Team Building Activities

by

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Abstract

This study sought to determine the potential impact of team building activities on anti-social behaviors in an urban fifth grade classroom. Team building activities are a pleasurable way to engage students in meaningful learning that has benefits on social, emotional, and academic development. The research was conducted in an urban elementary school in Western New York. The entire class participated in the team building activities. However, five students were selected for observational data collection. Various research tools were utilized to collect and analyze data such as: observation checklists, surveys, interviews, student response sheets, and a researcher's journal. Data illustrated that team building activities contributed to a decrease in anti-social behaviors in the classroom.

Chapter 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Positive social skills are necessary for students to grow as functional adults both socio-emotionally and academically. If students do not have the skills necessary to positively interact with others, every aspect of their lives will be affected. Healthy, positive relationships will be difficult to properly build or maintain. These students will constantly have to depend on others for emotional support because they have not built support systems (Payne, 2005). In addition, these students may miss instruction and get behind in assignments because they are often sent out of the classroom. This can cause more aggression and more missing of class in which they end up in a vicious cycle of non-learning.

As teachers we expect our students to work together socially and academically. Yet, joining a new group and immediately being expected to get along with the group can be difficult. Historically humans have worked and lived in close-knit, static societies. As such, methods have been developed to help people adapt to these new group requirements (Team Building, 2007). Team building activities are a fun way to engage students in meaningful learning that will not only benefit them academically and socially, but will help with emotional development as well.

Background

This research seeks to determine whether implementing team building activities will have an effect on anti-social behaviors. This study will be conducted in an urban school in Western New York, which serves a multicultural group of predominately low socioeconomic students in grades kindergarten through grade six. Data was collected in a classroom consisting of 13 fifth grade students, seven of whom were male and six were female. This group contained students from Hispanic (47%), African American (30%), and Caucasian (23%) backgrounds. Twelve of these students received free breakfast and free lunch. Data was collected on a target population of five of the thirteen students. Four of the students were randomly selected from the group and one student was selected due to the severity and history of behavior problems such as: fighting, bullying, using of profanity, and threatening bodily harm.

The researcher was an intern teacher in the classroom 15 hours per week, from September to June. Anti-social behaviors immediately stood out to the researcher as a prevalent problem in the classroom. Students displayed more verbally violent behaviors than physical. On some occasions, the verbal violence escalated into physical fighting between students in the classroom and during specials. Specials included gym, art, and music. It was clear these behaviors would continue to be a problem if effective intervention was not implemented.

The Research Question

What happens to anti-social behaviors in an urban fifth grade classroom when team building activities are incorporated into the curriculum?

Limitations

This study was limited to one fifth grade classroom in an urban setting. The participants in this study included thirteen students and the researcher who was the instructor. Data was collected and analyzed on five students. Variables that may have affected the outcome of this study include the time of day at which the observation checklist and team building activities were conducted, the content of the various team building activities, and the time of year this study took place.

The results of this study are specific to this particular classroom and cannot be generalized to other fifth grade classrooms with different economic status, social background, and instructional support.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions of term will be used.

- Active Learning: Instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).

- Anti-Social Behaviors: Negative behaviors which can cause physical, mental, or emotional harm to oneself and/or others. Anti-Social Behaviors focused on in the study are:

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- o Use of profanity

- o Arguing with adults/arguing with peers

- o Name calling

- o Violating other's personal space

- o Throwing/pushing/shoving/of objects or peers

- o Threats of physical harm

- o Other is used if behavior is not listed above.

- **Social Skills:** Skills used to interact with others. Social Skills focused on in this study include:

  - o Manners and positive interactions with others

  - o Appropriate classroom behavior

  - o Acceptable ways to handle anger and frustration

  - o Acceptable ways to resolve conflict with others.

- **Support System:** an individual or group of people who emotionally, financially, or mentally encourage another.

- **Team Building:** The process of establishing and developing a greater sense of collaboration and trust between team members (Team Building, 2007).

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Question

What happens to anti-social behaviors in an urban fifth grade classroom when team building activities are incorporated into the curriculum?

Introduction

The researcher wanted to engage in this study because of how the fifth grade students in the classroom in which she taught interacted with each other. Angry outbursts and negative comments were the norm. The researcher reprimanded students when they acted inappropriately but quickly realized that method was not effective. The students seem to lack a key component in development; they did not have the strategies necessary to appropriately interact. The researcher had expectations that the anti-social behaviors of many students could be changed for the better. However, even if the researcher reached only one student, there was the potential to make a significant difference in that one student's life and potentially in the atmosphere of the entire classroom.

Building Relationships with Students

In 2004, Curran, Tomlinson-Clark and Weinstein gathered demographic information that revealed one-third of elementary and secondary education students are of color, one-fifth are in poverty, and one-tenth are limited English. However,

approximately 90% of public school teachers are European American, middle class, women. Teachers and students coming from different cultures can cause misinterpretations and unnecessary discipline in the classroom (Curran, Tomlinson-Clark and Weinstein, 2004). Building a relationship with students is the foundation for learning. The researcher did not have a difficult time establishing relationships with the students; the researcher believes it comes, in part, from having a similar background. The researcher attended the same urban district from grades K-12 and is multi-racial.

Many of the behaviors students come to school with are necessary to help them survive outside of school but may not be understood by teachers who do not share the same backgrounds. If students from poverty do not know how to fight physically, they are going to be in danger on the streets. But if that is their only method for resolving a problem, then they cannot be successful in school (Payne, 2005). It is up to the teacher to build a safe, compassionate classroom community. However, middle class teachers may not realize they are imposing beliefs or hidden rules that are not feasible to students or parents in poverty. Hidden rules are the unspoken cues and habits of a group that may not match the behaviors of subgroups (Payne, 2005).

The mind-set of the teacher is a critical part of establishing relationships with students. If the students feel the teacher does not respect them or if they do not feel secure in the classroom environment, any strategy used will be unsuccessful. "Strategies will not be as effective if they are implemented by teachers who are

burdened with a negative mind-set and who do not truly appreciate their own worth and the lifelong impact they have on students" (Cohen, 1999, p. 62). Teachers must believe in their own abilities before they can expect to lead a classroom of students to believe in themselves. The students that challenge teachers the most are the ones who truly need the teacher's empathy (Cohen, 1999). It may be difficult to build relationships with these students but it is crucial to view the world through their eyes. Some students come to school dealing with extremely difficult home environments, and they need someone who is willing to take the time to build a healthy relationship with them.

Teachers need to have an understanding of how different cultures interact and of the rules by which they govern their beliefs. Urban education tends to be a more stressful environment than other educational setting thus teachers need to be more knowledgeable and prepared to create a support environment for themselves and their students (Campbell-Whatley, Kea and McKinney, 2005). In order to build students' positive social skills, teachers have to get the students to trust them. Davis and Jackson (2000) state, "For young adolescents, relationships with adults form the critical pathways for their learning; education "happens" through relationships" (p. 121)

It is vital for students whose skin color or whose culture is different from the teacher to feel comfortable, as though they belong and that they will have support for trying new things and perhaps failing or succeeding (Kelly, Oberg and Shade, 1997). If the students in this study do not feel secure in their environment, they may not be

willing to participate in the team building activities. How will the classroom community as a whole be affected by teaching team building? Teaching positive communication and social skills can help strengthen relationships, not only with peers, but with the classroom teacher as well. "When successful adults are asked what aspect of their education most influenced their later accomplishments, they often cite a special relationship with a teacher" (Davis and Jackson, 2000, p. 121).

Violence in Schools

School violence has been an ongoing problem in schools for years. The main reason the researcher chose to do this study was because of the excessive bullying in the classroom. How will the communication change between students during confrontational situations? Research suggests increasing concern about youth violence has spurred the development of numerous programs directed at teaching children attitudes, knowledge, and skills to reduce their involvement in violence (Farrell, 2003). Researchers have found that rampant violence is neither the norm nor the main concern. "Teasing, bullying, and horse-playing have gotten out of hand" (Johnson and Johnson, 1995, p. 23). These are the most frequent types of behaviors the researcher witnessed in the classroom on a daily basis. There were occasions when situations become violent or had potential to become violent.

There is sufficient evidence that students from poverty and or low socioeconomic status are disciplined at disproportionately higher rates than their counterparts (Monroe, 2005). Possibly, if these students were better equipped with

alternative strategies to violence, the disproportional rates would drop. Michael, Nardo, Peterson and Skiba (2002) described how high-income students reported having mild to moderate consequences (teacher reprimand or seat rearrangement). However, Low-income students reported receiving stricter consequences and sometimes provide in a less professional manner. Some students may have been subjected to severe punishment in the past, which may help explain partly why they continue to act aggressively; no one has taken the time out to teach them alternative methods of reacting in situations.

Social Skills

"Youths who lack social competence are at risk for many difficulties including, but not limited to, aggression, rejection by peers, academic failure, loneliness, social dissatisfaction, difficulty maintaining employment and relationships with others, mental illness, and contact with the legal system" (Maag, 2005, p. 155). This is a critical issue that we, as educators, can not afford to ignore. It is our job to teach our students how to successfully survive in the real world.

Social skills training is seen as fundamental because of the increasing violence in schools. Many different programs have been implemented, from violence prevention to conflict resolution, with varying results. Palmer (2001) states: "Teachers should help children to recognize the causes of conflict, to use different methods of resolving it, and solve their own conflicts constructively" (p. 65). However, some violence prevention programs do not work. They believe schools

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have implemented one size fits all violence prevention programs, ignoring the fact that different people turn to violence for different reasons (Johnson and Johnson, 1995). This supports the notion of understanding and building relationships with students as crucial to building social skills.

Eber and Netzel (2003) argue we must shift from a reactive to a proactive approach to problem behavior. The authors stated that if suspension were truly effective, the misbehavior of the students would decrease. However, they found that, in most cases the behaviors do not change. The authors also discuss how setting students up for success ahead of time is the best use of teacher's time and emotional energy. Teachers have to establish a supportive environment and stress their high expectations for all students as early in the school year as possible. Failure to do so may result in teachers wasting valuable time on ineffective discipline techniques. This generates another question for research: How would the teacher's relationship with the students be affected if a more proactive approach to problem behavior was implemented?

Abernathy and Obenchain (2003) note that if we build a positive community and empower students; we can prevent some of the management issues that arise on a daily basis. Research on conflict resolution and social skills training supports this notion. Amatruda (2006) implemented a conflict resolution program with 10-13 year olds. She used real life situations or behavior problems that recently occurred in the classroom to help the students understand that they will use the skills they learn in the real world. One lesson went as follows:

> From that point, I asked the students to reenact the disruptive entrance into the classroom. Each student had to leave the classroom and return acting as upset as he or she could. The rule was that the acting student could not touch anyone or do anything to hurt him- or herself, others, or property. If the student were going to throw a book, it had to be his or her own. Then I asked each student to enter the room a second time with the same explosive behavior. This time, however, I asked the classmates to demonstrate what someone might do to make the anger smaller. They said things such as, "Chill man, it's OK" or "Why don't you come and sit next to me; it's OK." Others ignored the behavior and pretended to be reading a book (Amatruda, 2006, p. 176).

Students identify more with what teachers teach them if the lesson is meaningful and engaging. If teachers build safe and trusting relationships with their students as soon as possible, management issues will not be as prevalent. Educators will still encounter conflict, but with relationships already established, implementing a social skills training program is more likely to be successful.

Active Learning

Bonwell and Eison (1991) define active learning as instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing. Active learning is not a process of teacher-centered classrooms where lectures are the predominate means of relaying information to students. With active learning, students are "doing" something, whether it is creating a skit, conducting an inquiry experiment, or presenting a mock court case. Traditional models of education involved teachers talking and students "actively" listening. The problem with traditional classrooms is not that the teacher is talking but that the teacher talks too much. "A time comes when everyone needs to speak in order to clarify what they

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have heard, read, observed, or experienced. The fact is we often do not know what we think until we try to say it" (Jones and Meyers, 1993, p. 21). When students work in small groups opportunities emerge for talking and active learning.

The process of active learning is focused, in part, on the student doing something, but the interactions that take place during the learning process are of equal importance. Interactions take place when active learning is combined with co-operative learning. When students work in small groups, they verbalize what they mean while listening to what others have to say. This process helps students comprehend what they are learning. Students tend to be more enthused about active learning because they have a say in their learning and the activities are mentally challenging (Huber and Stern, 1997).

In traditional educational experiences, students can easily tune out teachers while they are talking. Active learning requires student involvement; therefore, students must pay attention and participate in the learning process. Jackson (1995), notes, "Information is not given to them; they go after it. This is a 'get up and go' type of learning that places everyone in a position to benefit from being a part" (p. 10). The teacher is no longer the possessor of knowledge; students must be responsible for their own learning.

Some teachers are not comfortable with active learning because it requires teachers to relinquish some of the control in the classroom to allow students to discover learning for themselves. "The activity itself, the interests of the students and the needs of the group will drive much of the discussion" (Jackson, 1995, p. 24).

There is also a risk that students will not participate. This obstacle can be overcome by careful, thoughtful lesson planning (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). Active learning is not an approach that is intended to replace other methods of teaching. It is an additional tool for teachers to use.

Incorporating Team Building Activities

Educators have students in their classroom who need to work together in order to produce an outcome or to complete a task. Educators are often faced with issues of students not wanting to work with one another or students that do not know how to work with others. Team building activities are fun ways for students to learn the life skills necessary to survive as healthy adults in society.

"Life skills such as communication, problem solving, decision making, interpersonal relationships, values formation, and healthy lifestyles are being presented in such structured curriculum that our students are turning a deaf ear" (Jackson, 1995, p. 1). Playing a game is an active way to engage students in social skills training that will be meaningful, fun, and memorable. A discussion must take place during or after the game. "The discussion can turn an ordinary game into a therapeutic learning experience by focusing on goals, behavior, and observations from the game" (Jones, 1998, p. 12). Students should be given an opportunity to discuss their thoughts and insights about the various aspects of the game.

Students need to understand that some activities may be difficult but there is an important skill that should be learned. "Team building strives to teach that failure

is only temporary and that when one fails, reorganization and renewed efforts are needed. Team building enthusiasts realize that failing along the way can build a much sweeter path to success" (Glover and Midura, 1995, p. 2). When students fail at tasks, teachers need to let them know some activities are set up for failure because failure is inevitable in life. These types of activities prepare students for real life situations.

Before team building activities can take place, teachers must make sure they establish a safe, comfortable environment in their classrooms. Students who do not feel comfortable in their own classrooms may not be willing to participate in activities, even if the activities are games. By establishing relationships with students as soon as possible, they will be more willing to step out of their comfort zone because trust has been established.

Additionally, a teacher must demonstrate his or her faith in the team's ability to succeed and encourage students to think like a team (Newstrom and Scannell, 1998). The teachers play a vital role as the facilitator during the activities. He or she must notice non-verbal cues, probe, listen, question, and stimulate problem solving (Newstrom and Scannell, 1998). Without a strong facilitator or team leader, the overall message of the activity may be lost and students will only view the activity as 'fun'.

There are a plethora of activities that can be done with team building skills. Team building usually starts with activities that get team members acquainted with one another. Various researchers have suggested using an interview as an ice breaker

for the group. The interview contains questions about a person's background, personal interests and hobbies, and unique facts or information the person would like to share. There are varied ways to start team building activities and more than one activity should be used to acquaint the group.

In this study, the researcher did not have to begin with acquaintance activities because students were already familiar with one another. This study began in February, which is five months after the students started the school year. The activities the researcher chose for the students were based on the anti-social behaviors they displayed and social skills they lacked. The activities focused on team building, anger management, positive communication, and emotional development.

A key to team building is students realizing that their role in the group is significant. When students have a positive self-concept, they will value their individual success as well as the success of the team. "Self-concept is largely developed by how others perceive us and react to our efforts. If we receive positive reactions, our social development flourishes, and we have a better chance to succeed" (Glover and Midura, 1995, p. 2). Team building can help with the growth of self-confidence when students are successful at challenging tasks, which in turn will contribute to more positive self-worth and concept. Positive self-concept gives students the courage to try (Glover and Midura, 1995).

Summary

Many students come to school lacking vital skills necessary to be successful in school and life. Students are being teased and bullied on a regular basis.

Confrontations can occur because students do not know alternative solutions to anger. We, as teachers, cannot turn a blind eye to the momentous problem. Before we can begin to tackle this problem, we must establish a relationship with our students. Students must have confidence in their teacher and in the classroom environment. It has become a teacher's job to teach students life skills, but if they do not engage their students in meaningful activities, they are failing them.

"Active learning is an effective tool to teach not only information, but lifelong living skills. Through the process, an individual can internalize information and assume responsibility for their decisions regarding personal lifestyle choices" (Jackson, 1995, p. 3) Some research indicates that team building activities are fun, meaningful ways to explore life issues without making students feel uncomfortable. In this study, the researcher will explore the use of team building activities in a fifth grade classroom as an instrument to minimize anti-social behaviors.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

Students must possess the ability to positively interact with others in order to be successful in society. Often students come to school lacking the skills necessary to engage in appropriate relationships with their teachers and peers. These students are expected to build suitable relationships and engage in healthy interactions with their peers but what if they were never taught society's definition of appropriate interactions or if they never learned what healthy relationships are? These students come to school with the unhealthy behaviors they have developed over the years. The question is, what can teachers and schools do to help students interact with each other in a suitable manner? Team building activities help students realize the importance of working together. The activities build relationships among students, these relationships may help the students learn to respect one another and learn how to appropriately interact with others.

Statement of Question

What happens to anti-social behaviors in an urban fifth grade classroom when team building activities are incorporated into the curriculum?

Subjects

The researcher was an intern in an urban elementary school in Western New York. This school serves a multicultural group of predominately low socioeconomic students in grades K through six.

The classroom in which the research was conducted was a fifth grade regular education class. There were thirteen students who participated in the study, seven of whom were males and six of whom were females. This group consisted of students from Hispanic (47%), African American (30%), and Caucasian (23%) ethnic backgrounds. Twelve of these students received free breakfast and lunch.

One of the students received additional help for her developmental needs. The student visited an occupational therapist twice a week for a total of one hour.

Research Design

The researcher followed all of the necessary steps in preparation of data collection. The researcher completed the research training course required by SUNY College at Brockport (See Appendix A) and provided a design to the Internal Review Board for research with human subjects (See Appendix B). A thesis proposal was submitted to the department of Education and Human Development at SUNY College at Brockport (See Appendix C). A literature review provided background information on the topics of building relationships with students, violence in schools, social skills, active learning, and team building. Informed consent was approved

from school administration, parents, and students (See Appendices D and E). Eleven parents out of the thirteen consents sent home approved informed consent. Data was only collected on students with approval from parents.

Upon approval from the above sources, a two week baseline data collection took place. The researcher gathered data on anti-social behaviors through four means: an hour observation, a researcher's journal, an anonymous survey, and an interview. An observation checklist was used to observe anti-social behaviors in the classroom for one hour a day for an entire week. While recording initial and post observations, a journal was used to record student comments. The researcher's journal was also used to record time, lessons, and any other possibly relevant data taking place during observations. The implementation of baseline data began in February, 2007.

Five students were selected for the baseline observations based on the anti-social incidents that occurred prior to the onset of data collection. One student frequently had incidents occur that included fights, cursing, threats of violence, bullying, etc. Another student had occasional anti-social incidents occur including threats of violence and disrespect to teachers and peers. One student had no incidences of anti-social behavior occur and the last two students were selected by randomly drawing their names out of a box. The technique used was an observation checklist (See Appendix F). The researcher carefully observed the students for five days during random times in the day. During the week of baseline observations the researcher noticed that anti-social behaviors were not as prevalent as at the beginning of the school year.

The anonymous survey was administered to students the week following the observation checklist (See Appendix G). The survey was administered to the entire class and data was collected on all, due to the anonymity of names and personal information from the surveys. The surveys consisted of two scenarios in which the students had to respond to what they would do in each situation. One situation was accidental and the other purposeful. Following the survey, an interview was administered to each student. All students participated in the interview but data was only collected on students with consent. During the interview process, one student refused to complete the interview therefore her data was not collected. The interview included two scenarios similar to the survey, with one being accidental and one being purposeful. The interview contained probing questions after each situation to gain knowledge as to why the students responded the way they did (See Appendix G).

After the initial baseline data was collected on students, the researcher began to implement the team building activities. The activities ranged from teamwork to anger management activities. The activities were conducted twice a week for four weeks. The length of the activities ranged from twenty to forty-five minutes. After each activity a discussion took place. The researcher would ask questions pertaining to the content of the activities. A brief student response sheet (See Appendix H) was completed by each student that chose to participate in the activity. The students were reminded before each activity that they had the choice to participate and if they chose not to, there were no negative consequences.

The first activity that the researcher chose was called The Unfair Game (Jones, 1998). The game consisted of dice, a deck of cards, candy, and a small bucket. The activity took place on the sharing rug in the front of the classroom near the chalkboard. Two copies of the rules were available to the students: one was placed on the chalkboard and the other in the middle of the circle. All of the students and the researcher sat in a circle and started the game with five pieces of candy. Each student would take a turn and depending on what they chose (a card or rolling the dice); they had to follow the directions. The directions stated whether the student had to pass a piece of candy to his or her left, right, place a piece in the small bucket in the middle, or take a piece of candy from another person in the game.

The most important rule of the game was that the person with the best sportsmanship at the end of the game gets to keep all of the candy in the middle bucket. The game lasted for five rounds, once the game was over the researcher chose the person with the best sportsmanship. The researcher chose herself. The point of the game was to get the students to think about how they feel and react in situations that are unfair. The students were outraged that the researcher chose herself as having the best sportsmanship.

A discussion took place after the game and the researcher asked the students how they felt after playing the game. Most responses were negative including, "I feel used", "You played us", and "I can't believe you are going to keep all of that candy". Some students responded that they were happy because at least they got some candy. Once the discussion was over, the students completed the student response sheet.

Another activity that took place was called Cup Stack (Jones, 1999). The class was randomly split into two groups with six students in each group due to one student being absent. Each group was given ten seven ounce paper cups and a rubber band. The rubber band had six strings evenly spaced and tied around it. The object of the game was for the teams to stack the ten cups by placing four on the bottom, three on top of the four, two on top of the three, and one on top of the two.

The students were not allowed to touch the cups with their hands or any other part of their bodies. Each group had six students in it. Each student had to hold onto one string and pull with varied strength on the string. The harder a student pulled on his/her string, the more the rubber band would stretch. All six students would have to pull on their strings in order to stretch the rubber band enough to fit around the cup and pick it up.

Each group had extreme difficulty completing this activity. Some students were not working as a team, which caused cups to fall on the ground or cups to fall on their sides. Every student showed signs of frustration including, but not limited to, yelling at other teammates, trying to quit, and refusing to follow the group. The researcher had to stop the activity after fifteen minutes because some students were getting extremely angry and learning did not seem to be taking place. The researcher reminded the students that there was no prize for completing the activity nor were there consequences for not completing the activity. The activity was put on hold and the students went to lunch. On the way down to the lunchroom, some students were arguing about opposite teams cheating.

After lunch the students wanted to continue to try to complete the activity. The researcher decided to have the discussion with the students about why she chose this activity. The researcher told the students that this activity was supposed to be difficult and students were supposed to get frustrated but the behavior the students exhibited was not acceptable. The researcher gave examples of the inappropriate behavior she witnessed during the activity, which included the yelling, quitting, and refusing to work as a team. The researcher read the questions on the student response sheet with the students and discussed each question before the students were asked to respond individually. The students insisted on trying the activity again but promised to use teamwork the second time. Each group completed the activity within ten minutes. Both groups worked together and discussed strategies during the activity.

While data was collected on all students with consent, the five students chosen during the initial implementation of the study were used as a focus group in order for the researcher to triangulate the data. Data was triangulated to increase the validity of the data collection (Hubbard and Powers, 2003).

Data Matrix

Questions/Focus	Data Source # 1: Observation Checklist	Data Source #2: Survey	Data Source # 3: Interview	Data Source #4: Student Response Sheet
What anti-social or violent behaviors do students display?	X	X	X	
Do students respond violently to purposeful situations?	X	X	X	
Do students respond violently to accidental situations?	X	X	X	
How do students respond to accidental situations after the implementation of the team building activities?	X	X	X	X

Data Analysis

All of the data in this study was reviewed and analyzed by the researcher. During the initial and post observations, student comments were recorded in the researcher's journal. The observation checklists, journal, interviews, surveys, and student response sheets were thoroughly analyzed for trends and inconsistencies.

Field notes in the journal helped the researcher devise thoughts and begin processing data. Once data analysis was complete, generalizations were generated to describe the impact of team building on urban fifth graders' anti-social skills.

Team building activities were conducted in a classroom with all students participating. However, specific data from the interviews, checklists, and notes were only collected and analyzed on a focus group of five students. Data from the surveys and student response sheets were collected and analyzed on all students with informed consent. Findings cannot be generalized to other schools or students. Conclusions were utilized to create an enhanced understanding of the effects of team building activities on anti-social behaviors.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Through the duration of this study, the researcher collected data using a variety of tools including: checklists, surveys, interviews, student response sheets, and a researcher's journal. During the post collection period of the study, the researcher created a post interview relating to the students' feelings and experiences with team building activities. The researcher found this interview essential to data collection. Please refer to Appendix G. Data was analyzed thoroughly throughout data collection and generalizations were made based on the data. Due to the various limitations of the study, the generalizations are reflective of this classroom during the 2006-2007 academic school year.

Research Question

What happens to anti-social behaviors in an urban fifth grade classroom when team building activities are incorporated into the curriculum?

Generalizations

Generalization 1: After students participated in team building activities, males and females were less likely to respond violently to the accidental situation question in the

post survey but more likely to respond violently to the purposeful situation in the post survey.

Looking at graph 1, which represents male responses to surveys, five males responded that they would react violently to the pre-accidental situation. Looking at the responses to the post-accidental situation, only two males responded they would react violently. Could the decrease in violent responses be linked to the implementation of team building activities?

Conversely, two males responded violently in the pre-purposeful situation. The violent responses increased to three males in the post purposeful situation. Could students' new found knowledge of classmate's personalities have contributed to the increase of violent responses? If a student is convinced that another student is intentionally trying to harm him or her, are they more likely to respond violently?

Looking at graph 2, which represents female responses to the surveys, two females responded they would react violently to the pre-accidental situation. Only one female responded that she would react violently to the accidental situation in the post survey. Could the decrease be connected to the valuable discussion that took place after each team building activity?

On the contrary, no females responded they would react violently to the purposeful situation in the pre-survey. Two females responded they would react violently in the post purposeful situation. Again, the researcher inquires whether new knowledge of peer's personalities contributed to the increase?

Graph 1

Male Responses to Surveys

Graph 2

Female Responses to Surveys
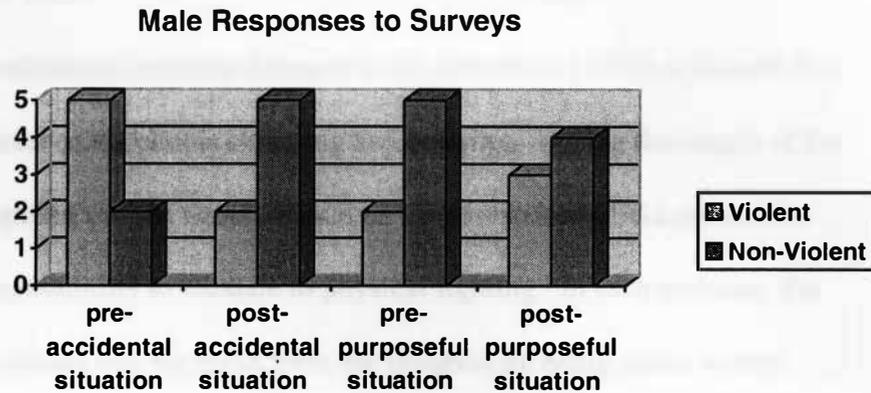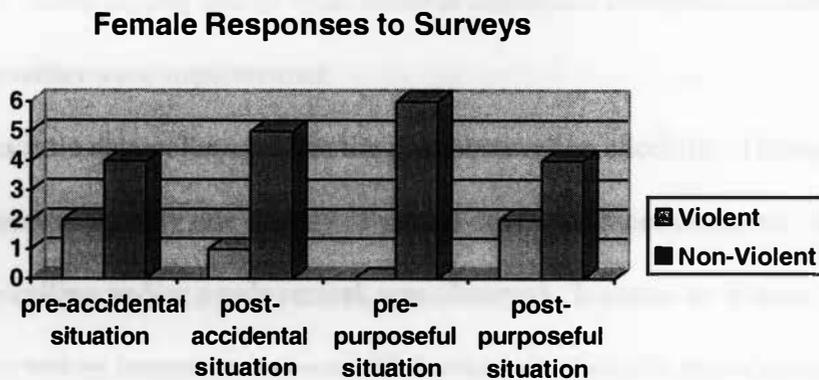
Generalization 2: The majority of anti-social behaviors displayed in the classroom were name calling and/or rude remarks.

During the baseline period, name calling and/or rude remarks were more prevalent than any other anti-social behavior. Each of the seven other possible anti-social behaviors were exhibited only one to three times by the students in the focus group. The researcher compared the prevalence of name calling and/or rude remarks to physical fighting. Physical fighting was not observed during the baseline or post

observation periods. However, name calling and/or rude remarks were observed a total number of 22 times.

This generalization confirms Johnson's and Johnson's (1995) argument that the majority of violence in schools is teasing and bullying. During the length of the study, physical fighting did not occur. Based on the researcher's field notes, two situations had the possibility to escalate to physical fighting. In each instance, the more aggressive student was removed from the situation by being asked to step outside of the classroom.

Generalization 3: Name calling and/or rude remarks decreased tremendously since team building activities were implemented.

There was little data collected from the post observation checklist. During the five-day post observation, only one display of an anti-social behavior occurred. One instance of name calling and/or a rude remark was observed. It seems as if team building activities had an impact on anti-social behaviors displayed in this classroom.

However, during the baseline observational week, students worked in small groups the majority of the time. During the post observational week, the majority of the observation time was during whole group lessons. In small groups, students are more responsible for their work. During whole class instruction, the focus tends to be more teacher centered. Could small group instruction have contributed to an increase in name calling and/or rude remarks or is it possible that team building activities had an effect on anti-social behaviors in this fifth grade classroom?

Generalization 4: Though students genuinely enjoyed the team building activities,
they did not feel the team building activities made a difference in their feelings
towards their peers nor in the behaviors of their peers.

Students were asked during the post interview, how they felt about the team
building activities and whether or not they would like to continue the activities.
Every student responded, "Yes" to the continuation of the activities. When asked
why they responded with a yes, the majority of the students' responses were, "It was
fun".

Students were asked, "Do you feel any differently about your classmates after
taking part in the team building activities?" Only one student responded yes to this
question, every other student responded no. Students were then asked whether they
thought their classmates were nicer, meaner, or acted the same since the team
building activities, all students responded the same. They did not feel the community
of the classroom was affected at all.

Based on data collected and analyzed from the student response sheets,
students understood the purpose of each activity. Some activities were focused on
teamwork, anger management, and communication. Student responses reflected the
knowledge of each focus but based on the information from the post interview, it is
clear the students did not feel they internalized the concepts. They did understand
that the researcher wanted them to learn how to incorporate teamwork into their
classroom. When asked on the post interview what the researcher's purpose was with
these activities, responses centered on "learning to work together."

Though data seems to show team building activities contributed to a decrease in anti-social behaviors, the students do not feel that the activities contributed. If the students do not believe the activities met the objective, is it possible that the activities did not? The data collected on the post survey and observation checklists indicate the students did internalize the activities. Data from the researcher's journal also shows decreased instances of anti-social behavior. Students seem to have a negative perception of themselves and their peers. It was apparent that the teacher did not reinforce positive behavior with specific compliments. If the students were constantly having their positive behavior specifically complimented, would their perceptions of themselves and their peers change?

Summary

The researcher set out to determine the effect team building activities would have on anti-social behaviors in an urban fifth grade classroom. Based on the data analysis, team building activities seemed to have an impact on anti-social behaviors in the classroom. Name calling and/or rude remarks dramatically decreased from the initial baseline observations to the post observations. Additionally, the violent responses to the accidental situations on the surveys decreased.

However, students felt the personalities and attitudes of their peers have not changed since the implementation of the team building activities. Students have negative perceptions of themselves and of their peers; it is imperative that teachers acknowledge this view and provide students with appropriate examples of positive reinforcement. Students need a positive relationship with peers and teachers alike but

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teachers must remember to model the suitable behavior as well as providing a

supportive environment to improve student attitudes and behavior.

Chapter 5

IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Following the generalizations made from the data analysis during this study, the researcher was able to construct implications regarding the research question. Implications were based on the information from the data analysis and the literature review. The tools used to aid in the acquisition of this information included: observational checklists, surveys, interviews, student response sheets, and a researcher's journal.

Implications

- The majority of school violence consists of teasing and bullying; physical fighting is not the norm.

- Team building activities are pleasurable activities that can contribute to building relationships with students and educators, which can reduce the amount of bullying and teasing in the classroom.

- Students may have negative perceptions of themselves and their peers, it is crucial for teachers to provide specific compliments, especially in regards to appropriate behavior.

- Team building activities are activities focused on critical social skills required to become successful in society; these activities have been contributed to decreasing anti-social behaviors in the classroom.

Questions for Further Research

- Will incorporating team building activities in the beginning of the school year compared to the middle of the year have a greater impact on student behaviors?

- Would team building be more successful if students were introduced to the activities in first grade instead of fifth?

- How does team building compare to conflict resolution programs in urban schools?

- If team building was incorporated before relationships were established between teacher and student, would the activities be as successful?

- Would anti-social behavior decrease more if team building activities were implemented for a longer period of time?

- If team building activities were conducted before a specific subject, would academic achievement improve in that subject area?

- If team building activities were a school-wide program implemented throughout the school, would that change the school climate and reduce anti-social behavior?

- If parents/guardians were involved in the communication process of reducing anti-social behaviors, would that support the reduction of anti-social behaviors?

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APPENDICES

Kesha James, College at Brockport

CITI Course in The Protection of Human Research Subjects

Grade Book

Congratulations Kesha James you have now successfully completed all of the requirements for Group .2 as defined by College at Brockport. You may now print a completion certificate indicating your accomplishment. In addition, all modules and quizzes are now accessible if you wish to do more than your institution's minimum requirement.

View completion report

Active status in the current group is set for 3 years and this status will expire on 08/30/09. Until that time, you can continue to take both required and optional modules. Additional optional modules may be taken and will be listed on the Completion Report, but quiz scores for these optional modules will not contribute to the "passing score" set by your institution. After 08/30/09, this completion report will expire, the grade book will be reset and the completion report archived.

Click here for information on CME/CEU credits.

If you wish to close out the current grade book and start a new one before the expiration date, CLICK HERE TO RESET GRADE BOOK. The current grade book completion report will be archived according to Learner Group and completion date. You will be able to retrieve the completion report at any time in the future as evidence of course completion.

The modules that you have completed are indicated with a score and a completion date. Required modules, yet to be completed, are indicated under the "Required Modules" heading as "incomplete". Complete the required modules in order. The optional modules will become available when all required modules are completed. If you want to improve a quiz score, you may review the module as often as needed and retake any or all quizzes. Your highest quiz score will be saved by the software

To be able to print a course completion report you must:

- Complete all the required modules.
- Correctly answer 80% of the quiz questions for required modules (Scores for the optional module quizzes will not "count" toward the 80% score requirement.)

Basic CITI Course

Required Modules	Date	Your Score	Total Possible Points
Introduction	08/25/06	no quiz *	
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	08/27/06	4 *	5
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	08/30/06	4 *	5
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	08/30/06	9 *	10
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	08/30/06	4 *	5
Informed Consent - SBR	08/30/06	4 *	5
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR	08/30/06	4 *	5
SUNY College at Brockport	08/30/06	no quiz *	

Optional Modules	Date	Your Score	Total Possible Points
Research with Prisoners - SBR	Incomplete		
Research with Children - SBR	09/04/06	4	5
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBR	09/04/06	4	5
International Research - SBR	Incomplete		
Internet Research - SBR	09/04/06	4	4
Percent correct for required modules:		83%	

Current completion report

Apply for 6 CME Credits. A minimum of 12 modules must be completed to obtain 6 CME /CEU credits.
CME credits are only available for completion of the Human Subjects Course.

CITI Learner Satisfaction Survey

* Module included on completion report.

CME/CEU | Copyright and Disclaimer | About CITI | Acknowledgements | Contact CIT

Human Subjects Application
SUNY College at Brockport
Kesha James

1. Provide a brief project description:

The purpose of this research is to study what happens to students' anti-social behaviors in an urban fifth grade classroom when positive communication skills are directly taught. Research suggests increasing concern about youth violence has spurred the development of numerous programs directed at teaching children attitudes, knowledge, and skills to reduce their involvement in violence (Farrell, 2003). In the urban classroom where I am currently doing an internship, students continuously exhibit anti-social behaviors and use poor communication skills. For this reason I am interested in examining strategies for improving the positive social climate of a fifth grade classroom and how respectful interactions among students can contribute to a positive social and academic environment.

A Framework for Understanding Poverty, by Ruby Payne (2005) will be used as a primary source for this research. Before beginning this research it was important to understand that many of the behaviors my students come to school with are necessary to help them survive outside of school. If students from poverty don't know how to fight physically, they are going to be in danger on the streets. But if that is their only method for resolving a problem, then they cannot be successful in school (Payne, 2005). I plan on implementing classroom meetings which will clearly describe the expected behaviors and probable consequences of not choosing those behaviors. Payne also explains that there

must be strong emphasis that the individual always has a choice to follow or not follow the expected behaviors (Payne, 2005).

The significance of this research will be in uncovering the ways that positive communication within the classroom contributes to setting a tone of respect. It also has the potential to contribute to a non-judgmental and safe classroom community where students will feel at ease during social and academic interactions. Directly teaching how to positively interact with each other has the potential to lead to positive social and academic interactions throughout the school day.

I will conduct a five day baseline observation of anti-social behaviors of students. Five students will be observed for five days. Students to be observed will be determined by selecting the student's name out of a box containing all of the students in the classroom. The expected behaviors to be observed are: use of profanity, arguing with adult, arguing with peers, name calling, violating others' personal space, throwing/pushing/shoving of objects or peers, threats of physical harm. The checklist will also have a box marked other. Other will be determined when a behavior does not fit the expected behaviors. These behaviors selected have occurred frequently since the beginning of the school year. The behaviors will be observed for one hour per day. These behaviors will be documented during our daily morning routine, starting at 9:00a.m. and ending at 10:00a.m. Please refer to attachment A.

I will administer an anonymous survey to students as a baseline for how they would react in two different scenarios. The first scenario portrays an accidental physical interaction with another student and the second portrays a purposeful physical interaction with another student. This survey will be administered during our daily morning routine. The survey will be administered a second time two months after the initial survey is administrated. Please refer to attachment B.

Each class meeting will last for 20 minutes and will focus on one particular positive communication skill. The skills that will be taught will be based on areas of need. These areas of need will be determined by the initial data collection. Following each class meeting, the students will respond to two questions/statements about the skill they learned in that meeting and how it will affect their interactions with peers. The class meetings will take place during our morning opening routines. Please refer to attachment C.

I will conduct audio-taped interviews with the five students from the initial observations. Each student will be interviewed twice: once before implementing positive communication skills and another interview following the conclusion of the positive skills training. Each interview will consist of two given scenarios. The interview will allow for students to elaborate on their reactions to the scenarios. Please refer to the attached interview protocol, attachment D.

I will observe the students one month after completing the five week data collection. I will use the observation checklist again, following the same

procedures as in the initial observation. I will select the same students observed in the initial data collection. Please refer to attachment A.

1. Number and relevant characteristics of subjects:

All 15 students in my 5th grade classroom are potential participants. Ninety five percent of my students receive free or reduced lunch. My classroom ethnic backgrounds include: six African American students, three Caucasian students, and six Hispanic students.

2. Describe how subjects will be selected for participation:

All students will participate in the skill meetings. Data will be collected from students who have been initially observed through the observation checklist, surveys, and interviews. Data collection will only include information from students for whom consent has been provided. No fees, gifts, or extra credit will be awarded for participation.

3. Status and qualifications of research assistants:

Not applicable

4. Source of funding:

Not applicable

5. Expected starting and completion dates:

Data collection will begin upon IRB approval and will cease by May 31, 2007.

6. Attach copies of all questionnaires, testing instruments, or interview

    protocols, and any cover letters or instructions to participants:

The following are attached:

a. An anonymous survey that will serve as a baseline assessment of student attitudes in the classroom.

b. An interview that will be audio-taped regarding student thinking about how to handle different scenarios in the classroom.

c. A checklist to document the frequency of anti-social behaviors during daily morning routine.

d. Student response sheets consisting of two questions administered after skills meetings.

7. **On-line training course:**

Online training course has been completed. Please refer to attachment E.

8. **Specify steps to be taken to guard the confidentiality of participants' responses:**

a. Last names and any other personally identifiable information will be deleted from all written documents.

b. Written documents, audio tapes, and other data will be kept in a locked file cabinet of the classroom and will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

c. No portion of audio tape will include students from whom written consent was not received. Information of those students will be deleted from the tapes.

d. Pseudonyms will be used in reports of this research.

9. **Attach informed consent documents:**

The following are attached:

    a.   Guardian informed consent form (please refer to attachment F)

    b.   Student informed consent form (please refer to attachment G)

Institutional approval:

Attached is a letter of permission from Debra Ramsperger (principal) at Louis A

Cerulli School #34 for research to be conducted. Please refer to attachment H.

12. Not applicable

SUNY Brockport Thesis Proposal

<u>Title</u>:

Direct instruction of positive communication skills as a tool for strengthening social behaviors.

<u>Research Question</u>:

What happens to anti-social behaviors in an urban fifth grade classroom when positive communication skills are directly taught?

<u>Purpose</u>:

The researcher is currently an intern in a fifth grade classroom at Louis A. Cerulli School #34 in the Rochester City School District.

1. This research seeks to identify whether or not positive communication skills can decrease anti-social behaviors in the classroom.

2. How will the classroom community as a whole be affected?

The significance of this research will be in uncovering the ways that positive communication within the classroom contributes to creating a safe community of learners. It also has the potential to contribute to a non-judgmental and secure classroom community where students will feel at ease during social and academic interactions. Directly teaching students how to positively interact with each other has the potential to lead to positive social and academic interactions throughout the school day.

<u>Steps in the Research Process/Methods</u>:

There are several steps included in the research process.

1. The researcher will conduct a five day baseline observation of anti-social behaviors of students. Five students will be observed for five days. Students to be observed will be determined by selecting the student's name out of a box containing all of the students in the classroom. The expected behaviors to be observed are: use of profanity, arguing with adult, arguing with peers, name calling, violating others' personal space, throwing/pushing/shoving of objects or peers, threats of physical harm. These behaviors selected have occurred frequently since the beginning of the school year. The behaviors will be observed for one hour per day. These behaviors will be documented during our daily morning routine, starting at 9:00a.m. and ending at 10:00a.m. Please refer to attachment A.

2. The researcher will administer an anonymous survey to students as a baseline for how they would react in two different scenarios. The first scenario portrays an accidental physical interaction with another student and the second portrays a purposeful physical interaction with another student. This survey will be administered during our daily morning routine. The survey will be administered a second time 2 months after the initial survey is administrated. Please refer to attachment B.

3. Based on the initial data from the observation checklist and the survey, the researcher will conduct classroom meetings once a week for 5 weeks. Each meeting will last for 20 minutes and will focus on one positive skill. The

positive skills that will be focused on will depend on the needs of the students in the classroom.

4. Following each class meeting, the students will respond to two questions/statements about the skill they learned in that meeting and how it will affect their interactions with peers. The class meetings will take place during our morning routines. Please refer to attachment C.

5. The researcher will conduct audio-taped interviews with the five students observed on the observation checklist. Each student will be interviewed twice: once before implementing positive communication skills and another interview following the conclusion of the positive skills training. Each interview will consist of two given scenarios. The interview will allow for students to elaborate on their reactions to the scenarios. Please refer to the attached interview protocol, attachment D.

6. The researcher will observe the students one month after completing the five week data collection. The researcher will use the observation checklist again, following the same procedures as in the initial observation. The researcher will select the same students observed in the initial data collection. Please refer to attachment A.

7. As an ongoing step in the process, the researcher will review professional literature on conflict resolution, social interactions, and other topics related to positive communication skills. The review will aid in understanding if and

how positive communication skills can be effectively used to decrease anti-

social behaviors in urban fifth graders.

Outcome:

The final product will be a written project containing a review of literature,

description of the research and process, and a summary of the findings. The

researcher will present the process and findings through an oral presentation at the

conclusion of the research.

DR. LOUIS A. CERULLI SCHOOL #34

Principal: Debra Ramsperger   *Assistant Principal: Lee Dan*

Rochester City School District

To Whom it May Concern:

I have read the following research proposal and give my permission for the research to be done at School #34 pending approval by the Human Subjects Committee at SUNY College at Brockport.

Proposal Title: Direct instruction of positive communication skills as a tool for strengthening social behaviors.

Researcher: Kesha James

[signature]

˙Signature of Principal/Assistant Principal

AMERICA'S
C H O I C E

Rochester City School District
Dr. Louis A. Cerulli School #34
530 Lexington Avenue
Rochester, New York 14613

PHONE: (585) 458-3210
FAX: (585) 277-0106
WEB SITE: http://www.rcsdk12.org

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As a part of our daily routine in our classroom, we will begin having meetings once a week. Our focus during these meetings will be on communication skills. These communication skills will help your child develop more positive interactions with his or her peers in academic and social settings.

Although these meetings will be a part of our classroom routine, as a part of my Masters program I would like to observe how students use the skills they learn to have more positive verbal interactions with each other. Along with the class meetings, I will conduct two interviews and two surveys. The data I collect will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the classroom. No child's name will be used in reports of my research. Also, what the students learn will not have a negative impact on their grades. There will be no negative consequences if your child does not participate and your child may withdraw at any time without fear of reprimand. Also, consent to participate will not, in and of itself, have any positive impact on your child's grades either. All students will participate in the meetings and I would like your permission to keep track of your child's success in these communication skills. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to call me at _____. Please return this consent form as soon as possible.

College Supervisor:

Thank you for your time,   Betsy Balzano

Ms. James   SUNY College at Brockport

Please *check* off a box, sign below, and return. Thank You! Please return by December 15, 2006.

☐   Yes, I give consent for my child _____ to participate in this research study.

☐   No, I do not wish for my child _____ to participate in this research study.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____   Date: _____

Student

As a part of our daily routine, we will begin having classroom meetings. We will have a

meeting once a week that is about 15 minutes long. The focus of the meetings will be

communication skills that improve how we speak to each other. After each meeting, you

will have to answer one or two short questions about that meeting's theme. I will also

choose different groups of people to have discussions about how they felt about the

meetings. There will be times when I interview some of you. The interviews will also give

you an opportunity to share your ideas about the meetings. You can choose to participate

in the discussions and meetings, please feel free to let me know if at any time you do not

want to participate. These meetings will not affect your grades but they will help contribute

to a positive classroom community.

Please sign below:

Print name   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Observation Checklist

Date: _____   Observation Day: _____

Student names/behaviors					
Use of profanity					
Arguing with an adult					
Arguing with peers					
Name calling					
Violating other' personal space					
Throwing/pushing/shoving of objects or peers					
Threats of physical harm					
Other					

Student Survey
PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS PAPER

Directions: Circle M if you are a boy or circle F if you are a girl. Put your age on the line next to age. Please answer the following questions honestly; I will not know who you are. Please do not write what you think I want to hear, just tell me what you would do if you were the person in the scenario. You will not be graded on this.

Gender: **M**   **F**   **Age:** _____

1. You get up from your seat to put your work in the class work bin. Someone is walking back in the classroom and is not paying attention to where they are walking. As they pass by you, they step on your brand new sneakers. What do you do?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. During bathroom break, it is finally your turn to use the bathroom. As you are walking into the bathroom, another student pushes you out of the way and tells you that you're ugly. What do you do?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Student Interview

Student Name _____   Age_____   Date _____

1. During Reader's Workshop, you are partner reading with another student.
    When it is time to respond, you realize you forgot your pencil at your desk.
    As you are walking back to your center, a student is getting up from his or her
    desk and pushes his or her chair back really hard. He or she knocks into you
    and makes you fall on the floor.

    What do you do?

    Why would you do that?

    What else can you do?

    Why would you do that?

    How do you think that will make the other student feel?

    What might happen next?

2. During Math, the teacher has asked you to work in groups. While your group
    is talking over your word problem, another student walks up to your group
    and tells everyone that they shouldn't listen to you because you are the
    stupidest person in the class.

    What do you do?

    Why would you do that?

    What else can you do?

    Why would you do that?

    What might happen next?

Post Student Interview

Name _____ Date_____

1. How did you feel about the team building activities? _

_____

_____

_____

2. Why do you think I chose to do these activities? What was the purpose? _____

_____

_____

3. Do you feel any different about your classmates after taking part in the team building activities? _____

_____

_____

_____

4. Do you honestly think these activities made a difference in the environment of the classroom? (Are people nicer, meaner, etc?) _____

_____

_____

_____

5. If you had the choice would you like to continue the team building activities? Why or why not? _____

_____

_____

_____

The Unfair Game

Name_____   Date _____

Student Response Sheet

1. How do you feel right now? _____

_____

_____

_____

2. Do you ever feel like your life is unfair? If so, how do you handle it when things seem unfair? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Do you think it would help you in your own life to change how you act when life seems unfair? If so, how? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Cup Stack

Name _____   Date_____

1. Was anyone frustrated at all during this activity? If so, how was it handled?_____

    _____

    _____

2. Why was teamwork so important for this activity?_____

    _____

    _____

3. Are you ever in a situation where you must use teamwork? Is this always easy for you? Why or why not?_____

    _____

    _____

4. What are some skills needed to be good at teamwork?_____

    _____

5. What is so hard about teamwork?_____

    _____

    _____

6. What did you do today to contribute to the teamwork on your team?_____

    _____

    _____