Running head: THE EFFECTS OF EMPATHY

The Effects of Empathy on Prosocial Behavior

Among Middle School Children

Kelly F. Carlie

State University of New York College at Brockport

Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all of those who have supported and encouraged me, without their encouragement this thesis would not have been possible. Specifically, I would like to thank my husband, George for his patience with me and for holding everything together at home while I was either at class, work or hunched over the computer. I will be indebted forever for the kindness, encouragement, and patient love he showed me throughout this process. In addition, I want to thank my most enthusiastic cheerleaders, my children, Christopher, Benjamin, and Emily, you have always inspired me to keep going when I wanted to quit.

Also, I thank my parents, Larry and Millie Canale, for their encouragement and love. I would also like to thank my sister Anne for her help whether it was picking up a paper at Brockport or just giving me some time to talk when I needed a break. I would like to thank the rest of my family for being patient and realizing that this was important to me to spend hours of time on even if it meant missing our family gatherings. I will soon be joining you again!

Special thanks to all my classmates, we have traveled a long, interesting road together, how we have all grown from that first Self class. I especially would like to thank Bobbie Jo Gaines for the constant encouragement, support and time listening to me.

In addition, I would like to thank the professors at Brockport, first Dr. Muhyi Shakoor who had faith in me from the beginning, also Dr. Leslie McCulloch for believing in me and encouraging me to continue to grow. I would also like to thank Dr. Jeff Cochran who has helped me to really "listen" and Dr. Susan Seem for always taking the time to hear me out. Last but not least I would like to thank Dr. Tom Hernandez for meeting with me numerous times, answering hundreds of questions and providing me with the guidance to complete my thesis.

Abstract

This thesis is an examination of empathy through research of a multitude of sources. Included is a description of the empathy program implemented to sixth graders, including the results of this research project conducted by a Graduate Student at SUNY Brockport. The definition of empathy, prosocial behaviors, and characteristics of bullies and victims was explored. The researcher's intent was to determine if empathy was a key component in maintaining children's positive relationships with each other, as well as decreasing bullying behaviors. This thesis also explored whether empathy had an effect on increasing a sixth grade child's instances of prosocial behavior. The researcher also attempted to determine if empathy could be taught to sixth graders through an eight-week character education program. Bryant's Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescence, developed by Brenda K. Bryant, and a Character Education Instrument developed by the researcher was used to determine if empathic tendencies were increased in sixth grade children following an eight-week character education program. The results of the study determined that empathy and knowledge of general character education traits could be taught to sixth grade students.

Table of Contents

Tables

Charts

Effects of Empathy on Prosocial Behavior

Among Middle School Children

Through individual and group counseling with middle school children the researcher was

beginning to recognize a pattern of concern expressed by students in the sixth grade. They were

frustrated, sad, angry, and even resigned to the knowledge that they were left out and excluded by

their peers. This was a concern expressed so frequently in the first few weeks of school that it is

what helped me to form the basis for this research project. Many of these children faced bullying in

the form of outright physical or verbal onslaught, or even worse being excluded and treated as

though they didn't exist. One thing these children had in common was the anguish and confusion in

their voices as they told me "nobody likes me." Even more upsetting was the knowledge that the

children that were the "bullies" were well aware of the status they held in the class and even voiced

that they liked being in their own group and didn't care to include others. What became apparent to

me was the lack of empathy or concern that students failed to show towards each other. I was also

aware that as a school counselor, I was to help children to be successful academically, but realized

that the intensity of the bullying was a block to academic success, as well as damaging to self-

esteem, and inhibited prosocial behaviors in general. Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg

(2004) postulated that for schools to be successful academically they need to address social and

emotional behaviors as well as increase academics. If a child is not coming to school because of

fear of their safety due to bullying or preoccupied in school with being the bully or getting into

trouble because of it they most likely will not be successful academically (Zins et al., 2004).

A common complaint among elementary school children is their perception that they are

different from other children, and do not feel included by their peers (Adler & Adler, 1995).

LaFontana and Cillessen (2002) reported that a student's concern with their status among peers is a

key developmental process among middle school children. Roberts (2000) stated that teasing

behaviors are a normal part of social development; however, if the teasing becomes intense or

occurs frequently, it becomes classified as bullying behaviors. Knight, (1989); Lickona, (1992);

Santrock, (2004) and Upright, (2002) reported that characteristic development in middle and late

childhood included increasing social knowledge which is necessary for a child to have the ability to

get along with peers. Social knowledge is a developmental process that is necessary for children to

define their "peer status" among others (Knight, 1989; Santrock, 2004; Shapiro, Baumeister, &

Kessler, 1991; Upright, 2002). Social knowledge is the ability of a child to initiate and maintain

social relationships; with out this it can lead to poor relationships which included bullying others

(Santrock, 2004). Lack of social knowledge or ability to maintain social relationships often resulted

in either initiating bullying behavior or being the victims of bullying (Knight, 1989; Santrock, 2004;

Shapiro, Baumeister, & Kessler, 1991; Upright, 2002). .

    Shapiro et al. (1991) described bullying behaviors as a step in the stage children progress

through while developing their socialization skills. Without this stage they would not develop

abilities to interact socially (Shapiro et al.,1991). Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton

and Schedt reported, "Nearly one-third of the middle school and high school students surveyed,

reported being a bully, being bullied, or both" (2001, p. 2094). Nansel et al.'s research was based

on information received from 15,686 students in grades 6 to 10 enrolled in public or private schools

throughout the United States. Nansel et al. (2001) reported that of those involved in the study, 29.9

percent reported having been affected by various victimizing behaviors. Other studies have

reported that 15 to 30 percent of youth in school are involved in bullying in some capacity, either as

a victim, perpetrator or bystander (Nansel et al., 2001). Hanish (2000) reported that 1 in 10 children

are bullied on a daily basis. These statistics indicated that bullying continued to be a common issue

affecting today's school children. "Given the concurrent behavioral and emotional difficulties associated with bullying, as well as the potential long-term negative outcomes for these youth, the issue of bullying merits serious attention, both for future research and preventive intervention" (Robinson, 2001, p. 2). Much of the research investigated, illustrated the prevalence of bullying in schools, why it occurred, and who is involved (Cotton, 2001; Nansel et al, 2001; Robinson, 2001; and Rock, 2003).

A common theme among much of the research is that the presence of empathy in a person has a direct effect on prosocial behavior among children (Berman, 1998; Chapman, Zahn-Waxler, Cooperman and Ianotti, 1987; Cotton, 2001). Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) speculated that empathy appears to be the character trait missing when children choose to bully others. Eisenberg and Mussen hypothesized that empathy is a key factor that gave children the potential ability to express tolerance, accept others, and engage in prosocial behaviors. The purpose of this research was to determine if empathy in sixth grade children could be increased through participation in an eight-week character education program. Subsequently, this research project is undertaken to determine if empathy could be taught and if so will it have an effect on reducing bullying and antisocial behavior among sixth grade students. The literature review as well as the research project is designed to determine if empathy is the key trait needed for children to form positive relationships with each other. This thesis will outline definitions of empathy and prosocial behavior including an exploration of the developmental stages of children and empathy. A review of the literature frames the discussion of several fundamental principles of empathy, children's relationships, prosocial behavior, and the effect of character education programs in the classroom.

Empathy

Definition of Empathy

Empathy appears to be a largely misunderstood term that is difficult to define (Cotton, 2001; Rock, 2003). The review of literature has revealed several studies and definitions of empathy (Cotton, 2001; Rock, 2003;Knight, 1989). Rock indicated that empathy is defined as "an effective response that is the result of a state of condition in another person" (2003, p. 5). Rock postulated that a person might feel or demonstrate empathy as a result of experiencing another person's status or position. Knight (1989) defined empathy as "understanding and sharing of the thoughts and feelings of others" (p. 42). Knight (1989) further explained that it is not feeling sorry for someone else, but actually having an "objective understanding of others" (p. 42). It can be thought of in the same terms as the old Native American proverb "Let us not judge any man until we have walked a mile in his moccasins…"(Unknown). Bengtsson and Johnson (1992) agreed with Knight in that empathy is a reaction to another person's situation. Cotton (2001) describes empathy as having the "insight into motives, feelings, and behavior of others and being able to communicate this understanding" (p. 1). These definitions of empathy reveal that empathy has both affective and cognitive meaning, it is not just feeling for someone it is acting on it as well. Affective empathy is having the ability to share another's emotions and cognitive empathy is the ability to be aware of another's emotions (Cotton, 2001). To be empathic toward others is to have the capacity to feel emotions for others and to be able to express these emotions while assisting the person. Upright (2002) described empathy as the ability to sense what another person is feeling and experiencing. Finally, Hoffman (2000) described empathy most clearly as "…the spark of human concern for others, the glue that makes social life possible".

Development of Empathy

It is thought that children who alienate or bully others have not yet developed empathy toward others (Eisenberg, Shell, Pasternack, Lennon, Beller, and Mathy, 1987). Although it was originally speculated that empathy formed in a child over time and wasn't evident until they were older, research now shows that responding empathetically to others is inborn and is evident in infants (Lamb, 1993; Santrock, 2004). Empathy developed as children grow and learned skills to express emotions (Lamb, 1993). Empathy is present in infants but possessing the ability to respond with empathy begins as young as one or two years old (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, and Chapman, 1992). This is evident when they attempt to help others who are hurt or when they react to another person crying (Lamb, 1993; Zahn et al., 1992). However, research indicates that a child must be developmentally ready to identify and label feelings as well as possess the capacity to respond to others in order for true empathy to be reached (Santrock, 2004). Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) have reviewed and conducted research that illustrated that personal, social, and emotional traits affected whether a child continued to develop empathy and subsequently exhibit prosocial behaviors thorough their lifespan. Although a child is born with empathy, certain events and characteristics must occur for a child to reach empathic maturity (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989). Investigation into available research revealed numerous theories of how empathy and prosocial behaviors increased developmentally in children (Eisenberg et al., 1987; Santrock, 2004; Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989).

Three theoretical explanations for development of a child's prosocial behaviors were outlined by Eisenberg and Mussen (1989), which included psychoanalytical theory, social learning theory, and social cognitive theory. Eisenberg and Mussen explained that psychoanalytical theory proposed that children engage in prosocial behavior as a result of trying to have their own needs met. Eisenberg

and Mussen implied that children exhibit empathy towards others to satisfy their own needs. In addition, all children are born with feelings of guilt, which is the drive that pushes people to act in a prosocial manner (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989). A child has a tendency to watch and mimic behaviors, therefore psychoanalysts strongly believe that parents and significant others in a child's life are the main contributors to the formation of empathy (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989).

Social learning theorists and social cognitive theorists believed that most behaviors learned are through observation of their environment (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989). Specifically, observations of actions that are rewarded or punished determine whether children will continue to act in a certain way or make changes in behaviors (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989). Children have a tendency to engage in prosocial behaviors when they receive positive reaction for a certain behavior; which encourages new methods of acting prosocially (Eisenberg et al., 1987). For example, Eisenberg et al. noted that "observational learning" is a way that children learn; meaning they model behavior they have been exposed to (1987, p27).

Piaget's stages of development explained and described the development of empathy in children (Santrock, 2004). Piaget developed the cognitive development theory in which he postulated that as children progress through developmental stages they develop care and concern (empathy) for others (Santrock, 2004). Piaget indicated that children begin developing morals by age four, during the "heteronomous morality stage" (Santrock, 2004, p. 270). During this developmental stage Piaget reported that children believe that they have no choice or control over the laws and rules of the world (Santrock, 2004). This awareness of rules is what teaches children how to abide by what is expected of them although they do this mainly because they believe they have to. Piaget's next stage the "autonomous morality stage" occurs from ages ten years and older, is when children become aware that laws are created by adults and can be changed if needed (Santrock, 2004, p.

271). Piaget's theory indicated that as children grow and develop they learn to respect others and follow rules because they want the acceptance of others (Grancher, 1998). The importance of each of these theories is the determination that empathy is inborn, however, can be nurtured in people through counseling, teaching, and modeling empathic behaviors (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). It is also important to note that developing empathy is what enables children to follow the rules or guidelines of their world (Grancher, 1998).

Bengtsson and Johnson's research also concluded that empathy developed as a child matured cognitively (1992). A child must develop the ability to recognize and react to another's visible stress and emotions to feel empathy for what that person is experiencing (Bengtsson & Johnson, 1992). In addition, they determined that a child is more likely to react with empathy and help someone if they feel a responsibility towards that person (Bengtsson & Johnson, 1992). Bengtsson and Johnson (1992) attempted to determine if a child had the ability to experience feelings based on looking from another's viewpoint. The study looked at the responses of children after they were exposed to hypothetical stories of distress, which determined that children had a tendency to react spontaneously to emotions of others suffering from an unfortunate event (Bengtsson & Johnson, 1992).

Bengtsson and Johnson's study correlates with Hoffman's research and consequent development of four stages of empathic growth (Hoffman, 2000). Hoffman's stages of growth outline that children are born with affective empathy response but lack the cognitive level response to react toward others. Hoffman indicated that as children grow and develop they reach a point where they become more self-aware. Hoffman believed that awareness of self is crucial in developing the ability to see how a person's actions affect others (Hoffman, 2000). Hoffman (2000) also indicated that progression through developmental stages which brings awareness of self, allows

children to learn to communicate with others, limit bullying, and control anti-social behaviors. Hoffman further explained that each developmental stage of empathy must be achieved prior to movement to the next stage with the end result being empathic maturity (2000). Feschbech and Feschbech agreed that when a child lacks the skills on either an affective or cognitive level they may feel or express empathy, which can result in bullying or aggressive behavior toward others (1987).

   Finally, research has indicated that females acquire and exhibit empathy faster than males do (Baron-Cohen, 2005). Baron-Cohen confirmed this when he discovered that females tended to be more concerned than males about being fair to others. Baron-Cohen reported that one study showed that males exhibited "fifty times more competition, whilst girls showed twenty times more turn-taking", which he feels indicated an ability to be empathic (2005, p. 1). Baron-Cohen attributed females progressing faster in empathy to their also progressing faster in language than males.

Prosocial Behavior

   Eisenberg & Mussen (1989) defined prosocial behavior as the "voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals" (p. 3). Eisenberg & Mussen indicated that these behaviors included generosity, caring, exhibiting kindness toward others, and acceptance of others (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989; Upright, 2002). Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) further explored and researched the basis of prosocial behaviors and surmised that prosocial behaviors in people are a result of a combination of a "complex interaction of biological, social, psychological, economic, and historic events" (p. 3). They further explained that prosocial behaviors are developed through a combination of learned behaviors and genetic characteristics (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989). At a very early age children learn what behaviors are expected of them, such as being kind and helping others, however this doesn't necessarily mean that they will

engage in these behaviors (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989). Children must first be able to recognize,

process, and then understand that someone is in need of assistance (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989).

Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) speculated that until this occurs children may recognize someone in

need but not act on the behavior to help them out. Eisenberg and Mussen described this as "pre-

conditions of social responsibility" or prosocial behaviors. This included; being aware of others,

interpreting their needs, and recognizing the person needed help (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989).

Upright (2002) acknowledged that when children engage in acts of empathy it may lead to acting

kind toward others and developing a "caring attitude" (p. 47). Eisenberg and Mussen indicated that

a child must also be confident and have the capability to put into action the necessary helping

behaviors (1989). In summary, Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) reported that having knowledge of

prosocial behaviors is not enough to ensure that they will engage in these behaviors. Eisenberg and

Mussen believed that prosocial behavior is acquired and can be learned (1989). Eisenberg and

Mussen concluded, following twelve years of researching prosocial behavior, that prosocial

behavior was not developed and fostered by one characteristic, but through an accumulation of

many (1989). In 1989, Eisenberg and Mussen reported that prosocial behaviors are stronger and

more apparent in children who are "relatively active, sociable, competent, assertive, advanced in

role taking and moral judgment, and sympathetic" (p. 8). Prosocial children were also more likely

to have parents who were "nurturing, supportive, modeled prosocial acts, discussed the results of

prosocial actions, and had expectations of maturity in their child" (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989,

p.8).

   A lack of prosocial behaviors may be the result of "social or learned behaviors, and inherited

traits" (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989, p. 8). The opposite of prosocial behaviors are anti-social

behaviors such as lying, cheating, and stealing (Santrock, 2004). Anti-social behaviors may be

exhibited when a child lacks knowledge and the subsequent ability to engage in prosocial behaviors (Santrock, 2004).

 Prosocial Behavior and Empathy

    Prosocial behavior is described as acts of unselfishness, helping others, and showing empathy (Santrock, 2004). This would include acts of helping a classmate, including others to join a group, intervening or supporting a classmate who is excluded, and showing basic respect toward others. Middle to late-childhood, which includes children ages six to 11, is when children begin to think of their peers in terms of who is "acceptable and who is not acceptable to allow in a close peer group" (LaFontana and Cillessen, 2002, p. 635). At this age they start "forming friendships based on who they believe falls in the category of who is popular" (LaFontana and Cillessen, 2002, p. 635). LaFontana and Cillessen compared two studies that examined children's perceptions of popular and unpopular children. LaFontana and Cillessen further discussed the difference between whether a child is well liked and whether a child is considered popular. This study indicated that in the past, studies have considered a popular child to be well liked and the reverse to hold true as well. However, LaFontana and Cillessen found that popularity and likeability do not go hand in hand. LaFontana and Cillessen discovered that children who are described as popular are oftentimes the children that are liked by few children. These popular children may be seen as aggressive, bossy, and exhibit an attitude that they are above the other children (LaFontana and Cillessen, 2002). LaFontana and Cillessen indicated that children might associate a popular person as being both "prosocial and antisocial" (LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002, p. 650). LaFontana and Cillessen determined that children perceived popular children as aggressive and unpopular children as antisocial. LaFontana and Cillessen also noted that the following characteristics determined popularity among children; "frequency of interaction, physical attractiveness, large number of peer

contacts, athletic and academic ability" (LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002, p. 648). LaFontana and

Cillessen determined that the distinction that children make in determining who is popular and who

is unpopular is based primarily on the other classmate's perception of who in the classroom

possessed positive traits of being athletic and talented. This research illuminated that children

generally perceived those that are popular have social skills, while the unpopular lack social skills.

LaFontana and Cillessen concluded the study with a description that children who are popular are

those that engaged in and are well versed in social skills and act prosocially. Children have formed

their own lists of accepted behaviors that peers engage in to determine who is popular and who shall

be bullied (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989; LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002).

Factors influencing Prosocial Behavior

   Fryxell (2000) conducted research with a small number of children who were identified by

teachers as having exhibited anger on a regular basis. Fryxell used a case study approach and

gathered information from students, parents, and school records of behavior and academic

achievement. Fryxell wanted to determine and examine risk factors that may have led to the

development of chronic anger. Fryxell (2000) related that angry children often lack social skills and

an ability to form close relationships with others; which leads to aggressive behavior between peers.

Personal characteristics such as "personality traits, disposition, reactivity, and temperament", as

well as family "nurturance and support", and school factors like size and environment contribute to

hostility and aggression between peers in school (Fryxell, 2000, p. 87). The results of Fryxell's

study suggested that a child experiencing negative impacts from various sectors of their life such as

community, peers, and family members could have an effect on how much and how frequently a

child feels anger (Fryxell, 2000). As a result of the study, Fryxell postulated that family and

environment, which becomes more developed when the child goes to school, formulate a person's

personality. Basically, the study found that children with little parental support and low motivation

were at high risk for chronic anger problems (Fryxell, 2000). The study also discovered that

children with a low level of social skills had a difficult time developing friendships and acting in a

prosocial manner also exhibited chronic anger (Fryxell, 2000).

Fryxell (2000) explained that family stress, discipline, relationships, and a child's personality are

factors that help to shape or deter empathy from developing. A child's community and home life, as

well as issues of neglect and abuse affects formation of or lack of empathy (Eisenberg & Mussen,

1989). A child's social and emotional responses from parents, peers, and media also can influence

development of empathy and prevent development of prosocial behaviors (Eisenberg & Mussen,

1989).

Characteristics of Victims

As indicated previously, bullying others on any level is prevalent between children in all schools

(Adler & Adler, 1995; Fryxell, 2000; Hanish, 2000; Roberts, 2000; Santrock, 2004; Zins et al.).

Santrock reported that those who were bullied typically suffered from low grades, poor self-esteem,

and feelings of isolation (2004). Hanish (2000) reported that the reason children are bullied by

others is due to the victim's personal characteristics, the "dynamics of the peer group, and the

structure and climate of the school environment" (p. 2). Hanish further reported that peer group

dynamics promote bullying either actively when they help or encourage the bully or passively, by

not taking a stand to stop the bully.

Hanish (2000) confirmed that children who possessed ineffective social skills are at greater risk

than others for being bullied by their peers. Hanish argued that children who are bullied tend to lack

the social skills or social knowledge to interact in an acceptable manner with peers. Hanish further

reported that aggressive children are reported to be annoying by other children, putting the

aggressive child at risk for being bullied (Hanish, 2000).

Hanish (2000) reported that the majority of children suffer from some form of bullying at some

time in their school career; however, he recognized that some children were more prone to be the

objects of bullying. Hanish (2000) determined that a child's sex, age, and ethnicity play a part in

who is bullied. Hanish reported that younger children more than older children are likely to be

bullied due to lack of social skills. Hanish also discovered that boys suffer more from physical

bullying; and girls from relational bullying, such gossiping and exclusion from activities. Hanish

also agreed that ethnicity determined who is bullied; however, this is also determined by the make-

up of the child's community. Hanish also reported that certain characteristics of children cause them

to be targeted more than others such as a child who is perceived as physically weak, is submissive,

and lacks social skills. A child may also be bullied if they exhibit deviant and aggressive behaviors

or are withdrawn. Hanish (2000) determined that children tend to bully others to gain social power,

to achieve approval from others, or because they believe it is okay to exert control over peers.

Hanish found that victims of bullying generally lack prosocial behaviors, which is also related to

lack of empathy. Hanish also suggested the importance of teaching empathy will be effective if the

family, school, and community are included in the program, which in turn will increase prosocial

behavior among youth (Hanish, 2000).

Characteristics of Bullies

The research on children who choose to bully others indicated that bullies typically come from a

home life that is physically abusive, lacks positive role modeling, and receive little or no positive

attention from their parents (Roberts, 2000). Roberts (2000) claimed that due to an unhealthy home

life, children learn that bullying is the appropriate method for handling difficulty because that is

what they have learned. Roberts (2000) reported that bullies are acting aggressively toward others

as a result of their own painful memories and family life. Hanish (2000) reported that the reason

why children bully others either passively or directly is an attempt to gain positions of power in the

social hierarchy of the classroom; and they believe they are not doing anything wrong.

   Hanish explained that many times school faculty are unaware that bullying is occurring and,

therefore, are unable to stop it from happening. This lack of attention allows the bully to receive a

false message that the behavior is acceptable (Hanish, 2000). Hanish argued that "peer victimization

in the schools is…a systemic problem", as it affects all levels of the school community and cannot

be stopped with out including all levels in the solutions (2000, p. 118). Bullying is further

promoted in schools when there is a lack of empathy, lack of school wide policies, lack of

awareness of students, and lack of proper supervision (Hanish, 2000). Hanish further postulated that

it is crucial to develop a system wide program to decrease bullying (Hanish, 2000). Programs that

promote and teach empathy are shown to combat bullying and victimization of children (Hanish,

2000).

Character Education Programs to Teach Empathy

   As bullying becomes the "hot" topic in education many character education programs have been

developed to attempt to decrease incidences of bullying behaviors and increase prosocial behaviors.

With the increase in programs however, the problem of bullying continues to exist in schools.

Lickona, (1992) outlined what a successful character education program should entail. It should

include components that would include all levels of education (Lickona, 1992) (See Appendix A).

This included a 12 step approach; the teacher acting to model prosocial behavior and mentor

students, create an educational community that is moral, democratic, and that included moral

discipline and awareness of values. Lickona also reported that a successful character education

program should include cooperative learning and a conflict resolution component. Lickona (1992) stressed including the whole community, the school, the home, and not just the classroom. However, many schools struggle to put this idea into place due to lack of staff and budget constraints.

Roberts (2000) indicated through his research that to intervene and assist a bully to change behavior, the bully must be taught how to interact with others. He stipulated that this should include the following components; that aggression towards others is not acceptable, and there are constructive ways to handle frustration and anger, in addition the bully must learn to understand "personal boundaries and limitations" (p. 5). Roberts (2000) described that a program that included teaching alternatives to aggressive behaviors, anger management, and explored the cause of aggressive behavior would be helpful in teaching children to refrain from bullying and have empathy toward others. Roberts (2000) strongly believed that social skills training were necessary to combat bullying.

Berman, (1998) agreed that to teach empathy and reduce bullying one must teach morality and ethics. Berman, (1998) postulated that an effective program should include teaching the skills of acceptable behaviors as well as modeling acceptable behaviors.

A review of literature conducted and published by Kahn & Lawthorne in 2003, outlined several school interventions and classroom based programs designed to teach empathy and reduce bullying behaviors. Kahn and Lawhorne separated the existing programs into three categories; clinically based, which are directed toward individuals identified as having an anger problem; classroom programs, which are directed at the whole classroom, and lastly, school based initiatives directed at the entire school community (Kahn and Lawhorne, 2003). Kahn and Lawhorne concluded that school based interventions have not on their own been proven to end bullying behaviors. Kahn and

Lawhorne reported that specific prevention programs in the classroom are "designed to teach knowledge and skills to reduce violence and increase prosocial behaviors often have not been supported by research…and often do not include actually teaching about empathy" (p. 17). The classroom based programs were supposed to meet state standards outlined by government programs such as "Safe School, Safe Students" to be effective, however, Kahn & Lawthorne found that only a few met the criteria (2003).

Kahn & Lawthorne (2003) emphasized the importance of including specific empathy training which entails; "identification of feelings, determine emotional state of another…know and understand the perspective of others, and how to respond with accurate emotion to another" (p. 17). Kahn and Lawthorne explained that after teaching the above knowledge it was vital to teach the children the skills to put this into place (2003). This indicated that it is important for a character education program to teach empathy both cognitively and affectively (Kahn & Lawthorne, 2003).

Kahn & Lawthorne summarized that they believed it important and effective to institute a character education program that would include all components of a community to influence norms and attitudes (2003). Kahn & Lawthorne reported that the "Safe Schools, Safe Students" report of 1998 suggested that effective programs instituted in a school should include the following recommendations in order to increase empathy and increase prosocial behaviors;

> "Clear and specific norms of acceptable and unacceptable behavior, comprehensive and multifaceted approach…physical and administrative changes…coordination across programs…training for total school staff…multiple teaching methods that accommodate different learning styles…cultural sensitivity and formal structures that integrate diverse populations…" (p. 21).

Furthermore, Hanish (2000) also agreed that social skills classes implemented by the school counselor will decrease bullying in schools and a successful social skills or character education program needed to reach the school on all levels, peers, faculty and administration. Hanish related that although various social skills programs and character education programs have been shown to work, there needs to be further testing of the multi-level, comprehensive programming approach (Hanish, 2000; Olweus, 1994). Results of Hanish's research on peer victimization concluded that a social skills training or school wide intervention will decrease bullying in the school but will not decrease it in the community. The report also included that because peer relationships improved, it resulted in children becoming more interested and involved in school (Hanish, 2000).

In Knight's review of empathy in the school curriculum, Knight (1989) indicated that it is useless to add social and emotional lessons to the curriculum if children have not developed a mature level of empathy. Hanish also agreed that without an adequate level of maturity children would be unable to feel or express empathy toward others (Hoffman, 2000).

Upright, (2002) indicated that teaching empathy can be more effective when modeling the desired empathic behavior. Upright suggested to do this successfully one must teach children through real life experiences (Upright, 2002). Upright suggested the use of acting out conflicts and telling personal stories to assist children in understanding empathy and values, and promote prosocial behaviors (2002).

Roberts (2000) reviewed interventions for children involved in peer victimization and recommended that children who bully others need individual attention in a non-threatening manner from the school counselor. Roberts (2000) suggested the intervention should include the school counselor explore self-awareness with the child in individual sessions, on a long-term basis. Roberts included behavior contracts and social skills training in his recommendations (2000). Roberts

indicated that for the conflicts between students to stop it is just as important to intervene with the bully as it is with the victim (2000).

Cotton's review of literature in 2001 reported that her research supported teaching social skills to increase empathy, through lessons on feelings, diversity, and communication. Cotton's research also confirmed that teaching about others' cultures could enhance empathy in students. Cotton outlined specific strategies in her review including cooperative learning, role-playing, and classroom education (2001).

Character education programs should include programming that consists of social and emotional lessons that will educate students to increase their affective skills (Zins Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). Affective skills include recognizing and taking care of feelings, making good decisions, ethics, responsibility, developing positive relationships as well as being aware of how negative decisions can affect a person (Zins et al., 2004). Zins et al. also determined that the inclusion of social skills in a character education program helped to increase the children's performance in school by removing roadblocks that prevent students from learning and concentrating on academics. Zins et al. (2004) indicated that character education classes should not be exclusive to the classroom but should reach many levels in the school system. Zins et al. supported multidisciplinary programs including academic lessons, parental and community programs, and restructuring school policies to be more effective (2004). The programs would need to be in place over a long period as Zins et al. indicated that short-term programs are not effective (Zins et al., 2004).

Hanish (2000) postulated that character education programs that include social skills training, are only effective for a short time in the reduction of bullying behaviors. Hanish indicated that bullying is "perpetuated by three levels; the bully, the witness to the behavior and the victims" (2000, p. 8).

Hanish (2000) suggested that a school program should include a component for the bullies, the peers who witness the bullying, and the victim of the offense as well. Hanish (2000) suggested that experiential team building activities that included the classroom community are effective as an intervention and to prevent further bullying behaviors. Hanish posited that these team building activities "significantly reduced aggressive and victimizing behaviors" (p. 6). This classroom approach appears to be more effective as all are educated and included in the learning to reduce bullying behaviors and increase prosocial actions (Hanish, 2000; Lickona, 1993).   Furthermore, Hanish (2000) speculated that the bullying behaviors would decrease if the entire school was also included through a school wide intervention including development of school policies to prevent bullying, increase staff awareness though education, and closer monitoring of children and more structured consequence for engaging in bullying. Hanish (2000) concluded that for the system approach of bullying reduction to be effective she encouraged inclusion of all systems specifically the community.

Overall, this review of the literature indicated that some researchers believe that empathy is an inborn trait that can be nurtured, developed, and taught in children (Berman, 1998; Chapman et al., 1987; Eisenberg et al., 1987). Through the review of literature it was evident that there are numerous social skills and character education programs, which have been instituted in schools to increase social skills and increase empathy (Eisenberg et al., 1987; Grancher, 1998; Hanish, 2001). Most of the research agreed that for character education programs to be effective in teaching empathy and promoting prosocial behaviors they needed to address all components of a child's school, home, and community (Hanish, 2000; Kahn & Lawthorne, 2003; Lickona, 1992; Roberts, 2000). None of the literature reviewed, however, discussed a classroom program that would include; combining speakers who have encountered bullying due to cultural, physical or

developmental differences with education of empathy, and practicing skills to act prosocially with

the children (Eisenberg et al., 1987; Grancher, 1998; Hanish, 2001). This study is an attempt to

answer the following questions: will the implementation of an eight-week character education class

that teaches empathy increase the level of empathy in sixth grade students. Also, if empathy is

increased will prosocial behaviors increase while instances of bullying decrease among students? In

addition, will increasing knowledge regarding empathy, decision-making, and appropriate social

skills also reduce the incidence of bullying in the classroom?

<div align="center">Methods</div>

In this section the methods of the research study will be explained. The methods section will

include the following subsections which will be discussed; setting, participants of the study will be

described, the procedure of how the study was implemented, the make up of the school, and lastly

the instruments that were used will be described. This includes Bryant's Index of Empathy for

Children and Adolescents (Bryant, 1982) and a Character Education Instrument, devised by the

researcher.

Setting

This research project was instituted in the sixth grade classes in an elementary school located in

rural, western New York. The total population of the school included 546 students in Kindergarten

through twelfth grade. There are 263 students in Kindergarten through sixth grade, which is

considered the elementary school. The ethnicity of this school district is detailed in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1 Ethnicity of School Setting

Ethnicity of School Setting

- White 84%
- Hispanic 12%
- African American 2%
- Asian/Pacific Islander 1%
- American Indian <1%
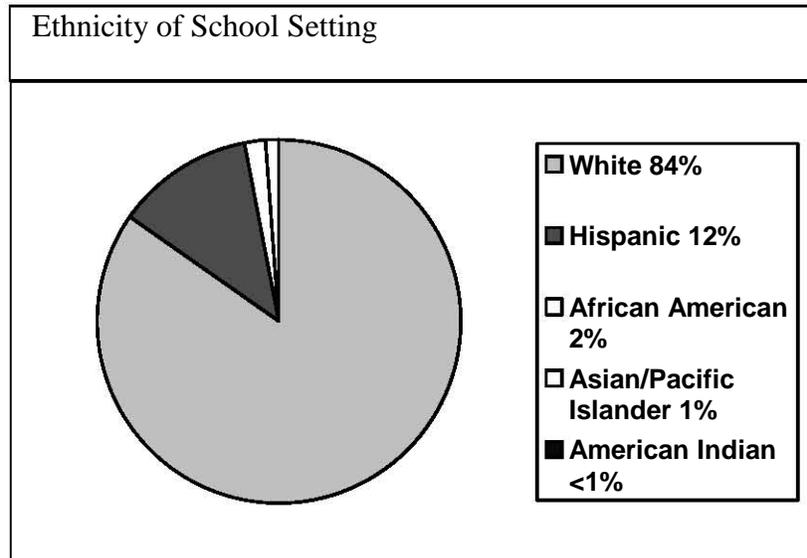
To further complete the picture of the school district the next Chart (see Chart 2) categorizes

students in subgroups of those eligible for free and reduced lunch, students with Individualized

Education Plans (IEP), migrant students, and those with limited English proficiency. The students

who are eligible for free and reduced lunch gives an indication of the "student economic level, and

family income level" at this school district as the families qualify by family income (City-Data,

2006). Poverty level and low family income are qualifiers for free and reduced lunch program.

Students with IEP's indicate those students are students with disabilities that have specialized

educational plans. Migrant students are identified as students who have moved with a parent or

guardian from different districts due to a parent's seasonal employment usually in agriculture or

fishing. Students with limited English proficiency are identified as those students learning the

English language. The chart below identifies percentages of students in each of these subgroups in

the district the research project was implemented. There is a large migrant population with 10% of

students being Limited English Proficient. Other statistics regarding the makeup of the school

include; 70 % of students meet or exceed the fourth grade state standards in English Language Arts

and Mathematics, 40% of students receive Academic Intervention Services, and 10.6 % of students

are classified through Committee on Special education. Lastly, 38% of the elementary population

receives free or reduced lunch.

Chart 2 Student Subgroups

Student Subgroups	This District	
Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch program	38%	
IEP students	10.6%	
Migrant students	10%	
Limited English proficient	10%	
		Source: NYSED, 2004-2005

The community of this school district is rural, surrounded by farmlands and muck lands.

Population reported in the New York 2004 census was estimated at 2,393 (City-data., 2006). The

following information was also reported by Cita-data; in the year 2000 the median resident age was

36.6 years, the median household income, $46,161, and the median house value was $82,500.

Participants

The empathy research project was implemented in the sixth grade classes comprising of 52

students in all. There are two classrooms, each with 26 sixth grade students. In Classroom I there

are 15 males and 12 females, 11 actually in the study (note that one female student was not present

for any of the classes and therefore will not be counted). Of the 25 students three are Hispanic and

22 are White. Classroom II consisted of 26 students, 13 males and 13 females; three are Hispanic

and 23 are White. The range of ages for both classrooms is 11 to 12 years old. The sample was

nonrandom as it included all the sixth grade students enrolled in the school.

Instruments

Bryant's Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents (IECA) was used to assess empathic

tendencies in children (see Appendix B). Brenda K. Bryant developed this in 1982 (Bryant, 1982).

The IECA consists of twenty-two dichotomous response items regarding empathy. The items are to be scored dichotomously; either 0 or 1 dependent on the response and the question (Bryant, 1982). Each statement was scored with 1 point for an affirmative answer of statements 1, 4, 5, 6,7 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 19. For statements 2, 3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 22 were assigned 1 point if answered negatively. The results can range from 0 to 22. The higher the score, the higher the tendency to be empathic to others. Test-retest reliability was reported to be .81, among a sample of fourth graders. Coefficient alpha for the empathy index was .78 (Bryant, 1982). Bryant reported that the "coefficients indicate an adequate degree of reliability over a short time period" (Bryant, 1982, p. 419). The IECA was also found to have moderate correlation in convergent validity when using it for younger grades. Bryant further reported that the results of her testing on the IECA showed that it meets the minimum requirements for construct validity as most item means were in the minimum to moderate range, which meant "reasonable discrimination power of the index" (Bryant, 1982, p. 422).

In addition to the above instrument a general Character Education Instrument (see Appendix C) of the empathy program was also administered the first week and the eighth week of the empathy program. This test included ten true and false questions as well as questions to gain a qualitative response from the participants. There is the potential to score a ten on the survey, the qualitative questions were not to be scored right or wrong, however were used to elicit feelings toward acceptance of behaviors and how they were treated in the school. As the researcher developed this instrument there is no test of validity available. The purpose of this instrument was to determine if general character education knowledge was gained, as well as to gather thoughtful responses from the participants regarding the treatment of their peers and each other in the school.

Procedure

Following approval of the Institutional Review Board, as the respondents are minors, a "Statement of Informed Consent" was obtained from the minor student's parents and/or guardian. The "Statement of Informed Consent" was sent to the parents and/or guardian of each participant (see Appendix D). The purpose was to inform the parents of the research project as well as elicit their permission for their child to participate. Following the return of the consent forms from the parents, the researcher sought participation from all sixth-graders at the school.   Participants were asked to participate on a voluntary basis only. The participants were also read and explained a "Statement of Informed Consent," (see Appendix E) and immediately following they were asked to sign it if they are willing to participate. They and their parents were informed that should a parent or respondent not be willing to participate, the student would be able to go to another classroom during the instruction period.

All participants were then administered Bryant's "Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents" before and after the eight-week character education classes. The researcher explained and then read the IECA to the participants. The participants were instructed to circle either "yes" or "no" in response to the statements. They were then administered the character education instrument in the same manner, the researcher reading it and the participant choosing either "true" or "false" to indicate what they believe about the statement on the survey.   Effectiveness of the program will be determined by comparing mean test scores on both the IECA and Character Education Instrument. Following the questionnaire and survey the researcher was available to answer any questions the participants may have had. Participants were instructed that if they had any distress following the survey or any of the subsequent character education classes, they might talk to the elementary school counselor or school psychologist.

The character education classes were administered for eight weeks, one time per week, for 30 minutes. Each sixth grade was taught separately and in their own classroom by the researcher. The curriculum (see Table 1), which consisted of lecture, role-play, team-building activities, and cooperative learning progressed as follows; week one, team-building (see Appendix G); week two, communication styles; week three, decision-making; week four, identifying feelings; and week eight, goal setting. Weeks five, six, seven, and eight was to consist of guest speakers. (see Appendix F) The guest speakers were arranged as follows: a young woman with a physical disability, an older gentleman, a mother of a child with Asperger's Syndrome, and a teacher who is Mexican-American. These guest speakers were arranged to meet the participants and following introductions, explained and discussed ways they have been excluded from others due to the way others judged and perceived them, there was then a question and answer period. Following each session was a 10-minute debriefing for the participants. Week eight also consisted of administering the Post Character education Instrument and final Index of Empathy Questionnaire.

Table 1 Character Education Curriculum Topics

Character Education Curriculum	
Week 1	Introduction, and team-building
Week 2	Communication Styles
Week 3	Decision-making
Week 4	Feelings
Week 5	Guest Speaker-physical disabilities
Week 6	Guest Speaker –judgment by appearances
Week 7	Guest Speaker-mental/emotional disabilities
Week 8	Guest speaker-culture diversity-Conclusion

Evaluation Procedure: Bryant's Index of Empathy

Both instruments were administered to each Class separately in a group setting. The testing took

approximately 20 minutes from beginning to end of both surveys. The test was explained and then

read item by item by the researcher. The class was given Bryant's Index of Empathy for Children

and Adolescents first. This was designed and tested by Brenda K. Bryant and the researcher had

written permission to utilize the instrument. The researcher gave the following instructions:

"The statements will be read to you and some statements

may describe you or may not describe you. Please

circle yes if you feel it does describe you and no if it doesn't

describe you. There is no right or wrong it is how you feel the

statement describes you."

They were also informed that no one else would see the surveys but the researcher, and they were

not being graded as there was no right or wrong answer. The instrument was scored by the

researcher using information obtained through the journal article authored by Bryant (Bryant,

1982). The student answer sheet is included as Appendix B. The results of both classes are included

as Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. It should be noted that a range of 0 to 22 could be achieved on the

instrument, the higher the score the higher the level of empathy reported. When Items 1, 4, 5, 6 7,

8, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 19 were answered in the affirmative, they indicated an empathic tendency and

were scored with one point each. If children answered them in the negative they were scored as a

"0", as they didn't contribute to empathic tendencies.

When items 2, 3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 22 were answered negatively it contributed to

empathic tendencies and was therefore scored with one point. If they were answered in the

affirmative they were scored as a "0". Overall, the higher the scores on the IECA the higher the

level of empathy, and the lower the score the lower the level of empathy expressed by the child

(Bryant, 1982).

Evaluation Procedure: Character Education Instrument

   The researcher devised an instrument to test general character education knowledge, which was

administered before and after the eight-week program. The instrument consisted of ten true and

false questions, and four short answer questions. The range of possible scores was from 0 to 10. The

higher the score the more knowledge of character education basic information the participant

demonstrated they knew before and after the program. There were no right or wrong for the four

short answers and were used to only obtain thoughts form the participants about the treatment of

others in their school. The Character Education Instrument is available as Appendix C. This

instrument was corrected using the answer key made by the researcher.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Results: Bryant's Index of Empathy

   Table 2 is a copy of the scoring chart used to determine levels of empathy on Bryant's Index of

Empathy for Children and Adolescents. A "+" indicates that answers to those questions in the

affirmative contributes to empathic tendency, a "-" indicates that if these questions were answered

in the negative they contributed to empathic tendency.

   Table 2 Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents

Statement	Responses
1. It makes me sad to see a girl who can't find anyone to play with.	+
2. People who kiss and hug in public are silly.	-
3. Boys who cry because they are happy are silly.	-
4. I really like to watch people open presents, even when I don't get a present myself.	+
5. Seeing a boy who is crying makes me feel like crying.	+

6. I get upset when I see a girl being hurt.	+
7. Even when I don't know why someone is laughing, I laugh too.	+
8. Sometimes I cry when I watch TV.	+
9. Girls who cry because they are happy are silly.	-
10. It's hard for me to see why someone else gets upset.	-
11. I get upset when I see an animal being hurt.	+
12. It makes me sad to see a boy who can't find anyone to play with.	+
13. Some songs make me so sad I feel like crying.	+
14. I get upset when I see a boy being hurt.	+
15. Grown ups sometimes cry even when they have nothing to be sad about.	-
16. It's silly to treat dogs and cats as though they have feelings like people.	-
17. I get mad when I see a classmate pretending to need help from the teacher all the time.	-
18. Kids who have no friends probably don't want any.	-
19. Seeing a girl who is crying makes me feel like crying.	+
20. I think it is funny that some people cry during a sad movie or while reading a sad book.	-
21. I am able to eat all my cookies even when I see someone looking at me wanting one.	-
22. I don't feel upset when I see a classmate being punished by a teacher for not obeying school rules.	-

In Table 3 are the means of the total score of the pre and post measurement of Bryant's ICEA by both classes. The results indicated a slightly larger increase in students reporting empathically in both classes. The mean score of the posttest in Class I was 13.5 which was a slight increase of 1.7 from the pre test. The mean score for Class II was 13.9 for the posttest showing an increase of 0.7 from the pre test. It should be noted that there was only a difference of 0.4 in mean scores between the classes at the end of the program. Although the increases were not substantial it does show somewhat of an increase in empathic responses following the eight-week program.   These scores included both males and females.

Table 3 Pre and Post Test Mean Scores for Bryant's ICEA by Class

Pre-test and Post test Means for Class I and Class II					
CLASS	N	Pre	N	Post	Change (+ or -)
Class I	22	11.8	22	13.5	1.7
Class II	26	13.2	24	13.9	0.7

Table 4 lists mean scores by sex for Class I, this was calculated for the total scores of Bryant's ICEA for both pre and post test. As predicted females scored higher in empathic responses and had a higher increase in overall score. In the posttests females scored 5.8 points higher than the males in Class II.

Table 4 Pre and Post Test Mean Scores for Bryant's ICEA by Male and Female

Pre and Post test means for Class I male and female						
Class	Sex	N	Pre	N	Post	Change
Class I	Male	13	10.5	13	11.2	0.7
Class I	Female	9	15.1	9	17.0	1.9

In table 5 are the means of the total scores of Bryant's ICEA for pre and post test for male and female, for Class II. Females scored higher in empathic responses than the males; however, they actually had a slight decrease in empathic responses for the post-test. It should be noted that the males in Class II had increased empathic responses by 0.4 as reported in the post-test.

Table 5 Pre and Post Test Mean Scores for Bryant's ICEA by Male and Female

Pre and Post test means for Class II male and female						
Class	Sex	N	Pre	N	Post	Change
Class II	Male	13	11.9	12	12.3	0.4
Class II	Female	13	15.6	12	15.5	-0.1

Table 6 lists the percentages of empathic responses for each of the 22 items on the Bryant's

ICEA for Class I. The table includes percentage of students who answered empathically for pre and

posttest and the resulting change. Change was slight on each item ranging from a decrease .13 to an

increase of up to .36.

Table 6 Index of Empathy for Children and adolescents

Percentages of Empathic responses for each item pre/post test with change for Class I			
Item Empathic response (- or +)	Pre n=23	Post n=23	Change
1	.47	.60	.13
2	.70	.78	.08
3	.52	.70	.18
4	.47	.83	.36
5	.26	.39	.13
6	.70	.83	.13
7	.65	.57	(.08)
8	.47	.60	.13
9	.70	.78	.08

Item Empathic response (- or +)	Pre n=23	Post n=23	Change
10	.65	.60	(.04)
11	.65	.70	.04
12	.52	.57	.04
13	.57	.52	(.04)
14	.35	.65	.30
15	.30	.30	0
16	.83	.87	.04
17	.43	.30	(.13)
18	.74	.74	0
19	.17	.39	.30
20	.60	.70	.08
21	.65	.65	0
22	.39	.43	.04
Total	.54	.61	.07

Table 7 includes the percentage of students in Class II who answered empathically for Bryant's

IECA pre and posttest and the resulting change. Change was slight on each item ranging from a

decrease .12 to increase of up to .15.

Table 7 Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents

Percentages of Empathic responses for each item pre/post test with change for Class II			
Item Empathic response (- or +)	Pre n=26	Post n=24	Change
1	.77	.79	.02
2	.65	.79	.14
3	.65	.71	.06
4	.65	.71	.06
5	.31	.33	.02
6	.85	.92	.07
7	.62	.54	(.08)
8	.35	.38	.03
9	.81	.79	(.02)
10	.62	.63	.01
11	.81	.92	.11
12	.73	.71	(.02)
13	.46	.50	.04
14	.81	.75	(.06)
15	.35	.50	.15
16	.92	.88	(.04)
17	.19	.13	(.06)
18	1.00	.92	(.08)
19	.31	.46	.15

20	.77	.67	(.10)
21	.69	.79	.10
22	.50	.38	(.12)
Total	.60	.63	.03

Results: Character Education Instrument

The second measurement used was a general knowledge test based on the Character Education information taught in the empathy program. The first section of the test consisted of ten true and false questions with score range of 0 to 10. The second half of the test consisted of four questions regarding the student's thoughts regarding treatment of others in the school. Table 8 reports total mean scores of pre and posttests for Class I and Class II. It should be noted that in both classes the mean was high and there was slight to no change on the post-test.

Table 8

Pre-test and Post test Means for Class I and Class II Character Education test					
CLASS	N	Pre	N	Post	Change (+ or -)
Class I	22	7.5	22	8.4	0.9
Class II	26	8.3	24	8.3	0

Qualitative questions on the second half of the Character Education survey were answered by all the class participants in short answer format. Patterns and themes were noted on both pre and post tests in both classes.

Responses for Class I: Pretest

Questions 1.What are some common signs of disrespect that you see in people at school? How do you feel about that?

The common theme of disrespect noted by Class I included name-calling, being mean to each other, swearing, and pushing fellow students. Some students recognized disrespect as ignoring the teacher and not following the class rules.

Actual responses included:

"Some common signs of disrespect at school is name calling and teasing."

"Some signs are ignoring and calling names."

"People make fun of other people."

The general feeling that Class I felt about the disrespect was that they felt sad, angry and horrible. Although there were six students who weren't concerned about the disrespect, and thought it was funny. Student's actual responses included:

"I feel badly when I see it."

"Horrible." ,

"It hurts me to know they don't care."

"It doesn't bother me."

"I don't care."

Question 2., What do you dislike most about the way people treat each other here at school? Why?

The general consensus of Class I regarding what they dislike about their school was when people were mean to each other, called each other names and left people out. There were only three responses indicating that they didn't care about the disrespect.

Actual student responses are;

"I hate it when people criticize people."

"They ignore people that aren't like them."

"Not everyone has friends."

"Name-calling because it's mean."

'They hate each other because they don't know each other."

Question 3. What do you like most (about your school)? Why?

Answers ranged from liking the school because it was small; to appreciating familiarity due to the small school and that they liked their friends.

Actual answers included:

"Nothing cause I don't care."

"I like the way some people treat each other nicely because it doesn't happen that much."

"When people are nice to each other…"

"I have good friends."

Responses for Class I: Posttest

Question 1.What are some common signs of disrespect that you see in people at school? How do you feel about that?

On the posttest the general theme of common signs didn't change from the pre test. The signs of disrespect included, name-calling, talking about people, and making fun of other people.

Actual responses included:

"Hitting, calling names, and rejection."

"People talking behind each others back."

"Making fun of others".

The students generally reported that they felt mad, sad, and angry about the disrespect. It should

also be noted that in the posttest only two children answered that they were ok with the disrespect.

Actual responses included:

"I think it is wrong and they shouldn't do it."

"I don't like it (the disrespect)."

"I think it's wrong because it hurts other' feelings."

"I feel bad."

I don't really like it."

Question 2., What do you dislike most about the way people treat each other here at school?

Why?

The general consensus of Class I regarding what they dislike about their school included they

didn't like when people were mean to each other, and do not show respect for each other.

Actual responses indicate:

"I hate when people fight."

"Calling names because it hurts people's feelings."

Question 3. What do you like most (about your school)? Why?

Responses to this question on the posttest had a central theme that while some students liked that

everyone got along there were also students who didn't like anything at all.

Actual responses include:

"I like how we all basically get along."

"People can be nice…it makes people feel good especially about themselves."

"I like how some people get along with everyone."

Responses for Class II: Pretest

Questions 1.What are some common signs of disrespect that you see in people at school? How   do you feel about that?

Many students recognized the disrespect and commented that it included leaving others out, not following rules in the class, talking negatively about others, making fun of others, swearing, lying, and excluding classmates.

Actual student responses on the pre-test included;

"(people) not listening, not doing what you are told."

 "People picking on other people."

"People make fun of others that are different."

 "Leaving out people."

 "Calling people names."

 "I see people picking on kids just because they look and act different."

The general feeling that Class II felt about the disrespect was that it was mean and made them either angry or sad. There were a couple responses that indicated they didn't care, as it didn't involve them.

 Actual student responses on the pretest included;

 "I think everybody should be treated equally."

"I feel it's rude to the other student and especially the teacher."

"I feel I don't care because it's not me doing it. "

"I feel sad…"

" I feel it's not fair…"

"…it makes me angry".

Question 2., What do you dislike most about the way people treat each other here at school?

Why?

The general consensus of Class II regarding what they dislike about their school was the way

students treated each other.

Actual student comments include:

"…some people can just be so mean…"

"I dislike when they call people names."

"They just don't care about other people's feelings."

"When they pick on the kids who are a little different."

"I dislike the names because they hurt."

"They leave them out, everybody needs friends."

Question 3. What do you like most (about your school)? Why?

The general theme for the last question was that they liked their school because it was small and

that generally people were friendly and helpful.

Actual responses include:

"It's small and everybody knows each other."

"…everybody being fair with each other."

"I like the way some people get along with everyone."

"I like that most 6th graders get along because most people are friends."

"Some people are respectful. That's good."

Responses for Class II: Posttest

   Question 1.What is some common signs of disrespect that you see in people at school? How do you feel about that?

Common answers for Class II have the same theme that the pretest; making fun of others, teasing, calling names and not listening to the teacher.

Some actual responses include;

"Different people get treated differently."

"Making faces behind someone's back."

"Name calling, shoving people and making fun of disabilities"

Question 2. What do you dislike most about the way people treat each other here at school?

Why?

Common theme for this posttest question included being judged by others, not liking when others aren't accepted and the various name-calling teasing responses."

   Some responses include:

"I hate when others aren't accepted because they are different."

"Being mean because of looks because it is what's on the inside that matters."

"I don't like when people laugh at others."

Question 3. What do you like most (about your school)? Why?

Responses to this question on the posttest had a similar theme of children liking the school as it was small, enjoy when others reach out and help others.

Answers included:

"I liked that the school is small."

"I like it when people help others."

"That most (key word) people are very nice and have friends."

   Overall the responses that were given on pre and posttests for both classes were very similar and there was little change except in the way students answered in more detail and used vocabulary we had used in the class.

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

   The purpose of this study was to determine if teaching an eight-week character education class, specifically focusing on empathy and understanding others would increase the level of empathic responses in sixth grade students. This study was also initiated to determine if increased empathy would have a positive effect on prosocial behaviors among the students. The researchers' original thoughts were that an eight-week class would significantly increase the level of empathy expressed by both males and females in the sixth grade class, and that this would be reflected through increased scores on the IECA.

   Although survey results were not significant they did indicate a slight increase in students responding empathically on the IECA in Class I from individual mean score of 11.8 to 13.5. In Class I scores increased for both males and females with females increasing their total mean score by 1.7 and males by 0.7. This would reflect studies that females mature faster and that they show empathy more than males (Baron-Cohen, 2005). Overall, percentage of empathic responses on items on the ICEA for Class I increased from .54 on the pretest to .61 on the posttest with a total increase of .08.

   The slight increase in Class I may have been due to the increase in awareness of each other over the eight-week program. Also, the overall mood among the children taking the posttest was much lighter with a willingness to help out more so than in the beginning when they were somewhat apprehensive about the program. Furthermore, in Class I there was a larger group of students,

mostly males that were outspoken, aggressive, and enjoyed engaging in discussions about the dynamics of the classroom. This group of students was more open about their feelings toward each other and didn't hesitate to admit that they liked to exclude those that "didn't fit" in their group. Because of this openness, the ability to assertively confront some of the aggressive issues took place during our class time, this I believed helped to increase awareness of their actions towards each other, which was reflected in the slight increase in scores for Class I.

Some items on the ICEA had a greater increase or decrease than others. Specifically, the following items, 1, 3, 5 and 6 all had increases ranging from .13 to .18 in students answering empathically. These four statements were regarding a child's reactions to someone getting hurt or crying, the increase showed that more students would have an empathic response as a result of observing someone else's situation. While these increases were slight, items 4, 14, and 19 had substantial increases ranging from .30 to .36 showing a considerable increase in a student responding empathically to another student being hurt or crying.

There was a decrease in responses in the following items; 7, 10, 13, and 17, decreases ranged from .04 to .13. These items had to do with reactions they may feel watching television or observing others laugh and not to do with observing others hurt or crying.

In Class II, on the IECA the total classes mean scores showed a slight increase from 13.2 to 13.9 with increase of 0.7. It is also important to note that in Class II, the mean score for males went from 11.9 to 12.3 showing an increase of 0.4. However the females' scores decreased from 15.6 to 15.5 with a decrease of 0.1. The total percentage of empathic responses on the ICEA for Class II went from a .60 to a .63 showing a very, slight increase of .03. In Class II the following items had increases of .06 to .16; items 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 15, and 19 all of which were in regards to how they would react if some one was hurt or crying.

However, there was a decrease in items 7, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20 and 21. These items also had to do with reacting to how some one is acting but in more of an abstract way for example; "I think it is funny that some people cry during a sad movie or while reading a book. One explanation for the decrease is the way the questions are worded some of the children had trouble answering them.

Although Bryant's ICEA indicated only a slight increase the researcher observed the students to engage in more prosocial behaviors. These behaviors included more inclusion of students in groups they weren't normally allowed in and showing interest and concern by communicating with some of the previously excluded children. Class II also became very excited about the culture and diversity project and it really sparked their interest in each other. Additionally, many of the quieter students voiced their opinions about how they were treated and how they felt about being excluded from others. This character education program and working together may have given them the power to communicate more assertively.

On the Character Education Instrument the results yielded a slight increase in Class I however no changes for Class II, although it should be noted that mean scores were already high on this instrument; Class I, 7.5 out of 10 and Class II, 8.3 out of 10 indicating that the children already possessed an average to high degree of knowledge of how others should be treated prior to the program beginning. Posttest mean scores were Class I - 8.4, and Class II remaining the same at 8.3. Responses to the qualitative questions revealed that all participants in both classes were well aware of the anti-social, bullying behaviors that were taking place among their peers, and most indicated they felt "bad" about this. However, most of the sixth graders were able to recognize positive attributes of their school such as it is small so everyone knows each other, and they recognized that most of their peers were kind and helpful.

This increase is consistent with other studies that showed an increase in empathy following a character education program (Hanish, 2000; Lickona, 1992). This is also consistent with Cotton's review of the literature (2001) indicating that teaching social skills would increase empathy, by using lessons on feelings, diversity, and communication. One session in Class II resulted in an hour-long session of teaching each other about their cultures and culminated with sharing foods, stories, and artifacts of each child's culture. This event was important in increasing curiosity about each other and increasing empathy toward each other. Cotton's research coincided with this in that it confirmed that teaching about others' cultures could enhance empathy in students.

Although the findings were consistent with other researchers work, a larger increase in empathy may have taken place if the children were older, or if the program had taken place over a longer period of time (Knight, 1989; Santrock, 2004; Shapiro, Baumeister, & Kessler, 1991; Upright, 2002). It is also important to note that many researchers discussions indicated that for a program to be effective it needed to encompass the children's environment meaning school, community, and family (Lickona, 1992; Kahn & Lawthorne, 2003). This is an important piece as this program only included the sixth grade levels, and didn't include parents, teachers or other aspects of the community. The student's excitement in some of the activities (i.e. sharing diversity, finding out how others felt) confirmed that a longer more intense program would have helped to engage the children and make greater increases in their ability to help and care about each other.

The fact that the increase was not larger could also be due to the fact that sixth graders, especially male's level of empathy matched their level of maturity. As Knight (1989) indicated if children have not developed a maturity level, it would be useless to attempt to teach empathy, as they may not possess the ability to increase their level of empathy yet. Increase in empathy will come with increase in age and maturity resulting from general developmental growth. Knight also

indicated that a person's ability to tolerate others and accept differences is also related to a higher

maturity level. Subsequently, if the students haven't reached a level of maturity to match the level

of empathy this researcher was expecting to observe (Knight, 1989).

Limitations

Limitations in this research program would include technical problems such as the final guest

speaker was unable to attend the last session and therefore the program only included the first three

speakers. Other technical problems that could not be rectified included students leaving class early

for appointments for other lessons and services. In a school system this is a difficult hurdle to

overcome as the programs are instituted around a school schedule and some changes would be

impossible to implement. Other changes in the program included the initial introduction sessions

taking two weeks to complete as opposed to the planned one week, causing the program to be

extended an extra week, although this extension may be seen as a positive aspect.

Other limitations would be that the program length including days and time was too short and

often times all the activities planned for the session could not be completed. There were also

instances when the students wanted to discuss the dynamics of the class, actions of others, and

problems with peers bullying each other, which resulted in some lessons not able to be taught in

full. On a positive note, some lessons were extended due to the enthusiasm of the teachers, for

example the cultural diversity day. This resulted in the teacher and students making an exhibit in the

school for others to see, and in turn sparked some fourth grade students to want to partake in the

same activity.

It should also be noted that other instruments to measure empathy and moral development

should be used as the participants had some difficulty with some of the items on Bryant's IECA.

They were confused by the wording and several times asked for clarification. It is also interesting

to note that they did much better on the knowledge-based questions than empathy reaction statements. This may be due to the type of knowledge based testing that is typical for them in the educational system. They were also wary about answering statements that were about their feelings, even though they were kept confidential. Feelings and responses to situations may have been more genuinely elicited through individual interviews with the students or in smaller groups. To obtain more accurate information about relationships and prosocial behaviors teacher observations combined with number of discipline and counselor referrals may have resulted in more concrete data. In order to confirm changes in relationships it may be important to elicit and include information from the teachers of the class regarding increase or decrease of inappropriate social behaviors, attitudes of students towards each other, and patterns of inclusive and exclusive behaviors, and bullying behaviors. Furthermore, to track changes in behaviors as well as long term effects; tracking disciplinary, and counselor referrals would be helpful. It would also be worthwhile to include parents in the program by sending home homework assignments and activities as well as elicit participants' parental/guardian input to determine any changes in behavior at home.

Recommendations

The slight increase and the qualitative feedback from the sixth grade participants lead this researcher to conclude that sixth grade children are excited and interested in character education and discussing social skills. At the completion of the program I had the students answer the following questions; "what is one thing you learned from the program". Answers included; "just because people look or act different they (still) should be treated the same", "I learned to treat others the way you want to be treated no matter their disabilities", "don't judge people", "I think I will think about other's feelings before I say anything", "I changed, because I now help more people out than before and I feel as though it changed my personality by telling people how I felt about things and helping

out more." These comments and there were many similar to this indicated that there were changes

that may not have been reflected on the instruments used.

Major recommendations to the program would be to increase the program to 10 or 12 weeks and

increase the class time to 45 minutes allowing much more time for discussion. I would recommend

that topics remain the same but leave more time for role-playing. I would recommend regular

contact with the student's homes to inform them of what we are learning and encourage

communication through various interactive homework assignments. I would also increase school

wide involvement by having the students plan a school wide diversity day (this may be an extension

of the program) and also encourage more interaction between the class at lunchtime and during free

periods. Other recommendations would be to have a follow up program with seventh and eighth

graders to reinforce what they learned.

Additionally, it is important to identify at-risk youth through this program and have a referral

process into a group, which would begin at the completion of the Character Education program. As

a result of this program, students were referred and some requested to meet with the school

counseling department for anger management and conflict resolution. If a group were ready to start

it would save time and continue work already started in the program.

Overall, I believe that it is a lack of awareness of others and a disinterest in fellow students that

leads to and breeds exclusion and bullying. Students tend to ignore or lash out at that which they are

unfamiliar with. Often students don't have the opportunity to discuss life skills and social skills;

including feelings. Allowing time for this during the day can enhance student and teacher

relationships. For example, some students in Class I were able to voice their concerns with their

teacher during a class discussion, this lead to a discussion between them following the program, and

helped to resolve issues between them. Even the very minimum of having regular classroom

meetings can be useful in enhancing empathy and cohesion in a classroom (Lickona, 2005).

Children want to be heard, accepted, and understood. Through even the most basic character

education program a school counselor would be able to cultivate and enhance a feeling of inclusion

in a classroom for all participants. The participants said it clearer in their final comments than any

measurement tool I used when they indicated: "it was nice to be able to speak freely about our

feelings", and "it was nice to spend time discussing what our true feelings are." Many also

indicated that the one important thing learned was the Golden Rule, "Treat others how you want to

be treated."

Teaching students to recognize and discuss feelings, be aware of their uniqueness, teach them to

be sensitive and aware of others, let them know they are valued, and show them respect are all

concrete basics for helping students to do the same for others. Mister Fred Rogers sums it all up:

"When you combine your own intuition with a sensitivity of other people's feelings and moods,

you may be close to the origins of valuable human attributes such as generosity, altruism,

compassion, sympathy, and empathy" (Rogers, 2003).

References

Adler, P. A. & Adler, P. (1995) Dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in preadolescent cliques. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 58*, 145-162.

Baron-Cohen, S. (2005). Do sex differenced in empathy account for sex differences in language acquisition? Coevaluation of Language and Theory of Mind. Retrieved on April 8, 2006 from http://www.interdisciplines.org/coevolution/papers/7.

Bavolek, S. J. (2003). *Developing empathy in families*. Family Development Resources. Retrieved on September 28, 2005 from www.nurturingparent.com.

Bengtsson, H., & Johnston, L. (1992). Perspective taking, empathy, and prosocial behavior in late childhood. *Child Study Journal*, *22*, 11-24.

Berman, S. (1998). The bridges to civility: Empathy, ethics, and service. *The School Administrator*, *55.*

Borba, M. (2001). Building moral intelligence: The seven essential virtues that teach kids to do the right thing. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bryant, B., K. (1982). An index of empathy for children and adolescents. *Child Development*, *53*, 413-425.0

Canter, L., & Peterson, K. (1995). Teaching students to get along. Santa Monica, CA: Lee Canter & Associates.

Chapman, M., Zahn-Waxler, C., Cooperman, G., Iannotti, R. (1987). Empathy and responsibility in the motivation of children's helping. *Developmental Psychology, 23,* 140-145.

City-Data. (2006). City-data.com. Retrieved on March 30, 2006 from http://www.city-data.com/city/New-York.html.

Cotton, K. (2001). Developing empathy in Children and Youth. School Improvement Research

    Series, Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved on September 28, 2005 from

    http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/7/cul3.html.

Dosick, W. (1995). Golden rules: The ten ethical values parents need to teach their children. New

    York, NY: Harper Collins Press.

Eisenberg, N., & Mussen, P. (1989). The Roots of Prosocial Behavior in Children. New York, NY:

    Cambridge University Press.

Eisenberg, N., Shell, R., Pasternack, J., Lennon, R., Beller, R., & Mathy, R. M. (1987). Prosocial

    behavior in middle childhood: A longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology, 23,* 712-

    718.

Feshbach, N. D., & Feshbach, S. (1987). Affective processes and academic achievement. *Child*

    Development, 58, 1335-1347.

Fryxell, D. (2000). Personal, social, family characteristics of angry students. *Professional School*

    Counseling, *4*, 86-95.

Grancher, R., P. (1998). How to raise a moral child. Retrieved on January 30, 2006 from

    http://www.2preslex.org/GRANACH1.HTM.

Hanish, L. D. (2000). Children who get victimized at school: What is known? What can be done?

    Professional School Counseling, 4, 113-120.

Harper, F. D., Harper, J. A., Stills, A. B. (2003). Counseling children in crisis based on Maslow's

    hierarchy of needs. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 25*, 11-25.

Hoffman, M. (2000). Empathy and moral development. New York, NY: Cambridge University

    Press.

Humphrey, S. M. (1995). If you had to choose, what would you do? Amherst, NY: Prometheus
    Books.

Humphrey, S. M. (1999). It's up to you…what do you do? Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Knight, P. (1989). Empathy: Concept, confusion, and consequences in a national curriculum.
    Oxford Review of Education, 15, 41-53.

Kilpatrick, W., Wolfe, G., & Wolfe, S. (1994). Books that build character. New York, NY: Simon
    & Schuster, Inc.

LaFontana, K.M. & Cillessen, A. H., (2002). Children's perceptions of popular and unpopular
    peers: A multi-method assessment. *Developmental Psychology, 38*, 635-648.

Lamb, S. (1993). First moral sense: An examination of the appearance of morally related behaviors
    in the second year of life. *Journal of Moral Education, 22*, 97-113.

Lewis, B. A. (1998). What do you stand for? Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Lewis, B. A. (2000). Being your best: Character building for kids 7 – 10. Minneapolis, MN: Free
    Spirit Publishing

Lickona, T. (1992). Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility.
    New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Lickona, T. & Davidson, M. (2005). Smart & good high schools: Integrating excellence and ethics
    for success in school, work, and beyond. Cortland, NY: Center for the 4th and 5th R's
    (Reading and Responsibility/Washington, D.C. Character Education Partnership.

Livewire Media. (2005). Good character. Elkind & Sweet Communications. Retrieved on
    November 7, 2005 from www.goodcharacter.com.

Meek, C. R. (1957). An experiment in teaching empathy. *Journal of Educational Sociology, 31,*
    107-110.

Miller, J. (1998). Ten-minute life lessons for kids. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, J., Simons-Morton, B., & Schedt, P. (2001).

    Bullying Behaviors among US youth. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 285,*

    2094-2100.

New York State Education Department. (2005). Retrieved on March 31, 2006 from

    http://www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/ny/other/print/788.

Ojanen, T., Gronroos, M., Salmivalli, C. (2005). Relational schema, social goals, and social

    adjustment in childhood and adolescence. *Developmental Psychology, 41,* 699-710.

Olweus, D. (1994). Annotation: Bullying at school: Basic facts and effects of a school based

    intervention program. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 35,* 1171-1190.

Perlstein, R. & Thrall, G. (1996). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Roberts, Jr., W. B. (2000). The bully as victim: Understanding bully behaviors to increase the

    effectiveness of intervention. *Professional School Counseling*, *4,* 148-156.

Roberts, W., Strayer, J. (1996). Empathy, emotional expressiveness and prosocial behavior. *Child*

    Development, *67,* 448-470.

Robinson, V. (2001). Bullying—Is it part of growing up, or part of school violence? *In Focus*

    Retrieved on November 23, 2005, http://www.healthinschools.org/focus/2004/no2.htm.

Rock, E. A. (2003). School-based program to teach children empathy and bully prevention. *The*

    International Child and Youth Care Network, *53*, 1-22.

Rogers, F. (2003).The world according to Mister Rogers. New York, NY: Family Communications,

    Inc.

Safe Schools, Safe Students. (1998). Drug Strategies, Washington D.C.

Santrock, J. (2004). Life Span Development. McGraw Hill: New York, NY.

Shapiro, J. P., Baumeister, R. F., & Kessler, J. W. (1991). A three component model of children's teasing: Aggression, humor, and ambiguity. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 10,* 459-472.

Teolis, B. (1998). Conflict-resolution activities for elementary students. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Unell, B. C. (1995). 20 teachable virtues. New York, NY: The Berkeley Publishing Group.

Upright, R. L. (2002). To tell a tale: The use of moral dilemmas to increase empathy in the elementary school child. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 30*, 15-20.

Wright, J. C., Giammarino, M., & Parad, H. W. (1986). Social status in small groups: Individual-group similarity and the social misfit. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *50*, 523-536.

Zins, J., E., Bloodworth, M., R., Weissberg, R. P., & Walberg, H., L. (2004). *Building Academic Success on Social Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?* Danvers, MA: Columbia University.

Zahn-Waxler, C., Radke-Yarrow, M., Wagner, E., and Chapman, M. (1992). Development of concern for others. *Developmental Psychology, 28,* 126-136.

Appendix A

A 12-POINT
COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO CHARACTER EDUCATION
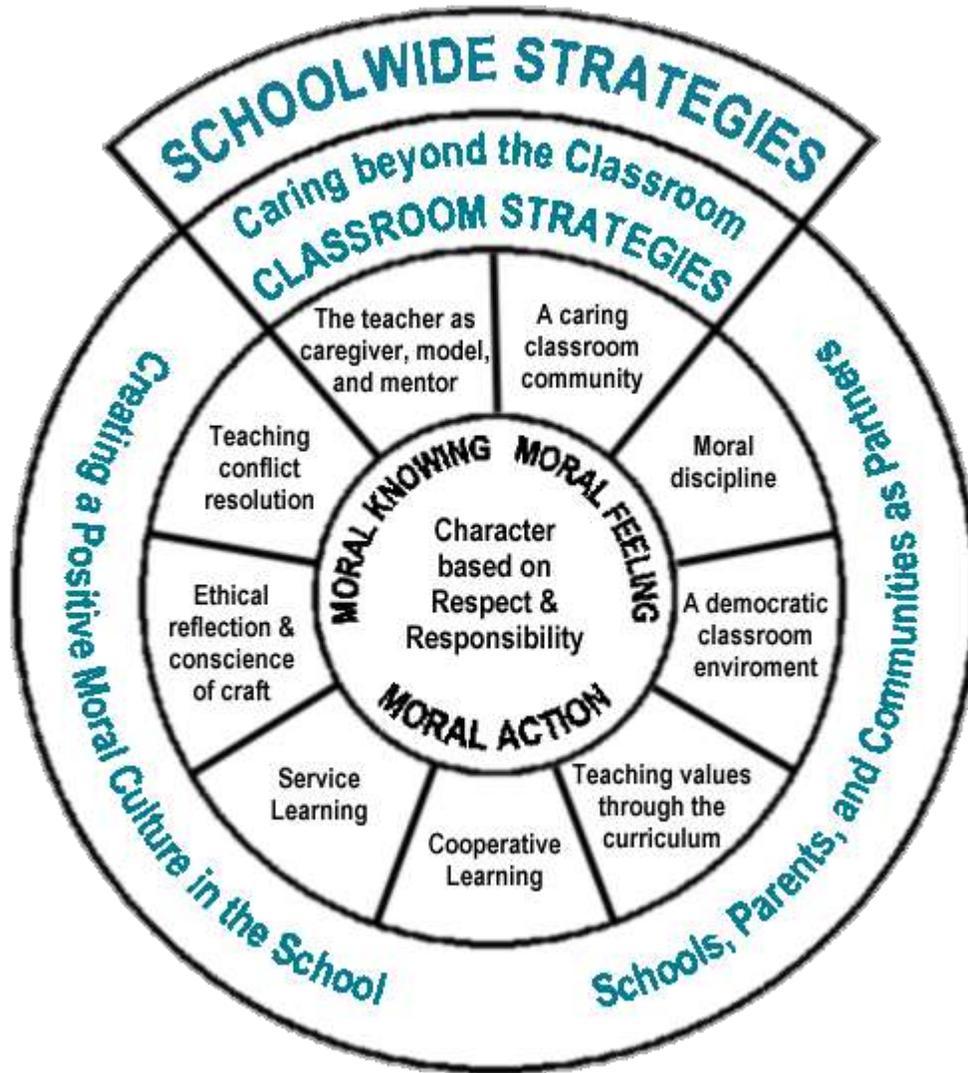
Appendix B

Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents
Please circle yes if you agree with the statement and no if you don't agree with it.
Date _____   Teacher _____   Male or Female

Statement		
1. It makes me sad to see a girl who can't find anyone to play with.	Yes	No
2. People who kiss and hug in public are silly.	Yes	No
3. Boys who cry because they are happy are silly.	Yes	No
4. I really like to watch people open presents, even when I don't get a present myself.	Yes	No
5. Seeing a boy who is crying makes me feel like crying.	Yes	No
6. I get upset when I see a girl being hurt.	Yes	No
7. Even when I don't know why someone is laughing, I laugh too.	Yes	No
8. Sometimes I cry when I watch TV.	Yes	No
9. Girls who cry because they are happy are silly.	Yes	No
10. It's hard for me to see why someone else gets upset.	Yes	No
11. I get upset when I see an animal being hurt.	Yes	No
12. It makes me sad to see a boy who can't find anyone to play with.	Yes	No
13. Some songs make me so sad I feel like crying.	Yes	No
14. I get upset when I see a boy being hurt.	Yes	No
15. Grown ups sometimes cry even when they have nothing to be sad about.	Yes	No
16. It's silly to treat dogs and cats as though they have feelings like people.	Yes	No
17. I get mad when I see a classmate pretending to need help from the teacher all the time.	Yes	No
18. Kids who have no friends probably don't want any.	Yes	No
19. Seeing a girl who is crying makes me feel like crying.	Yes	No
20. I think it is funny that some people cry during a sad movie or while reading a sad book.	Yes	No
21. I am able to eat all my cookies even when I see someone looking at me wanting one.	Yes	No
22. I don't feel upset when I see a classmate being punished by a teacher for not obeying school rules.	Yes	No

Bryant, B. K. (1982). An index of empathy for children and adolescents. Child Development, 53,413-425.

Appendix C

Character Education Test

Date: _____   Please circle: Male or Female   Test# _____

After reading the statements please circle whether you think it is true or false.

True False	1. When it comes to making choices, it is okay to do anything you can get away with.
True False	2. It's better to set lower goals than to risk failure by setting higher ones.
True False	3. In order for something to be a goal it has to be important to you, personally.
True False	4. It's okay to insult or make fun of people as long as they don't hear it.
True False	5. It is harder to respect someone who is different from me.
True False	6. It's never okay to feel angry!
True False	7. In order to have good friends you have to be a good friend.
True False	8. Moods sometimes affect the way you make decisions.
True False	9. When you get into a conflict with someone, it's okay to hit and call names.
True False	10. It's better to go along with the crowd than to make your own choices.

Please answer the questions below as honestly as possible:
What are some common signs of disrespect that you see in people at school? _____
_____
How do you feel about that? _____
What do you dislike most about the way people treat each other here at school? Why?
_____
What do you like the most? Why? _____
_____

Appendix D

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am the elementary school counselor at Elba Central School and am completing my Master's Degree in Counselor Education at SUNY College at Brockport. I am conducting a research project to fulfill a requirement of my college course. The research project consists of putting into place an eight-week character education class to teach empathy in all sixth grade classes at Elba Central School. The classes will include discussion, cooperative learning, role-playing, and guest speakers. These exercises are used to teach value clarification, communication, feelings, decision-making, and goal-setting skills that will help students get along with others. Research shows that character education programs help build a safe, friendly, and positive school climate and improve a students' ability to learn.

You are being asked to make a decision whether or not you want your child to be included in this project. If you want them to and agree with the statements below, please sign this form and return it to school.

I understand that:

1. My child's involvement is voluntary.

2. My child's privacy is guaranteed. There will be no way to connect his/her name to the tests, my child will not be identified, and results will be reported in category form only.

3. There are not any personal risks to my child to take part in this project.

4. My child's will be taking pre/post tests and attending eight weeks of 30 minute classes in their regular classroom.

5. All Elba Central School sixth graders are being asked to take part in this project. The results will be used for the completion of a class project in the Counselor Education Program at SUNY Brockport.

6. Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office and will be destroyed at the end of the Spring 2006 semester.

I am the parent/guardian of _____. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this project have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to allow my child _____to participate in the study realizing that he/she may with draw without penalty at any time during the survey process. If you have any questions you may contact Dr. Susan Seem at 395-2258,Department of counselor Education or Kelly Carlie at (585)-757-9967 extension 1602.

Sincerely,

Kelly Carlie
Elementary Counselor

I _____give consent for my child _____ to participate in the above study.

_____   _____
          Signature   Date

Appendix E

Statement of Informed Consent

Name_____ Date_____ Teacher _____

I am doing a research project that is required for a class I take in college, at SUNY Brockport. I am interested in learning about how children can become better friends with each other and get along better in the classroom.

I am asking all sixth graders in Elba Central School to help me learn about this. If you agree to do this, here is exactly what I will ask you to do. You will be asked to take a test and answer questions about being a friend and how to treat others. You will then you will attend eight classes with me every Wednesday for ½ hour. During these classes we will work together to solve problems, we will role-play about how to get along with others, and we will talk about how to treat others whether or not they are different from us.

You won't be graded on anything you do and the results will not affect your school grades or anything else that you do. Your teachers and parents and the other children will not know how you do, or what you answer on the tests. Of course, you don't have to do this if you don't want to, even if your parents or guardian gave their permission. If you don't want to do this just tell me and I will not ask you any questions. It is OK with me if you do not want to be part of the project. If you have any questions about this project at any time during the program you can ask me. If you agree to do this, I would like you to sign this paper. Your parents also gave permission for you to be in this research project.

The project has been explained to me and any questions I had have been answered. I would like to take part in this study.

_____ _____
(Child's signature)   (Date)

Appendix F

Empathy Class Curriculum

Week One: Introductions and Surveys.

- I ill explain consent forms explained to students and they will be given time to sign them.
- I will distribute surveys, and instructions will be given to complete as best as they can. I will read the questions to them.
- Introductions:
    - Children will complete name cards that will be used every week on their desks.
    - Discuss respect- "Treating people with respect makes your world a nicer place to live in, whether it's at home, at school, or out in your community. And it's easy - all you have to do is treat people the way you like to have them treat you". The Golden Rule
    - Place children in groups and instruct them to make lists how to respect others (how to treat others with respect) Should include:
    - • Don't insult people or make fun of them.
      • Listen to others when they speak.
      • Value other people's opinions.
      • Be considerate of people's likes and dislikes.
      • Don't mock or tease people.
      • Don't talk about people behind their backs.
      • Be sensitive to other people's feelings.
      • Don't pressure someone to do something he or she doesn't want to do.
    - Discuss diversity
      we live in a diverse nation made up of many different cultures, languages, races, and backgrounds. That kind of variety can make all our lives a lot more fun and interesting, but only if we get along with each other. And to do that we have to respect each other. In addition to the list above, here are some ways we can respect people who are different from us.
    - • Try to learn something from the other person.
      • Never stereotype people.
      • Show interest and appreciation for other people's cultures and backgrounds.
      • Don't go along with prejudices and racist attitudes.
        - In their groups children will be asked to introduce themselves to each other.
    - They will be given a worksheet (Appendix F) and asked to list ways they are all alike and ways they are different. They will then present in front of the class.
    - Spider Web activity –Children get in circle, with ball of yarn throw to each child saying one positive thing about the person you are throwing to whiled holding on to the end of the yarn. At he end makes a large web, discuss how strong the web is add some balls to middle. Show how when 3 or 4 drop their end the balls fall and the web becomes weak. Discuss strength of the class when they work together and help each other out.
    - End class with brief discussion of ways a class can work together.

Week Two: Communication styles, Aggressive, Passive or Assertive & respecting others
- Brief lecture on definitions of Communication, specifically what is assertive, aggressive and passive communication.
- Teams break up and are each given scenarios of a situation that might take place in the classroom. They are asked to role play how to assertively handle the situation
- Brief discussion on the importance of being assertive. Discuss how this helps to communicate and get along with others.
- Homework is to practice speaking assertively to others and report to class next week.

Week three: Decision-making
- Each child in teams of two.
- Paper bags in front of room each have something different in them.
- They go through three rounds of trying to guess what is in each one.
- First round they just look and guess, second round they pick up the bag, then guess, third round they can feel through the bag. Lastly, one team member picks up bag and gives hint to the other about what is in bag.
- As a class we determine what round they were able to decide what was in the bag.
- Discussion surrounds why information is needed before a decision or judgment is made. This includes how we judge people. Discuss how often times people prejudge others before they know them how this can affect relationships and friendships.
- Discuss ways that we can find information about people before we judge them.
- Everyone must set a goal to find out information about one person in the class that they don't know very well. They are to write a brief statement introducing the class and hand in at the last class.

Week Four: Feelings/self-esteem
- Discussion regarding "the way we feel about ourselves has an affect on the way we treat others and on the choices we make."
- Discuss and define self-esteem and self-image
- Discuss self-esteem as a bucket, which is full when we are born however as we develop negative beliefs about ourselves it is like poking holes in the bucket.
- Have class list things that we say or do to ourselves or others that "poke holes" in our self esteem bucket. (List this on board as well)
- Discuss ways to strengthen the bucket or to repair the bucket. Put this next to the other list.
- Give homework: they need to list their negative beliefs that "poke holes" in their bucket and positive beliefs that can strengthen the bucket.
- We will also discuss what emotions/feelings are. List of all emotions by class; highlight the emotions that have trouble controlling.
- Point out that at times our emotions control our behavior "ask what does this mean".
- Getting in their groups work on the following: For each of the situations given below, ask the following three questions:
  - #1. *Name the feeling.*

#2. *What's a helpful way to deal with it?*

#3. *What's a harmful way to deal with it?*

- o a) What do you feel when you're blamed for something you didn't do?
- o b) What do you feel when someone keeps fouling you on the basketball court?
- o c) What do you feel if you are expecting to see a friend, and he or she backs out at the last moment for no good reason?
- o d) How does you feel when you work really hard for something and you succeed?
- o e) What do you feel when your team keeps losing?
- o f) What do you feel when a teacher praises your work?
- o g) What do you feel when you do poorly on an exam because you didn't study?
- o h) What do you feel when your parent hasn't understood you?
- o For whom work the group is to make a small poster of what they can do if they are feeling down, feeling angry and sad. This will be shared next week.

Week Five: Guest speaker

- Kim F discusses with the class her physical disability that she has had had since a child. She will show them her prosthetic arm. Tell them how others have treated her, and explain what she has done to overcome adversity.
- Question and answer period to follow.
- Discussion again reviewing judgments of others, how to help others out and how we treat each other.

Week Six: Guest Speaker Mr. N.

- Prior to Mr. N. Coming I will discuss with children again that even though people may be different from us, by talking with them and getting to know them we can form an honest opinion of them.
- Mr. Nowak is an older gentleman, very tall, deep voice. He will discuss how many times children and others are intimidated by him due to his height. Also, that he is treated differently due to his white hair and perceived as older.
- Question and answer period to follow
- Again review our perceptions of Mr. N. and what we felt after he introduced himself, determine if these changed.

Week Seven: Guest Speaker: Mrs. A

- Mrs. A will discuss what Asperger's Syndrome is, as well as what a child with Asperger's may act like.
- She will read a book to the children about a child with Asperger's.
- Question and Answer period will follow
- Discussion on how we can help some one that has a disability and ways we can understand their behavior and help by including them.
- Discuss another's feelings when they are excluded.

Week Eight- Mrs. M
- Mrs. M will come into room and speak Spanish for a couple minutes to the children specifically to a child who also speaks Spanish.
- When she is done we will process what it felt like when the others didn't know what she was talking about.
- Mrs. M. will describe her years growing up and having been treated differently because she is Mexican.
- She will explain how it felt to be excluded by others because of the way she looked. Question and Answer period will follow.
- Brief discussion of diversity and how we all come from different backgrounds
- Discuss how to help others fit in, collect homework from week three.
- Post surveys will be administrated. If there is no time for surveys I will return the next day to administer them.

Questions from week four were obtained from Good Character Program. Instructed to include copy Elkind+Sweet Communications / Live Wire Media.
Reprinted by permission. Copied from www.GoodCharacter.com.

Appendix G

Names:_____

All of us like _____

All of us have _____

All of us are _____

All of us were _____

None of us has _____

None of us likes _____

None of us is _____

None of us were _____