101)
- Do “Listening” Activity (*Tribes* p. 79)
- Validate peers’ contributions

Week Six (March 17, 2008)

- Continue social skill from week five: cooperation
- Do “How to Build a Better Bathtub” (*Tribes* p. 96)
- Do “What’s a Ghost Going to Do?” (*Tribes* p. 200)
- Validate peers’ contributions

Week Seven (March 31, 2008)

- Implement social skill of the week: responsibility
- Do “Addumup” (sic) Activity (*Tribes* p. 152)
- Validate peers’ contributions

Week Eight (April 7, 2008)

- Continue social skill from week seven: responsibility
- Do “Personal Contract” (*Tribes* p. 171)
- Validate peers’ contributions

Week Nine (April 14, 2008)

- Implement social skill of the week: empathy
- Do “Resentment and Appreciation” (*Tribes* p. 154)
- Validate peers’ contributions

Week Ten (April 21, 2008)

- Continue social skill from week nine: empathy
- Do “Dear Blabby” (*Tribes* Book p. 169)
- Do “Where Do I Stand?” (*Tribes* p. 158)
- Validate peers’ contributions

Week Eleven (April 28, 2008)

- Implement social skill of the week: self-control/problem solving
- Do “Step by Step Problem Solving” (*Tribes* p. 36)
- Validate peers’ contributions

Week Twelve (May 5, 2008)

- Continue social skill of the week: self-control/problem solving
- Conduct class meeting to determine topics for student skits
- Validate peers’ contributions

Week Thirteen (May 12, 2008)

- Administer and record the student, parent and teacher surveys
- Observe and record the students’ off-task behavior using the observation checklist
- Culmination Celebration: “Friendship” Snack

#### Methods of Assessment

The parent survey (Appendix A) was administered to gain the parents’ perspective on their child’s behavior during a typical week at home. This information gave the teacher researchers data from outside the teacher researcher’s classroom. It measured the five social skills: responsibility, empathy, respect, cooperation, and self-control. The survey was given to parents who had a child in the class that was researched. The students received the survey and envelope and brought it home to their parents on Monday, February 11, 2008 and parents had until Monday, February, 18, 2008 to return the survey. Another survey was sent out to be returned on Monday, May 12, 2008. The teacher researchers compared the data from pre- and post-documentation surveys.

The teacher survey (Appendix B) was administered to gain the teacher’s perspective on their students’ behavior during a typical week at school. This information gave the teacher researchers data from outside the teacher researcher’s classroom. It measured the five social

skills: responsibility, empathy, respect, cooperation, and self-control. The teachers received the survey in their mailboxes on Monday, February 11, 2008 and had until Monday, February, 18, 2008 to return the survey. Another survey was sent out to be returned on Monday, May 12, 2008. The teacher researchers compared the data from pre- and post-documentation surveys.

The student survey (Appendix C) was administered to gain the students' perspective on their own behavior and reflect on how they thought their teacher viewed their behavior during a typical week. This information gave the teacher researchers data from their own students. It measured the five social skills: responsibility, empathy, respect, cooperation, and self-control. The survey was given to each student in the class. The students received the survey during class on Monday, February 11, 2008 and again on Monday, May 12, 2008. Students took time during class to complete the survey. The teacher researchers compared the data from pre- and post-documentation surveys.

The teacher observation checklist (Appendix D) was used to document the students' behavior during a typical class. This information gave the teacher researchers data from inside the teacher researcher's classroom. It measured the five social skills: responsibility, empathy, respect, cooperation, and self-control. The observation checklist was completed by the teacher researcher. The teacher researchers completed the observation checklist on Monday, February 11, 2008 and again on Monday, May 12, 2008 during class while the students were working on a small group activity. The teacher researchers compared the data from pre- and post-documentation surveys.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT RESULTS

#### Historical Description of the Intervention

The purpose of the project was to improve social skills in children. In order to document poor social skills, the teacher researchers utilized three data collection tools: a parent survey, a teacher survey, and a student survey. The surveys were distributed, completed, and returned between the dates of February 11, 2008 and February 18, 2008. Data was also collected through the use of an observation checklist. The student surveys were distributed to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at Site A (n=44), and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students at Site B (n=26), for a total of 70 students.

The teacher researchers started collecting data during the week of February 11, 2008. We began collecting data by sending a permission form to the parents. We also distributed the teacher and parent surveys. We used an observation checklist to observe and record the students' off-task behavior. During the week of February 18, 2008 we collected and evaluated both the teacher and parent surveys, and also distributed and evaluated the student surveys. We also explained class meetings to our students by using a "T" chart. The "T" chart showed what a class meeting should look like and what it should sound like. We observed and recorded the students' off-task behavior using the observation checklist. The class was very interested in learning more about the different activities that we discussed. They had many different ideas about how a class meeting should go. The class leaders began to emerge. Some of the ideas about what should happen in a class meeting were negative. Some students thought the idea of classroom meetings were pointless. These children tended to be the more disruptive students. The students had never had a class meeting before and were excited to be able to voice their concerns.

During the week of February 25, 2008 we focused our activities on our first social skill of respect. We began by putting the children into cooperative learning groups. Next, we used a lesson called the M&M jar where all of the students placed an M&M in a large jar that represented each of them as a whole. This led to a discussion on validating others and group involvement. The class enjoyed the M&M jar activity. Most had very respectful things to say about each other. The children wanted to eat the M&Ms instead of putting them in the jar to represent the respect for each other. Some of the kids seemed to lose focus during the activity. Maybe they were thinking more about the M&Ms that they got to eat at the end of the activity.

Respect was also the theme during the *Com Tag* activity (Appendix E) during the week of March 3, 2008. The class really liked this activity. A majority of the groups worked well together. They were all listening to each other and following the tag that they were wearing. If the students had a good tag they enjoyed the game. One of the group was easily distracted and not focused on the activity. They were making fun of the activity. Instead of talking or reacting to each other according to the tag they were wearing, they were really ignoring someone and showing a general lack of respect for one another. Other students struggled with what to say. It was difficult for them to say mean things. One interesting thing is that the tag "praise me" was the most requested tag. The child with that tag expected the others to bow to them. Another interesting thing was that most of the students really got into their tags. We had a very good talk about how the students felt during the activity.

The social skill we worked on during the week of March 10, 2008 was cooperation. We introduced this social skill by having the children do an activity called *Tribal Portrait* (Appendix F). Some of the students really got into drawing each other. They were really taking their time and were happy to draw whoever they received. We let the children choose what size of paper to

create their portrait on. We thought that would be a great idea and that it would give them more freedom in their creation. The negative was that the ones who picked the largest paper were the slowest workers. Next time we would not give them a choice on the size. Some students intentionally drew negative pictures. Several students complained that they could not draw. Other students did not like who was drawing them because of their artistic ability and because they were not friends with that person. The portraits took longer than expected. We think that it was really interesting how some of the groups were very quiet and introspective while they were working on their portraits while others did not seem to be taking it serious. The groups that were working well together ended up with a better end product.

During the week of March 17, 2008 our focus remained on cooperation. We had the children do two activities this week. The first activity was called *To Build a Better Bathtub* (Appendix G). We let the students brainstorm first before they created their bathtub. We talked about what an “ultimate bathtub” would be like and what would be included. Then we let them start to brainstorm what they would include. The children were very creative and had some unique ideas. One group started to draw their bathtub before everyone else. They did not follow the directions of brainstorming first. However, you could call their drawing their brainstorming. Some groups had a hard time cooperating and agreeing on what to include in a bathtub. Not all of the children stayed in their original groups. They wanted to branch off and work on their own. Even though the one group did not do a writing brainstorm their bathtub came out great. Eventually we could hear them talking about what else to add and they all seemed to be respecting each other’s ideas.

Our second activity of the week of March 17, 2008 was *What’s a Ghost Going to Do?* (Appendix H). Every group worked together to create their new home. They seemed to finally

start to understand the idea of teamwork. The students enjoyed the book and quietly listened to the story. Some of the students did not understand the idea of what the new house needed to include. They forgot what it was that Gus liked and did not like. Some students struggled with who was in charge. It was interesting that some of the students that we thought would pay the most attention to the story chose not to listen.

Our featured social skill of the week of March 31, 2008 was responsibility. We taught an activity called *Addumup* [sic] (Appendix I). During this activity the students liked being able to add different things to one another's shape. The students thought this activity was fun and had a hard time staying within the time limit because they were so engaged. Unfortunately, some students got sloppy and wrecked the artwork of others on purpose. There was no child who chose to pass on adding to someone else's shape. We think that it may be because they could possibly lose control over their shape. We hoped that someone would have passed so that we could have seen what would happen. We also found it interesting that when the students looked at their final abstract creation they immediately began to add details to make it representational of something.

During the week of April 7, 2008 we continued with the theme of responsibility. This activity was called *Personal Contract* (Appendix J). Each group member identified a personal intention about which he has been procrastinating by filling out a personal contract and having it signed by a witness. Children were able to come up with an idea for their contract. Some had to take some time to think about what they really wanted to stop procrastinating. We did not think that some of the students took this seriously. We hoped that they would really follow through on their contract. Some of the students were not willing to share what was on their personal contract. Many children stated that they would stop procrastinating on turning in their homework on time. We were proud of them for making this commitment to their education! It was also

interesting whom they asked to be their witnesses. Some people were asked multiple times while some were not even asked to sign.

Another social skill we encouraged was empathy toward others. We taught this skill during the week of April 14, 2008 with an activity called *Resentment/Appreciation* (Appendix K). This was an easy activity for our classes. Our counselors have been talking with them about using “I” statements. They had been doing well with the counselor so they were excited to put this activity into action. The children really liked being able to discuss their frustrations with the class and being able to vote. When children were able to vote, they enjoyed having the feeling of power over our final decision. Some of the children took this opportunity to voice some concerns that should have been done in a private meeting with myself and the other student. This caused some embarrassment for the other child involved. This activity turned into a situation where students were tattling on each other. We found it interesting how involved some of the students became in the activity. We could see who will most likely become leaders some day because they had very insightful solutions for some of the problems that were brought up.

Empathy continued to be the theme during the week of April 21, 2008. Once again, we had two activities. The first activity was called *Dear Blabby* (Appendix L). This activity was similar to Dear Abby letters. The leaders from the previous week continued to be leaders this week. They were very helpful in deciding what “Blabby” should do about the problem. Most students took this seriously, tried to find real solutions, and demonstrated good listening skills. Some of the children knew each other’s handwriting so handing them the card with a student’s handwriting proved to be a challenge. We were not sure if the children wrote real problems that they were having but most of the children that were reading the problems thought they were real. This became a problem when the students could identify the other children’s handwriting. We

encouraged them to seek answers to more personal problems other than just tattling about school issues. Many of the children showed good problem solving skills in the process of solving the other person's problem. One way that we could change the handwriting issue would be to rewrite the comments and then pass them out to the children.

The second activity this week was called *Where Do I Stand?* (Appendix M). Children were asked to choose an animal that represented them and stand under the animal's name. Some of them asked for help from their peers as to what animal they think that they should be. Some of the children compared themselves to the physical aspects of the animal as opposed to the animals characteristics and qualities. It was interesting to listen to the children discuss where they would place themselves depending on the situation. Some of the students needed some clarification on the different properties of each animal. We turned it around to the class and had them brainstorm the different characteristics/qualities of each animal. It was also interesting to see where the children placed themselves depending on the child. Some were a dove and we would not put them into that group.

During the week of April 28, 2008 we implemented the social skill that focused on self-control/problem solving. We led the students in a Step-by-Step Process for Group Problem Solving (Appendix N). After the last ten weeks, most of the kids have become good problem solvers. This is another activity that they have had prior experience participating in so they were successful in completing the activity. The class also really liked being able to show what their choice was with the stickers. Some of the problems did not really apply to the playground situation so they were not really applicable to the activity. Some children immediately put their sticker next to their friends. We really liked watching the children grow in their maturity. They

were able to come up with some great ideas and we think that this activity would have had very different results if we had done it at the beginning of our interventions.

We continued the social skill of self-control/problem solving during the week of May 5, 2008 by conducting class meetings to determine topics for student skits. We had the students brainstorm ways to model one of the five following skills; respect, cooperation, responsibility, empathy, and self-control/problem solving. Most of the students were good at adlibbing and were creative. Some of the students had a difficult time understanding and began goofing off instead. We found it interesting seeing some of the more timid children truly enjoying being a part of the skit.

Our last week of interventions starting May 12, 2008 was spent administering and recording the student, parent, and teacher surveys. We also observed and recorded the students' off-task behavior using the observation checklist to note any improvements. Our final activity was a culmination celebration where we shared a friendship snack. Each child was responsible for bringing in one item to include in our community snack to be shared by all. Students were able to reflect on the fun they had during the past twelve weeks. They shared their favorite activities. It was interesting that there was no fighting when food was involved. Overall we were pleased with the final results.

Throughout the intervention period, the teacher researchers found that the behavior of the students varied depending on the lesson being taught. When we taught lessons that focused on a social skill the overall behavior in the class was much better and the off-task behaviors were far fewer. We feel that the more actively involved the students were in an activity the better their behavior was. We also found that the more the children felt like they were a part of the class and that both their peers and the teacher respected them the higher the learning was. The children

also seemed to be more at ease in the classroom when the learning environment felt like a cohesive group, or a team. Since respect was one of the five social skills that was being focused on there seemed to not be a fear of being ridiculed by others and the students seemed to share more of their thoughts and feelings with the class. The students felt that they were making a valuable contribution to the class.

As one of the researchers, I, Teacher Researcher A, felt that using the classroom meetings with my students helped my students learn new ways to work together and count on each other. The classroom meetings provided my class with the opportunity to be expressive with their ideas. Each week a new activity brought a fun and interesting challenge that helped my students learn about themselves and each other. I learned about my students and more about myself. I learned that my students worked very well together after they learned of my expectations. I am a better teacher when I have an outcome in mind and high expectations for my students. Using the Tribes lessons gave me the tools I needed to teach my students the important social skills they needed to become a working, respectful team. My favorite part of this experience was the culminating activity at the end, the friendship snack, which celebrated our hard work. My class shined during this time.

As one of the researchers, I, Teacher Researcher B, felt that the use of classroom meetings has been a positive experience for my children. I really got to know and appreciate my class. It was interesting to observe their development over the past five months. The project was not a complete success, but the children that chose to cooperate in the activities seemed to improve their level of social skills. I felt that the results of the final observation checklist might have rendered different results if it were not given so close to the end of the year. I am anxious to try these activities again next year with a different class.

As one of the researchers, I, Teacher Researcher C, felt that overall my class was very successful in performing the different social skills activities. My students really seemed to enjoy the various activities and I found that their overall behavior improved. I liked the use of classroom meetings to help us work on our communication skills. My students took the first social skill of respect to heart and every activity that we did after that was better and better with each child truly paying attention to the other's comment or idea. I think that these activities helped me find the "fun" in education again and I look forward to using these different social skills activities with my future classes.

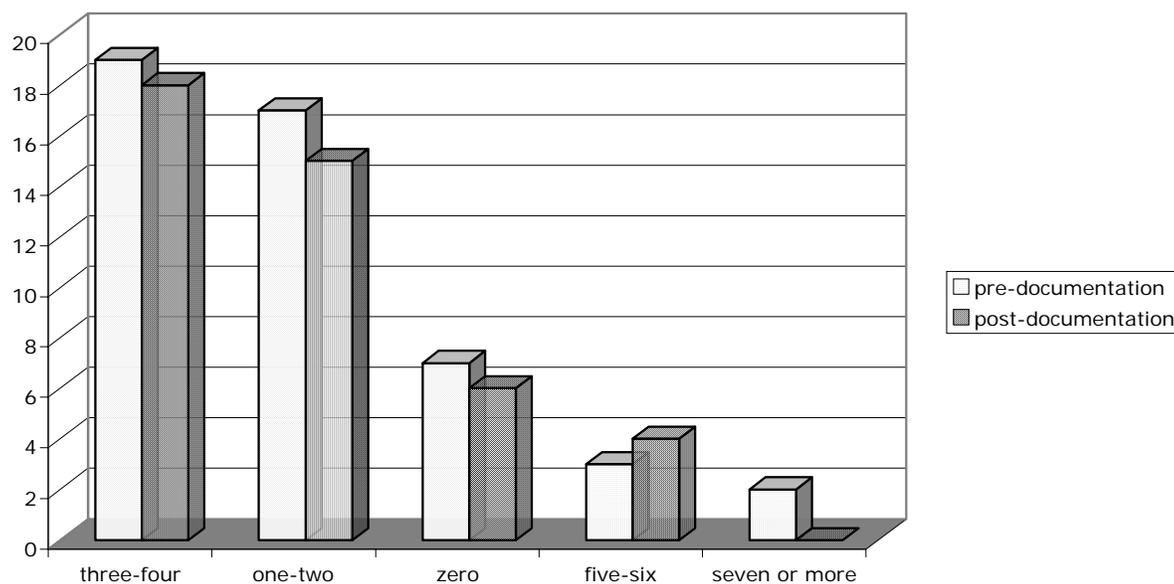
### Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to evaluate the improvement of children's social skills the teacher researchers utilized three data collection tools: a parent survey, a teacher survey, and a student survey. The surveys were distributed, completed and returned during the week of May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Data was also collected through the use of an observation checklist. The student surveys were distributed to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at Site A (n=44), and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students at Site B (n=26), for a total of 70 students.

#### Parent Survey

The parent survey was administered the week of May 12, 2008 to have the parent compare their child's behavior before the intervention and after. Forty-three (61%) surveys were returned. The survey the parents received was identical to the survey they received in January during pre-intervention. On the parent survey, parents were to rate their child's behaviors at home during a typical week using a Likert scale 0-7 (zero indicates that the child's behavior was not observed and seven means that the behavior was observed seven or more times).

During post-documentation observations, 33 (77%) parents responded to question one that their child forgot to do their chores 1-4 times a week. The summary of these findings can be found in Figure 16 below.



*Figure 16: Forgetting Chores (n=43)*

After 12 weeks of intervention the parents found that there was not a noticeable change. Most parents thought their child showed no improvement. The data revealed that 18 (42%) of the children were still forgetting to do their chores three-four times a week.

During post-documentation observations, 23 (53%) stated their child said hurtful things 0-2 times a week in response to question two (Figure 17).

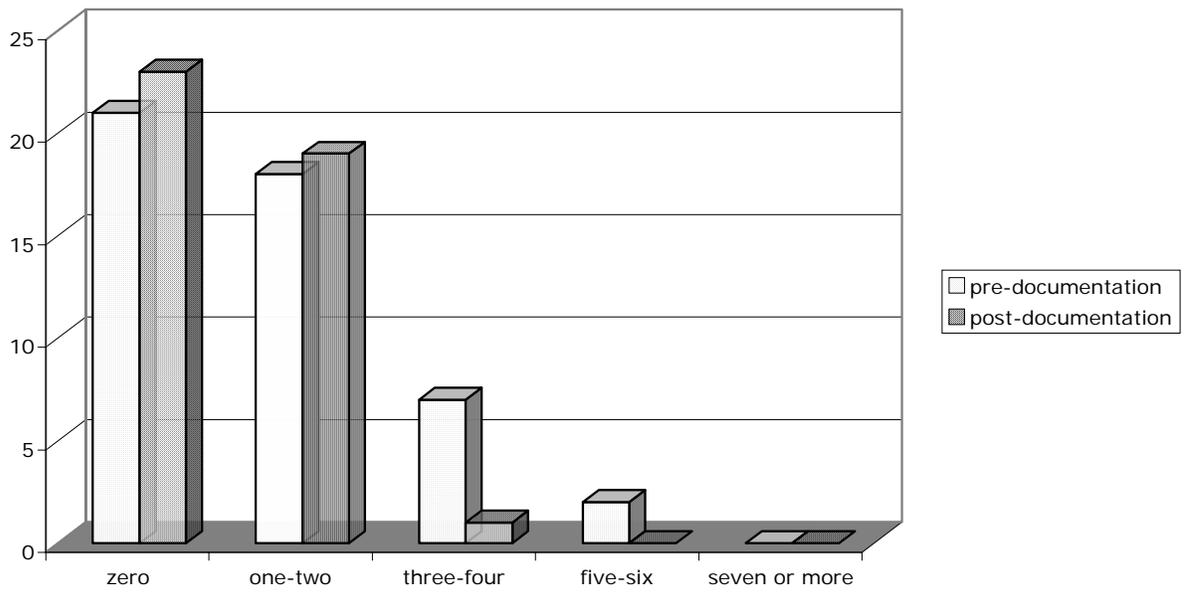


Figure 17: Times Hurtful Things were Said at Home (n=43)

The data revealed that of the 43 parents (n=23) who responded, most parents generally felt their child said less hurtful things now compared to before the intervention. No parent responded that their child said hurtful things to others more than four times a week.

The teacher researchers notes that in response to Question 3, 9 (21%) of the parents surveyed said their child talked back and argued at home 7 or more times during the week (Figure 18).

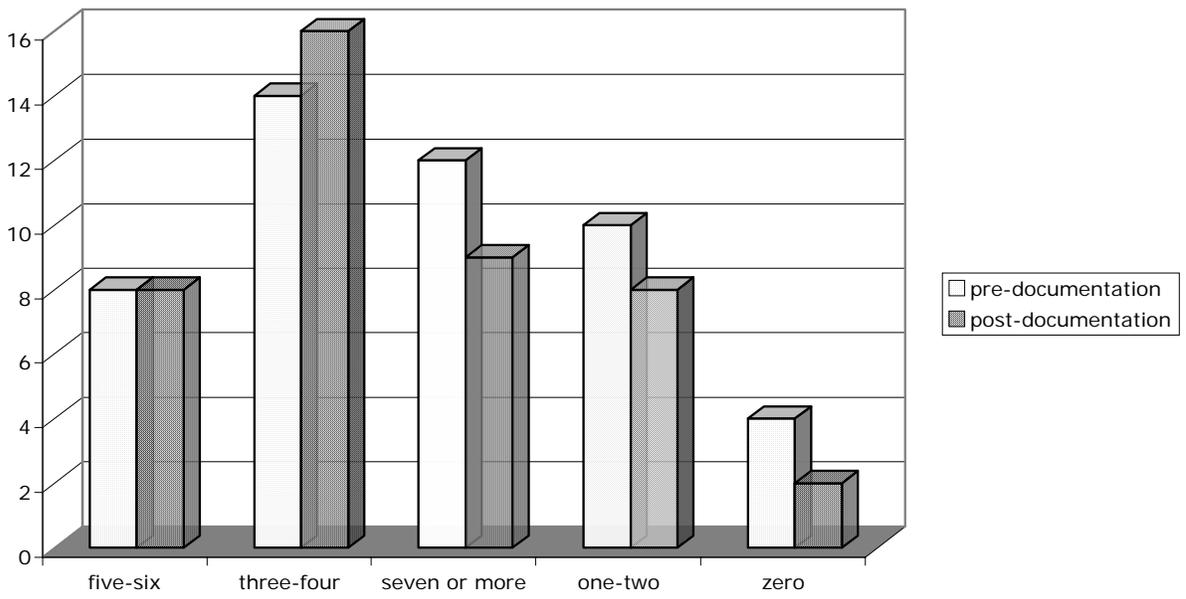
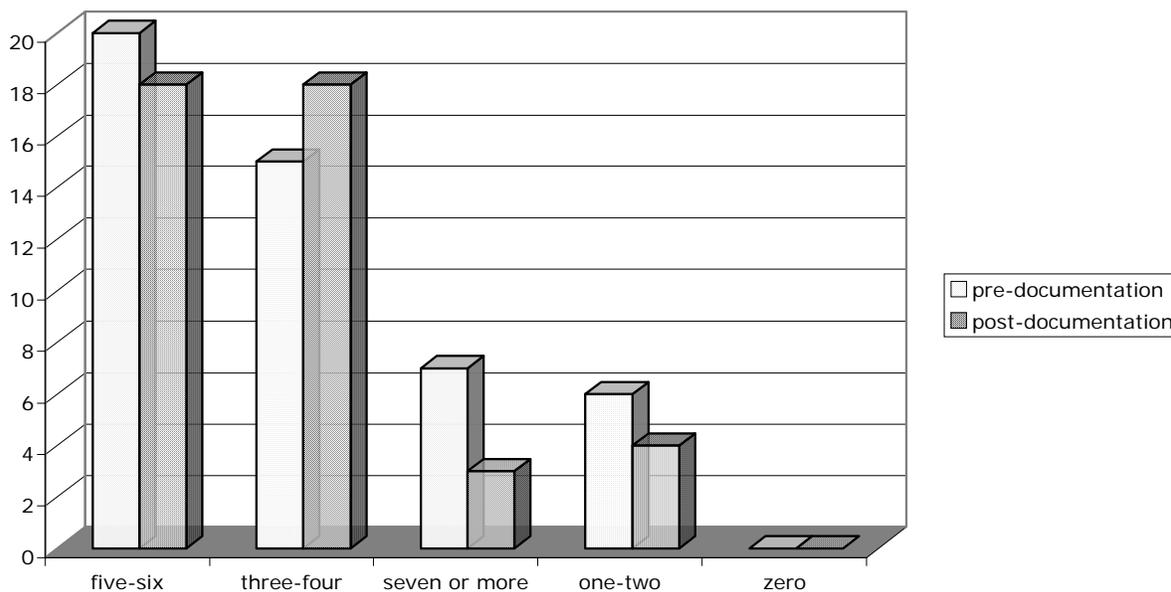


Figure 18: Times Child Talked Back or Argued at Home (n=43)

On the pre-documentation survey 25% (12) of the parents stated their child talked back or argued more than 7 times a week. Fewer parents thought that their children talked back, 21% (9) after post-documentation.

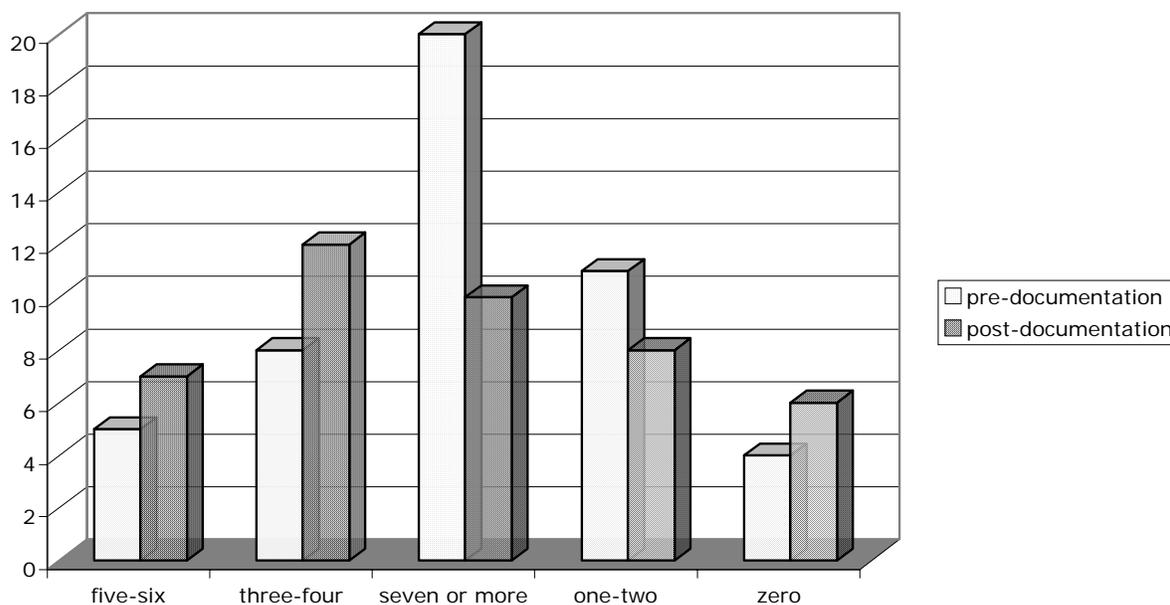
As summarized in Figure 19 below, teacher researchers observed in post-documentation that 18 (42%) of the parents responded that they note this behavior 5-6 times a week. In addition 18 (42%) said it happens 3-4 times a week.



*Figure 19: How Often Child Helped Out at Home (n=43)*

When asked, “How often does your child help others at home?” in Question 4, 31% of the parents (15) answered their child helped 3-4 times a week in pre-documentation while in post-documentation 18 (42%) noted an increase in helping at home.

During post-documentation, twelve parents (n=28%) indicated in their response to Question 5, that their child interrupted others three-four times a week (Figure 20).



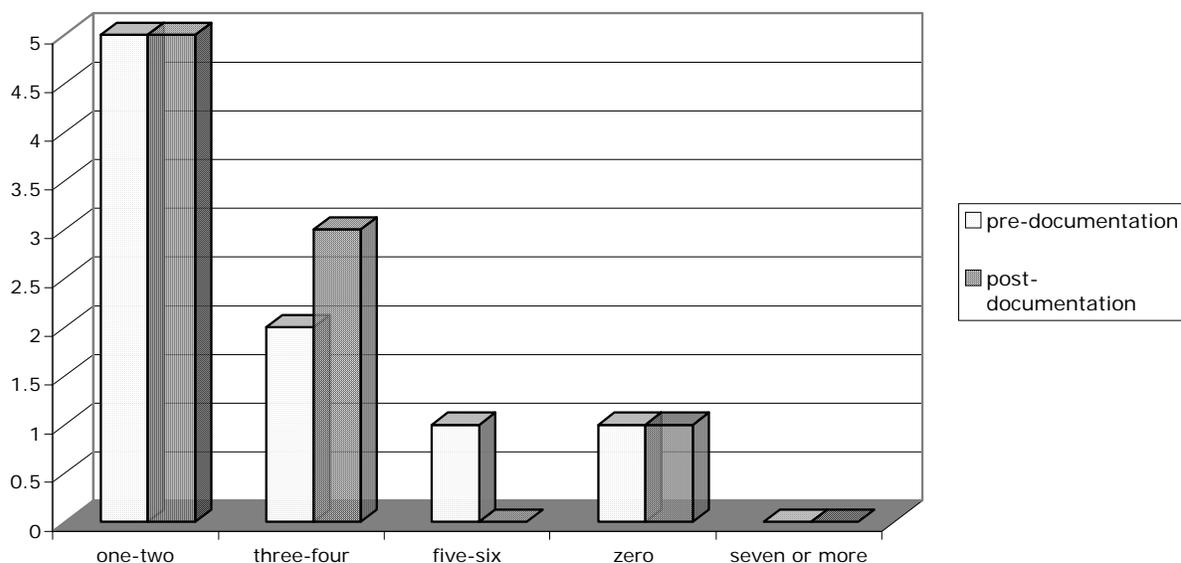
*Figure 20: Interruptions at Home (n=43)*

Overall parents thought their children interrupted less. Most parents, 42% (20) pre-documentation thought their child interrupted 7 or more times a week compared to post-documentation.

### Teacher Survey

The teacher survey was administered the week of May 12, 2008 to have teachers compare their class's behavior before and after the intervention. All nine of the surveys were returned. The survey the teachers received was identical to the survey received in January during pre-intervention.

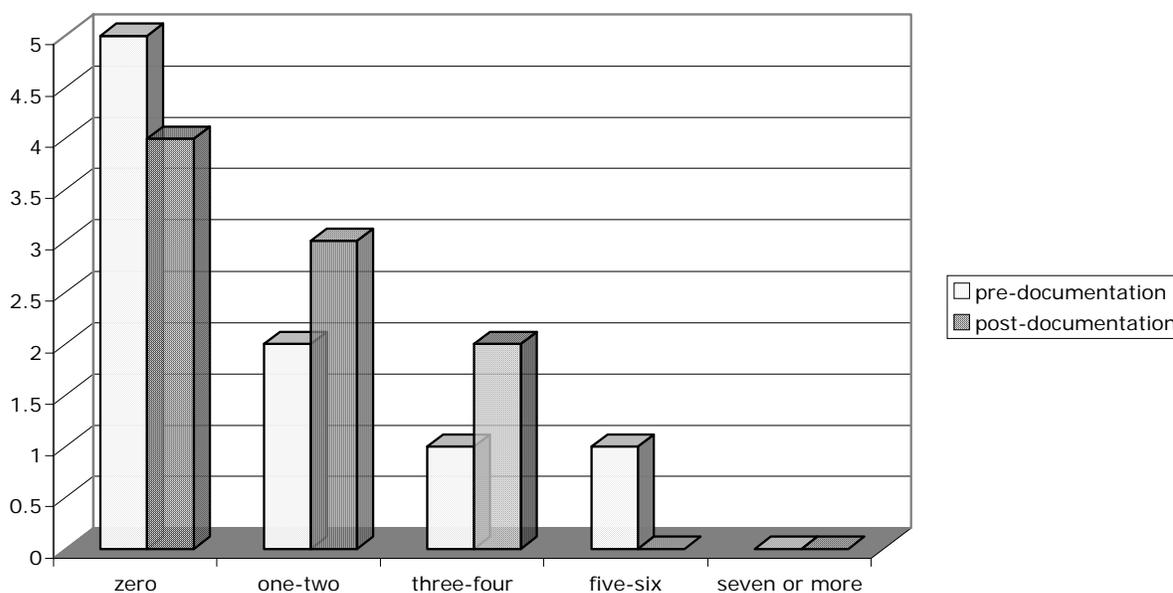
The first question asked to what extent did their children not complete an assignment or activity. Of the choices given, five (55%) teachers felt that their students did not complete an activity 1-2 times a week, while three (34%) felt that this behavior happened 3-4 times a week (Figure 21).



*Figure 21: Teacher Response to Number of Incomplete Activities or Assignments (n=9)*

Of the choices given, five (55%) teachers felt that their class did not complete an activity one-two times a week which did not change from pre-documentation. While three (33%) teachers responded that their students had a more difficult time completing an activity and responded that this happened three-four times a week.

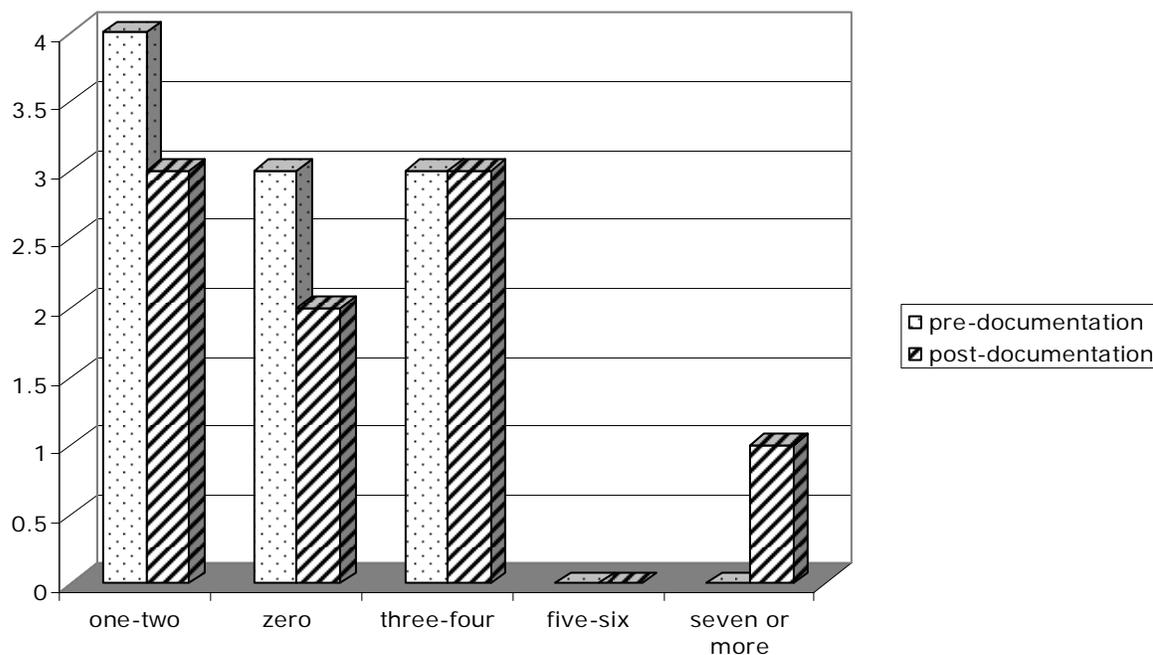
During post-documentation, the teacher researchers noted that 9 (45%) did not say hurtful things to one another at all (Figure 22).



*Figure 22: Teacher Response to How Often Does Your Class Say Hurtful Things To Each Other (n=9)*

Question 2 asked, “How often does your class say hurtful things to each other?” Of the nine teachers surveyed, 7 (78%) stated that their class said hurtful things two or less times a week. When comparing pre- and post-documentation, the results were the same.

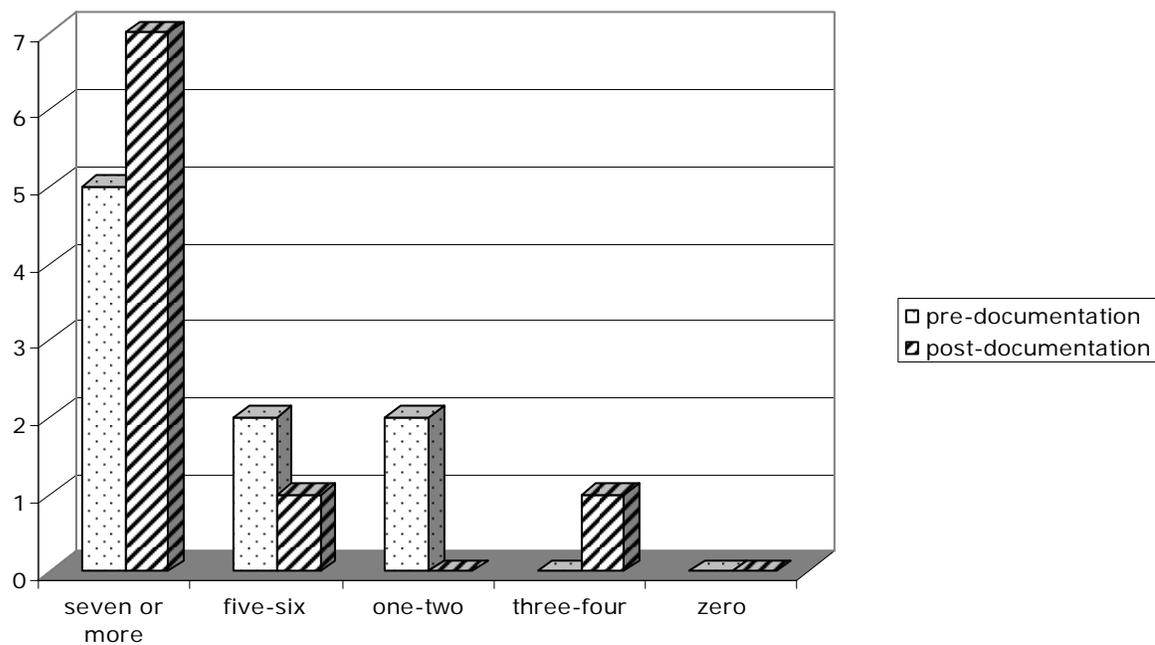
During post-documentation observations, the teacher researchers noted that three teachers (40%) thought that their students talked back or argued with others three-four times a week. The summary of these findings can be found in Figure 23.



*Figure 23: Teacher Response to How Often Does Your Class Talk Back or Argue in Class (n=9)*

As summarized in Figure 23 above, the teacher researchers observed from pre- to post-documentation that with only nine teachers participating in the survey, there was an insignificant change to note.

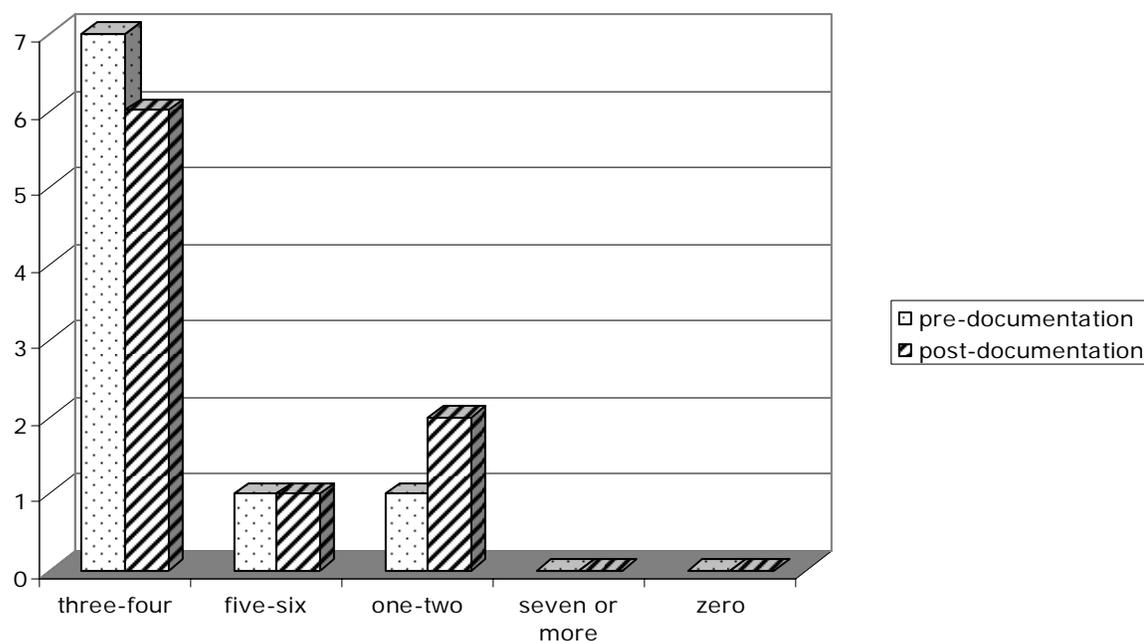
During post-documentation observations, the teacher researchers noted that the behavior improved. Seven (78%) of the teachers observed that children helped each other in the classroom seven or more times (Figure 24).



*Figure 24: Teacher Response to How Often Does Your Class Help Others in Class (n=9)*

As summarized in Figure 24 above, the teacher researchers observed from pre- to post-documentation that more teachers (n=2; 23%) saw an increase in students helping each other.

During post-documentation observations, the teacher researchers noted that 67% (n=6) of the teachers felt that children interrupted others three-four times a week. In addition, two teachers (22%) noted this behavior happened less often and only saw it one-two times a week (Figure 25).



*Figure 25: Teacher Response to How Often Does Your Class Interrupt Someone When They are Speaking (n=9)*

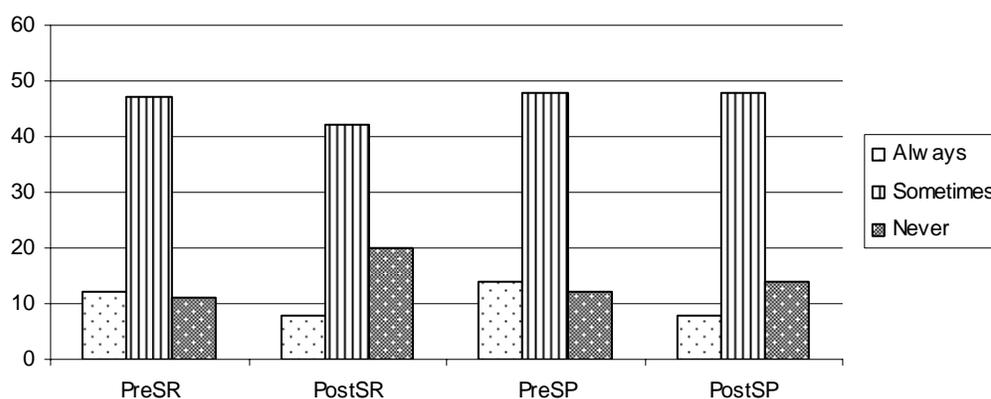
As summarized in Figure 25 above, the teacher researchers observed from pre- to post documentation that an overwhelming majority of teachers continued to see children interrupting others three-four times a week. No notable change occurred.

### Student Survey

The student survey was administered the week of May 12, 2008 to have each student answer questions about their own behavior and also how they felt the teachers viewed their

behavior. All of the students (n=70) completed the survey. The survey the students received was identical to the survey they received in January during pre-intervention.

During post-documentation observations, the teacher researchers noted that over half of the students, 42 (62%) felt they “sometimes” talked out in class and 48 (69%) felt that teachers would agree (Figure 26).

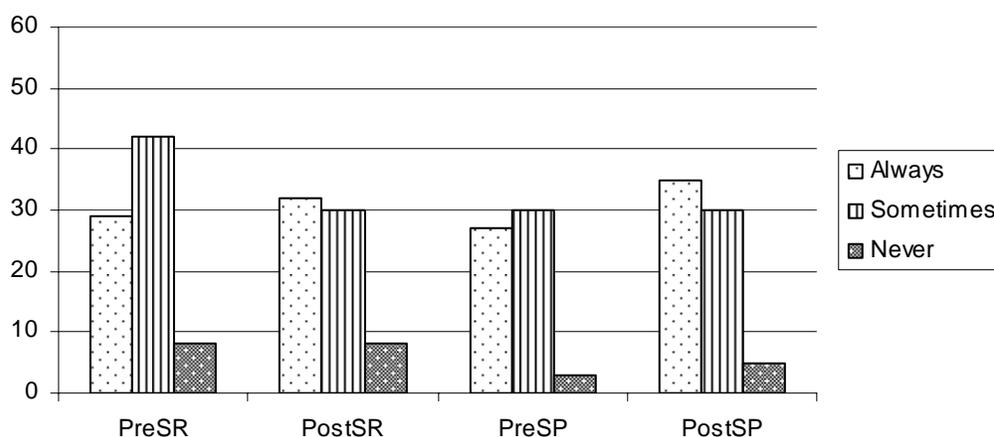


Key: SR=Student Response  
SP=Students' Perception of Anticipated Teacher Response

*Figure 26: Comparison of Pre- and Post- Documentation Student Responses*

As summarized in Figure 26 above, the teacher researchers observed from pre- to post-documentation that the data revealed a 13% (n=9) increase in students who stated that they “never” talked out in class. An increase of two students (22%) felt that their teachers would agree.

During post-documentation observations, the teacher researchers noted that 32 (46%) of the students felt that they “always” completed their work on time. While 30 (43%) of the students would say they “sometimes” turned in their work on time and an equal number of students felt that their teachers would agree (Figure 27).

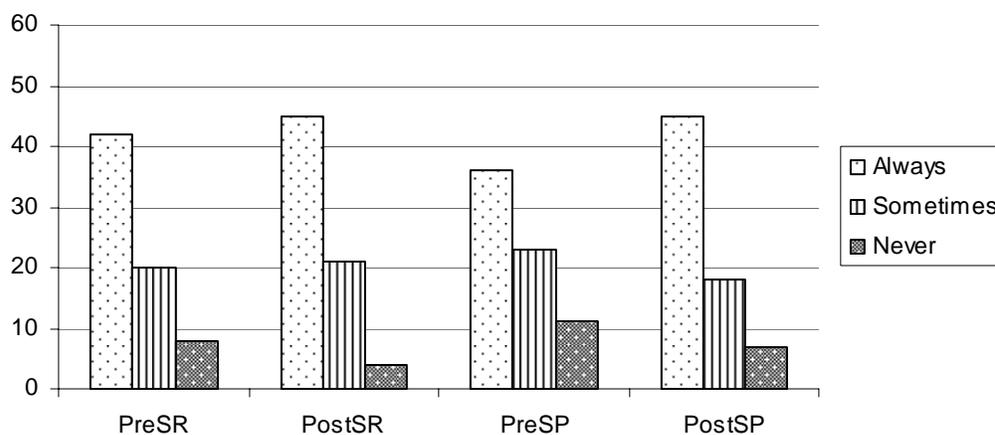


Key: SR=Student Response  
SP=Students' Perception of Anticipated Teacher Response

*Figure 27: Comparison of Pre and Post Documentation Student Responses*

As summarized in Figure 27 above, the teacher researchers observed from pre- to post-documentation encouraging results. Three more students, (4%) felt that they “always” turned in their homework. Eight more students, (11%) also felt that their teachers would agree.

During post-documentation observations, the teacher researchers noted that when question five and six about empathy was asked, 45 (64%) were “always” concerned about their classmates’ feelings. The same number of students 45 (64%) would agree and respond with “always” (Figure 28).

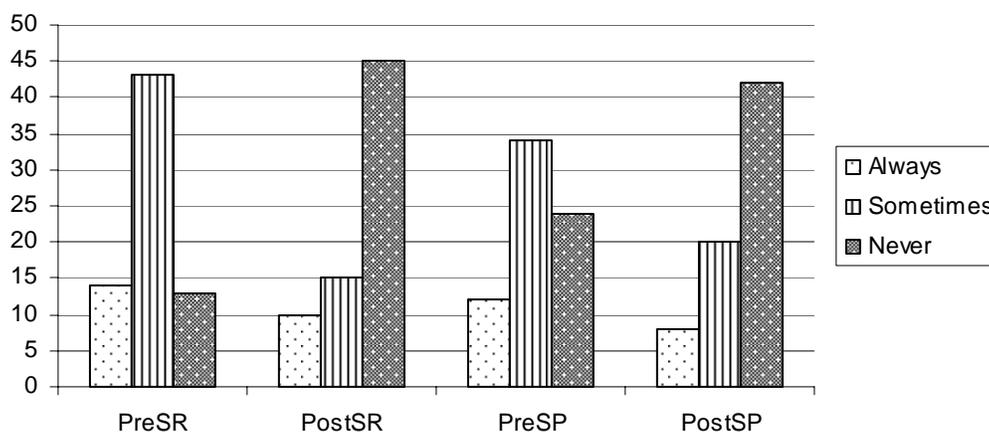


Key: SR=Student Response  
SP=Students' Perception of Anticipated Teacher Response

*Figure 28: Comparison of Pre and Post Documentation Student Responses*

As summarized in Figure 28 above, when comparing the pre- to post- documentation the teacher researchers noted positive results when the students responded to questions five and six about empathy. There was a 6% decrease (n=4) of students who felt that they “never” cared about their classmates’ feelings. An equal amount of students felt their teachers would respond similarly.

During post-documentation observations, students were asked questions to think about respect. Of the 70 students surveyed, 45 (64%) responded they “never” talked back or argued with others, while 42 (60%) thought their teachers would also agree and respond that they “never” talked back or argued with others (Figure 29).

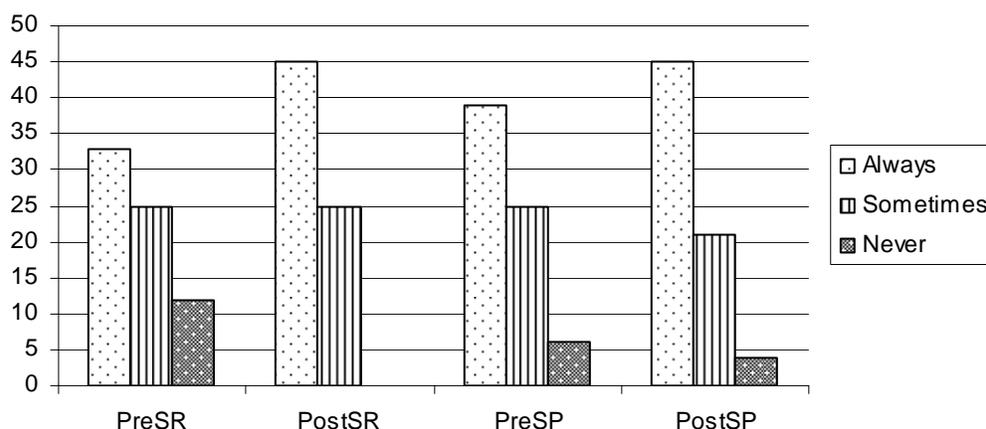


Key: SR=Student Response  
SP=Students' Perception of Anticipated Teacher Response

*Figure 29: Comparison of Pre and Post Documentation Student Responses*

As summarized in Figure 29 above, when comparing the pre- to post- documentation the Teacher Researchers noted an increase 45% (n=32) of students who believe that they “never” talked back or argued with others. Of the students surveyed, 18 more (25%) felt that their teachers would agree that they “never” talk back.

During post-documentation observations, the Teacher Researchers noted that 45 students (64%) thought that they worked well with others. An equal number of students thought that their teachers would agree (Figure 30).



Key: SR=Student Response  
SP=Students' Perception of Anticipated Teacher Response

*Figure 30: Comparison of Pre and Post Documentation Student Responses*

As summarized in Figure 30 above, the teacher researchers observed that during post documentation all of the children responded that they “always” or “sometimes” worked well with others compared with pre documentation where 12 students responded that they “never” worked well with others. Although all of the students felt that they worked well with others during post documentation, four students thought that their teachers would not agree.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The data that we collected showed little improvement in the students’ social skills. During the ten weeks of intervention we implemented different lessons and activities that focused on five social skills; self-control, respect, empathy, responsibility, and cooperation. Our goal was to improve our students’ ability to work cooperatively, learn to value and accept individual differences, and have a positive regard for one another. Due to the lack of returned

surveys in May, we concluded that parents were less enthusiastic to complete our survey. We contribute this lack of participation to an increase in the end of the school year activities, outdoor sports, and warm weather not allowing us to adequately compare our students' behavior at home from pre to post documentation. Our students did seem to exhibit a higher level of confidence while participating in our activities. We feel that there was a lower atmosphere of peer pressure allowing our students to enjoy the activities and feel more open to respond appropriately.

If we were to use class meetings through Tribes lessons again with our classes we would try to focus on one character trait instead of five. The character trait we would focus on would be respect. Respect is the social skill most students needed to work on. Focusing on just respect would make the experience for the students more meaningful. The message would be stronger and we could get more in depth using lessons that teach respect only. Even though the students learned about respect, cooperation, responsibility, empathy, and self-control the teacher researchers did not feel that the children had enough time to be deeply impacted by the activities. If the lessons taught only about respect, we feel that the students would remember the lessons and use what they learned in the future while working with others. In conclusion, we feel we would have had a more significant and positive change if these activities had been implemented at the beginning of the school year.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

## Parent Survey

Please answer the following questions regarding your child and place it in the envelope provided. Do not put your name or your child's name on it. Have your child return the sealed envelope to me.

Thank You, Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate your child on the following behaviors during a typical week.

1. How often does your child forget to do his or her chores?  

0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7 or more
---	-----	-----	-----	-----------
2. How often does your child say hurtful things to others?  

0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7 or more
---	-----	-----	-----	-----------
3. How often does your child talk back or argue with someone at home?  

0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7 or more
---	-----	-----	-----	-----------
4. How often does your child help others at home?  

0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7 or more
---	-----	-----	-----	-----------
5. How often does your child interrupt someone when they are speaking?  

0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7 or more
---	-----	-----	-----	-----------
6. What improvements would you like to see in your child's behavior?

## Appendix B

## Teacher Survey

Please answer the following questions regarding your class. Place the survey in the envelope provided, seal it, and return to my mailbox. Please do not put your name on it.

Thank You, Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate your class on the following behaviors during a typical week.

1. How often does your class not complete an activity or an assignment?

0                      1-2                      3-4                      5-6                      7 or more

2. How often does your class say hurtful things to each other?)

0                      1-2                      3-4                      5-6                      7 or more

3. How often does your class talk back or argue with others in the classroom?

0                      1-2                      3-4                      5-6                      7 or more

4. How often does your class help others out in the classroom?

0                      1-2                      3-4                      5-6                      7 or more

5. How often does your class interrupt someone when they are speaking?

0                      1-2                      3-4                      5-6                      7 or more

6. What improvements would you like to see in your class's behavior?

## Appendix C

My Teacher Thinks....I Think.....Student Survey  
Circle the answer that best describes you.

1. My teacher thinks I talk out of turn in class.
  1. never
  2. sometimes
  3. always
  
2. I think I talk out of turn in class.
  1. never
  2. sometimes
  3. always
  
3. My teacher thinks I do my work on time.
  4. never
  5. sometimes
  6. always
  
4. I think I do my work on time.
  - a. never
  - b. sometimes
  - c. always
  
5. My teacher thinks I care about how my classmates feel.
  - a. never
  - b. sometimes
  - c. always
  
6. I think I care about how my classmates feel.
  - a. never
  - b. sometimes
  - c. always
  
7. My teacher thinks I talk back or argue with others.
  - a. never
  - b. sometimes
  - c. always
  
8. I think I talk back or argue with others.
  - a. never
  - b. sometimes
  - c. always

9. My teacher thinks I work well with others.

- a. never
- b. sometimes
- c. always

10. I think I work well with others.

- a. never
- b. sometimes
- c. always

Appendix D

Behavior Observation Checklist

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Students \_\_\_\_\_

When one of the following off-task behaviors is observed during a forty five minute class period place a check next to it. Record the total of the behaviors at the bottom.

Incomplete Work (Responsibility)	Saying Hurtful Things (Empathy)	Talking Back/ Arguing (Respect)	Not Working Well as a Group (Cooperation)	Getting Angry (Self-Control)

## Appendix E

**Communication Skills***Time:* 30 minutes*Influence:* tribe*Materials:* balls, Com-Tag cards, tape*Grades:* 4-8**Com-Tag\*****Objectives**

1. To experience communication difficulties
2. To promote awareness of feeling
3. To promote awareness of group dynamics

**Instructions**

1. Each tribe has one ball in the center of their group. Also Com-Tags with the following phrases:
  - a. Interrupt me
  - b. Ignore me
  - c. Humor me
  - d. Doubt me
  - e. Praise me
  - f. Everything I say is wrong
  - g. Listen to me
  - h. Question me
2. First task is for each member of the tribe to choose a com-tag to wear throughout the exercise.
3. Develop a game to play with your tribe using only the ball that is in the center of your circle.
4. As you are developing the game, respond to each person in your tribe according to the phrase on the com-tag he/she is wearing..
5. Spend ten minutes developing the ball game.

**Discussion**

Ask questions:

- How did you approach the task?
  - Were you able to complete the task?
  - Do you observe this kind of behavior (communication) among your students?
4. How can you help facilitate effective communication with kids?

**Process**

Ask questions such as:

- How did you feel being responded to according to the Com-Tag?
- Do you experience these feelings in other situations?

**Validation**

Suggest validation, saying:

- "I learned . . ."

\*Carolyn McInnes

## Appendix F

**Time:** variable (see note)

**Materials:** butcher paper, felt pens, pencils, erasers

**Inclusion:** tribe

**Grades:** K-8

### Tribal Portrait\*

#### Objectives

1. To enhance body awareness
2. To develop awareness of students' own spatial relationships
3. To develop cooperation skills
4. To practice observation skills

#### Instructions

1. The teacher explains to the full group that each tribe will draw a self portrait. The portrait will include individual pictures of each member. Students are instructed to meet in tribes, get material and find a space to work.
2. Each tribe member asks one other member to draw him/her. (Student should not draw himself/herself.)
3. Artist draws subject using pencil.
4. After completing portrait, artist checks with subject for additions or corrections.
5. After corrections and additions have been made, the artist uses marking pens on portrait.
6. When every tribe member has a portrait finished, the tribe decides on how they will present their "tribal portrait" to the rest of the class.

#### Discussion

Ask questions such as:

- Which tribe's portrait is largest? Why?
- Which people look like themselves?
- Which tribe took the longest time to finish?

#### Process

Ask questions:

- What feelings did you have while your portrait was being drawn?
- What feelings did you have when you saw your portrait?

#### Validation

Suggest people validate, saying:

- "When I look at our tribal portrait I feel . . ."
- "I like what you drew because . . ."

Note:

This project can best be done over a period of 2-5 days because of attention span. Also the teacher needs to move from tribe to tribe giving some instruction in the drawing techniques needed. Excellent opportunity to bring in outside Art resource person to work with small groups.

\*Barbara Rodgers

## Appendix G

*Time:* 20 minutes

*Materials:* felt markers, large sheets of paper

*Inclusion:* tribe

*Grades:* K-8

### To Build A Better Bathtub

#### Objectives

1. To warm up a group
2. To promote inclusion
3. To experience the fun and creative power of brainstorming as a problem-solving technique

#### Instructions

1. Ask each tribe to appoint a recorder\* to jot down ideas on paper, blackboard, or newsprint as fast as ideas are called out.
2. Tell tribes that to "brainstorm" certain rules must be followed:
  - D. defer judgement
  - O. off-beat, original
  - V. vast number
  - E. expand, elaborate
3. Inform tribes that they shall brainstorm for five minutes on the subject, "How could we design a better bathtub for more enjoyment, efficiency, and comfort?" Recorder jots down all ideas.
4. Stop the brainstorming at five minutes. Ask each recorder to report back.

#### Discussion

Ask questions such as:

- Are many heads better than one to get a wider range of ideas?
- What would have happened if we had judged, commented or discussed ideas as they were offered?
- Could we use this technique on other questions? Can you suggest some?

#### Process

Ask questions:

- Did you feel free to offer any silly suggestions without judging them yourself?
- Was it difficult not to judge or comment?
- Did the group have fun?
- How does the group feel about itself after this activity?

#### Validation

Suggest that members validate, saying:

- "I liked it when you said . . ."
- "I felt good when . . ."
- "Your suggestions helped me to . . ."

\*An adult or an older child may help out here.

## Appendix H

*Time:* 2 days, 1 hour each day

*Materials:* book—*What's a Ghost Going To Do?*

by Jane Thayer. Large pieces of butcher paper, crayons, felt markers

**Art—Halloween**

*Inclusion:* tribes

*Grades:* 2-6

### What's A Ghost Going To Do?\*

#### Objectives

1. To promote inclusion through creative problem solving and commonality of purpose
2. To experience the fun of an artistic creation

#### Instructions

*Day 1:*

1. Read the book, *What's A Ghost Going To Do?* out loud to the class and stop on the exact page where Gus the Ghost advertises through the mail for a place to live because he is about to be evicted (approximately page 15).
2. Take a few minutes to clarify Gus's predicament through a class discussion.
3. Explain that each tribe will design a proper home for Gus on a large piece of butcher paper.
4. Ask the class to meet in tribes for about 10 minutes to make some plans.

*Day 2:*

1. Meet in tribes, and distribute materials.
2. Design a proper home for Gus on butcher paper. Allow about 45 minutes.
3. Have the class come together and sit in a large circle. Ask each tribe to share their version of Gus's home.

#### Discussion

Ask questions such as:

- How did you go about designing Gus's home?
- How did this activity help you know people better?

#### Process

Ask questions such as:

- Who became the leader(s) of this activity?
- Did the group have fun?
- What did you notice about the degree to which people participated?

#### Validation

Suggest people validate by saying:

- "\_\_\_\_\_, thank you for . . ."
- "\_\_\_\_\_, I liked your idea about . . ."
- "\_\_\_\_\_, I thought you helped us by . . ."

\*Patti Camras

## Appendix I

*Time:* 40 minutes

*Influence:* full group or tribe

*Materials:* butcher paper, felt markers (assorted colors)

*Grades:* K-3

### Addumup\*

#### Objectives

1. To make personally satisfying decisions.
2. To develop an awareness of one's own "personal space."
3. To develop oral language skills: listening, verbalizing ideas, stating conditions, desires and needs

#### Instructions

1. Ask participants to form a community circle (full-group), or meet in tribes.
2. Place a large (3' x 7') sheet of butcher paper in the center of the circle.
3. Ask each person to choose a felt marker from among the assorted colors.
4. There are three sets of instructions (three times around the circle):

First time around:

- a. Ask each person to draw an outline of a shape (create a space). This should *not* be a picture, but rather an abstract shape.
- b. Each shape should in some way connect with the one preceding it. Upon completion of the first time around, there should be a large abstract figure composed of inter-locking shapes, one per person in various colors.

Second time around:

- a. Ask each person, in turn, to add to the *inside* of his/her space.
- b. Each person may ask *one other* person to add something to his/her space.
- c. If a person who is asked to add something to another's space chooses to pass, the asker may request that someone else add to his/her space until someone agrees. As people add colors to one another's spaces they become increasingly unique and special.

Third time around:

- a. Same directions as "second time around," except that this time each person may ask *two* others to contribute to his/her space.
- b. Anyone who chooses to pass on "round three" may do so, but he/she must stay in the community circle.
- c. Anyone who chooses to pass on round three loses control over his/her space. Everyone in the circle may, in turn, place a mark in the space on someone who passes.

#### Discussion

After Addemup has been completed, ask questions such as:

- Where is the top of Addumup? (show of hands)
- Is Addumup a living or a non-living creature? (show of hands)
- What is Addumup for? (discussion)
- Where does Addumup live? (discussion)
- Etc.

\*Barbara Rogers

## Appendix J

*Time:* 15 minutes  
*Materials:* paper, pencils

*Influence:* tribe  
*Grades:* 4-8

### Personal Contract

#### Objectives

1. To reflect upon personal situations
2. To set new directions and commitment (decision making)
3. To facilitate positive peer influence

#### Instructions

1. Each group member identifies a personal intention about which he has been procrastinating.
2. Explain that validity of a contract depends on its being *specific, believable, attainable*.
3. Each member then writes a self-contract as follows:

“I, \_\_\_\_\_, will by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”  
Signed, \_\_\_\_\_  
Witnessed, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Author of contract asks two other group members to sign as witnesses.
5. Author may ask witness to check on specified date to learn of contract's completion.

#### Discussion

Ask questions such as:

- Did you have difficulty narrowing your choices to one situation?
- Do you think that writing a contract for yourself will help you fulfill the commitment?

#### Process

Ask questions such as:

- How did the witnesses feel?
- How does your contract make you feel?

#### Validation

Suggest that members validate, saying:

- “I felt good when . . .”
- “I like my contract because . . .”

## Appendix K

*Time:* 10 minutes  
*Materials:* none

*Influence:* full group  
*Grades:* K-6

## Resentment/Appreciation\*

### Objectives

1. To teach I-messages
2. To develop oral language skills
3. To learn acceptable ways to express feelings

### Instructions

1. Set aside five to ten minutes daily for this activity.
2. Explain terms: Appreciate - I liked it when . . .  
Resentment - I'm angry because . . .
3. Review the norms.
4. Ask for volunteers who need to express an appreciation or resentment. The following are sample statements:
  - "I am angry because we had a short recess."
  - "I liked it when Bettie made hot chocolate."
  - "I am angry at Tom because he wouldn't let me play kick ball."
5. Teacher asks Tom if he would like to say anything. After Tom responds, teacher decides whether this needs further discussion, and possibly a private conference. When the resentment has to do with the "schedule-of-the-day," the teacher asks for suggestions and ideas on how to solve the problem. The suggestions are discussed and voted on by the total group.

### Discussion

Ask questions such as:

- Have we helped you? In what way?
- Does anyone have a similar problem?

### Process

- Do you feel better?
- How was it for you to share this?

### Validation

Suggest people validate, saying:

- "I admire you for . . ."
- "I learned . . ."

Possible follow-up activity: **Confrontation** (coming up next!)

\*Barbara Rodgers

## Appendix L

*Time:* 30-45 minutes  
*Materials:* box, 5 × 8 index cards, pencils

*Inclusion:* tribe  
*Grades:* 4-8

### Dear Blabby\*

#### Objectives

1. To encourage active decision making
2. To build appreciation for another's point of view
3. To encourage problem solving
4. To provide for the application of personal values

#### Instructions

1. Have each child write at least one problem on an index card to "Dear Blabby." Collect these problems in a box over a period of a few days. The problem questions written to Dear Blabby should focus on common, real issues that occur to children of your class's age. (preliminary step to activity)
2. Have participants meet in tribes, and distribute a pile of problems on index cards to each group.
3. Ask participants to each take a turn at reading a problem out loud from a card to rest of the tribe and then say, "What I would do in response to this problem . . ."

#### Discussion

Ask questions such as:

- Did you notice certain types of problems occurring more frequently?
- What values were upheld in people's solutions?

#### Process

Ask questions such as:

- What did you feel when you listened to other people's problems?
- Is there more than one solution to a problem? How did you feel about your solution?

#### Validation

- "\_\_\_\_\_, you were a good listener."
- "\_\_\_\_\_, I liked it when you said . . ."

\*Patti Camras

## Appendix M

*Time:* 15-40 minutes

*Materials:* animal signs, string, tape

*Influence:* full group, tribe

*Grades:* 3-8

### Where Do I Stand?

#### Objectives

1. To encourage the exploration and sharing of personal feelings and attitudes
2. To encourage acceptance of differing personal styles

#### Instructions

1. Using large index cards, make four animal signs: LION, DEER, FOX, DOVE.
2. Suspend animal signs from the ceiling in four areas of the classroom. (Use yarn or string.)
3. Ask each person to stand under the sign for the animal that he/she is most like in his/her tribe. Encourage people to talk among themselves while they are deciding where to stand.
4. When everyone has chosen an animal, encourage volunteers to share why they placed themselves where they did.
5. Continue the activity by repeating steps #2 and #3, with other situations, e.g.
  - How you are with your friends?
  - How you are with your family?
  - How are you by yourself?
6. Ask people to return to their tribes and talk about their choices and why they stood where they did. (This step could be optional.)

#### Discussion

Ask questions such as:

- What are the qualities of a lion? A fox? A dove? A deer?
- What did you learn about other people in the class? About yourself?

#### Process

Ask questions such as:

- Was it difficult to make choices?
- Was it scary to share your reasons in the full group?

#### Validation

Suggest that people validate, saying:

- "I know just how you feel when . . ."
- "I was interested when . . ."
- "I felt good when you said . . ."

## Appendix N

### Controlling Inappropriate Behavior

In dealing with inappropriate classroom or playground behavior, the same principle applies:

When students are involved together in finding a solution to a problem, they tend to accept responsibility for making the solution work.

The class that has had a role in defining rules for appropriate classroom behavior, will "enforce" the rules far more effectively than the teacher alone can. Research has demonstrated that peer pressure can be a positive force, but few teachers have managed to apply this knowledge effectively. Once the group issues of inclusion and influence have been resolved in your tribes, you can begin to transfer responsibility for controlling inappropriate behavior to your students. Here is another strategy dealing with inappropriate behavior using a peer group process:

#### "Ban the Bullies"

Let's use the situation presented at the beginning of the chapter: your principal wants you to deal with a couple of bullies in your sixth grade class.

#### *Step-By-Step Process For Group Problem-Solving*

1. Lead your class in a guided fantasy which enables them to remember how they felt when they were in kindergarten and older children picked on them. Ask them to share their feelings in tribes; then have a full-group discussion.
2. Tell your class that the school needs to have some ways to manage the bullying-on-the-playground situation.
3. Pass out large sheets of paper. Ask tribes to brainstorm some ways that they, as older children, can bring a halt to the bullying on the playground.
4. Ask each tribe to choose their three best ideas.
5. Compile a total class list from the individual tribe lists. Give each student three colored stickers to vote for his/her top choices, count blue stickers 15 points, red 10 points, yellow 5 points. Each child places a blue sticker next to his/her final choice, red second, yellow third. Adding up the sticker-points for each item yields the class decision. In this case, the top two or three ideas might be used.
6. Deal with the specifics of translating the good ideas into action. Example: one tribe may make a poster, another tribe may volunteer to be playground monitors, etc.

