Peer Coaching: Students Helping Students Succeed in the Classroom

Mary Beth Ziobro
Professional Development School Intern
State College Area School District
Boalsburg Elementary- 5th Grade
mcz124@psu.edu

Abstract:

Student behavior is one of the main elements that determine if a child will be successful in school or if he/she will struggle with the daily demands of an elementary classroom. For this reason, my inquiry project focuses on the three most common behaviors problems that are exhibited in my classroom. These problems include off task behavior, poor organizational skills, and an unwillingness to contribute to classroom discussions. Through this inquiry paper, I will provide an overview of how I handled these troublesome behaviors in my classroom through a peer-coaching program.

Teaching Context:

In my self-contained fifth grade classroom, there are eight boys and ten girls for a total of eighteen students. As with any other classroom, my students exhibit a wide range of academic abilities and achievement levels. In our school, we group students for math across the entire fifth grade. Sixteen of my students participate in the advanced math class, and two students attend a math class for those who are below grade level. In addition to these accommodations, three students leave the classroom two times a week to receive Title One support in reading. Due to the wide range of abilities, my mentor and I also try to differentiate instruction in every subject to ensure that students are successful in every classroom situation. As with any classroom setting, a wide range of socioeconomic statuses are represented. These statuses include, low, middle and, upper.

Social and behavioral differences also add to the dynamics of the classroom. In terms of social differences, the students get along fairly well with each other in classroom settings and during group work; however, during recess and lunchtime, the students tend to socialize with individuals who they have known from previous school years and often exclude students they have just met this year. As with any other classroom, there are students in my class who constantly push the limits to see how far they can take their off-task behavior. They often need reminders and redirection so that they can complete their work. Additionally, these students have trouble keeping their materials organized, remaining engaged during instructional times, and confidently contributing to discussions.

Rationale:

Due to the social and behavioral concerns I have about the students in my classroom, I have decided to implement a peer coaching program. I have set up peer-coaching partnerships that require two people to work together who normally socialize with different groups of friends for two different reasons. First, by pairing students who normally don't socialize with each other outside the classroom environment, they have the chance to meet someone new with the potential that they will become friends and different groups will start intermingling with one another. Second, students who are having difficulty in the classroom will be partnered with an academically and behaviorally successful student. This way, those students who need a peer coach will have the opportunity to learn from their coach effective techniques to use to help them remain on task, keep their things organized, and develop a confidence level that will allow them to participate during classroom discussions. It is my hope that through the peer coaching system, those students who are having difficulty in the classroom will develop a confidence level that not only allows them to see that they can remain on task, keep their things organized, and participate in classroom discussion, but also develop the confidence to make new friends and trust new people.

Literature Review:

According to Brewer, Reid, & Rhinke (2003), "one-on-one instructional and [support] procedures have been viewed as highly effective for students [within a classroom setting]." (p. 113). One effective classroom strategy that has shown marked improvement and success in the classroom is known as "peer and cross age tutoring [or coaching]" (Brewer, Reid, & Rhinke, 2003, p. 113). In this model of "peer and cross age tutoring, students take part in a class-wide experience that pairs competent students with students with specials needs" (Brewer et al., 2003, p. 113). In my classroom, I adapted this original version of the peer-coaching program so that students who were high academic achievers and did not demonstrate behavior problems were the coaches for students who were in the lower to middle range of academic achievement and did display certain behavioral deficits. Therefore, these students were not only acting as a peer coach, but also a role model.

Zornemann, Krappmann,Grabow, & Hans (1999), state that since the peer coaching system primarily revolves around the idea of peers helping peers achieve success in the classroom, one issue that may arise is soliciting requests for help. The authors explain, "one particular situation that may provoke a problem [within the peer coaching program] is actually asking for help" (Zornemann, et. al, 1999, p. 3). Asking for help or accepting help is never an easy situation for the person who is seeking the assistance, in this case the student asking her/his peer coach for help. The reason for this is because "an individual's need for something, [such as homework help], that they have to rely on another to give or refuse, often creates an imbalance that children try to avoid" (Zornemann, et. al, 1999, p. 3). To ensure that this problem did not occur in my classroom, I made sure that all of the peer coaches were open to helping their partner and made sure that the partners were comfortable asking for help. This was accomplished

through a class discussion that helped to define the role of the peer coach and partner. These roles can be described as follows: the peer coach is responsible for helping his/her partner achieve success by making sure papers and class materials are organized, students remain on task during a lesson (for example, not drawing pictures instead of taking notes during instructional times), and motivating the other student to volunteer during class discussions. The peer coach partner on the other hand was to ask for help or assistance at any time from the peer coach and trust that the peer coach would truly help the partner achieve success. During this clarification of roles, I made sure to stress to the peer coach and the partner, that the peer coach did not hold any type of power or superiority, therefore, helping to eliminate the stress of the program in terms of asking another person for help and feeling as though the other person was in control.

According to Brewer, et al. (2003), in addition to clarifying the roles of both the peer coach and partner, it is equally important to maintain the peer coaching model steps to ensure that the program remains successful. The steps that the authors suggest are as follows:

1. "Identify coached and their needs

2. Identify learning buddies with similar needs

3. Set up schedule

4. Determine supervision process

5. Plan lessons

6. Implement coaching sessions

7. Reflect on lesson

8. Evaluate" (p. 114)

Understanding that following a particular set of steps is important, I have adapted the above steps to meet the needs of my students as well as the peer-coaching program I implemented in the classroom. These steps are as follows:

1. Identify students with behavioral problems (in my case, these behavioral problems included being off task, disorganization, and not contributing to class discussions).

2. Identify students in the class who will serve as effective and supportive peer coaches.

3. Set up expectations and procedures to follow (Observable On Task Behavior sheets).

4. Determine supervision process (teacher observations; removal of sticky strips from Observable On Task Behavior sheet).

5. Plan time for students to interact with each other (for example, time to ask questions about particular assignments and to get homework materials together).

6. Survey the students on a continual basis to check in about their progress and feelings about the peer-coaching system.

In addition to helping students succeed in the classroom, the peer coaching program also allows students to develop friendships with students with whom they may not have been close in the past. Since students are provided with a peer coach, in the initial stages of the program, I tried to match students up with someone familiar. However, to foster new friendships in the classroom, I progressively changed the peer coaches so that students would become comfortable working with others and develop new friendships. According to the website, http://www.tolerance.org, changing friendships among the students is beneficial because it allows all the students to feel like they are accepted in the classroom. Furthermore, the website explains that partnering students together who do not normally socialize or "hang out" with each other helps to foster new relationships as well as a new level of respect for one another. As stated

above, understanding that this is an important element to the peer-coaching program, I have considered these ideas and used them to help guide my peer-coaching program.

In the report that follows, I have described the process that I used to implement the peer coaching program in my classroom taking into consideration all of the important aspects that have been addressed above.

Wonderings:

Due to the factors listed in my rationale, I have chosen to implement a peer coaching system to help six students remain on task, keep their materials organized, and develop more appropriate behavioral and social skills. As a result of this system, I have developed several questions as to the effectiveness of the program in a fifth grade classroom and have decided to use these questions as a guide for my inquiry.

Main Wondering:

What effect will peer coaching have on the student behavior of selected students in a fifth grade classroom?

Sub-Questions/Wonderings:

How do all students in the fifth grade classroom feel about having the peer-coaching program implemented to help off-task students?

How do individual students who exhibit consistent behaviors of being off-task, disorganized, and unwilling to contribute to classrooms discussions feel about having a peer coach?

Will the students' behavior change with the guidance and help of a peer coach?

How will students feel about serving as a peer coach?

What will happen if students are told they do not need a peer coach anymore? Will the students gradually revert back to their off-task behaviors?

Inquiry vs. Improvement Project:

According to Dana & Silva (2003), teacher inquiry can be described as the "process where teachers generate the wonderings of the classrooms and these wonderings serve as the main focus for the inquiry project" (p. 4). Understanding that developing a wondering is the main criteria for an inquiry project, I feel that my project can be classified as inquiry and not improvement for several reasons. The first reason is because I'm not sure that peer coaching will work in my classroom because I cannot determine how my students will react to having a peer coach. However, as part of the inquiry process, I have explored relevant literature to learn what experts believe the advantages of peer coaching may be, and I have used my experiences with, and reflections on the behaviors of these particular students to develop a plan that may address their specific needs. In addition, even though through my inquiry project I want to foster the growth of new friendships and intermingling of my students, I cannot guarantee that this will happen. I have developed my wonderings based on questions I had about how my students were interacting and behaving and the interest I had to help struggling students in my classroom transition into more successful students with the help of a peer coach. Furthermore, through this process, I have also developed an interest in helping to foster new relationships in my classroom.

Inquiry Plan:

I developed the idea for my inquiry project while wondering about the process of creating a program that would help students who exhibit problem behaviors, such as consistent off-task behavior, unorganized classroom materials, and lack of unwillingness to contribute to classroom discussions. I wanted to correct these behaviors so they did not interfere with success in the classroom. Through this process, I knew that I wanted to create a program that would allow students in the classroom, who do well in the classroom academically and do not possess these problem behaviors, to act as a role model for those students who were having problems. Thus the peer-coaching program has evolved based on my understanding of the literature and my own classroom observations. (Appendix A- data collection timeline)

Due to the fact that the peer-coaching program would require me to pair up students who are having behavioral problems with students who do well in the classroom, both on an academic and behavioral level, I realized that I would need to collect data to determine which students would benefit from having a peer coach. To begin this data collection, my mentor teacher and I observed on a weekly basis those students who we felt would benefit from a peer coach in a number of settings. These settings included circle discussions, independent work time, recess, and monitored group activities. The reason for observing the students in these settings was to see how they interacted in these areas without the help or guidance of a peer coach. More specifically, we were looking at how the students' problem behaviors interfered with their ability to be successful during these classroom settings. Through these observations, my mentor and I gathered data that supported the idea that the students exhibited behavioral problems in one or more of the areas defined above. After analyzing the data, we determined there were six students out of eighteen that would benefit from having a peer coach. Once we narrowed down the

students who would benefit from having a peer coach, it was now time to address the program with the students and develop for them, a clear picture of what the program would entail.

To address the program, my mentor and I held a class meeting on the morning of January 22, 2007. During this meeting, we discussed that there were some students in the classroom who were having problems completing activities and homework assignments for a number of reasons. We further explained that the reasons for these problems included behaviors, such as being off-task, poor organizational skills, and unwillingness to volunteer during class discussions. We further explained that these behaviors were adversely affecting their success in the classroom. We continued to explain that to help these students get back on track and achieve success in the classroom, we had created a program called the Peer Coaching program in which we would partner students who are having difficulties in the classroom with students who we feel, based on our observations, would be good role models for them. During this brief introduction with the students, we made it a point to not only go over the system in general, but to also discuss the role the peer coach would have in helping their partner work through problems in the classroom. To address this part of the program, we first told the peer coaches that they would have the opportunity to tell me or my mentor their views on being a peer coach, specifically whether they wanted to be a peer coach or if they chose not to be a peer coach at this time. Once we set that expectation, we then described the elements of the system that the students would need to follow. These elements included that peer coaches would not have "power" over their partner nor could they command them to do something. Rather, the role of the peer coach would be to help the students work through their problems through friendly reminders. These friendly reminders would come through an "Observable On-Task Behavior Sheet" (Appendix B) that I created to help peer coaches know when their partner was exhibiting problem behaviors and to let the

students who were exhibiting these problems know what behavior expectations we had set. After this introduction to the behavior sheet, we explained to the students that the sheet described what their partner was supposed to do when they arrived at school in the morning as well as what they needed to do during instructional times. In this area, we pointed out to the students that each morning their partner was to look at the schedule and determine what supplies/materials they would need from their cubby so they did not go back to this area during morning lesson, therefore helping the students to organize their materials by having everything ready at hand. Next, we explained to the group that both the peer coach and their partner would need to sit next to each other during all lessons to help reduce the amount of off-task behavior and promote note-taking and active participation in the lesson. Once we went over the expectations that were set through the behavior sheet, we went over how the peer coaches would let their partner know that they were not following one of the expectations. We explained that for this process, the peer coaches would be provided with four sticky strips of paper, two strips for the morning and two strips for the afternoon. With these strips of paper, the peer coach would take one away for a behavior they felt was interfering with their partner's success in the classroom. Below the sticky strips was an area that was revealed that allowed the student to write down what they were doing at the time it was taken away. For example, comments in this area might include, "I was drawing in my notebook instead of taking notes." (Appendix B). These behaviors included, talking during a lesson, writing notes to another classmate or drawing in their notebook during a lesson, calling out, being disrespectful, and not paying attention to classroom rules, such as no talking in the hall. If either the peer coach or teacher took the sticky strip away, the student would then write on the area where the sticky was taken away what they were doing at the time it was taken away. Comments in this area might include: "I was drawing in my notebook instead of taking notes", "I

was fooling around in the group circle", "I did not follow the rules when I was walking in the hall." In addition, we told students that if two sticky strips were removed during the morning or afternoon hours, the peer coach's partner would have to write a letter during recess describing why the sticky strips were removed and how they would correct those behaviors next time. By following this procedure, the peer coaches were helping the students realize that their behavior was inappropriate and by writing their behavior down, the student acknowledged that what they were doing was inappropriate and not acceptable.

During the weeks that followed the initial establishment of the peer-coaching program, I surveyed all of my students to determine their feelings about the program. Since I only have six out of eighteen students who needed a peer coach, those students who were a peer coach and those students who needed a peer coach answered surveys that had questions that were very much different from each other. The reason I decided to construct the surveys (Appendix C) in this manner is because it allowed me to see how the peer coaches felt about the program as well as how those students who needed a peer coach felt about the program. Therefore, it gave me a better sense of how the program was working.

Another survey that I developed was for those students who were not involved in the program, but served as bystanders in the class who observed the relationships between the peer coach and their partner. The reason I chose to interview these students is because it provided me with data from the viewpoint of someone who was not directly involved with the program, allowing me to see how these students felt about the effectiveness of the program.

To make sure that the surveys were unexpected by the students, I handed them out at various times during this time period to ensure that the students could not predetermine what they wanted their answers to be. These surveys were handed out on various days between the

months of February and April. Based on the results that I received from the surveys, I determined that it would be a benefit to students to rotate their peer coaches. The reason for this is because through my observations and analysis of the surveys, I discovered that some peer coaches were not removing strips from the Observable On-Task Behavior sheet when needed. As a result, the behaviors that we were trying to correct were still being exhibited because the students knew that they were not being held accountable for them. As a result of this, my mentor and I decided to rotate peer coaches every two weeks.

As of March 5, 2007, I had five students who had a peer coach from the beginning of the program in January. Since that time, one student was removed from the system due to parental request that he be removed for personal reasons. Although the remaining students have some improvement in their behavior, there were times when they fell back into their old habits. As a result, I chosen to keep these students on the peer coaching system to the end of the year, following the procedure that I have defined above.

Data Collection:

  I collected data for my inquiry in three ways: student surveys (administered two times between February and April), Observable On-Task Behavior sheets that were distributed daily, and daily observations. Each of these data collect techniques are defined in the area that follows. To begin this data collection, my mentor teacher and I observed on a weekly basis those students who we felt would benefit from a peer coach in a number of settings. These settings included circle discussions, independent work time, recess, and monitored group activities. The reason for observing the students in these settings was to see how they interacted in these areas without the help or guidance of a peer coach.

Student survey

  I administered surveys (Appendix C) two times to my students over the course of the past three months. The first survey was administered on February 13, 2007. As you will notice, this survey was given almost one month after the program was initiated in the classroom, therefore not providing me with baseline data.

  The first survey that I administered dealt with the effectiveness of the program up to just about the one-month point and my students' feelings about whether or not the program was working. Due to the fact that the survey was about the student's feeling, they were required to provide a written response. The second survey that I administered on March 7, 2007, asked the students to describe what they felt the negative and positive aspects of the program were once more through a written response. To make sure that all of my students understood the type of information I was asking them to provide during the surveys, I went over every question with them, providing examples and clarifications along the way. Furthermore, before I allowed the students to answer the questions listed on the survey, I assured them that I would not share their

answers with anyone and gave them the option to answer the questions anonymously, possibly allowing them to answer the questions more honestly.

Observable On Task Behavior Sheets

Beginning with day one of the program, peer coaches and their partners were given Observable On-Task Behavior (Appendix B) sheets that would help the coaches determine when to take a sticky away and help their partner understand what behaviors were expected on a daily basis. On these observation sheets, the students were given four sticky pieces of paper, two for the morning and two for the afternoon. Each time they did not follow one of the behaviors listed or they were exhibiting one of the problem behaviors that were defined earlier in the paper, the peer coach or a teacher would take away a sticky for that portion of the day. If students lost two sticky pieces of paper from either portion of the day, the consequence would be to write a letter describing why they lost the sticky strips during recess time. Once the sticky was removed from the paper, the peer coach or teacher would have the student write down in that area what they were doing during the time the sticky was removed. Reasons in this area vary from talking during a lesson to drawing in their notebook instead of taking notes. Once collected, these sheets were placed in a binder under tabbed areas that were dedicated to a particular student. As of April 11, 2007, I had handed out and collected fifty-two Observable On-Task Behavior sheets.

Daily Observations

For this section of my data collection, I decided that it would be a good idea if I kept notes on file tracking various elements in the classroom. These elements include the amount of homework assignments students completed, how often they went to their cubbies for something,

how often I needed to remind them of their behavior, and finally how often they had to ask me where they could find a particular class material, such as various worksheets. To keep track of these observations, I wrote notes directly on the students Observable On-Task Behavior sheets at the end of the day.

Data Analysis:

In order to systematically organize and analyze my data, I decided that my best option would be to look at each data collection technique separately and write notes about any similarities that I noticed between the data that was found within each of these collection techniques.

Initial Observations

During the early stages of the peer-coaching program, my mentor and I kept anecdotal notes on various students that we felt would benefit from having a peer coach. With these anecdotal notes, my mentor and I would write down various observations about how often the student did not hand in his/her homework, how often he/she went to their cubbies, how often class materials could not be found, and lastly how often he/she contributed to classroom discussions. Based on the occurrences of the above behaviors, my mentor and I used the information to identify six students that would benefit from the peer-coaching program. Due to the fact that these notes were only taken in the initial stages of the lesson, they were not analyzed beyond this point.

Student Survey- February 13, 2007

The first piece of data that I analyzed was the first survey I administered to the students. The reason that I analyzed this survey separately from the second survey that I handed out is because each of them dealt with different topics; therefore the data I collected would not show any similarities due to the responses I was looking for from the students. This initial survey contained four open-ended written response questions. With this initial survey, I created two

different questions sheets, one question sheet for peer coaches and one question sheet for their partners and other members of the class. Questions one and two of the survey for peer coaches dealt with their views of the peer-coaching program and if they felt they were positively helping their partners to work through their problem behaviors. Questions three and four dealt with the peer coach's responsibilities to take a sticky strip away. More specifically, the questions asked the peer coaches how they determined when to take a sticky strip away and if they had ever been confronted with a situation when they knew they should take a sticky strip from the Observable On-Task Behavior sheets, but chose not to. Answers for this survey varied between the peer coaches, but similarities did exist. The analysis of this survey is as follows and is broken down by each question. For question number one, which asked, "After being a peer coach for more than a month, how do you feel about being a coach?"

- **6** out of **6** peer coaches stated that they felt the program was working well

Question two number asked, "Do you feel that your help and guidance is helping the student that you are a peer coach for to remain on task?"

- **6** out of **6** peer coaches responded that they felt that they were motivating their partner to remain on task.

- All **6** coaches commented that they noticed a positive change in their partner's behavior when it came to writing notes and participating in classroom discussions.

Question number three, which dealt with the peer coach's responsibility to take away a sticky strip asked, " How do you determine when to take away a paper strip on the On-Task Behavior sheet? For this question, student answers varied because each student had her/his individual way of deciding when to take away a strip. Due to this fact, I looked at the common behaviors that the students looked for to determine when they took a sticky strip away. Through this analysis, I was

able to determine that the peer coaches took away sticky strips when their partner was drawing instead of taking notes or when they were socializing instead of doing their work. Just like the previous question, question four dealt with the peer coach's responsibility to take away a sticky strip when their partner was exhibiting one of the problem behaviors. This question more specifically asked, " Are there times when you know you should take away a sticky strip and do not? If you respond "yes" to this question, why do you choose not to take the sticky strip away?" The break down of this data is as follows:

- **5** out of **6** peer coaches answered "No" that they always took a strip away

- **1** out of **6** peer coaches stated answered "Yes" and stated that she was sometimes hesitant to take a strip away because she did not want to hurt her partner's feelings.

The second version of the survey (Appendix C) that I handed out was created for students who had a peer coach and for those students who were not involved in the program. The questions that were included in this survey were created so that the students could provide me with their honest opinion of how they felt the program was working for them and in the classroom. Just like the previous survey, questions on this survey, which was for students with a peer coach, were broken into two different topic areas. More specifically, questions one and two dealt with the students' feelings of having a peer coach and if they felt their peer coach was helping them to remain on task, be organized, and volunteer more confidently in classroom discussions. Question three dealt with the student's feelings when they had a sticky strip of paper removed from their "Off Task Behavior" sheet. Question one asked, "Do you like having a peer coach?" The analysis for this question is as follows:

- **5** out of **6** students replied that they enjoyed having a peer coach

- **1** out of **6** students replied that he did not like having a peer coach because he did not want to be told what to do.

Question two asked, "Do you feel that your peer coach is helping you to remain on task during classroom activities?" Analysis is as follows:

- **5** out of **6** students replied that they felt their peer coach was effectively helping them to remain on task

- **1** out of **6** students replied that he did not feel his peer coach was helping him at all

The final question, question three asked, "How do you feel when a paper strip is taken off your paper during times when you peer coach feels that you are off-task?" Answers to this question were very similar among all of the students with the exception of one. The analysis for this question is as follows:

- **5** of the **6** students replied that when they lost a stick strip they felt like they could have done better.

However, the same student who had different responses than the rest of the students on the survey stated that he did not like when a sticky was removed because his peer coach would take them away even when he was not doing anything wrong.

The other version of the survey that was handed out was created for those students who were not involved in the peer-coaching program. This survey only contained one question that required a written response. Six people in the class took this survey. Their answers are broken down as follows:

- **6** out of **6** students who are not involved in the program felt that it was a tremendous success in the classroom.

Once I had the opportunity to analyze all of the data that I collected through the survey, I discovered that my data supported the idea that both the peer coaches and partners felt that the peer-coaching program had many benefits and found it to be a positive intervention in the classroom.

Student Survey- March 8, 2007

The second survey (Appendix C) that I gave me students was administered on March 8, 2007. Unlike the first survey, this survey asked all of the same questions to all eighteen students in the class. The reason I administered this survey to all of the students instead of the students who were directly involved with the program was because I wanted to see their opinion of how they felt the program was working from an "outsiders'" point of view. The focus of this survey was the student's opinions on what they felt the positive and negative aspects of the peer-coaching program were. Once again, I structured the survey so that the question would be open-ended and would require the students to provide a written response. Unlike the other survey that contained either three or four questions that students needed to respond to, this survey only contained two questions. Question number one asked students to respond to the following, "What do you feel are the negative aspects of the peer coaching system?" To analyze the data for this question, I decided that it would be a good idea to first see how many students felt that their were negative aspects to the system and how many felt that there were no negative aspects to the system. Next, I broke the data down even further and looked at the surveys from students who felt that there were negative aspects and then looked for similarities among these surveys to see how many students listed the same negative aspects. The analysis of this data is as follows:

- **4** students felt uncomfortable when a sticky was removed from their Observable On-Task Behavior sheets

- **1** student felt that the peer coaches should have Observable On-Task Behavior sheets as well

- **1** student felt they might fool around if they were partnered with a specific peer coach

- **1** student worried about people feeling embarrassed when they got a peer coach

- **2** students worried about the student who has the sticky removed feeling angry

- **9** students did not feel that there were any negative aspects to the peer coaching system

The second question in the survey asked the students to list any suggestions they may have to improve the negative aspects of the peer-coaching program into positive aspects. More specifically, "Do you have suggestions to make the negative aspects turn into positive aspects? To analyze this data, I used the same format that I did for the above question; I looked at the comments that were listed, and sorted them to see how many students provided the same suggestion. The analysis for this data is as follows:

- **4** students suggested coming up with a different way to let students know that they were exhibiting problem behaviors.

- **1** student suggested that an Observable On-Task Behavior sheet should be created for the peer coaches with sticky strips that their partner could remove.

- **1** student suggested that he was paired with a peer coach that he was a not close friend with so he did not fool around and had the opportunity to make a new friend.

- **2** students suggested that a conversation be held so that people know they did not have to get angry if a sticky strip I was removed.

- **9** students did not provide a suggestion

After a thorough analysis of my data, I noticed that a majority of the class supported the peer coaching system and once again felt that it was a positive intervention in the classroom. However, to ensure that I supported and considered my students' suggestions to improve the program, I took some of their suggestions and worked them into the program. Some of these suggestions included providing a particular student with a peer coach who was not his close friend and going over what feelings should be expressed when a sticky strip was taken away with all of the students.

Observable On Task Behavior Sheets

A major component of the peer coaching system was an "Observable On-Task Behavior" sheet. These sheets were used to not only make the students aware of the behaviors that were expected, but to also help the peer coach keep track of and remind their partner when they were exhibiting any of the off task behaviors. To analyze this set of data, I gathered all of the sheets and first looked at the most common disruptive behavior that occurred between all six students. Next, I took the analysis a bit further, and looked to see which student had the largest number of sticky strips removed and what time during the day most of these removals occurred. The analysis of this data is ask follows:

Most Common Behavior Occurrence

- Drawing instead of taking notes was the most common behavior exhibited by students
- Not volunteering in classroom discussions and being disorganized were tied for second
- Behaviors occurred most often during the afternoon hours during circle discussion time and during transitions between lessons.

Sticky Removal Break Down

- **1** student had **15** sticky strips removed from the "Observable On-Task Behavior" Sheet during the time from of January 22, 2007 – April 11, 2007

- **1** student had **4** sticky strips removed from the "Observable On-Task Behavior" Sheet during the time from of January 22, 2007 – April 11, 2007

- **1** student had **2** sticky strips removed from the "Observable On-Task Behavior" Sheet during the time from of January 22, 2007 – March 5, 2007 (student was removed from peer coaching program after parental request)

- **1** student had **1** sticky strip removed from the "Observable On-Task Behavior" Sheet during the time from of January 22, 2007 – April 11, 2007

- **2** students had **0** sticky strips removed from the "Observable On-Task Behavior" Sheet during the time from of January 22, 2007 – April 11, 2007

Observation Notes:

Even though my "Observable On-Task Behavior" sheet was to serve as the main source for me to know why students were losing sticky strips, I also took notes on various sheets commenting about student behavior. Although not often, these notes were taken when I noticed a particular day when a student was exhibiting one or all off-task behaviors. In addition to taking the notes when a student would exhibit an off-task behavior, as stated earlier, I would take notes to keep track of missed homework assignments and the number of times a student asked me to find a particular paper. After looking at the data I collected, I did not take many notes on any of

these topic areas because the students would often go to their peer coach for help instead of me. The notes that I did take in this area dealt with the student's success and setbacks with the program. My notes mention items, such as "The student has done really well today in class and did not need to have a sticky strip removed" or "The student was having a tough day and two sticky strips were removed, one during the morning and one during the afternoon."

Claims and Evidence:

Claim 1: Most students enjoy helping each other and generally view the peer-coaching program as a positive intervention in the classroom.

After analyzing all of my data, I developed this new claim based on the answers that my students provided in the first survey I administered. In this survey, 83% (based on a survey that was given to 6 students) stated that they enjoyed the peer coaching system and helping their fellow classmates achieve success in the classroom. In addition, through the second survey I administered, which dealt with the negative and positive aspects of the peer coaching system, 50% (survey given to eighteen students) of the students stated that they did not feel that there were any negative aspects to the peer coaching system. The remaining 50% percent of the class did provide suggestions for minor corrections in the program, but did feel that the peer-coaching program was working well in the classroom. It appears that even though the students need to rely on a fellow student for help in certain situations, they enjoyed having the help and the peer coaches enjoy helping them. In fact, one of the students who had a peer coach told me that he knew that he was doing well in school now because his peer coach reminded him about homework assignments and helped him keep classroom papers organized.

Claim 2: Students are not always aware that their behavior can have detrimental effects on their success in the classroom.

Although this claim seems like it should have been evident from the start, it was not until I started the peer coaching program that the students who needed a peer coach realized how much their success in the classroom was being affected by their disruptive behaviors. What I mean by this was the students did not realize that not paying attention to classroom discussions,

keeping their papers unorganized, and refraining from volunteering in classroom were interfering with their success in the classroom. This was eventually brought to their attention when the "Observable On-Task Behavior" sheets were introduced into the classroom and they had the opportunity to see how often these behaviors occur.

One student remarked to me during a conversation that he could not believe how often he was off-task and he never thought that the behaviors he was demonstrating, such as being off-task during circle lessons and being unorganized affected his success in the classroom. He further stated that until he was put on the peer-coaching program, he never realized how often he was looking for misplaced papers, but that his peer coached pointed it out using the "Observable On-Task Behavior" sheet.

Implications for Future Teaching

   Through this inquiry project, I have learned a great deal about how important it is to provide students with support from not only teachers, but also support from peers. To ensure that this relationship begins on the first day of school, I plan to do several community-building activities with the students in my future classrooms so they become comfortable with one another and with me. In addition, I will set up a program in my room that will allow the students to have a "learning buddy" that they can spend some time with completing classroom assignments at the end of the day, as well as asking them questions about homework assignments they may have for that night. My intent with this program is to start building a strong supportive relationship between the students so that in the event I have to start the peer-coaching program, the students will already be familiar and comfortable working with one another. Although I am unsure about how I will set up these initial "learning buddy partnerships," some ideas I may consider include, looking at placement cards to determine the academic level of my students, talking with past teachers to determine which students will work best with one another and which will not, and trial and error. As stated above, the main focus of this partnership will be to help the students develop supportive relationships among one another and it may take some time to figure out which students will work best with each other to provide this support.

   Due to the fact that my current classroom consists of all white middle-class students, I did not consider how to use this program where diversity exists until now. Understanding that not every classroom will look exactly like my classroom this year, I hope to introduce the peer-coaching program in the beginning of the year, providing each student with a "learning buddy" with whom they can discuss homework and class assignments. By introducing the program in this way, the students will already be comfortable with working together and will not feel like

the peer-coaching program is different from this initial partnership. In addition to providing the

"learning buddy," I will also help the students make new friends in the classroom, by rotating

"learning buddies" throughout the course of the school year.

As with any inquiry project, there are going to be things that will work and things that

will not work. With this program, the "Observable On Task Behavior" sheet was a tremendous

success in the classroom and proved to be a great way to help students acknowledge their

problematic behaviors. The one draw back of the program was the fact that even though a

particular student was showing signs of success, he was removed because of a parental request.

Due to this, the student still exhibits the behaviors that were defined earlier in the paper and these

behaviors interfere with the student's success in the classroom on a continual basis.

New Wonderings:

As a result of my inquiry and analysis of my data, I have developed several new wonderings that I hope to explore as I continue the peer coaching program in my classroom through the end of the year. While developing these new wonderings, I kept in mind that this particular data set only applies to this group of students, and as my classes change each year I may not have the same outcomes or success with the program. Understanding this very important point, the following are new wonderings that I have developed and hope to explore along with the wonderings that I addressed at the beginning of my inquiry.

- Do different peer coaches have different effects on a student's behavior?

- Why does the time of day have an effect on the number of sticky strips a peer coach removes from the "Observable On-Task Behavior" Sheet? What might I do to reduce these effects?

- As a teacher, how will I implement the peer-coaching program in my classroom next year to meet the needs of my students?

- Will the peer-coaching program show success in any classroom situation/?

- Is there a way to remind students of their behavior that is more effective than using the "Observable On-Task Behavior" sheet?

- What can I do to foster relationships between the students in which they help each other succeed in the classroom without introducing the peer-coaching program.

- Does having a peer coach make the "coached" students feel less successful and cause these students to lose self-confidence?

- Is there a way to structure the peer-coaching program so that all students have a chance to serve as coaches and would this increase student self-confidence, particularly on the part of students who would otherwise only be the "coached' students?

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Appendix A

Information Collection Timeline

Data Collection

- **Observations/Note**- I will observe and take notes on students' behaviors when necessary
- **Observable On Task behavior chart**- I will collect the charts and file them to monitor student progress
- **Surveys**- Two times during the inquiry data collect, I will conduct surveys with both the peer coaches and the students who have a peer coach to determine their attitude towards the peer coaching program and the progress they are making.

Calendar- adapted from the calendar found in *The Reflective Educator's Guide to Classroom Research* by Nancy Dana and Diane Silva (2003, p. 85)

February

- Data collection through daily "On Task" behavior charts and observational notes
- Analyze data and look for patterns
- Conduct monthly peer survey to determine how students feel about the peer-coaching program

March
- Continue collecting and analyzing data
- Conduct monthly peer survey to determine how students feel about peer coaching (two months into the program)

April
- Continue data collection
- Complete data analysis
- Complete Inquiry Paper

Appendix B
Observable On Task Behavior Sheet

Observable On Task Behavior

Morning Work

Off Task Behavior
Observed

☐ ☐

- Unpack book bag
- Check schedule to see what materials you will need for the ENTIRE morning. You WILL NOT be allowed to go back to your cubby after this time.
- Sign up for lunch/ Hand in Assignments
- Complete morning work (Mug Shot & Geography Trivia) by 8:50
- Any time we sit in a circle for class discussion, you MUST sit next to your peer coach.

Afternoon Work

Off Task Behavior
Observed

☐ ☐

- Wash your hands after lunch
- Check schedule to see what materials you will need for the ENTIRE afternoon. You WILL NOT be allowed to go back to your cubby after this time.
- Sit at your seat and prepare to complete Vocabulary Ventures.
- Anytime we sit in a circle for class discussion, you MUST sit next to your peer coach.
- At the end of the day, have your assignment notebook checked by your peer coach and initialed by KRS or MBZ and pack your book bag to go home. After packing, sit at your seat and silently read until busses are called

Appendix C

Student Survey- February 13, 2007

Peer Coach Survey

1.After being a peer coach for more than a month, how do you feel about being a coach?

2. Do you feel that your help and guidance is helping the student that you are a peer coach for to remain on task?

3.How do you determine when to take away a paper strip on the "On Task Behavior" sheet?

4. Are there times when you know you should take away a paper strip and don't? If you respond "yes" to this question, why don't you take the paper strip away?

Student with a Peer Coach Survey

1. Do you like having a peer coach?

2. Do you feel that your peer coach is helping you to remain on task during classroom activities?

3. How do you feel when a paper strip is taken off you paper during times when your peer coach feels that you are off task?

Student Survey- March 8, 2007

1. What do you feel are the negative aspects of the peer coaching program?

2. Do you have suggestions to make these negative aspects turn into positive

aspects?