

Anti-Bullying In Fifth Grade

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Teaching Context:

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Inquiry Project in Fifth Grade

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What led me to my wonderings?

It was a little over two years ago when my best friend and roommate at the time came home and started talking enthusiastically about a class that I would just LOVE. She said in her psychology class her professor, Dr. Jeffrey Parker shared information with the class about another class that he teaches Psychology 425. The class is described as stated in the syllabus as *“a practicum experience that combines fieldwork involving middle school students with specialized coursework on children's' friendships, groups, and social and emotional competence. This is a truly unique course that combines learning and community service to children. It is appropriate to advanced undergraduates who intend to develop careers in developmental, educational, or clinical psychology, human development, social work, or counseling.”* At the time I was an elementary education major but I was interested in becoming a school psychologist. And my friend, knowing me as well she did, knew this would interest me. Well she was correct, I heard about this class and immediately started to smile. I wanted this opportunity to go into a middle school and help students with their problems. I applied that day and was overjoyed when I was accepted into the class. I was paired up with another girl and we were assigned to a sixth grade classroom in Bellefonte Middle School. We went to Bellefonte once a week

for a semester and taught the sixth grade students about various social issues that they could be experiencing in and out of the school environment. These topics ranged from, stereotypes, friendship, listening, peer pressure, relationships with their family, trust, rumors/gossip and self-esteem. It was a wonderful experience working with this class and my interest and passion for teaching grew from this experience. I took the class again the following fall.

After taking Psychology 425 I began thinking of the impact we had on these students. Did we make any difference? I left this course with questions and knowledge, which led me to my inquiry. My wonderings began before entering PDS but increased once I was teaching everyday and resulted into my main wondering of, what impact would an anti-bullying program have on a fifth grade classroom?

Wonderings

These wonderings that began after finishing my psychology class arose again when I was observing the fifth grade throughout the year. I began thinking what impact would an anti-bullying program have on a fifth grade classroom. If students are introduced to these topics at a younger age would they be better equipped for the stressful merger into middle school? Would they be more open-minded individuals and be less likely to form cliques? Would the students be mature enough to handle the difficult discussions? And finally, would any of this make a difference? Before I could begin answering some of my questions, I needed to discover if there was a need for an anti-bullying program in my fifth grade partner classroom.

Was there a need for an anti- bullying program in my partner classroom?

A bullying program would be a valuable tool in a classroom but only if a class would respond well to specific lessons. Did my fifth grade partner classroom need an anti-bullying program? From my previous observations in their classroom it seemed as if the students did need this type of program. There were times when I saw students call each other by inappropriate names or there were groups of students that always interacted with only each other. However my time spent in the classroom was limited. The teachers in the classroom knew their students the best so I approached the main teacher and the intern to ask for their opinion. They both responded positively about implementing an anti-bullying program in their classroom. They felt as if the class was appropriate for this and would hopefully respond well to the lessons. After receiving this exciting news I began thinking about the students in the classroom and all the questions that would come along with an anti-bullying program

Fifth Grade Classroom Profile

This classroom is comprised of twenty-one students (11 girls, 11 boys) that range in ability, learning style and personality. There is a split for math, there are 11 students who remain in the classroom for upper ability math (6 girls, 4 boys). One boy goes to middle school for enriched math learning, while the remaining 9 are divided amongst the two other fifth grade classrooms. Six students attend learning enrichments (4 girls, 2 boys), while three would be classified as gifted/talented. (2 girls, 1 boy) There is one girl who needs learning support for language arts.

There are four students (2 girls, 2 boys) who are quiet and anxious to conform and never cause any distractions in the classroom. There are four (2 girls, 2 boys) social leaders. There are two boys who are non-conformists and can cause discipline problems. And there are 2 students (1 girl, 1 boy), who have difficulty completing work on time.

Having a diverse classroom was ideal for implementing a bullying program. The students would have an opportunity to hear opinions and situations from students of different backgrounds.

What other think/know about this topic

After discovering there was a need for this type of program I needed to research what experts know about bullying. Some of my research has come from my experience with Dr. Parker and Psychology 425. While taking the class there were a lot of articles that helped me gain a better understanding of the importance of bullying. A main article called *Some Speculations on the Social Skills Basis of Friendship Formation and Maintenance*, was the source that introduced the importance of friendship. Throughout the article it stated that there was not much research done on the importance of friendship in adolescence. Due to this lack of research hypothesis were made about why certain aspects of friendship are important. From this article I picked out three hypotheses that I found to be important in my understanding of friendship which pertained to my inquiry project.

The first hypothesis was: Children must possess skills for self-disclosure. The rationale for this hypothesis is that for a relationship to be defined as a friendship the two parties must reveal private personal experiences and strongly held thoughts and feelings.

This is because with self-disclosure comes a feeling of vulnerability which fosters the need for trust. Research says that trust develops early in adolescence and this characteristic is what most children complain about with their friendships. It was important for me to understand if the fifth grade students would have the ability of self-disclosure with their friends or with me to see where they were in terms of friendship. Also, if they were able to self-disclose their feelings maybe they would be able to understand and appreciate other people's comments and be less likely to bully another person.

Another hypothesis from this article that I found important was: Children must be able to help their friends when their friends are in need. This was an interesting concept in terms of bullying. This is because if the students were able to help their friends then maybe if given the proper tools they would be able to help a friend that was being bullied. From my previous interactions with young students I knew that children experience problems and stress and they often turn to their friends for help, advice, comfort, and emotional support. It would be interesting to see if children would be able to respond appropriately. My anti-bullying program would hopefully begin to teach the students the skills so they would be better prepared to help a friend.

The final hypothesis that was important with my inquiry was Children must be able to forgive. The significance of this hypothesis was if students began to acknowledge their bullies would they be able to forgive this person and try to reconcile their differences? I knew from previous lectures and discussions that forgiveness is one of the most difficult things to teach. I did not want to teach the children forgiveness but rather open their eyes to the possibility and help them try to relate to each other. This was a key

component for the students to be able to move on and learn from their bad experiences instead of keeping those negative feelings bottled up against a particular person.

After learning from this friendship article and gaining a better understanding of the importance of friendship in regard to bullying I wanted to learn more about bullying. How did people explain what bullying was to children? How big of a problem is bullying in elementary schools and middle schools? Was there anything that I could do to make a difference?

An article titled, *The Bully Blight*, featured in the New York Times gave an appropriate perspective on the severity of bullying. The New York Times stated, “*Bullies have lurked in hallways and on playgrounds ever since history’s first day of school, and until recently, dealing with them was considered just another painfully useful life lesson. But that attitude is changing. In 2002 the American Medical Association warned that bullying is a public-health issue with long-term mental-health consequences for both bullies and their victims. Just last month UCLA researchers publishes two new studies showing that bullying is much more widespread and harmful than anyone knew.*” After reading this quote I realized the significance of my inquiry program. I wanted the students to begin to understand the magnitude of bullying.

To understand the magnitude of bullying I felt as if I needed to understand why a person would be a bully. To help understand this concept I found a book on bullying by Dan Olweus which provided important information on why students were bullies. An expert from this book, *Bullying at School* identifies characteristics of students who are most likely to be bullies and those that are most likely to be victims of bullying. Bullies tend to exhibit the following characteristics:

- They have a strong need to dominate and subdue other students and to get their own way
- Are impulsive and are easily angered
- Are often defiant and aggressive toward adults, including parents and teachers
- Show little empathy toward students who are victimized
- If they are boys, they are physically stronger than boys in general

The typical passive or submissive victims, according to Olweus' research, generally have some of the following characteristics:

- Are cautious, sensitive, quiet, withdrawn and shy
- Are often anxious, insecure, unhappy and have low self-esteem
- Are depressed and engage in suicidal ideation much more often than their peers
- Often do not have a single good friend and relate better to adults than to peers
- If they are boys, they may be physically weaker than their peers

These traits that Dr. Olweus listed were frightening. If these behaviors were acknowledged at an earlier age than hopefully it would reduce the possibility of the bullying increasing and becoming more severe. The New York Times article, *The Bully Bright* discussed the long-term affects of bullying. According to Dr. William Coleman a professor at the University of North Carolina, “*bullies are four times as likely as the average child to have engaged in criminal behavior by age 24; they also grow up deficient in social, coping and negotiating skills and are more likely to engage in substance abuse. Victims have similar problems; they also have fewer friends and are more likely to be depressed.*”

More startling information from the New York Times article, *The Bully Bright*, stated that 47% of sixth graders said they were bullied at least once in the course of five school days. This statistic represented the need for a program in the fifth grade. If

students could gain information on bullying and proper social behavior before entering middle school than they could be better equipped to handle the difficult transition into middle school.

All of this information combined with my previous experiences made it seem necessary to implement this anti-bullying program in the fifth grade. Now came the concern if the students would be able to handle the mature discussions about their friendships, bullying and social issues.

Implementing the anti-bullying program

It was important for me to find out what topics the student's needed/wanted to discuss. To understand the students I thought a survey would be most appropriate. After completing my research and remembering my time spent in fifth grade I designed a survey that I felt covered some major issues concerning fifth graders. The first week's lesson would have to be an introduction to the program to explain to the students why I would be coming in for six weeks and discussing social issues. The survey would be the focus of the lessons so I could gather enough information to create five more lessons that would be age appropriate and relevant to the students.

Week 1:

The first lesson titled Introduction (See Introduction Lesson) started with an explanation of the program and a background on myself. I then gave them a survey, which asked them basic questions about their feelings on social issues, such as bullying, friendship and appearance. After the survey I asked the students if they would share the

issues they believed existed in their class. I recorded their answers on the white board. Their responses to this question also helped to narrow down which topics I should focus on for the remaining five weeks. They mentioned a lot of social topics ranging from violence, trust, gossip, friendship, name calling, exclusion, labels, listening and so on. Then we played the Identity Circle game. This game consisted of the class being in a circle and each student having the opportunity to share something about themselves. If anyone else in the class experienced the same thing or shared similar feelings they would take a step into the circle. An example that one of the students shared was, "I love to go four wheeling." To my surprise half the circle stepped in with the young girl. We had a discussion which followed the game. The students expressed their enjoyment of the game and stated that they learned that they had more in common with their classmates than they had thought. After the game and discussion I brought out a box that I made. This box is called *Social Survival Skills*. I explain to them that it was a mailbox between them and me. They could write me notes and I would check it daily. The notes could be anonymous and could range from particular situations to suggestions for future lessons. After all of this was done I handed them their first of six reflection papers. They were required to write a mini reflection on the lesson for the day. Numbers were assigned to each student to protect them from feeling embarrassed when sharing certain thoughts. I tried to reassure them the purpose of these reflections were not to make anyone feel vulnerable but rather for me to gain a better understanding of them and to see the impacts of a particular lesson. I left the first lesson with a positive feeling, the students were ready to handle this program and they were excited about it. (See Journal Entry Week 1 and Student Reactions Week 1)

Week 2

Week two would be in my opinion the most intense lesson. This lesson was on stereotypes (See Crowd Clout Lesson) and the way in which I presented them this topic would be heavy. Each student was given a “sticker.” I met with the fifth grade classroom intern to group the student and decide which sticker each student should receive. For example the class leaders would receive the “ignore me” sticker. We tried to give each student a sticker, which was uncharacteristic of that student. They had to wear this sticker for the entire activity and the sticker would be the way in which they had to be treated. The students did not know what “label” they were given, they just had to remember how they felt being treated this way. The students were then grouped in small groups and given the task to create their ideal school. The only catch was that they had to create this school treating the people in their group exactly the way in which the sticker said. Each student had one of the following stickers:

- Treat me like I am the best
- Try to impress me
- Treat me like I’m weird
- Treat me like I’m normal
- Ignore me
- Treat me like I’m annoying
- Act like you are better than me

After creating their dream school they were allowed to take off the stickers and we had a class discussion. This discussion was very interesting because it allowed the students to have the opportunity to share how they felt being “labeled. Those that received the sticker “ignore me”, had a difficult time handling this negative title and most of them after a few minutes separated themselves from the group physically, by moving

away or walking around the room instead of participating. Those that received some positive labels were usually the shyer children or those that get bullied. Some of them appreciated the positive statements, one girl said, "I really like how everyone wanted to hear what I had to say, people usually don't ask me my opinion." One boy was angry by this attention and stated, "I felt weird how everyone was looking at me. I did not like my label." The purposes of the activity was not for the student to have a positive experience with their sticker but rather to gain a better perspective on how we treat others and the labels we consciously or subconsciously give to each other. Each student experienced for a half an hour what their life would be like if they had to wear that sticker. From the student's reflections at the end of class, some of them really were beginning to understand the negative impacts of labeling. (See Journal Entry Week 2 and Student Reactions Week 2)

Week 3

Week three would focus on listening. (See Listening Lesson) This topic was important because this class the first two weeks had difficulty listening to me and their classmates. My time spent observing this class revealed that the students had difficulty listening to their teacher's directions. The main activity of this lesson was to separate the students into partners. One partner would go out in the hallway and was told that they have to create a really great story to tell their partner. The pairing that remembered the most detail from the story would win. The partners inside the classroom were told to ignore their partner by making no eye contact, playing with objects on their desk and not answering any questions. The students from the hallway were frustrated with the lack of

respect their partners were showing them. This gave them a better perspective on the need to listen to teachers and classmates. This lesson was successful because the students began to understand the frustrations involved when people do not listen to them. Many students wrote in their reflections that it was “annoying” when their partner was not paying attention. Hopefully the students will remember this lesson and in the future be more aware of their listening behavior. (See Journal Entry Week 3 and Student Reactions Week 3)

Week 4

This week’s topic was rumors/gossip. (See Rumor/Gossip Lesson) This lesson consisted of a gossip quiz, which would give the students a better understanding of whether or not they are a gossip. After the quiz the students were placed into groups and were given urban myths. The group had to state whether or not these myths were true and why. The class had a mini discussion on why it is important to find out the truth. Without knowing the truth a rumor could exist for so long that everyone assumes it is true. The students seemed to make the connection between the urban myths and the need to discover the truth about rumors/gossip in which they hear. Then we played whisper down the lane. We realized how quickly a story can change the more people hear it. It was important after the game to have a discussion on not always believing what you hear because people could have exaggerated or changed a story a little which could change the entire story. Students were again able to make the connection between spreading rumors and the game. They loved the game and asked to play it multiple times. After all of this we shared the results of the gossip quiz and discussed what the results meant. To respect

the student's privacy I did not require the students to return their quizzes. I told them it was their responsibility to learn from the surveys and if their results suggested that they gossip too much they should try to challenge themselves to work on this weakness. Some students realized that they participate in gossip while others tend to stay away from it. There were some students who were honest and thoughtful with their responses from what they learned from the lesson. (See Student Reactions Week 4)

Week 5

Friendship was the focus of this week. (See Friendship Lesson) This was an important subject to cover because the students could really relate to this topic. No matter if they were a bully or a victim everyone in their lives had already experienced friendship. To begin this lesson the class generated a list of qualities of a good friend. Then we discussed six other important friendship qualities; Keeping a Confidence, Listening and Understanding, Disagreeing with Respect, Giving Support and Encouragement, Sharing and Respecting Limits. Then the Dear Cathy letters were passed out to groups of students. These letters represented scenarios of students their age. They were suppose to explain what advice they would give to this person if they were their real friend. The students decided to add a twist to the directions and they acted out all of the scenarios. This was unexpected but I allowed them to do this and I think they enjoyed having the opportunity to act. There were some situations in which the student's advice for this made up person would be to make new friends. I pointed out to the students that there are others suggestions to maintain a friendship before deciding the friendship is over. After acknowledging this ulterior solution the students adjusted and were more

creative with their responses. After a discussion on the Dear Cathy Letters a friendship quiz was passed out. The purpose of this quiz was for the students to see if their friend was a true friend. After they answered the questions the points were given for certain answers and then revealed to the students. The students seemed to enjoy this activity because many of them shared with the class and myself, "I really have great friends." This lesson was important because it allowed the students to reflect on their friendships and realize the importance of being a good friend. (See Journal Entry Week 5 and Student Reactions Week 5)

Week 6

This final week's topic is self-esteem. (See Self-Esteem Lesson) This was the lesson I was most looking forward to because I thought the students would really enjoy the activity and it was to be an appropriate culminating lesson. There were many times throughout the program students had expressed self-doubt. I wanted to provide the students with an opportunity to receive compliments, which would hopefully increase their self-esteem.

The students were blindfolded and placed in a circle. Two students at a time were asked to remove their blind folds and come into the middle of the circle. They were given the opportunity to 'tap' any student in the circle that they felt a statement applied to. An example of a statement is, "This person makes me laugh." Each student had the opportunity to be a 'tapper'. After the activity there was a discussion on how the activity made the students feel. Most students enjoyed this activity and really helped them with their self-confidence. Some people were more concerned with what they did not receive

'taps' for instead of focusing on what they did receive taps for. This concerned me and I did not anticipate this negative response. We talked about trying to focus on the positive and see the statements that they did not receive a tap for as an area of growth. After the activity the students took the original survey again and the class had a discussion on what changes they have seen within themselves and of the class since I began the lessons. I received a lot of positive feedback and was sad that this was the final lesson. (See Journal Entry Week 6 and Student Reactions Week 6)

Data Collection/Analyzing the Data

Along with teaching the lessons there were other things that I did to implement an Anti-Bullying Program in the fifth grade classroom. I introduced the program by assigning a name to the program. The name had to be catchy yet represent the purpose of the classroom. After much thought the program was titled, *Social Survivor Skills*. I created a box with the name of the program which would be placed in the fifth grade classroom for the entirety of the inquiry project. (See Introduction Lesson) This would serve as a means of communication between the fifth grade students and myself. Students would regularly utilize the *Social Survivor Skills* box to communicate about frustrations or to ask my opinion on a specific situation. (To see more examples of notes left by students see 'Student Notes Left in the Social Survival Skills Mailbox') An example of a note from a student is,

Ms. Kornburg

Everyone (mostly) has a boyfriend/girlfriend. And especially around Valentines Day, I want one. I know that I'm probably too young, but there is this guy in this class I like and I want him to ask me

Some students were not as specific and offered suggestions for future lessons, an example of this is:

I think we should talk about fighting and argueing

As the program progressed the amount of notes left in the box decreased. This was something that I assumed would occur as the excitement wore off and was probably replaced with a new unit or activity held in the classroom. I did learn that the students utilized this box because they needed a way to communicate with an adult in an anonymous fashion.

STUDENT SURVEYS

Another form of communication that I utilized throughout my inquiry project was surveys. (See Student Survey) A survey was given to the fifth grade students during the first week. This survey asked general questions about the student's feelings on friendship, appearance, bullying and rumors/gossip. The same survey was given at the end of the year to analyze if there was a change from the beginning lesson to final lesson.

After collecting the data I began to analyze it. The surveys were the first piece of data that I analyzed. I separated each question into piles and recorded how many people answered each question. I recorded the numbers for the first survey and did the same for

the second. This showed how the student's opinions on various social issues changed. The results from this survey showed that for every question there was a positive change. The first set of numbers (in red) shows the amount of responses when the survey was first given and then the second set of numbers (in blue) represents the students reactions during the last week of the program.

1. Do you think the other kids in you class like you?

None	Some	Most	All
<i>1</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>1</i>
0	2	12	3

2. Do you think the other kids at school (your grade) like you?

None	Some	Most	All
<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>1</i>
2	8	11	0

3. Do you feel there are cliques (a group of people who are only friends with themselves) at school?

None	Some	A lot	Me (student created their own responses)
<i>4</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>1</i>
5	11	5	0

4. How often do you hear rumors about other kids?

Never	Once a month	Once a week	Every day
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>5</i>
1	7	9	4

5. Do you care about how you look at school?

Never Sometimes Always

6 *7* *8*
6 **10** **5**

6. Are there kids in your class who are consistently mean to you or to someone else?

None A few A lot

6 *13* *2*
10 **10** **1**

7. How often do you see someone (including yourself) get treated badly or made fun of?

Never Sometimes A lot

3 *15* *3*
4 **17** **0**

8. How many kids in your class might you call a friend?

0-5 Kids 6-11 Kids 12-16 Kids 17-21 Kids

5 *3* *4* *9*
2 **3** **6** **10**

9. How many kids in your class might call you their friend?

0-5 Kids 6-11 Kids 12-16 Kids 17-21 Kids

8 *3* *3* *7*
3 **3** **4** **11**

The most important component of the survey in terms of bullying was question number 7. How often do you see someone (including yourself) get treated badly or made fun of?

<u>Never</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>A lot</u>
<i>3</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>3</i>
4	17	0

This data shows that the students have seen an improvement in how students are treating each other. Out of the twenty-one students in the class, there was not one student at the end of the program that felt that themselves or a peer got treated badly on a regular basis. This is significant data that shows the importance of implementing an anti-bullying program.

CONTROL GROUP SURVEY

To gain a better perspective on the impacts of the anti-bullying program I wanted to survey (See Student Survey) a class who did not participate in the program. This class was considered my “control group.” Even though this class did not participate in the project I knew the data would be not be perfect because their class dynamic differed. However, I wanted to see if this “control group” could provide important data to help see the impacts of the program. The results from this control group did not support my program. What I was hoping for was that the class that received the anti-bullying program would have better results after receiving the program than a class who did not participate in the lessons. However, this was not the case. Their responses showed that they were as content with their relationships in their class and in their grade as my classroom with out being a part of the anti-bullying program. These are the results from the control groups survey. This class has 22 students.

1. Do you think the other kids in you class like you?

None Some Most All

0 6 15 1

2. Do you think the other kids at school (your grade) like you?

None Some Most All

0 8 13 1

3. Do you feel there are cliques (a group of people who are only friends with themselves) at school?

None Some A lot

1 14 7

4. How often do you hear rumors about other kids?

Never Once a month Once a week Every day

4 5 11 2

5. Do you care about how you look at school?

Never Sometimes Always

4 15 3

6. Are there kids in your class who are consistently mean to you or to someone else?

None A few A lot

10 10 2

7. How often do you see someone (including yourself) get treated badly or made fun of?

<u>Never</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>A lot</u>
4	17	1

8. How many kids in your class might you call a friend?

<u>0-5 Kids</u>	<u>6-11 Kids</u>	<u>12-16 Kids</u>	<u>17-21 Kids</u>
3	12	4	3

9. How many kids in your class might call you their friend?

<u>0-5 Kids</u>	<u>6-11 Kids</u>	<u>12-16 Kids</u>	<u>17-21 Kids</u>
6	14	3	0

These results show that there are students in the class who feel that there are social issues. There is no way to tell if the students in this classroom would respond well to the lessons and see positive changes. This survey represents a different classroom who based on the survey do not show as great of a need for an anti-bullying program.

PARENT SURVEY

A survey (See Parent Survey) was also created for the parents. The same topics were covered but the parents were asked to answer the questions from their opinions of their children. A letter (See Parent Letter) was sent home with the survey explaining to the parents the purpose of the program and that the results from these surveys would remain confidential. Not every parent responded, but some did.

Looking at the parent's surveys it was interesting because out of a class of twenty-one students only eight parents responded. This is not surprising but because of this lack of data instead of comparing each student's response with a parent response, I chose three students as an example. (See Parent Survey) These three students' answers varied and so did their parents answers. It was interesting because in two situations the parents were inaccurate with representing their child. A shocking example of this was with one student who answered question 8, "How many kids in your class might you call a friend?" This student answered 5 friends. The student's parent answered 16-20 friends. This showed that there was a lack of communication between the student and parent that the parent would assume that they were friends with every child in their class. Another example of this is with a similar question, "How many kids in your class might call you a friend?" This student answered 10 friends. The parent of this child answered the question, "How many friends (Children they get along with and feel comfortable with) do you think your child has in his/her class?" the parent answered 1-2 friends. This again shows that the parent is either not listening to their child speak about their day or they do not understand their child's perspective. Either way, the parent's lack of awareness of their child's social interests in school is important.

JOURNAL ENTRIES

After most lessons, I wrote a journal entry in my inquiry journal. This type of self-reflection allowed me to gain a better understanding on how the lessons went. I took this opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in my personal teaching but also on how the students responded to the lessons. This was also a place to write

important quotes that students said that I did not have the chance to write down. This journal is an excellent source of data for my own personal opinions on how the program progressed. (See My Inquiry Journal)

STUDENT WORK

The main source of data collection was student work. After each lesson each student was required to write a mini-reflection on how they felt the lesson went. The student reflection paper instructions were as follows:

Number: _____
Date: _____
Lesson Topic: _____

This reflection is a time to communicate with me about your reaction to the lesson for this week. You MAY also write about other social issues that are on your mind. (Not just in today's lesson) These are confidential so please feel free to write whatever you want. If there is an issue that you want to discuss with me, write your name at the bottom of the paper and I will make sure to talk with you in confidence. Take your time and reflect on what we talked about today as well as other related things/issues.

Reflection:

Things that you may want to include in your writing....

- things from the lesson that made you think
- a thought that you wanted to say in class but you did not feel comfortable sharing
- highlights of the lessons
- a question or concern that you have
- a suggestion for another topic for a lesson
- how the lesson might change your behavior
- anything else that is on your mind that you want to write down

Students were given a few minutes at the end of each lesson to write down a few important things from the lesson. The student's responses ranged in topic and length. Some students took advantage of this reflection to truly reflect on their own feelings, while others could not be bothered.

The student's reaction papers helped to understand what the students were learning from the lessons. Each student reaction was read and then depending on how meaningful of a response was stated it would be placed in separate piles. Many times students just responded with statements similar to "This activity was a lot of fun. Thanks for doing this." This tells me that they are enjoying themselves but it is not supporting any self-reflection. The responses that explained what they were learning or how they changed were separated and then highlighted in different colors. If the statement was a suggestion for a future activity this received a color. If the statement shows change or personal growth that received a different color. If the statement gave a specific example of something that applied to the lesson topic again that received a different color. After all the reactions were read there were four piles on the floor that represented different important areas that could support future claims. (See Student Reaction Papers)

ADULTS

A final way in which I collected data was from other adults in the classroom. I provided an observation sheet for my PDA as well as the intern in the classroom. They would take notes to record student reaction. The directions for the observation sheet is as follows:

Observer: Please note anything that indicates/has to do with behavior of an individual students or the entire class

- unfriendly behavior
- exclusive behavior (students who intentionally leave other students out)
- bullying (verbal and non-verbal abuse)
- self-esteem issues
- when students label other students
- rumors/gossip

Having another adult observe while I was teaching relieved some pressure for to make an effort to remember every valuable quote while at the same time trying to control the classroom. (See Adult Observations)

What I learned

Claim 1:

Having a forum for students to discuss social issues was seen as an important and enjoyable part of the day

Evidence:

There are many pieces of evidence for this claim. The students on various occasions would comment that my lessons were their favorite part of the day. They would ask in the hallways if I was coming and smile if the answer was yes. They would tell the other teachers that they enjoyed the lessons.

Student work is also evidence. (See Student Reaction Papers) Examples of student work that showed that they enjoyed talking about these issues are similar to the following quotes, “I thought this lesson was really really fun.” “I think a highlight of the lesson was that we got to treat each other like the sticker said and that was fun.” “I like the game, because playing telephone is fun, but I never realized it was like gossiping.”

Claim 2:

There have been positive changes in individual students and the class dynamics since implementing the program

Evidence:

The survey results (See Survey Graphs) from the first survey to the last survey show that there was a positive change in every question. Some of the changes were drastic, while others there were only a few students that changed their opinion.

1. Do you think the other kids in you class like you?

<u>None</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Most</u>	<u>All</u>
<i>1</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>1</i>
0	2	12	3

2. Do you think the other kids at school (your grade) like you?

<u>None</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Most</u>	<u>All</u>
<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>1</i>
2	8	11	0

3. Do you feel there are cliques (a group of people who are only friends with themselves) at school?

<u>None</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Me (student created their own responses)</u>
<i>4</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>1</i>
5	11	5	0

4. How often do you hear rumors about other kids?

<u>Never</u>	<u>Once a month</u>	<u>Once a week</u>	<u>Every day</u>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>5</i>
1	7	9	4

5. Do you care about how you look at school?

<u>Never</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Always</u>
<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>

classroom. “I thought that there were a lot of changes because now that you have given us these lessons I talk to more people. I think of people differently.” “Our class really changed and since we are being nice to others in other classes everyone is nice. Even myself have changed, there was this one girl I never really got to know her. Then my friends became friends with her and I found out she is actually really fun. Thanks. I will miss you” (See Student Reaction Papers Week 6)

These are just two examples of how students saw changes in themselves and in the class. The survey results and the student works are examples of the positive changes the program has had on the class as a whole and the individual students in the classroom.

Claim Three:

The Social Survivor Skills program has caused students to reflect more and heighten their awareness upon social issues in their 5th grade classroom

Evidence:

The first piece of evidence to support this claim are the lessons themselves. (See Inquiry Lessons) Spending an hour for two months reflecting on the social atmosphere and trying to figure out where you fit in that scene encourages self-reflection. The lesson topics ranged from a variety of social topics. There were some students who were interested in particular lessons more than others, but all of them had to reflect on their social lives and interactions during these lessons. This caused self-reflection that hopefully reflected in changes or realizations that allowed to students to grow.

The second piece of evidence that supports that students have reflected on social issues is the Social Survivors Skills box.(See Notes Left in the Social Survivor Skills Mailbox) This box represented the communication between the students and myself. At the beginning of the program there was a lot of “mail” left for me to read. This shows that the students were utilizing this box and were reflecting on the social situations surrounding them. There is no way to prove that they did not do this self-reflection on their own, but the box does show independent reflection and thought with at times wanting a response from an adult. Providing this tool for the students allowed them to express in written form their concerns or suggestions about social issues.

Implications for My Future Practice as a Teaching

Implementing this program in the fifth grade has made me aware of the need to provide a forum for students to discuss social issues. This can be done with students of all ages and it can range in severity. I have used some of the general ideas behind the lessons and implemented it into my kindergarten classroom. I constantly encourage my students to play with new friends, use “I” messages to solve problems and to treat all people with respect. These mini-lessons have made a difference in my kindergarten class community. Also, I know for all my future years of teaching I will communicate with my students that I am there for them to talk to about academic and social problems. The students responded well to me because they trusted that I was there for the right reasons. They saw me as a teacher, but they saw me as a person who supported them and cared about them. This is what every teacher can do to help understand the students on a more social level.

Ideally as a teacher I would want someone outside of my classroom to come in and discuss these social issues. I think having an adult that is not the main teacher allows the students to express themselves in a way that they could not do if the classroom teacher was leading these discussions. I did not know what the children were like as academic students or as behavioral problems in the classroom. This open-mindedness allowed me to be unbiased to their statements. Some students who are usually shy and quiet felt comfortable sharing personal situations because I had not in my mind labeled them as “shy.” This is of course an ideal situation. If a guidance counselor could become involved in these types of lessons the students might not feel the sense of vulnerability with a guidance counselor as they could with a classroom teachers. If another adult is not an option than a teacher could try to apply these lessons into the classroom community and stress the importance of feeling comfortable.

The information that was received from the parents alarmed me and made me see the need to encourage child/parent communication. Conferences would be a great opportunity for the student to share with the teacher and the parents how they are feeling socially. The parents can gain a better perspective on their child and could be supportive if social issues are problematic.

Finally, as a teacher I will always make the children know the danger of bullying. Sharing articles and situations with older aged students is necessary. Many times bullies probably do not realize that their actions can have long-term serious effects on them and the victims. It is important for students to realize that their words and actions can and will impact another student.

I hope in the future wherever I am teaching at, I will prioritize the need to recognize the problems and impacts of bullying. I would love to lead a training session for teachers and emphasize the importance of communication with their students. Many times what happens during school hours teachers are unaware of the impact it is having outside of school. It is our role as educators to provide a safe community for our students and trying to decrease the amount of bullying will help to protect many students.

New Wonderings

After finishing the inquiry project and implementing an Anti-Bully program the results still are not certain. I will never know if these lessons had any long term impacts on the students or if the students will be better prepared and equipped for the transition into middle school? I am also wondering if a program similar to this was implemented for every class in fifth grade would the whole grade dynamic change? Also, what if a type of programs like this was done with every elementary class then would the amount of bullying for the entire school decrease? All of these questions involve long-term research. I hope that one day someone realizes the importance of this topic and takes the time to do an intensive study to see truly what the impact would be if students at a young age are familiarized in a professional fashion the ways in which to prevent and handle bullying.

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