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Character Education Using Literature and Discussions

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Character Education Development Using Literature and

Discussions

An Action Research Report

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Character Education Development Using Literature and Discussions

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Abstract

Laminack and Wadsworth (2012) "believe the single most important thing we can teach our children is kindness" (p. 1). I hoped to teach kindness characteristics to students in my first, second and third-grade classroom, as well as, lessen students' frequency of unkind behaviors. I utilized Laminack and Wadsworths' (2012) curriculum *Bullying Hurts: Teaching Kindness through Read Alouds and Guided Conversations* as my action research focus. Throughout my study, I used a tally chart and observation journal to track the frequency and types of behaviors students demonstrated. Also, students completed a behavioral self-assessment before and after implementation to assess their opinions of their behaviors. Finally, students completed a kindness assessment to demonstrate their views on the effectiveness of the curriculum. Data results show kindness lessons decreased frequency of unkind behaviors and improved students' personal opinions of themselves. Given the results of my study, kindness curriculum may improve student behaviors in other classrooms.

Character education has many different constituents, and researchers focus on different areas of deliberation. Teachers, administrators and other officials research character education, to discover the *proper* method for students' development (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2012). Researchers create studies and assess effectiveness of various curricula (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Humphrey, 2005; Laminack & Wadsworth, 2012). The Montessori Method (see Appendix A) focuses on peace education. Teachers utilize resources, such as past training in the Montessori Method or best practices while using new curriculum tools (McFarland, 2004). Educators use read alouds and discussions to teach elementary students character (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2012). Laminack and Wadsworth provide a multi-layered curriculum, timetable, relevant literature, and lessons relating to each book to actively teach kindness education.

Smith (2013) described the initial stages of character education within the United States' public school curriculum. Within public schools, Smith discusses schools' neglect of implementing various cultural and ethical viewpoints. Smith (2013) explains that maybe in the 1950s, character education curriculum reflected the *social norm* ideals, without empathy towards differing opinions. In the 1980s, virtues curriculum began to reflect a more *universal* approach that continued into the 1990s. Beginning in 2003, the United States Department of Education gave schools more funding opportunities if they imparted a character education curriculum (Smith, 2013). Schools and policy makers continually develop and refine their understanding of the importance and benefit of character education in today's schools (Smith, 2013). According to Smith (2013), "Over 20 years of research has shown that children need a strong foundation of social-emotional competence to succeed in school…" (p. 353). Students should receive this *strong foundation* through a character education curriculum in their schools.

Humphrey (2005) defined character education as "the deliberate effort to develop good character based on core virtues that are good for the individual and good for society" (p. xvi). Humphrey argued that many schools are neglectful towards student development, with their lack of a character curriculum. Moral education is necessary for students' social, emotional and academic developments (Humphrey, 2005).

The literature provides many examples of authors' viewpoints on the importance of character education. Baldis (2004) reiterated Humphrey's challenge towards schools' implementation of moral education programs. He argued students spend 1,260 hours each year with their teachers. Thus, teachers have the moral responsibility to instill moral character within their students. Baldis also discussed the unintentional neglect of teacher-education programs, for not including character development studies. He believed teachers should actively learn a specific curriculum and method, in order to successfully teach character education in the classroom (Baldis, 2004). Laminack andWadsworth (2012) and Baldis (2004) described the positive effects of read aloud stories on students' character developments.

Laminack and Wadsworth (2012) provided a curriculum for teachers to utilize, in order to focus on the specific virtue of kindness of character education. Laminak and Wadsworth (2012) used Common Core State Standards and College and Career Readiness Standards as the focal resources in their curriculum development study (p. 5). They began their book by explaining the necessity for teachers to create a sense of community within their classrooms. The authors then provide lessons plans for teachers to follow, including various read aloud options and discussion topics. Powell (2009) would agree on using guided discussions as a curriculum tool with the present-day generation of students. He believes in the importance of student exploration and discovery. The goal Laminak and Wadsworth (2012) wish to describe in their book is "Together

we can help students develop the insights and understandings essential to embracing their own humanity, respecting the humanity of others, standing together to resist bullying behavior, and coming to the defense of students being bullied" (p. 112). Guided discussion and read alouds could be a means for teachers and students to learn and explore character education together. (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2012; Powell, 2009.)

Zickefoose (2010) believed the importance of character education implementation on student development and studies its effects after three elementary schools implement different programs. Examples of different character education curricula that Zickefoose (2010) studied are Positive Behavior Intervention (PBI), Love and Logic, Kindness and Peacekeeping (p. 102 & 185). Zickefoose did not believe in one overarching successful character education curriculum. Instead, Zickefoose highlighted the importance of principals, teachers, parents and students all contributing to the effectiveness of their school's program (2010, p. 175).

Cooperation among students, staff and parents is important for character educations' success (Zickefoose, 2010). However, Chen (2012) cautioned cooperators against merely teaching a virtues curriculum as their character education focus, as this mistake is an argument those opposed for a common character education curriculum argue. What virtues should schools implement, and who decides the common virtues? "… Character education can escape this criticism as long as it fully accounts of the relationship among the virtues…" (Chen, 2012, p. 347). Individuals possess varying degrees of moral character and virtuous understandings. Thus, a common moral education curriculum needs to provide the necessary components towards educating diverse individuals.

Character education implementation does not require an excessive amount of a school's focus and energy. Cubukcu (2012) describes the process, observations and data of the

effectiveness of a *hidden* character curriculum in elementary and middle-school grades. A hidden

curriculum occurs when practitioners do not write it explicitly (Cubukcu, 2012, p. 1528). The

author studied 40 fifth through eighth-grade students and observed the effects of implementing

various social activities in students' character development. The results of the study

demonstrated positive effects of this character curriculum, such as students demonstrating and

verbalizing better communication skills with their peers. Cubukcu's study highlights the

importance of a specific character education curriculum for student development, which should

no longer remain *hidden* to the general public of educators.

Classroom discussions could reflect an example of hidden curriculum, as teachers are not

always able to foresee the effects, process or quality of conversation. Willems, Denessen,

Hermann and Vermeer (2013) provide lesson plans and examples showing the effects of guided,

classroom discussions on students' moral development. Teachers focus on educating students in

moral reasoning, emotional understanding and virtue knowledge. Williams et al. provide

discussions from classroom lessons, including teachers' questions and students' answers. The

authors' goal was assessing whether or not the quality of teachers' character education

conversations with their students could be quantified and successful (Willems et. al, 2013, p.

117).

Kindness education, as a facet of a general character education curriculum, is necessary

for youth to learn. Powell (2009) states, "America faces few more urgent challenges than

preparing our children to compete in the global economy" (p. 18). Within his article, Powell

describes the characteristics students should possess in order to succeed in a future society. Many

characteristics Powell stated are focuses of character education curriculum, such as life skills,

communication and collaboration. Powell also explained the Montessori Method of education as a prime example where character education is already an integral part of its curriculum.

McFarland (2013) states the importance of peace (character) education in the Montessori Method of education, continuing today after its implementation over 72 years ago. McFarland (2013) goes on to describe Montessori's peace curriculum, while providing options to further develop character education for students in present-day schools. McFarland (2013) provided a model with six characteristics teachers should focus on teaching their students. The characteristics are educating students in love, human needs, self and community knowledge, acceptance of various cultures and respect for students' environments.

The collective research offers evidence for schools to offer some sort of character development (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2012, p. xi). However, the proper method of instilling morals is up for debate (Zickefoose, 2010). Many researchers believe best practice is an effective method for teachers to continue to follow, in which teachers act as a role model for teaching school expectation. Character education is a more recent method of moral education, and more studies, theories and strategies are needed to comprehend its effectiveness fully for today's students (Smith, 2013). What effects would kindness education have in a first, second and third-grade classroom to lessen the frequent unkind acts students demonstrate towards their peers?

Continually throughout the school year, I perceived many instances when students acted unkind towards their peers. Students physically retaliated against one another when upset. They excluded peers from recess games, during lunch and circle time in the classroom. Students also teased and interrupted others when talking. One factor related to unkind behaviors could be students did not adequately learn and internalize expectations that I modeled and asked them to follow.

I wished to focus on teaching students kindness, the ability to think, interact and empathize with their peers respectfully, in order to observe any positive effects towards behaviors. I utilized Laminack and Wadsworth's (2012) curriculum *Bullying Hurts: Teaching Kindness through Read Alouds and Guided Conversations*. This is a five-layer program that contains daily lessons to teach students kindness. Each lesson plan provided teachers with step-by-step directions, literature choices, discussion topics and activities.

I conducted my research in an E1 (grades 1-3) classroom in a charter school in a small city. I notified the Head of School of the time and nature of my project. I also distributed parent notification letters to my students' families. My classroom consisted of twenty-five students, thirteen female and twelve male. Participants partook of fifteen lesson sessions over the course of five weeks. Each lesson averaged twenty minutes, thus, students participated in five hours of kindness lessons.

Methodology

"Kindness means knowing everybody is the same and different" (Third-year student). I began implementation of Laminack and Wadsworths' (2012) curriculum in February. Before teaching students kindness lessons, I asked them to complete a behavioral self-assessment (see Appendix B). Students completed the same self-assessment at the end of the study, in order to assess differing opinions. I recorded kind and unkind behaviors daily using a tally chart and observation journal (see Appendices C and D). Students also filled-out a final report at the end of the lessons, to describe the effectiveness of the curriculum (see Appendix F). Laminack and Wadsworth (2012) provided overarching themes for each week, which students summarized as (a) live in peace, (b) same and different, (c) treat others how you want to be treated, (d) stop and stand up, and (e) be a good model for people.

Laminak and Wadsworths' (2012) *Teaching Kindness through Read Alouds and Guided Conversations* provides five tiers of lesson themes teachers can follow when teaching kindness. I chose fifteen picture books, referenced by Laminack and Wadsworth (2012), to utilize throughout the tiers. I read Fox's (2001) *Whoever You Are*, Hoffelt's (2004) *We Share One World*, Hamanaka's (1994) *All the Colors of the Earth*, Lears' (1998) *Ian's Walk*, Millman's (1993) *Moses Goes to a Concert*, Lyon's (2010) *The Pirate of Kindergarten*, Lester's (1999) *Hooway for Wodney Wat*, Whitcomb's (1998) *Odd Velvet*, Rodman's (2011) *Camp K-9*, Bottner's (1992) *Bootsie Barker Bites*, O'Neill's (2002) *The Recess Queen*, Bateman's (2004) *The Bully Blockers Club*, Lovell's (2001) *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon*, Otoshi's (2008) *One*, and Woodson's (2012) *Each Kindness*. *Each Kindness* was not a referenced book from Laminack and Wadsworths' (2012) curriculum. I chose to utilize Woodson's (2012) book since I read the story in previous years, and the book provides an insightful description of potential consequences when students choose to act unkindly towards peers.

Before I taught the kindness curriculum, I asked students to complete a behavioral self-assessment (see Appendix B). I wished to observe students' opinions regarding students' demonstrations of kind and unkind behaviors. Many unkind behaviors I saw throughout the school year were students tattling, pushing while waiting in line, not cleaning up after themselves and excluding others from recess, lunch, and peer group projects. I hoped to increase the frequency of kind behaviors such as students discussing issues with each other, keeping their bodies to themselves, putting away classroom materials, and including others.

In order to record the frequency of unkind/kind behaviors, I utilized a tally chart and observation notes daily (see Appendices C and D). I tracked behaviors in the morning and afternoon by placing a mark in the appropriate section. Then, I wrote notes discussing the types

of behaviors I saw under the proper heading and timeframe. I hoped to observe correlations

between the types of behaviors students demonstrate with the day of the week and time. I

decided to teach Laminack and Wadsworth's (2012) curriculum three days per week right after

students finish lunch. Students' afternoon work schedules were more consistent than morning

agendas, and I wanted to provide kindness lessons at a routine time.

   According to a third-year student, "Live in peace" describes the theme of my first week's

kindness lessons in my E1 classroom. Before I read each book, I showed students each picture

asking them to describe how the images represented human similarities around the world. Then, I

read the story while showing the pictures again. Next, students discussed with a partner the same

question as before and added a discussion on each book's theme. After I read the third book,

students created a "bumper sticker" to represent the week's theme, which was a culmination

statement about our week's discussions (Laminack and Wadsworth, 2012, p. 22). We also

created an inverted pyramid to show the significance and insignificance of each student's role in
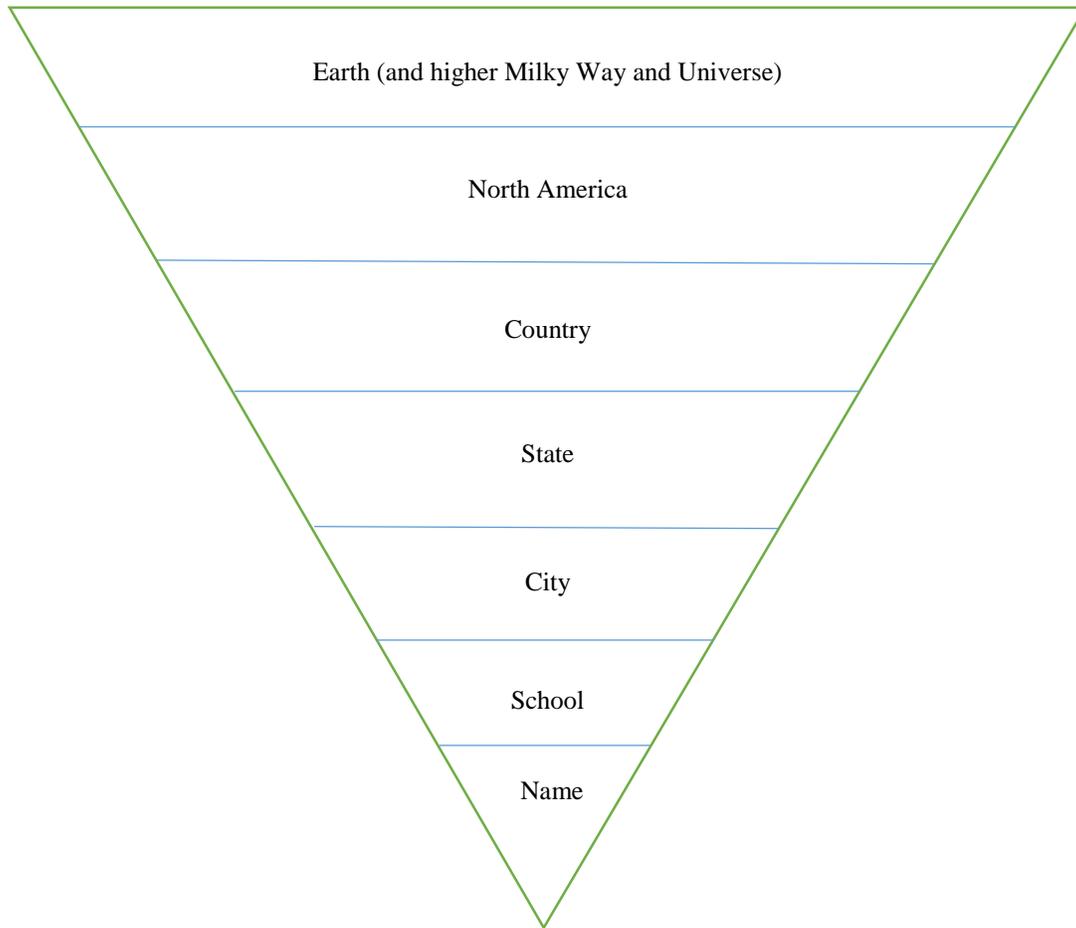
the larger community (see Figure 1).

Earth (and higher Milky Way and Universe)

North America

Country

State

City

School

Name

Figure 1. An inverted pyramid, demonstrating the interrelatedness amongst students and the

larger community.

The second week's theme, as defined by a second-year student was "Everybody is the

same and different." Similar to week one, I showed students the images, before reading the story

and then read the story with pictures. However, this week our discussion topics focused on

describing how the main characters in each story acted differently than their peers. We also

talked about the similarities of the main characters, who had a physical or mental disability

(autism, hearing and vision impairment), with the other characters. After each book, we created a

graphic organizer (see Appendix E) together to show how everyone can be different and the

same (Laminack and Wadsworth, 2012, p. 46). Students also created another bumper sticker, which I hung from the ceiling of my classroom.

"Treat others how you want to be treated." The Golden Rule is a universal philosophy of kindness that describes week three's theme. The books showed students examples of characters that possess unique characteristics, such as a speech impediment, an overly self-confident personality and attachment to a blanket. These characters were continually teased-until the plot in each book shifts towards a change in peer acceptance of individual uniqueness. I showed each book's pictures first, then read the story, and students and I discussed the characters' unique characteristics. Students and I also talked about our own similarities and differences. Next, students created a bumper sticker for the week and responded to the writing prompt "How am I the same and different?" in their journals.

Individual empowerment was the theme of week four, with a third-year student summarizing, "Stop and stand up!" I followed the same routine as stated above, but our discussions focused on comprehending the characteristics of the bully characters and discussing why we thought the characters chose to bully others. We also discussed what students should do if they experience or witness bullying at school. Students created bumper stickers that I posted on our door in the hallway.

The fifth and final week's theme was, "Be a good model for people," as stated by a first-year student. The final tier of the kindness education curriculum focused on the individual responsibility of each student to stand up for others and be proud of personal characteristics. I showed the pictures of each book, read the text, and students discussed with peers and the whole group how they can act with kindness. Students created their final bumper stickers, which I hung

on the outside facing door. Students can now observe these bumper stickers right before they begin recess.

On the final day of my action research project, students completed another copy of the self-assessment they filled out at the beginning the study. I wanted to observe any changes in students' perceptions of their behaviors after participating in a kindness curriculum. Students then responded to a ten question assessment of the kindness curriculum, in general (see Appendix F). I wanted to gauge how successful or unsuccessful students thought Laminack and Wadsworths' (2012) curriculum helped improve the frequency of kind and unkind behaviors in our classroom.

Analysis of Data

Students completed the Behavioral Self-Assessment before I began my kindness curriculum implementation. I hoped to assess how often students believed they demonstrated kind behaviors. My first, second and third-grade students read various scenarios and marked if they Never, Sometimes or Always use each behavior (Figure 2). Results indicated students on average believed they were always kind towards peers in all situations. However, five students thought they either excluded others in lunch or recess, did not line up respectfully or did put their hands on others. An average of five students believed they sometimes demonstrated kind behaviors.
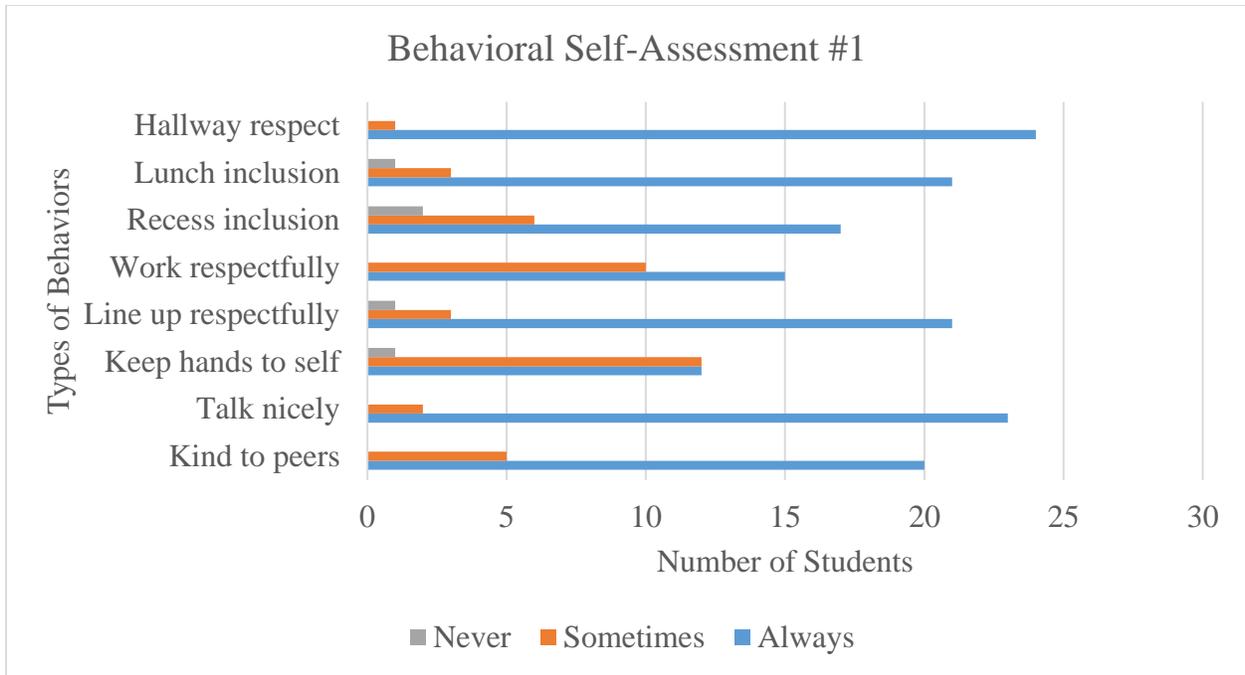
Figure 2. An analysis of students' opinions regarding their personal behaviors.

Throughout the five weeks of kindness curriculum implementation, I tracked the frequency of unkind and kind behaviors students demonstrated (Figure 3). I used a tally chart to record the conducts I observed in the morning and afternoon (Figures 4 and 5). I assessed whether the time of day factored into the frequency of unkind behaviors. Also, I utilized observation notes to perceive particular types of student actions (Figures 6 and 7).
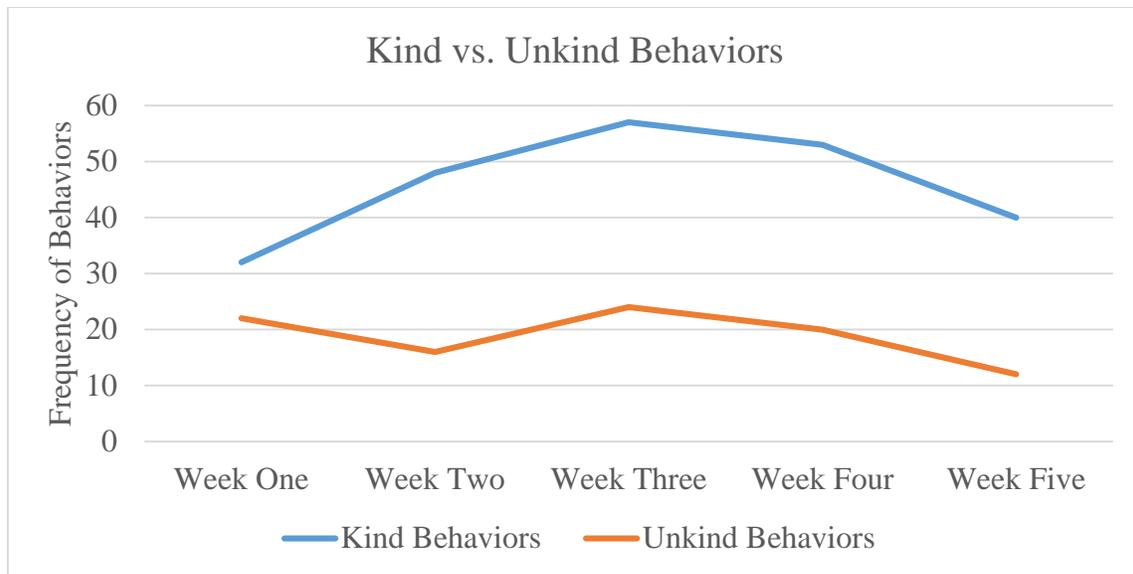
Figure 3. An analysis of frequency of kind versus unkind behaviors demonstrated during a five-week study.

Data in Figure 3 demonstrated an increase in frequency of kind behaviors students demonstrated from week one through week three of implementation. One example of a kind act, occurred when a first year student came up to me in tears when her friend was home sick. She said to me, "Miss Molly it is just awful she is sick!" The first-year decided she best make her friend a card to feel better… that this would be a kind act to show her friend. In beginning lessons, students were motivated to practice the kind behaviors I read and taught using picture books and discussion. However, students began losing motivation to show kindness actively in weeks four and five of data collection, as Figure 3 demonstrates.

Figure 3 also shows an overall decrease in frequency of unkind behaviors throughout curriculum implementation. Students were inspired to show less unkindness during the first week of kindness lessons. During week two, students reverted to their characteristic frequency of inconsiderate behaviors. However, from weeks three through five, students reflected during discussions and activities on unkind behaviors they demonstrated and managed their behaviors

more successfully. I observed one second-year, who struggled to keep hands to self, catch

himself as he was about to touch another student in line. He looked around the room to see if

another student or I observed the situation, and he put his hand to his side instead. I believe a

longer implementation time could positively affect the results (as seen in Figure 3), with more

students following classroom expectations.

Information in Figures 4 and 5 does not show correlation between the frequency of kind

or unkind deeds and time of day. During week one, students showed an increase in kind and

unfriendly behaviors in the morning and a decrease in the afternoon. Week two displayed a

decline in kind actions and a decrease in unkind actions during morning hours, as well as, an

increase in both during afternoon time. The patterns of discrepancies continued, as shown in

Figures 4 and 5, suggesting that the frequency of sympathetic and unfriendly actions correlates

more with students' individual characteristics and means of reflection than on time of day.
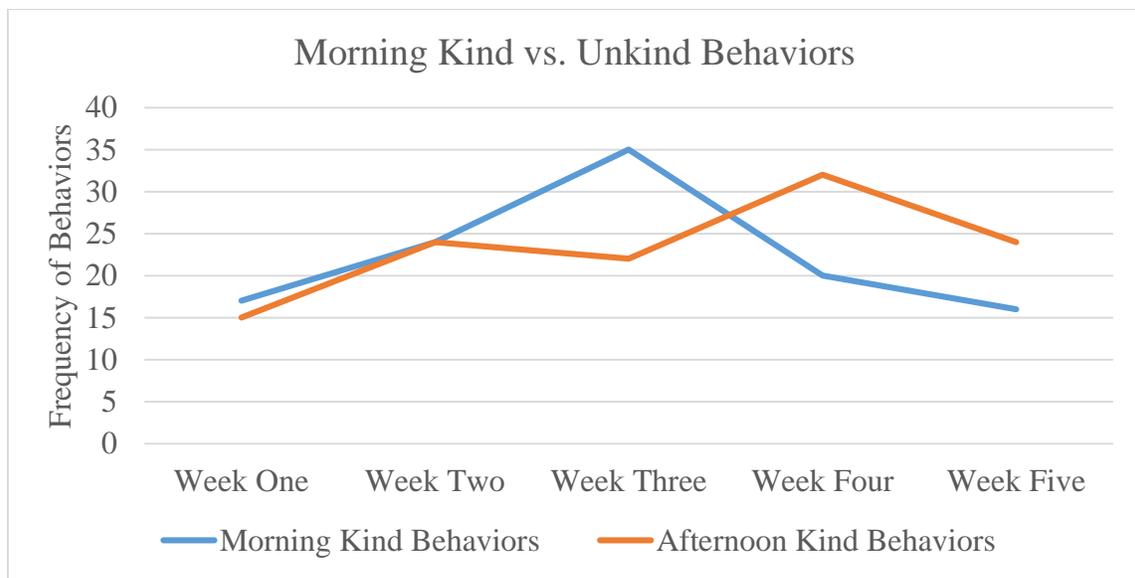

Figure 4. An analysis of the frequency of kind versus unkind behaviors students demonstrated

during morning work time.
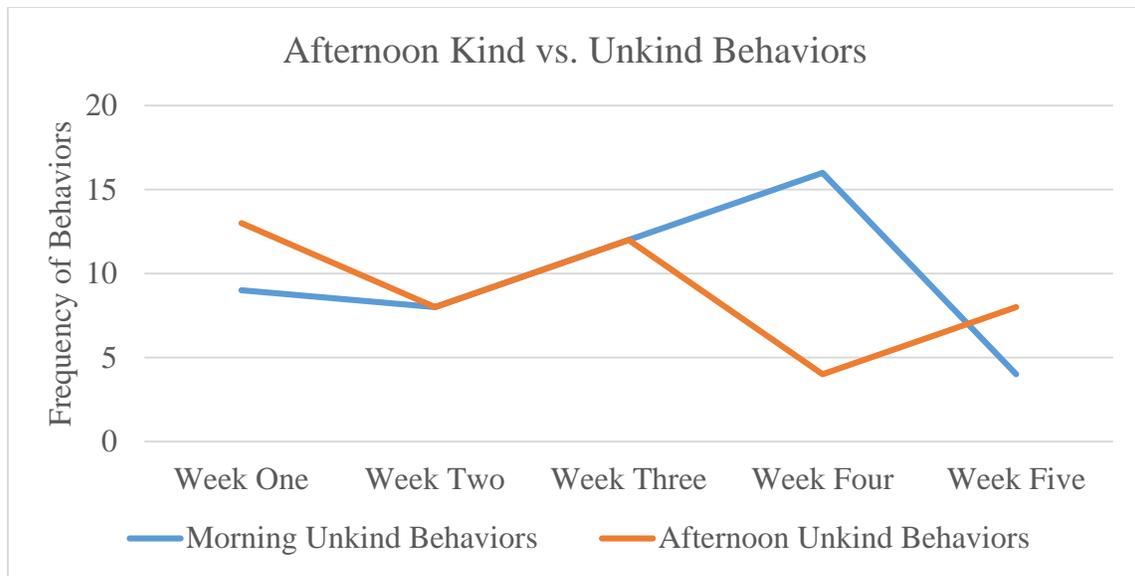
Afternoon Kind vs. Unkind Behaviors

Figure 5. An analysis of the frequency of kind versus unkind behaviors students demonstrated during morning work time.

Could data results change if I gave lessons right away in the morning instead of before afternoon work time? Figures 4 and 5 did not demonstrate significant changes in student actions during varying time periods. Thus, I would not expect timing of lessons should affect the frequency of unkind versus kind behaviors during morning and afternoon work time. Frequency of behaviors was not connected to the time of day. Figures 6 and 7 for kind acts and Figures 8 and 9 for unkind also showed the specificity of student interactions did not correlate to morning and afternoon work schedules.

I organized kind behaviors into three categories. "Respecting Peers" represents students including others in projects, at recess or lunch, helping others complete assignments and showing empathy for others' feelings. "Respecting Teachers" showed students politely waiting for assistance and showing manners towards their teacher and assistant teacher. "Respecting the Environment" encompasses students cleaning their workspace, as well as, assisting their teachers and peers.
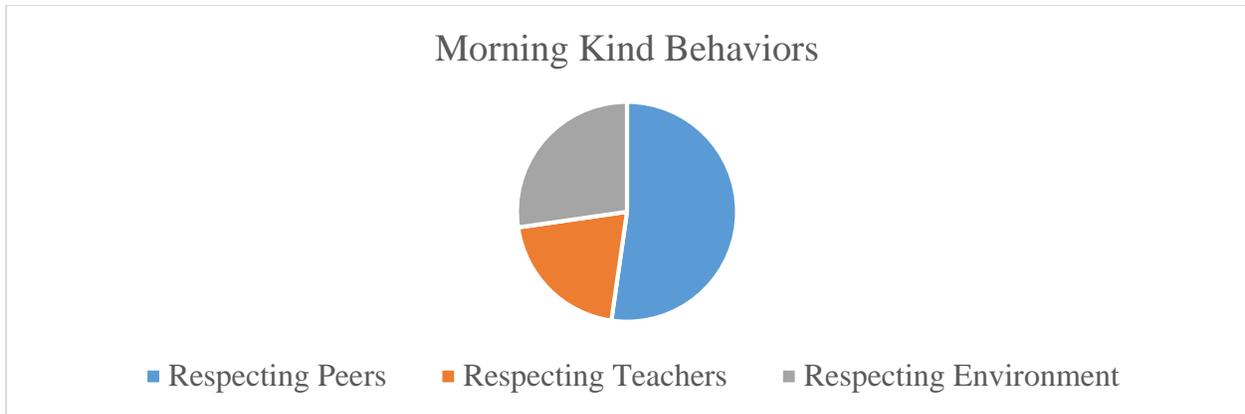
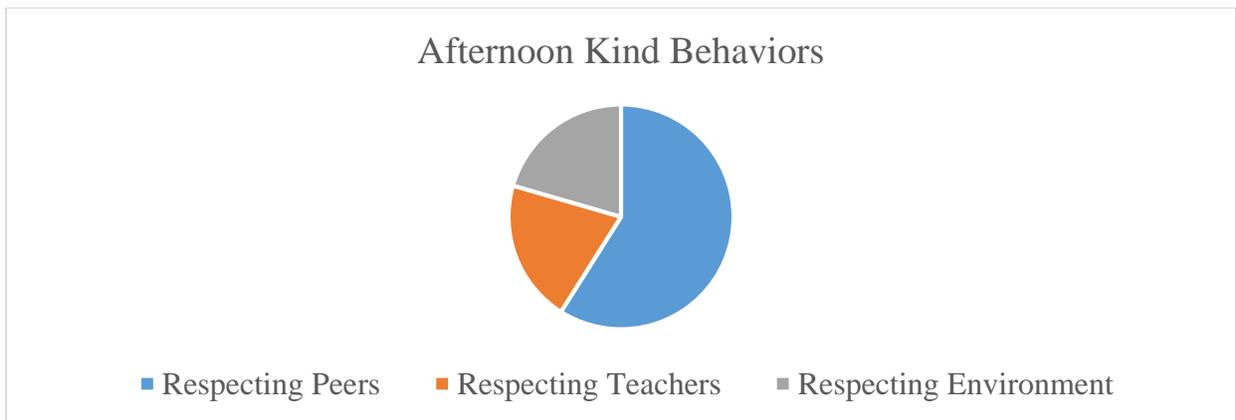*Figure 6.* An analysis of the types of kind behaviors students demonstrated during morning work time.

Figure 7. An analysis of the types of kind behaviors students demonstrated during afternoon work time.

Students demonstrated over half of their kind behaviors towards peers, with the other half averaging evenly amongst kind actions toward teachers and environment. Data shows students' acceptance in and empathy towards peer groups outweighs concern towards teachers and environment. Based on the findings from this study, it appears that the kindness curriculum increased students' acceptance and compassion of their peers. Figures 8 and 9 also demonstrated students' attention towards peer relationships. I observed many times students kindly redirecting

an individual who has difficulty "blurting out" during whole group lessons. Once, I noticed a

second-year remind this student, "Please remember, you need to raise your hand quietly."
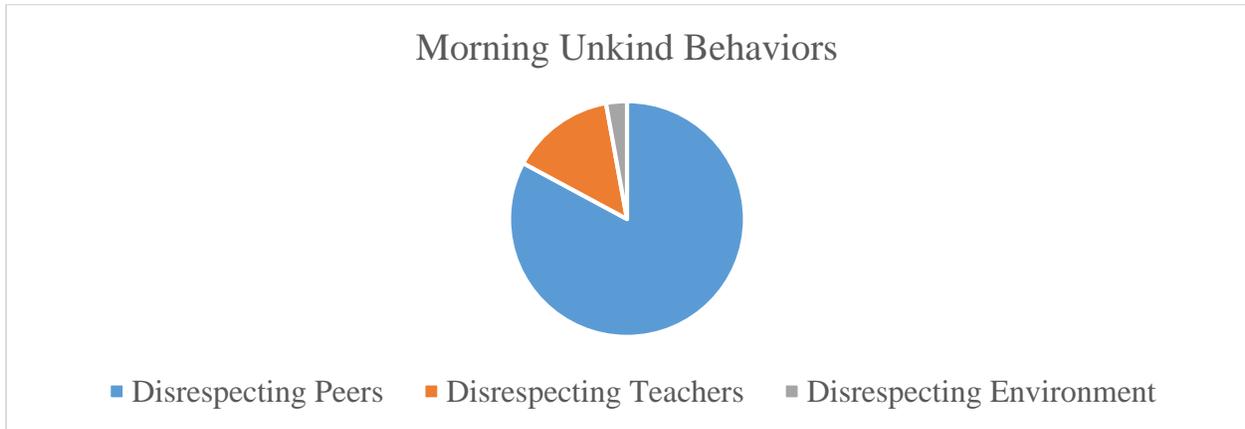

Figure 8. An analysis of the types of unkind behaviors students demonstrated during morning
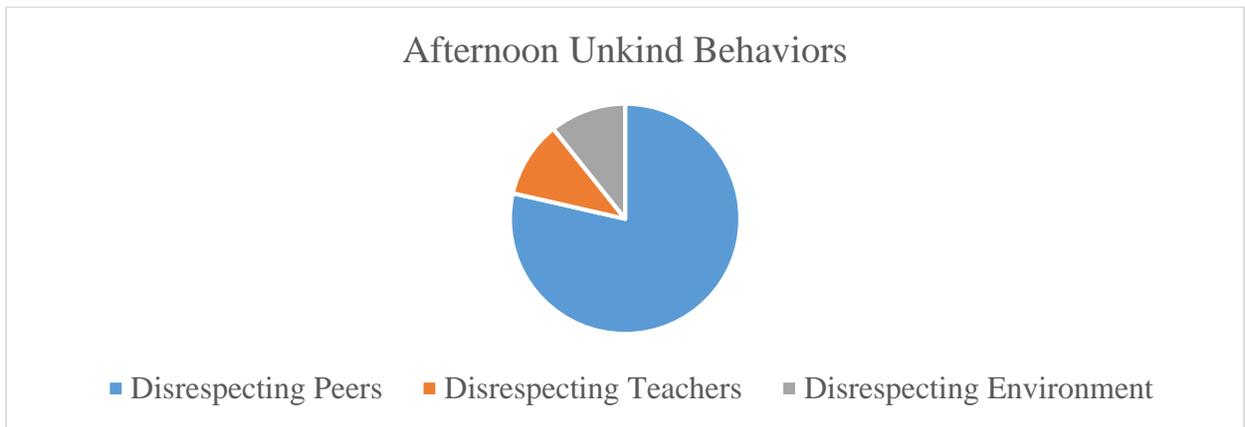
work time.

Figure 9. An analysis of the types of unkind behaviors students demonstrated during afternoon

work time.

I also organized unkind behaviors I observed into three categories. "Disrespecting Peers"

represented students excluding others in projects, at recess or lunch, tattling, and pushing peers

in line. "Disrespecting Teachers" showed students talking back to their teacher or assistant

teacher or interrupting their teacher during lessons. "Disrespecting the Environment"

encompassed students who were not cleaning their workspace, or not helping teachers or peers when asked.

Students demonstrated over 75% of their unkind behaviors towards peers during morning and afternoon work time, and the other 21% averaged evenly amongst teachers and environment. Data reiterated students' emphasis towards their peers, with their unkind focus towards other students. Results from this study showed kindness curriculum fostered peer-centeredness growth and help quell inconsiderate behaviors. Figures 6-9 demonstrate the peer centeredness of pupils' behaviors, as most of the focus, whether kind or unkind, was towards students' peers.

After students participated in the five-week kindness curriculum, they again completed the Behavioral Self-Assessment. I recorded data from the second assessment and used it to compare with data from the first behavior self-assessment (Figure 10).

Figure 10 shows students felt more kind towards peers than they felt before participating in kindness curriculum and activities. No students believed they "Never" demonstrate kind acts towards others. Students were also more to answer "Always" than "Sometimes" in comparison with the first self-assessment.

Figure 10 shows students believed themselves to act kind more frequently than they did before participating in kindness lessons and activities. Data from this kindness curriculum showed that students learned the importance of self-reflection and empathy in their interactions with others. Students possessed a more positive attitude towards their actions after the kindness curriculum. During our snack and tea time, two students sat down together and one asked the other, "So, how was your weekend?" The student was able to think about the other, and smiled while she listened to her peer speak.
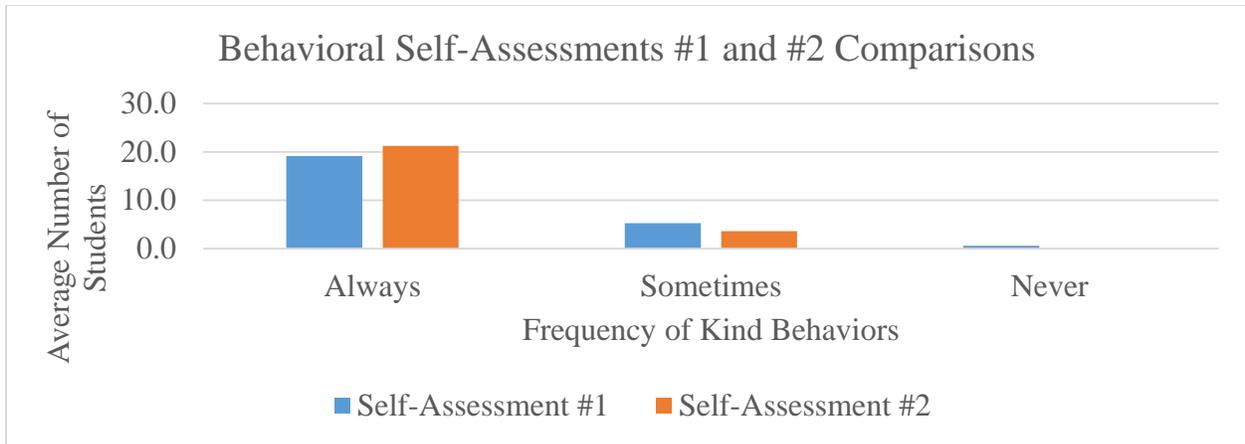
Figure 10. A comparison of students' behavioral self-assessments at the beginning and end of research implementation.

The final data collection tool students completed was a curriculum assessment. I hoped to compile students' opinions on the effectiveness of the kindness curriculum relating to the frequency of their kind behaviors towards peers, teachers, and the environment. Figure 11 shows most students believe the kindness curriculum was a worthwhile tool that helped them learn kind versus unkind behaviors. The majority of pupils thought they were kinder after receiving lessons than they were before. On the curriculum effectiveness assessment, students answered "Yes" or "No" to scenarios following the statement, "After participating in a kindness curriculum students more often…"
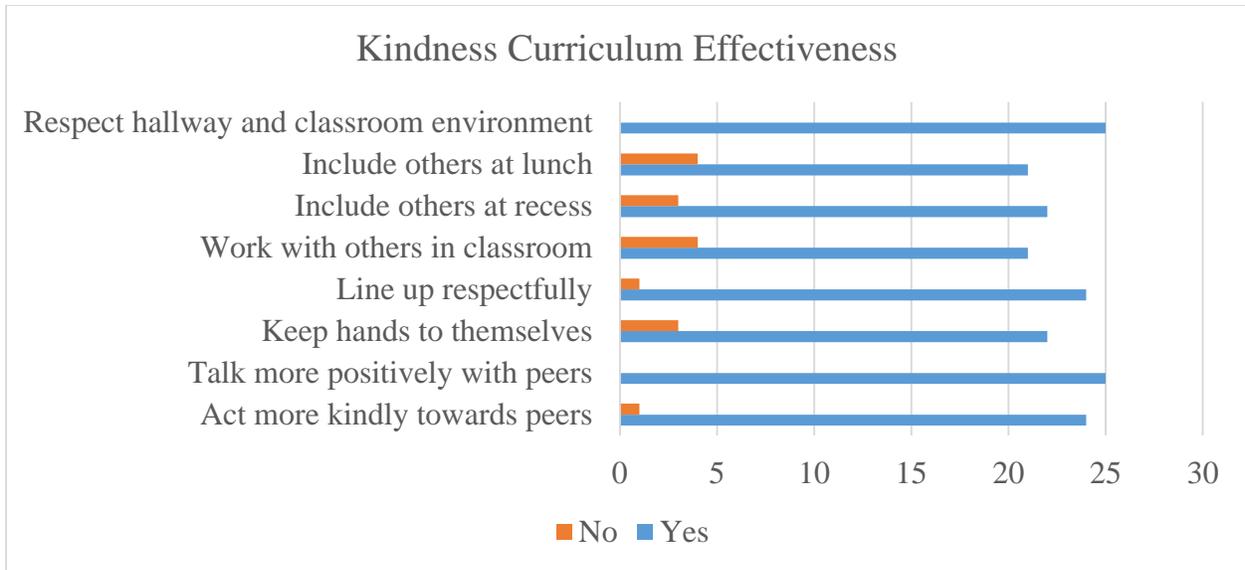
Figure 11. An analysis of students' opinions of kindness curriculum effectiveness.

       The curriculum effectiveness assessment also allowed me to observe students' most and

least favorite aspect of the curriculum, as recorded in Figure 12. Seven students believed the

picture books, discussions, and bumper stickers were all worthwhile portions of the curriculum.

Eight and nine students voted picture books and bumper stickers their most favorite, with three

and four students voting these least favorite. The majority of pupils thought discussions were

their least favorite activity, and only one proposed discussions as his or her favorite activity. E1

students do not have much experience discussing topics as a whole group, and many times act

shy and anxious. Students could benefit from more experience talking in front of larger groups of

peers before I use kindness curriculum again in the future.
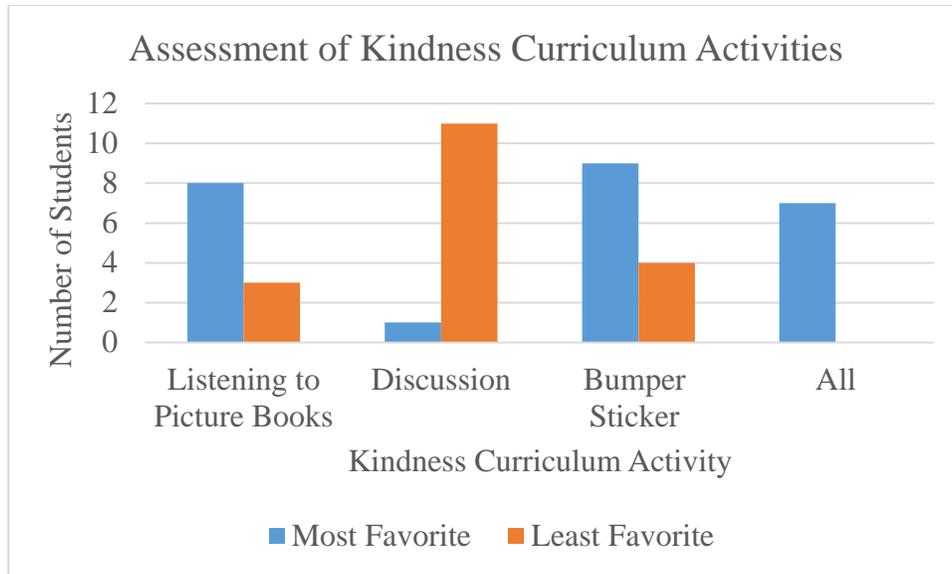
Figure 12. An analysis of students' opinions regarding kindness curriculum activities.

The data collection tools (Behavioral Self-Assessment, Tally Chart, Observation Notes, and Curriculum Assessment) allowed me to assess the effectiveness of Laminack and Wadsworths' (2012) curriculum. Overall, the frequency of unkind behaviors decreased over the five-week curriculum implementation. Frequency of kind behaviors increased and then decreased over the five weeks. Student motivation could have affected the decline in kind deeds, and increased student reflection during discussion may reflect the decrease in unkind actions. The majority of students thought the kindness curriculum was effective in improving interactions amongst students. Most students also developed more positive opinions of their behaviors towards others, after participating in kindness lessons and activities.

Action Plan

Results from data reflect the goals presented in Laminack and Wadsworths' (2012) curriculum *Bullying Hurts: Teaching Kindness through Read Alouds and Guided Conversations.* Laminack and Wadsworth state their objectives as such,

> The ideas in this curriculum are intended to spark and lead a cultural change inside
> classrooms and schools. The work of that change is slow and deliberate. By design, it is
> developed layer upon layer, working consistently like the force of water flowing over
> eons to create the Grand Canyon. A shift in consciousness is not typically something that
> occurs rapidly, so we must be patient and diligent. The books for this curriculum were
> selected to provide access to the essential understandings for each layer. Each layer
> scaffolds for the understandings in the next layer, to create an accumulation of
> understanding, not unlike the formation of a hailstone. (2012, p. 111),

Beginning kindness education in lower elementary grades could instill within students' social developments knowledge of behaving empathetically with peers throughout their school careers and beyond.

Data results from my action research reflected a decrease in the frequency of unkind acts students demonstrated toward their peers. Students became more aware how their unkind acts impacted others and were more empathetic towards peers' feelings. I observed fewer occurrences of students excluding others in recess, lunch and during peer group work. Students more successfully remembered the classroom expectation of keeping their hands to themselves. Beginning kindness education at the start of the school year; could also positively affect the results.

Although the frequency of unkind acts lessened, the occurrence of kind acts decreased from week three to five of data collection. Students were not working unkindly or choosing to go out of their ways to do kind acts, such as cleaning another's workspace or asking a peer if they wanted snack. A focus for future kindness lessons could be researching ways students could act kindly towards the larger community, through volunteering at a food shelf or nursing home. Baldis (2004) states, "Use Real-Life Situations… Direct instruction lays a foundation for understanding, but does not require the students to relate the meaning of the character attribute to their own lives" (p. 5). Life skills students may receive; through helping others in the larger community and observing their teacher model these skills; could assist in students' internalization of kindness development in the classroom.

I understand the necessity of peer kindness education based on the finding of my study. I also hope to research other methods of teaching lower elementary students service habits they may use to demonstrate kind behaviors towards adults and the environment. Developing a positive school culture, could allow more focused learning during lessons and work time. When students are not worrying about how they "fit in" with peers, they can put more effort into their studies. Laminack and Wadsworth (2012) state, "One known antidote to bullying behavior is the development of healthy social relationships found in a caring community. We must work together to develop the bonds, the trust, the mutual respect, and the self-respect necessary to create community" (p. 2).

Students demonstrated positive opinions with regards to the effects of their participation in a kindness curriculum. Most students believed they always act more kindly towards others than they did prior to receiving kindness lessons. Also, no one answered "Never" on the question describing students' frequency with demonstrating kindness after completing the second

behavioral self-assessment. Students were also pleased with the literature selection of the study

and the bumper sticker culminating activity for each week. The discussion portion of the study

was least liked. Perhaps students did not like the discussion experience because, they may need

more group discussion experience, as first-year students do not have much training in speaking

in front of a large group.

Would continuing kindness curriculum implementation every school year for a longer

period than my five-week action research study, decrease unkind behaviors more or increase the

frequency of kind actions? I could also share my research findings with colleagues and

administration, with the hopes to create a school wide goal of students' mutual respect towards

peers, teachers and the environment. If my school develops a strong sense of community,

students may feel more confidence in demonstrating kindness behaviors from the beginning of

the year and throughout.

Also, would real-life experiences impact students' want to act more kindly. My goal was

to assist students in developing the necessary skill of acting with kindness towards their peers,

teachers and environment. Although the frequency of unkind acts declined because of students'

participation in kindness lessons and activities, I had hoped to increase the frequency of kind acts

as well. Providing students with volunteer opportunities could help students internalize a desire

to act selflessly with kindness towards others.

Laminack and Wadsworth (2012) summarize what teachers might wish for, "there was no

need for a book such as this in our schools… We can see the problem [unkindness amongst

students]. Now we have a vision, a plan of action, and each of us must work one classroom at a

time to build strong, caring communities of learners" (p. 109). As a Montessori teacher, I possess

the drive to teach the "whole child," in order to ensure students intrinsically comprehend their

responsibility as knowledgeable and kind human beings. As a future action research study, I wish

to schedule volunteer opportunities for students' participation in the larger community. Then, I

may observe any effect on students' kind or unkind behaviors as a result of their volunteerism. I

would also like to begin kindness curriculum implementation at the beginning of the school year.

Then, I may collect students' data from their state test scores, and compare with students' from

the previous school year. Changes in students' scores could show a positive correlation between

students' academic, focused learning and kindness curriculum development.

Appendix A
The Montessori Method

      The Montessori Method is a century's old educational philosophy begun by Maria Montessori. Montessori believed educator's roles were to educate the "whole child," which encompasses children's intellectual, physical, spiritual and moral developments. Observation, nature and peace philosophies highlight Montessori practice in present-day Montessori schools. Maria Montessori states, "We know how to find pearls in the shells of oysters, gold in the mountains, and coal in the bowels of the earth, but we are unaware of the spiritual gems, the creative nebulae that the child hides in himself when he enters our world to renew mankind" (1982, p. 219).

Appendix B
Kindness Behavioral Self-Assessment

Students, please complete this assessment discussing your kindness behaviors in the classroom. Please make sure to answer each question by circling your choice from the scale. I appreciate honest answers, since I will use the information you provide to create lessons and decide how I can best teach you. You do not need to put your name on the paper, and may return the form upside down in the gray bin.

A=Always   S=Sometimes   N=Never

I am kind towards my peers.	**A**	**S**	**N**
I talk nicely with my teachers and peers.	**A**	**S**	**N**
I keep my hands to myself.	**A**	**S**	**N**
I line up quietly and respectfully.	**A**	**S**	**N**
I work well with others when my teachers choose my partner.	**A**	**S**	**N**
I include everyone at recess.	**A**	**S**	**N**
I let anyone sit next to me at lunch and in circle.	**A**	**S**	**N**
I am respectful of others in the hallway.	**A**	**S**	**N**

Thank you for participating! –Miss Molly

Appendix C
Kindness Tally Chart

	Morning	Afternoon
Monday		
Kind Acts		
Unkind Acts		
Tuesday		
Kind Acts		
Unkind Acts		
Wednesday		
Kind Acts		
Unkind Acts		
Thursday		
Kind Acts		
Unkind Acts		
Friday		
Kind Acts		
Unkind Acts		

Appendix D
Kindness Observational Journal

Date:

Morning Kindness:

Morning Unkindness:

Afternoon Kindness:

Afternoon Unkindness:

Appendix E
Graphic Organizer

What is life like for people who can't see clearly?	How is that different for others who can?
Identify all the ways a person with a visual impairment is like every other person in the world?	

Appendix F
Kindness Survey

Students and staff, please complete this survey discussing the effects of kindness education. Please make sure to answer each question. The first eight questions need "yes" or "no" answers by circling your choice and the last two are open-ended. (Staff members do not need to complete questions 9 and 10). I appreciate honest answers, since I will use the information you provide to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum. You do not need to put your name on the paper, and may return the form in the office.

After participating in a kindness curriculum students more often:

1. Act more kindly towards their peers.   Yes   No

2. Are more positive when talking with others.   Yes   No

3. Keep their hands to themselves without reminders.   Yes   No

4. Line up quietly and respectfully.   Yes   No

5. Work with other students on peer projects without complaining.   Yes   No

6. Include everyone in games and play at recess and gym.   Yes   No

7. Do not "save" seats in the lunch, circle and specialists' work spaces.   Yes   No

8. Are respectful towards the classroom and hallway environment.   Yes   No

What activities during the kindness lessons did you like most?

What activities did you not like?

Thank you for participating! –Miss Molly

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