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# An Exploration of the Effects of a Literature-Based Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum on the Kindergarten Classes in a Large K-5 Elementary School

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF A LITERATURE-BASED SOCIAL-  
EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM ON THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSES IN A  
LARGE K-5 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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May 2014

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Title: An Exploration of the Effects of a Literature-Based Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum on the Kindergarten Classes in a Large K-5 Elementary School

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The purpose of this case study was to explore the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum on kindergarten students' social-emotional behaviors, awareness, and early reading skills in a large elementary school. The study examined beliefs/perceptions of kindergarten teachers in regards to what reading skills students possess, the progress students make during a semester, how social-emotional skills affect the classroom environment and whether a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum has a general impact.

Two experimental and two control teachers participated in the study. There were fifty-three (N = 53) students who participated in the study. Forty (N = 40) students were assessed due to time constraints; twenty (N = 20) in the experimental group, twenty (N = 20) in the control group. Students were assessed using the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* test, (Schultz, Izard, & Bear, 2004) to measure social awareness and emotional accuracy skills and the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Next* Assessment (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011) to measure first sound and letter naming fluency both before and after implementation of *Strong Start*, the literature-based social skills curriculum. Qualitative data collected included teacher interviews, teacher reflective journals, fidelity check observations, communication logs, and researcher field notes.

Results showed that while there was a change in scores on the ACES and *DIBELS Next* assessments from pretest to posttest for all groups and from experimental to control group, scores were not comparatively statistically different. The change in scores could not be attributed to the

social-emotional learning curriculum. Gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nor group had any effect on the scores for the ACES. However, white children did better than “other” students on the letter naming fluency *DIBELS Next* subtest. Experimental group students did not lose ground in reading, improved their problem-solving skills and enriched their social-emotional vocabulary. The data revealed classroom schedules filled with primarily teacher driven activities, core academics, and structure. Teachers changed their own behaviors by focusing on students’ social-emotional skills and behaviors, teaching social-emotional skills formally and explicitly, and by modeling social-emotional skills.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the result of an interest I had many years ago when I first began teaching. It grew through the years and when I became a principal in a building where there were children with deep emotional needs in addition to academic ones, my interest in students' social-emotional development became even more developed. I would like to acknowledge each and every one of those students because that's what started all of this. I believe that those students, some of whom are misunderstood, need love beyond the books.

I would like to thank my ESU Chair, Dr. Margot Vagliardo who continually gave me sincere feedback on my writing, structure, content, thinking, and transformed me from a solely quantitative thinker into a much deeper critical thinker than I ever thought I could be. I even wrote to her one time, "Hey this qualitative stuff is fun!" When I wanted to give up, she was there to push me. When I cried, she reminded me that being emotional was part of the learning process and that sometimes advanced learners don't even "get this far". Thank you for recognizing that I could finish this and pushing me when I wanted to be stubborn.

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I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the participant teachers and students in addition to the building and district administration and RtI coordinator at the district/study site. I am indebted to them for their help in completing my mission.

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Last, but not least, to my husband Jim. I love you and I absolutely thank you for loving me for who I am and supporting me through this process. You’re the best.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, John R. “Moose” and Naomi Gravle. Simply put, they made sure their three girls got an education. They were hard on us when it came to getting grades and working hard in school, but that was their way of instilling in us the importance of an education. We are all college educated. All of us have Master’s degrees. Two of them gave them grandchildren...but I will be the first with a doctorate.

Mom and Dad, you were with me in every class pushing me to do my best. You would accept nothing less. You both are with me every day. You will be with me when I graduate. My father used to say, when my sisters had their kids (and I didn’t) that my doctoral degree would be the “grandkid” that I would give them. Well, Moose and Naomi...Here you go.

I love and miss you every day.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“Education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society... We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.” Martin Luther King

#### **Introduction**

Sitting down and reading with children can be an extraordinarily rewarding experience for both the children and the adult with whom they are interacting. The experience can be even better if the storytelling helps build a foundation for the children’s early social-emotional skill attainment while simultaneously building the strong early literacy skills they will need to be successful in the future. Quality kindergarten classrooms are child-centered environments in which teachers encourage students to make good choices, stretch their learning, and attend to all the developmental needs of the students in not only the academic domain, but in the areas of social and emotional development as well. The best outcomes for students come from addressing the whole child, not just the academic content (Diamond, 2010; Liew & McTigue, 2010).

#### **Kindergarten in the Face of Accountability**

In stark contrast to the balanced, child-centered, developmentally appropriate model of early childhood classrooms of 25 years ago, some kindergarten classrooms are now high-pressured academic models (Miller & Almon, 2009). Beginning with the 1983 publication of *Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, and sustained by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (The White House, 2002), it is unlikely that educators could foresee that a long-term consequence would be a radical shift of focus in early

childhood settings some 25 years later (Miller & Almon, 2009). Scripted and highly didactic teaching methods have all but eliminated play, unstructured, or child-selected choice activities in many early childhood classrooms (Miller & Almon, 2009).

Miller and Almon (2009) claim that there is a crisis in kindergarten classrooms across the country because of the use of developmentally inappropriate teaching practices, brought on by school districts' worries about meeting established benchmarks and the required high stakes standardized test scores to meet "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) as defined in Sec. 1111 (b)(F) of the NCLB law (The White House, 2002). A result of the crisis in kindergarten is students' increased anger and aggression, and the increase in behavioral infractions reported in early childhood classrooms (Miller & Almon, 2009). Case in point: Kindergartner "Ethan", whose impulse is to hit a classmate when the classmate takes his toy, may be working on social-emotional skills such as emotional regulation and self-regulation. The teacher may step in to remind Ethan to count to three rather than hit his classmate. The construct of social-emotional competencies, especially those related to emotional regulation and self-regulation as shown in the Ethan's example, are related to school outcomes (McClelland & Tominey, 2011).

Even before what Miller and Almon (2009) coined as a crisis in kindergarten, Gussin-Paley (2004) contends that the shift in focus to academics and the push-down of first grade skills to kindergarten may have misled teachers into believing what used to be issues of maturation are now learning handicaps. Ordinary children who benefitted from a little extra time to mature into the academic areas may not have extra time and may mistakenly be regarded as having learning problems due to the academic shift in many kindergarten classrooms in American public schools. Gussin-Paley (2004) refers to this as the "chicken-and-egg" (p. 47) dilemma because she raises the question whether there were learning deficits there to be discovered or does the premature

presentation of the academics actually cause perceived learning deficits for the children who are not grasping the material?

Michnick-Golinkoff, Hirsch-Patek, and Eyer (2004) assert that the acceleration of academics into kindergarten is not a well thought out developmental choice for children in public education. They say the rush robs children of freedom and happiness. Michnick-Golinkoff et al. (2004) say that to be happy and well-adjusted, the children do not need to have every educational toy or partake in every single class. Michnick-Golinkoff et al. (2004) contend that the emphasis on standardized testing and schools' attempts to monitor, measure, and quantify everything students are learning has forced teachers to spend more time engaged in direct instruction, reducing time students spend interacting with each other and in exploratory learning activities. After school, parents shuttle students from one activity to the next, sometimes depriving students of down time to socialize with friends (Michnick-Golinkoff et al., 2004).

Elkind (2007) argues that many parents and schools try to push students into academics when they are not developmentally ready for those activities, which can set them up for later school and social failure. Elkind (2007) likens the downward push of curriculum into kindergarten to a "factory model" (p. 50) because there is an increasing pressure to produce results.

When school is looked upon as an assembly line and when there is pressure to increase production, there is temptation not only to fill the bottles faster but also to fill them earlier. Why not put as much at kindergarten as at first grade? Why not teach fourth grade math in grade two? (Elkind, 2007, p. 50)

Elkind believes that there is too much faith that children are only learning when pencil and paper tasks are assigned (Wertlieb, 2006). A developmentally appropriate kindergarten classroom may not look like children are learning early reading and math skills because they

aren't working in a workbook or at a desk. However, the children in a kindergarten classroom where developmentally appropriate practices are the norm, the children are working on these skills in a different manner (Wertlieb, 2006).

Further, with the shift in focus of the early childhood classroom environment, comes an adult-directed punitive system for behavior infractions with punishments including suspensions and expulsions, and a belief system that students can regulate their behavior to fit what adults think is appropriate based on a "code of conduct" rather than on developmental behavioral expectations, forcing schools to operate under a deficit model of addressing social skills (Miller & Almon, 2009; Sugai et al., 2010). For example, astoundingly, in 2009-2010, seventy-five early childhood students in the Baltimore Public School System received out-of-school suspensions or were expelled for incidents such as disrespect, classroom disruption, refusal to obey school policies, and inciting/participating in a disturbance (Maryland Department of Education, 2011). Traditional methods of discipline in schools, typically meted out by teachers or administrators, can be punitive and reactive in nature. Consequences for unacceptable behavior, usually administered after the behavior, are meant to punish a student who acts outside the norms of expected school behaviors. Punitive methods of discipline can be aggressive, demand compliance, may be used to control students, and may leave them feeling helpless. Educators may find it useful to use modeling instead since it may be a more effective and developmentally appropriate teaching strategy (DeMasters and King, 2004). Other preventative approaches to discipline such as positive reinforcement, recognizing students for expected behaviors, and teaching students age-appropriate self-management skills are other strategies that may be used (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

Disputes and arguments are naturally occurring events and can be common events in kindergarten classrooms, as well as in other unstructured educational settings, including school

playgrounds (Denham and Weissberg, 2004). Issues of conflict and other negative social behaviors occur in the hallways, the cafeteria, and in particular, during transitions throughout the school day (Sanchez, 2008). Consider this scenario as described by Denham and Weissberg (2004); two children are pretending to be Bob the Builder®. They are playing with play tools and a ride-on bulldozer. One child moves the bulldozer to the spot the other is pointing to, ready to dig. Then things suddenly change. The child who is not riding the bulldozer decides that he should be the one to dig the hole and physically pulls the current rider off the bulldozer. Nearby, a third child whines that he wants to play too. All the students start to cry. A fourth student approaches the group and ridicules the others inappropriately. To resolve the issue, a teacher must intervene or mediate, separating the students, thereby taking her attention away from all the other students. As the example illustrates, children who are four to six years of age tend to be developmentally self-centered beings. Because of this, students require a great deal of adult coaching when dealing with disputes in the classroom environment, where sharing, consideration of others, and good sportsmanship during play, are valued (Steinhauer, 2005). The coaching falls to the teacher because students cannot solve the disputes on their own yet. If teachers can utilize an effective, developmentally appropriate social-emotional learning curriculum, perhaps scenarios like the one described by Denham and Weissberg (2004) would be fewer or resolved by the students themselves.

A typically developing five-year-old child, according to the National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health (2010) may lack moral concepts of right and wrong, is rebellious if expectations are excessive, and expresses anger and jealousy physically. He/she also may not be emotionally ready for competition, often exclude others in play and is “bossy”. In addition, he/she is inquisitive, may use words that aren’t fully understood including vulgarity, tries to be independent, and can be aggressive.

Despite not knowing the specific facts of each of the separate disciplinary cases cited in Baltimore, it would seem that the disruptive behaviors leading to the suspensions or expulsions of those children may have been tied directly to age appropriate behaviors and being unable, developmentally, to adhere to the adult imposed rules of the school.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Children are cognitive, physical, social, and emotional beings. If educators ignore any of these domains, it is to the detriment of the student. Cognitive and social-emotional skills are “intimately intertwined; nurturing both is of fundamental importance to either and to the student’s success in school, career, and life” (Diamond, 2010, p. 781). How can early childhood educators help children master the social-emotional skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, building and maintaining relationships, and making responsible decisions (Zins, Elias, & Greenberg, 2007), all of which are needed to succeed in and out of school, and how can early childhood educators make these skills an integral part of the curriculum, thus simultaneously supporting academic development? Kindergarten teachers need to be able to identify the social-emotional skills students possess when the students enter their classrooms and understand how these skills affect classroom climate and student learning. It is essential to provide an effective way for early childhood educators to successfully integrate the building and practice of social-emotional competencies with early literacy competencies in their classrooms. Allowing the practice and development of social-emotional competencies in students would help students successfully navigate the world in a pro-social, emotionally competent manner while maximizing academic success.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study was to explore the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum on kindergarten students' development and practice of pro-social behaviors, social awareness skills, and emergent reading skills in a large K-5 elementary school. This case study also investigated the beliefs and perceptions the kindergarten teachers have in terms of what social-emotional and reading skills the kindergarten students possess when they enter the classrooms, the beliefs and perceptions the teachers have regarding the development and practice of social-emotional skills the students make in the classroom throughout the course of a semester, how the teachers feel social-emotional issues affect the classroom environment, and whether or not the teachers feel the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum had an impact on their students and social environment of the classroom.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Children's Social-Emotional Skill Development: A Historical Perspective**

The basis for social-emotional learning can be traced as far back as the Ancient Greeks, who were very interested in developing the moral character of their students (Mayer & Cobb, 2000). Social-emotional learning also draws on the pillars of character education (Elias, Parker, Kash & Dunkeblau, 2007), and the affective education movement, which promotes experiential approaches for building students' internal personal skills, self-knowledge, recognition of feelings in self and others, self-esteem, and positive self-image (Mayer & Cobb, 2000). Educators recognize the importance of social-emotional variables and their influence on academic achievement (Ragozzino, Resnik, Utne-O'Brien, & Weissberg, 2003). Having recognized this importance, educators have developed social-emotional learning curricula, which incorporate many concepts such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, decision-making skills, conflict resolution skills, in addition to concepts that relate to mental

health prevention and promotion (Ragozzino et al., 2003; Durlak & Weissberg, 2005; Zins et al., 2007).

Social-emotional learning also has roots in several developmental psychologists' theories such as those of Kurt Lewin (1948), Albert Bandura (1977), and Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979). In brief, Lewin (1948) believed that human behavior is a function of both the individual and the environment. Bandura (1977) speculated that learning includes a social element, arguing that people learn new concepts and behaviors by watching others. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of development blends both Lewin's and Bandura's theories by emphasizing that the developing child is part of a *series* of systems that interrelate with each other and with the individual child to influence the child's development. However, the primary theorist's work that drives the focus of this research study is Lev Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory because it integrates language and social interaction as the way students learn.

Vygotsky (1978) hypothesized that children's thinking emphasized a process in which they share their problem-solving experiences with a parent, a teacher, or peer. As a result, the children's language and thoughts intermingle with that of the person with whom they share the experiences. This fusion of thoughts and language serves as a vehicle for the children's own cognitive development. Vygotsky's theory is relevant because it maintains a social context for learning and adds a language component. The theory explains that social-emotional development is in important ways, intertwined with cognition.

Children's social-emotional competence, which is characterized by cooperative rather than aggressive behavior, effective communication with others, the ability to manage their own emotions, the ability to understand another's point of view, as well as the ability to develop close relationships with peers and adults, has been linked to executive brain functioning, cognitive and academic competence, as demonstrated by their ability to learn, pay attention to academic tasks,

and self-regulate at school (Diamond, 2010; Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2011). Early childhood experiences and interpersonal relationships at home and at school should prepare children for success with learning these skills. If students are able to master these crucial competencies, they have a greater chance at attaining success in school (Joseph & Strain, 2003; Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003; Bredekamp, 2004; Diamond, 2010; Jones et al., 2011). Children who are age four through six who are exposed to a developmentally appropriate classroom environment with a balance of child-initiated activities along with teacher guided rich, focused, experiential learning opportunities have the best prospect for developing a foundation to early literacy and numeracy, as well as for developing personal and social responsibility skills (Bredekamp, 2004; Elkind, 2007; Miller & Almon, 2009).

### **Integration of Social-Emotional and Cognitive Learning**

At this time, like no other period in educational history, there is increasing pressure on teachers to focus on academics. This is a growing pressure for early childhood teachers. Promoting school success right from the beginning of a child's educational career involves integrating skills in multiple domains (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). Durlak and Weissberg (2005) and Durlak et al. (2011) conducted meta-analyses of several school-based social-emotional learning curricula for students in grades kindergarten through 12 and the results showed that academics and social-emotional learning are intimately connected. Students in schools which implemented some form of social-emotional learning curricula scored 11% higher on academic achievement tests as compared to control groups. Some other benefits the students reaped, according to the data, were: a substantial improvement in social-emotional skills, a reduction in distracting behaviors, and less emotional disturbance.

While social and emotional learning is still widely separated from academics in schools, Black (2006) and Goleman and Lucas (2007) say that social-emotional content can be

successfully integrated into subject area content, imbedding the teaching of social skills into a variety of subject areas, where it can also be successfully assessed. Like social-emotional competencies, reading development pervades much of what young children do in school (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). Emergent literacy and social-emotional development intersect in significant ways because language plays a key role in both the development of early reading and social-emotional skills (Vygotsky, 1986; Gallagher, 1999; Snow, Tabors, & Dickinson, 2001).

### **Research Questions**

Doyle and Bramwell (2006) posit that in language arts instruction, books with strong social-emotional content can be utilized so that an emphasis on the overlap between emergent literacy and social-emotional learning can be made, thus creating a more powerful learning experience in both domains. Primary grades, particularly kindergarten classrooms, may need a carefully planned social-emotional component so that all children, especially those who do not yet have the ability to characterize or control their emotions or act in a socially appropriate manner or who are not ready to successfully establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, can benefit from intentional instruction and practice in this crucial area (Mindness, Chen, & Brenner, 2008). To that end, the integration of literature and social-emotional learning was explored in this study in which three research questions guided the inquiry:

- 1) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' social awareness, recognition of emotions, and improve their use of pro-social skills and will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?

- 2) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' reading achievement and will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?
- 3) What are the kindergarten teachers' beliefs/perceptions regarding the following:
  - a. Social-emotional and emergent reading skills with which the students enter their classrooms
  - b. Strategies the students use to manage social issues and how the strategies change throughout the course of the semester
  - c. How, if at all, the classroom environment and/or students are affected by the whole class implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum

When kindergarten students are exposed to a developmentally appropriate literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, the expectation is that they should increase their use of pro-social behaviors and social awareness. Students should be able to better characterize their own and others' emotions and better manage or avoid negative social situations. In addition, if the social-emotional learning curriculum is literature-based, the kindergarten students should increase their reading achievement as well. This case study is based on the belief that children's emotional knowledge and social-emotional competence may be important predictors of school adjustment and academic success, particularly early reading success.

### **Significance of the Study**

The trend of challenging behaviors in young children is an issue on the increase (Joseph & Strain, 2003; Gilliam, 2005; Davis, 2006; Zigler & Gilliam, 2009). Pre-kindergarten students are being expelled from school at a rate of 6.7 students per every 1000 students per year across the country (Gilliam, 2005). Early childhood educators need to appreciate the importance of

emotions and developmentally appropriate practices as critical to student learning. The receptiveness for social-emotional learning curricula which utilize developmentally appropriate teaching methodologies by early childhood educators, especially in light of the changes to the kindergarten classroom environment, may be greater if there was evidence connecting the improvement of social-emotional influences to better school behavior and more successful academic performance (Zins et al., 2004).

Despite the body of evidence supporting effective school-based social-emotional learning curricula, Brown (2003) states that there have been few studies that examine specifically the cross-domain effects of such curricula on children's academic achievement. In their review of the impact of social-emotional learning for students in grades kindergarten through eight, Payton et al. (2008) suggest that future research is needed to determine what, if any, are the differential benefits particular populations of students derive from social-emotional learning curricula and how they can be adapted to meet the specific groups of students' needs. This research study attempts to do just that for students in kindergarten who are emergent readers in a large, diverse K-5 elementary school.

The data this case study reveals in terms of perceptions teachers have regarding students' social-emotional readiness, the development of emergent reading and social-emotional skills of their students, and the effects these factors play in the classroom environment has an anticipated importance in determining actual classroom practice and whether or not teachers' perceptions are in line with current policy or developmental theory (Thompson, 2002; Ackerman & Barnett, 2005). Having an idea of what teachers' perceptions are can assist administrators in changing policy and practice to better meet the needs of the students.

## **Operational Definition of Terms**

The following is an introduction of basic terms that appear throughout the dissertation text. The terms defined are among the most commonly found in the literature and will provide a basis for understanding all aspects of the study.

1. Social-emotional competence – Social-emotional competence is defined as a comprehensive behavioral and emotional structure that reflects one’s ability to perform appropriately in various social settings. Social-emotional competence is a general term that implies an ability to perform suitably in overall social functioning (Robbins & Merrell, 1998). There are five core social-emotional competencies that include self-awareness (which involves knowledge of one’s own emotions), self-regulation (which involves regulation of emotions), social awareness (which involves knowledge of others’ emotions), relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Zins et al., 2007).
2. Self-regulation (including emotional regulation) – Self-regulation (including emotional regulation) is one of the most crucial social competencies. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) define self-regulation as a child’s capacity to gain control over all bodily functions, maintain control over emotions, keep focused and pay attention. The development of self-regulation and emotional regulation is a foundation of early childhood development and impacts all areas of behavior and academic success.
3. Social-emotional skill – In contrast to the more general term of social-emotional competence, a social-emotional skill is a specific observable social-emotional behavior (Robbins & Merrell, 1998).
4. Pro-social skill – Pro-social skills are those specific observable social behaviors that help or benefit others with no expectation of reward or compensation (Robbins & Merrell, 1998).

5. Social skills assessment – A social skills assessment is an evaluation of a child’s ability to recognize and characterize emotions, establish relationships to peers, affect, ability to recover from emotional setbacks (resiliency), social withdrawal, social skills, social competence, anti-social behaviors, and social status. The assessment can help educators to identify, understand, and respond to the various social problems and challenges that children may face in and out of the classroom. For this study, the social skills assessment that is used is the *Assessment of Children’s Emotion Skills* (Schultz, Izard, and Bear, 2004).
6. Social-emotional learning – Social-emotional learning is a process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to acquire social-emotional competence (Elias et al., 2007).
7. Social-emotional learning curriculum – Joseph and Strain (2003) define social-emotional learning curriculum as a comprehensive program that focuses on building pro-social skills such as initiating and maintaining friendships, recognizing and dealing with emotions (emotion knowledge), developing problem-solving skills (including resolution of conflicts), violence and substance abuse prevention, anger management, and developing coping skills.
8. Emergent literacy skills – Emergent literacy skills are the focus of early childhood classrooms. These pre-reading skills later develop into conventional reading and writing skills. Pre-reading skills include identification of letters, letter sounds, concepts about print, and phonemic awareness (Rhyner, 2009). This study measures the emergent literacy skills using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (*DIBELS*) *Next* (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011). *DIBELS Next* includes probes for each of the five essential components of reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,

vocabulary, and comprehension (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

9. Fluency probe – Fluency is reading with expression with an appropriate rate, with no cognitive or mental effort. A probe is a short, individual measure of fluency. For the purpose of this study, two probes are used to measure fluency; first sounds and letter naming (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011).
10. Benchmark – In educational terms, benchmarks are points along the continuum of learning something new. Benchmarks give educators a way to monitor all students’ progress and mark students’ achievement against identified academic skills or standards. Teachers can use the *DIBELS Next* assessments to determine the extent to which students have grasped the skills such as letter naming fluency (LNF) and first sound fluency (FSF) in individual classrooms and also in comparison to other grade-level classrooms in the district and nationally (Olson, 2005). Standardized benchmark assessments such as *DIBELS Next* are typically given periodically, emphasize reading and mathematics skills, are short in duration, reflect academic content skills or standards; and evaluate students’ progress through the curriculum and/or on material in state exams (Olson, 2005).
11. Early childhood certification - Pennsylvania teachers, and other educators are required to hold a Pennsylvania certificate to be able to work and teach in Pennsylvania’s public schools. The certificates are issued by the Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality, Division of Certification Services, and guarantee that an individual has the required degree, coursework, assessment and experience that the job/position requires. Certificates are granted in a number of titles in three major divisions: classroom teaching (Instructional), administrative (Administrative) and supervisory (Supervisor), and pupil personnel service. Early childhood is the designation for teachers who hold certification

in grades pre-K through grade 4. Grade 4-8 is now designated middle level certification (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2013).

12. Mediation – When human beings purposely interject tools between themselves and their environment in order to change it and gain from it (Vygotsky, 1978). There is a mediated relationship between humans and their environment, the use of tools within social organized activity and language is a cultural tool of mediation. As an example, when a child points at an object, the parents interpret the pointing, then give the object to the child. The child internalizes the pointing as a way to get objects in the future. The interpersonal relationship between the child and parents becomes intrapersonal.
13. Developmentally appropriate practice – Teaching methods that take into account those facets of teaching and learning that are modified along with the life experience and chronological age of the learner (Bredekamp, 1992). Developmentally appropriate practice has two aspects. First, the practice should be age-appropriate and consider what educators know regarding children’s development and learning processes. Second, the practice should be suitable to the individual child and consider each child's own development, cultural upbringing, and unique interests. Educators should bear in mind both aspects of practice (Bredekamp, 1992).
14. Differences among student populations – For the purposes of this case study, the student populations being used are the subgroups disaggregated for adequate yearly progress (The White House, 2002). The subgroups are subordinate group students disaggregated out of the entire student body whose members usually share some common differential quality (ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status). For the purposes of adequate yearly progress those subgroups require forty students or more (The White House, 2002).

## **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 gives an introduction to the study, states the research problem, describes the purpose and significance of the study, and includes the research questions that were explored. An overview of the theoretical framework of the study and operational terms are defined in Chapter 1 as well.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature including an explanation of the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978), specifically his sociocultural learning theory. Chapter 2 also features research studies regarding the development of social-emotional skills, particularly self-regulation and emotional regulation. The chapter additionally includes studies related to social-emotional learning relative to the classroom environment. Since this case study focuses on reading achievement, particularly fluency, research studies that relate to fluency as a predictor of future reading success are presented.

Chapter 3 describes in detail the methodology used to carry out the study. In Chapter 4, all findings related to the data are reported, and in Chapter 5, a summary and discussion of the results are included. Conclusions which can be supported by the findings are recorded as are the implications of the findings and suggestions for further research.

## **Summary**

As the theoretical framework suggests, there is a gap between social-emotional developmental theory and public policy regarding developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood classrooms. Developmental theory promotes an approach to early childhood education, which early childhood teachers are mindful to foster skills in all areas of their students' progression towards lifelong success. However, current educational policy is too often focused principally on the area of academic development of children. This gap between developmental theory and policy

has led to many early childhood education classrooms that may actually be detrimental to child development (Elkind, 2007; White, 2008). This case study adds to the body of knowledge that encourages delivering a developmentally appropriate literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum which also promotes students' social-emotional development and emotional knowledge, while also building emergent literacy skills.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

Seventy-five percent of kindergarten teachers in the United States report that they believe it is essential that students be ready for school socially and emotionally to be academically successful. The list of skills the teachers enumerate as important are skills such as taking turns, sharing, showing self-control, being sensitive to others' feelings, following directions, finishing tasks, and being able to communicate needs and wants (Lin et al., 2003; Bredekamp, 2004). However, early childhood educators also contend that children who enter kindergarten need yet another set of skills in early literacy, such as letter recognition, knowing letter sounds, and having overall language ability (Snow et al., 1998; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). The question then becomes which is more important for long-term success?

Current educational policy focuses predominately on children's cognitive development including early reading and math skills. In order to motivate and fully cultivate all domains of their development, students' emotional and social skills require as meticulous attention as the development of academic skills. Educators' teaching practices, in concert with schools' curricula, should work together to maximize the benefit for students, teachers, and the school environment (Raver, Izard, & Kopp, 2002; Diamond, 2010; Liew & McTigue, 2010).

The purpose of this case study was to explore the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum on kindergarten students' development and practice of pro-social behaviors, social awareness skills, and emergent reading skills. This study also examined kindergarten teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding social-emotional and emergent reading skills with which kindergarten students enter their classrooms, strategies the students use to manage social issues, how strategies changed throughout the course of a semester and how, if at

all, the social environment of the classroom and/or students were affected by the whole class implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum. The literature-based social-emotional learning curricula may provide a framework for integrating beneficial life skills such as social-emotional competencies into the classroom curriculum, infusing them across various content areas. A literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, such as the one used in the present study, may have the greatest potential to positively affect social-emotional skills, language development, and early literacy skills if they are integrated into the existing classroom read aloud discussions, interactions, and activities, thus becoming an integral part of the classroom. This is especially true, when teachers believe they can make a difference by educating the whole child (Diamond, 2010; Liew & McTigue, 2010).

### **Criteria for Literature Selection**

The research questions explored in this case study were:

- 1) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' social awareness, recognition of emotions, and improve their use of pro-social skills and will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?
- 2) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' reading achievement and will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?
- 3) What are the kindergarten teachers' beliefs/perceptions regarding the following:
  - a. Social-emotional and emergent reading skills with which the students enter their classrooms
  - b. Strategies the students use to manage social issues and how the strategies change throughout the course of the semester

- c. How, if at all, the classroom environment and/or students are affected by the whole class implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum

Information in this literature review was gathered using a combination of online sources, the EBSCO database system, peer-reviewed journals, books, and other resources. The research studies reviewed were drawn primarily from the fields of education and developmental psychology. The literature includes research studies showing that the development of social-emotional skills and emergent reading skills are essential during children's early childhood years. The literature review also features studies that deal with social-emotional issues related to classroom environment including the impact social-emotional curricula have on both students and the classroom culture. In addition, research studies in regard to social-emotional issues and their effect on academics are reviewed. Since this study also emphasizes reading achievement in addition to social-emotional learning, literature on the topic of early reading development, the use of children's literature to teach content, and bibliotherapy is incorporated in the literature review.

Vygotsky's (1978) work in developmental psychology as it relates to children's learning in the early childhood setting frames the literature review. While other developmental theorists' works provide a backdrop for social learning theory, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory, because of its social learning context, is the underpinning through which this current case study shows the likelihood that by joining social-emotional learning, language development and reading together, educators can create a better school environment, and for students, create a stronger outcome for success across multiple domains.

## **Sociocultural Learning Theory**

Lev Vygotsky (1978) took a sociocultural perspective on the cognitive and social-emotional development of children. There are three primary principles emanating from Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory: (a) higher mental functioning can be both inborn and developmental in nature; (b) higher mental functioning is facilitated, or mediated, by language which in turn is changed to cognitive action; (c) higher mental functioning begins with social relationships (Vygotsky, 1978; White, 2008).

The term "sociocultural" is used because the origins of higher mental functioning are found in social activity (Wertsch, Del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995). Vygotsky's view was that the cognition and behavior of children differ from that of adults because adult thinking and behavior has already been created by cultural and social contexts. Vygotsky (1978) says:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people... and then inside the child. This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher [mental] functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (p. 57)

### **Higher Mental Functioning is Genetic and Developmental**

Vygotsky (1978) utilized a genetic examination to guide and develop his theoretical framework. He focused on origins and history and how they intertwine to create meaning. In relating this approach he stressed the necessity to focus not on the product of development, rather on the process by which higher functioning is created. In addition to the social and cultural influences on human development, Vygotsky recognized that biological processes play a role in the cognitive and social development of children. However, the role of biological processes in

terms of human development varies at different stages of development. The influence of biological factors recedes as social phenomena start to dominate. This is referred to as sociogenesis. For example, infant behaviors such as smiling, sucking, crying, and grasping are simple, lower processes that are transient and involuntary. As children mature, the waning influence of biology and the subsequent development of conscious understanding permit a higher sensitivity to the environment, a better understanding of it, and flexibility to it.

In order to move into higher levels of mental processes, “a significant cultural reconstruction has to take place in order for the child to shift from the stage of primitive perceptions to the stage of competent forms of adaptation to the external world” (Vygotsky & Luria, 1930/1993, pp. 149-150). This involves others guiding an individual, prompting, rewarding, inhibiting, imitating, and modeling for the child in addition to using cultural artifacts to help the child organize behaviors. By the age of seven, most biological determinants of behavior are extinct and the basis of behavior becomes almost entirely cultural. At this point in a child’s development, his individuality is a function of social experiences he has had, including reactions of others to the child’s behavior and physical appearance (Vygotsky, 1978). For instance, shyness as a personality trait that is valued and nurtured differs qualitatively, Vygotsky would theorize, than shyness that stems from rejection, disappointment, or embarrassment.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that children’s cognition and behavior depends on social experiences, such as the way in which people gain and maintain attention, model and respond to behavior, control body movements, and organize spatial relationships with each other, coupled with cultural artifacts (or tools) such as signs, symbols, linguistics, objects, and instruments. For example, according to Vygotsky, a parent regulating how a child responds to verbal name calling may determine later the kind of intensity of emotion the child develops in similar situations. In

another example, Vygotsky would state that restricting an infant's movements may instill passivity rather than activating a sense of freedom of expression. Vygotsky further believed that the way humans understand a social event will determine the emotional reaction to it. For example, one's emotional reaction to another's deliberate attempt to cause harm might be anger in Western cultures. However, this social construct may not exist in all cultures, thus the emotional reaction may be different. From this viewpoint, as children participate in a myriad of new activities with adults or others who are more experienced, children learn new skills and information about the world and culture around them (Vygotsky & Luria, 1930/1993).

### **Higher Mental Functioning is Mediated by Words and Language**

The second belief of sociocultural theory is that higher mental functioning is mediated by words and language, and this both enables and transmutes mental action. This concept is exemplified by what Vygotsky referenced as the private speech of young children (Vygotsky, 1978). Private speech, or speaking aloud to oneself, is a part of a child's development that Vygotsky understood as an important transition between the child communicating with others and thinking for himself. Picture a young child who has just learned a new task. He will talk aloud to himself as he practices the task he just learned. As the child ages, the speech becomes softer, such as a whisper. Then the speech becomes fully internalized in the final stage. The process continues into adulthood as new tasks are learned (Vygotsky, 1978).

Children will learn how to do new tasks from others more experienced. As children become more independent learners, they utilize private speech as a way to self-regulate and gain mastery over the task at hand. The private speech becomes part of the thought process of changing the mental images into a goal. The more complicated the goal, the more importance the role of private

speech in attaining the goal. Private speech fosters social awareness and cognitive functioning (Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Higher Mental Functioning is Rooted in Social Relationships**

The third primary belief of sociocultural theory, according to Vygotsky (1978), is that higher mental functioning has its roots in social relationships. This introduced the basis for instructional scaffolding and thus, Vygotsky (1978) proposed the concept of the “zone of proximal development” (p. 86) or ZPD.

The concept of scaffolding is significant and involves the adult or more knowledgeable other (MKO) delivering an adjusting level of assistance while teaching the student a new skill. Scaffolding supports the demand for social interactions in the early childhood classroom setting. As the student masters a task, the level of help fades until full self-sufficiency is attained (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky stressed that the people sharing an activity are sharing the higher mental processes of performing the activity. The higher mental processes used by the teacher or more experienced peer are then eventually used and applied by the learner (Vygotsky, 1986).

Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the central function of social relationships in cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) believed that cultural influences, such as signs and symbols, play a significant role in the process of making meaning, or mediation. Vygotsky argued, "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (1978, p. 90). Social learning comes before development.

Mediation, according to Kozulin (1998), is the instrument of cognitive change. The source of mediation can be either a material tool, for example a computer or book (particularly important to the current study); a system of symbols, for example, a language (particularly important to the current study); or the behavior of another person in a social interaction (particularly important to

the current study). Mediators transform both natural, spontaneous as well as planned impulses into higher mental processes. In the case of classroom instruction, this mediation can take the form of teacher assistance in learning a new skill or planned experiences, the teacher acting as the more experienced expert, and materials as the cultural mediators assisting in the process of making meaning (Vygotsky, 1978; Kozulin, 1998).

In using a Vygotskian approach, teachers place an emphasis on a progression in which children share their problem-solving thoughts with a teacher, parent or peer. As a result, children's own language and thought act as a means for their own development. This instructional scaffolding occurs through the support of a more experienced other and leads to the application of new skills and their automaticity of use. Vygotsky believed that good instruction is instruction that pushes ahead of development and then directs it. Vygotsky valued children's activity and demanded that teachers foster independent activity in order to enhance learning, stressing that it is very important that children learn about their natural and social worlds (Vygotsky, 1978; Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

It is interesting to note that a critical premise of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is that higher psychological functions, such as organization/planning, voluntarily paying attention, and deliberate memory all have social beginnings and all of these are essential skills for later academic success (Vygotsky, 1978; Diamond et al., 2007; Blair & Diamond, 2008; White, 2008; Diamond, 2010). Higher cognitive functions are not inborn. Rather, children build cognitive function through social interactions with others, and these cognitive processes become part of the student's nature (Vygotsky, 1978; Diamond et al., 2007; Blair & Diamond, 2008; White, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) hypothesized that children begin reasoning with others prior to being able to reason on their own. Therefore, scaffolding and social interactions are vital for cognitive development. Vygotsky's

(1978) sociocultural learning theory maintains that it is imperative that a socially rich environment be provided for children during the early childhood years. Such an environment, as would take place in the classroom in general and specifically through interactive problem solving, discussions, and planned activities such as read aloud sessions, places an emphasis on the interactions between the students and their teacher and also interactions among the students themselves.

This case study hypothesizes a relationship between social-emotional competency and academic achievement, particularly in the area of language development and reading achievement. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory's three major tenets fuse social contexts and language together. Cognitive development may be enriched through critical social interactions. Vygotsky (1978) believed that children need a set of acquired skills in cognition, linguistics, and social-emotional competencies that shape their minds for all future learning, not just academics.

### **The Five Essential Social-Emotional Competencies**

There are essential core social-emotional competencies identified by Zins et al. (2007): 1) self-awareness, accurately judging/knowing your own emotions (emotion knowledge); 2) self-regulation, regulating your own emotions to handle stress, maintaining impulse control, and persevering in the face of challenges; setting and monitoring progress toward goals; articulating feelings appropriately; 3) social awareness, being able to see things from others' point of view and empathize with others (emotion knowledge), recognizing and appreciating similarities and differences between others, recognizing and using community, school, and family resources; 4) relationship skills, starting and keeping healthy and rewarding relationships based on collaboration and teamwork; resisting peer pressure; averting, dealing with, and resolving conflict with others; seeking help if/when needed; and 5) responsible decision-making, making

decisions based on consideration of ethics, safety, social norms, respect, consequences of actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to society.

Attending kindergarten for the first time for a young child is an exceptionally important transition that may challenge children's social-emotional competencies (Gussin-Paley, 2004; Elkind; 2007; Payton et al., 2008). It may be critical that these social-emotional competencies are mastered in order to maximize the child's school experience, make the school environment one in which all students are safe and can enjoy the learning experience, and the teacher can present learning opportunities in developmentally appropriate ways. Each social-emotional competency will be addressed later in the review of the research literature.

### **The Importance of Early Development of Social-Emotional Competencies**

The start of kindergarten may be difficult for many children, especially if it is their first experience away from the home. Children must learn to meet the adult imposed social expectations of the new environment to be successful (Greene, 2009). When children can meet adult imposed social expectations, they can get down to their academic learning. Mastery may take some children longer than others, which speaks to the need for social-emotional competency development as early as possible in a child's life (Raver et al., 2002; Durlak & Weissberg, 2005; Zins et al., 2007; Payton et al., 2008). Transitions to and from one activity to another may be filled with social challenges (Miller & Almon, 2009). Every kindergarten child may not be developmentally equipped with the skills needed to resolve negative social issues or regulate emotions. Since many kindergarten classrooms have become more academically focused there are cognitive tasks at school that require a young child's sustained ability to pay attention to regulated, linear activities. Added to the challenge of following adult defined classroom rules, this can tax a child's social-emotional

competence (Greene, 2009). Emotions and relationships, which include how children resolve conflicts with others, affect how and what children learn in the everyday world. It is important for educators to recognize the reasons for negative social issues and the specific social-emotional skills needed to resolve them in order to maintain a safe, nurturing, and well-managed learning environment. Children may need to build their skills in recognizing and managing their emotions in order to deal successfully with their relationships with others (Payton et al., 2008). This ability impacts both the students' readiness, preparation for learning and the ability to benefit from the learning opportunities presented to them in school (Raver et al., 2002; Zins et al., 2007; Payton et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011).

NCLB (The White House, 2002) was passed with the intent to increase the academic achievement for students, aiming to close the gap between sub-groups of students. High stakes testing is at the heart of this enterprise, with schools being made to administer assessments in almost all core subject areas. Schools not making AYP are punished, while those that do are given accolades. Paradoxically, while NCLB was passed to close the achievement gap and help all children, there is increasing evidence that it is doing just the opposite (Blaustein, 2005; White, 2008; Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). The real-world implications of NCLB have created unplanned consequences in the educational system and have affected the basic developmentally appropriate expectations of early childhood curricula and practices across the United States (Blaustein, 2005; Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). For example, kindergarten students are expected to enter classrooms with increasingly advanced skills in literacy (and beginning math skills) and in most states, have standards for what they need to know and do before entering kindergarten. Students are now expected to think more abstractly and focus their attention for long periods of time on adult-chosen activities. Curricula are teacher delivered through direct instruction. Indeed,

academic success largely depends on whether a child is able to listen for an extended period of time, absorb information directly from a teacher, and do seatwork (Blaustein, 2005; Bredekamp & Copple, 2009).

While high stakes testing in Pennsylvania does not begin until children enter the third grade, the requirement for academic achievement starts as early as the kindergarten year. Many kindergarten classrooms now have a high academic focus. Therefore many kindergarten classrooms that previously employed approaches that centered on the child and were based in developmental theory, now must attend to preparing young children to meet the mandates of standardized tests in the post-NCLB environment (Gussin-Paley, 2004; Michnick-Golinkoff et al., 2004; White, 2008).

Prior research has shown that an intense academic emphasis can raise academic achievement scores. However, this attention on academics solely may be at the detriment of the development of the whole child (Michnick-Golinkoff et al., 2004; Elkind, 2007; White, 2008; Diamond, 2010). Students in such highly didactic, highly structured academic kindergarten classes experience rising exasperation because they are not yet able to handle the demands of the structure of the “academic” classroom, thus their outlook on personal success decreases as compared to children who are more motivated in highly child-centered classrooms. Indeed, even prior to NCLB researchers were studying the importance of instructional practices on the long term success of students. For example, a study conducted by Marcon in 1993 assessed the effects of kindergarten classrooms that focused on strictly academics versus kindergarten classrooms that combined academics with social-emotional development. Marcon (1993), whose subjects were predominately African American children across 86 inner-city classrooms, found the students in kindergartens that emphasized social-emotional development in combination with academics performed better than students who attended

academically focused kindergarten classrooms; this included all core subject areas. In addition, a prior longitudinal study conducted by Miller and Bizzell (1984) found that students who participated in a Montessori preschool, where the classrooms provided a carefully prepared environment and the children were free to self-select purposeful developmentally appropriate activities with the guidance of the trained adult, outperformed students who attended “academic only” preschools on measures of academics and cognition. These effects continued long term through the students’ high school years. This outcome was particularly strong for the boys in the study.

Diamond et al. (2007) conducted a study evaluating the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum. The *Tools of the Mind* curriculum is based on the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and was developed by Bodrova and Leong (2007). The *Tools of the Mind* curriculum works on the premise that executive functions such as cognitive control and self-regulation are more strongly associated with school readiness and successful entry into kindergarten than emergent reading or math skills. The program develops students’ private speech, memory, and attention through activities such as structured play that promote executive function skills. The study was conducted across two years in two low income urban school districts. Eighteen classrooms were randomly assigned to either implement the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum or the regular balanced literacy program. The classes covered the same content but the classrooms delivering the balanced literacy programs only did not focus any time on developing executive functioning skills. Data collected revealed that on neurocognitive tasks, the *Tools of the Mind* students outperformed balanced literacy students on tasks such as staying on task for extended periods of time, delayed gratification and similar executive functioning skills, reinforcing the argument that child-centered classrooms can strengthen cognitive development (Diamond, et al., 2007).

## **Social-Emotional Competence in the Academic Setting**

Social-emotional competence is important to develop early because as socially and emotionally competent children engage in enjoyable interactions with peers and adults they reap tremendous benefits from the connections to their friends, their environment at home and at school including being more successful at school (Zins, et al., 2007; Payton et al., 2008). With social and emotional competence, students are able to cooperate with other students and form positive relationships with peers and adults. Children are better able to recognize emotions and handle taxing situations such as conflicts, disagreements, or transitions, constructively and ethically without difficulty. Students who are social and emotionally competent are self-assured, compassionate, trusting, intellectually curious, and have the capacity to use language to communicate proficiently with others (Payton et al., 2008). Students who are socially and emotionally proficient have the skills necessary to manage their emotions and behaviors in the classroom. Social-emotional competence includes self-awareness and social awareness. These include the ability recognize and acknowledge the emotions of self and others (Schultz et al., 2004). When a child can differentiate emotions in others, she can be appropriately responsive in instances when she needs to be sensitive to others' emotional needs (ie. when a friend is injured or upset), which helps to build positive peer relationships (White, 2008). Self-awareness and social awareness, including identifying and understanding the emotions of self and others can be evaluated using assessments such as the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* (Schultz et al., 2004). This assessment is used as one of the measures in this case study.

In a study conducted by Garner and Waajid (2008), emotional knowledge, social awareness, and self-regulation were examined as possible predictors of cognitive ability, classroom behavior, and social competence. Seventy preschoolers participated in the study. When a

hierarchical regression analysis was applied to control for age, gender and family income, the results showed that emotional knowledge incrementally predicted cognitive ability and social competence while self-regulation predicted classroom behavior. The study establishes that emotional knowledge, social awareness, and self-regulation are important pre-requisite ingredients in building positive social and educational outcomes for students.

Self-regulation is one of the social-emotional competencies that plays a particularly critical role in intellectual development. Self-regulation helps children to control their impulses and feelings and in turn can control their behaviors and social relationships. This allows their higher mental processes to be used for cognitive tasks (Vygotsky, 1978; White, 2008; Garner & Waajid, 2012). Students who become flooded with negative feelings and emotions, or if, when teachers are covering the appropriate material, children can't engage cognitively because they aren't able to pay attention, follow directions, or have a difficult time remembering what the teacher just presented, they are not likely to fully participate in classroom learning activities. These are the students who may become the students with behavioral issues (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Denham, 2006).

Emotional regulation, an integral part of self-regulation, which consists of children's capability to alter the strength, interval, and intensity of their emotions, is especially critical for primary children to cultivate (Denham et al., 2003; White, 2008). Children must acquire the ability to manage their emotions as they navigate classroom relationships. They need to be able to share things, take turns, line up, and conquer the daily routines of classroom existence (Denham et al., 2003). It has become increasingly apparent that self-regulation, including emotional regulation, two social-emotional competencies that are the biggest keys to school readiness because they support students' ability to be successful across both the academic and social domains (Shonkoff &

Phillips, 2000; Denham et al., 2003; Diamond et al., 2007). Self-regulation may be one of the most important social-emotional competencies that enhances children's academic and social success because it is the skill that allows children's behavior to be deliberate and precise and is the competency that includes the ability for students to delay gratification, pay attention for periods of time, and stay on task. It is an executive function that emerges during early childhood development and is an essential skill that children use to control their behavior and responses to different social situations. Self-regulation helps children to adapt to a variety of settings such as home and school.

Prior to being able to regulate oneself, the first step to developing self-regulation is the notion of "other regulation" (Vygotsky, 1981a, p. 219). This is when an adult as the more knowledgeable other structures, or mediates, a task, then slowly, as a child's skills become proficient, lets the child take over. For example, it is commonly assumed that when a child stops doing something, they have remembered the rule. However, it is because the child progresses through first being able to perform a behavior and subsequently being able to stop the behavior. In terms of school success, the skill of self-regulation is imperative to paying attention, staying on task, and controlling hyperactive behaviors, which correlate to school success. Engaging children at an early age in activities that practice other-regulation in addition to self-regulation in developing children's meta-cognitive abilities is of utmost importance (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Vygotsky (1978) believed that children do not automatically acquire the executive function of self-regulation, but that explicit instruction and repeated mediation is required to lay the foundation for academics.

Vygotsky (1978) speaks about the function of tools and signs as a way for children to develop self-regulation. In the context of social interactions, the active use of signs, such as

speech, independent from stimulus, children must increase their control over their thoughts and behavior. Vygotsky (1978) says:

A most essential difference between a sign and a tool, and the basis for a real divergence of the two lines, is the different ways that they orient human behavior. The tool's function is to serve as the conductor of human influence on the object of activity; it is externally oriented; it must lead to change in objects. It is a means by which human external activity is aimed at mastering, and triumphing over, nature. The sign, on the other hand, changes nothing in the object of a psychological operation. It is a means of internal activity aimed at mastering oneself; the sign is internally oriented. (p. 55)

To further illustrate this point, there was a study conducted by Trentacosta and Izard in 2007, in which the relationship between attention to task and academic competence was examined. One hundred ninety-three kindergarten students across seven elementary schools in two cities participated. The study showed that when kindergarten teachers rated a child high in attention to task on a rating scale, the child, when tracked to first grade, was doing well academically as measured by several standardized tests, and for students who were not rated highly on attention to task in kindergarten it was just the opposite. The results showed that self-regulation is indeed, crucial to academic success.

In another study conducted in 2011, Oades-Sese, Esquivel, Kaliski, and Maniatis investigated emotional competence and its possible connection to academic readiness. Fifty classrooms in urban public preschool centers across New Jersey participated. The student population included 207 students, of whom there were 54 % boys, and all of Hispanic ethnicity. Through multiple assessment instruments, researchers concluded that the regulation of emotions may be a mediator between social skills and academics. Specifically, students with low non-

verbal cognitive/oral language skills (poor academic ability) and negative temperaments (how student responded to new situations, people, or challenges) showed poor social interactions. These findings were supported by Blair and Razza (2007) who examined 141 three to five-year-olds who came from low income homes. Using measures of effortful control (self-control) and attention, the researchers examined the connection of self-regulation to emerging academic ability in literacy and math. Results implied that a variety of characteristics of self-regulation attributed for differences in the academic outcomes separate from intelligence of the students. In addition, the ability to sustain attention had major correlation to both early reading and math ability. Blair and Razza's (2007) findings indicate that curricula intended to develop self-regulation competencies in addition to enhancing early academic abilities may be beneficial in helping children succeed in school. These studies illustrate that emotional regulation and social-emotional competence does indeed facilitate academic success. The studies also showed that there are not only social and cultural influences, but biological influences on social-emotional competence as well.

Self-regulation is a crucial matter in the field of child development in terms of brain functioning, which may have an organic relationship to school success. Sylwester (1997), Gazzinga (2004) and Sanchez (2008) describe the brain function behind the processing of emotion and memory. These processes occur in the limbic system of the brain, particularly the amygdala. These areas of the brain are vital to cognitive development because they are linked to the neo-cortex, which manages executive function tasks crucial to knowledge acquisition such as sustained attention, self-regulation, organization, and decision making (White, 2008). As White (2008) points out, children's emotions affect cognitive development and knowledge acquisition and other higher mental functions. Because of the association between cognitive functioning and emotions, extreme

emotions can be very distracting to the learning process and disruptive in the learning environment (White, 2008). An upset, angry, or agitated child, for example, will not be able to process literacy or math information because they are not attending to the information their teacher is presenting. The emotions and cognitive processes work in concert, they are not separate processes (Vygotsky, 1978; Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Diamond, 2008).

While there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that intense emotions (such as anger or fear) can alter cognitive control, few studies have investigated the effect of positive emotions on facilitating cognitive functioning (Carpenter, Peters, Vastfjall, & Isen., 2013; Xue, Wang, Zhang, Qiu, & Luo, 2013). Two recent studies with adults revealed that positive emotions, rather than intense negative emotions, expedited conflict resolution skills, cognitive processing and improved working memory. The positive emotions could modulate cognitive control, researchers suggested, because the executive functions were mediated by increased dopamine levels in frontal brain areas (Carpenter et al., 2013; Xue et al., 2013). While these studies were conducted with adult participants and further research would be required to ascertain the results would be for children, one would assume that the dopamine levels would increase in children's brains as well, thus improving conflict resolution skills, cognitive processing, and working memory to the extent the children are developmentally able. It is apparent that neuroscience confirms the idea that the brain functioning responsible for self-regulation, including emotional regulation, might be the same brain functioning as those responsible for cognitive processes, particularly higher mental processes such as sustained attention and deliberate memory (Sanchez, 2008; White, 2008).

Researchers also theorize that there is a connection between emotional competence, attentional skills and academics. Two rural elementary schools were the target locations for a study conducted by Trentacosta, Izard, Mostow and Fine (2006) in which 263 first and second

graders participated. Several assessments were used to gather data pre and post social-emotional skills curriculum implementation. After implementation of the social-emotional skills curriculum, data revealed that the children who understood emotions the best (emotional awareness and emotional knowledge) in themselves and their classmates were also better at sustaining attention and focus. These abilities had a direct correlation to the students' scores on the academic measures of verbal ability taken during the study. The students who scored poorly on emotional competence measures were more disruptive as reported by teachers, had difficulty sustaining attention, concentrating on tasks, and had poor peer relationships as reported on self-reports. Students with poor self-regulation skills, who have problems paying attention in school may also have difficulty with compliance with teacher demands and the mandates of adult applied rules of the school. This difficulty may cause increased anxiety and stress for students who then become increasingly detached from the school and thus, in turn, teachers become frustrated and annoyed with the problem students, creating a hostile environment (Trentacosta et al., 2006; Sanchez, 2008; Greene, 2009).

The kindergarten experience may be able to promote self-regulation and emotional support through social interactions and instruction that develop higher mental functions. Kindergarten classrooms may also be able to support students' positive sense of self with activities where they are using language, taking turns, and using role play to learn (Vygotsky, 1978; Blair & Diamond, 2008; Diamond, 2010; Denham et al., 2012). Denham et al. (2012) conducted a study to investigate children's regulatory processes and emotional knowledge skills, particularly labeling emotions and social situations properly. The study included 322 preschoolers and 100 kindergarten students who were trained to use reflection to reduce stress and anxiety in addition to use developmentally appropriate ways to problem solve. Data revealed that proficiency in

labeling emotions and social situations early in a child's school experience may play a role in academic success. This type of emotion knowledge may be the ability that is the most critical to success in both the academic and social environments according to Denham et al. (2012).

### **Social-Emotional Competence in the Academic Setting: Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making**

The notion of social-emotional competence and its significance toward overall academic and personal success has been more recently defended by educational researchers (Zins et al. 2004; Durlak & Weissberg, 2005; Payton et al. 2008; Durlak et al. 2011). Having proficiencies in social-emotional competencies enables children to be accepted by peers and teachers alike (Zins et al. 2004; Hamre & Piant, 2005; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). This acceptance leads to positive relationships at school, a belief central to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory. When children feel safe and accepted by their teacher and classmates, they are more self-assured and are more able to risk taking academic challenges (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Diamond, 2010).

In a longitudinal study of 1,242 African American children living in an urban community and in poverty, Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) found that students who achieved poor grades and lacked social-emotional skill competencies in first grade were likely to make the decision to drop out of school before they graduated. Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) also found that students who had a combination of excellent academics and low aggressive tendencies in first grade stood the best chance of graduating high school. Poor grades and destructive or volatile behaviors in first grade, paired with ongoing poor academic expectations in middle school and beyond were identified as the largest high school drop-out rate prediction factors. Ensminger and Slusarcick's (1992) examination revealed a significant connection between decision making and academic ability beginning very

early in a student's school career and has lasting implications for a student's future success. The researchers indeed make a claim that a positive connection to school, appropriate social behavior, decision making, and proficient social-emotional competencies may be essential to future school success.

As Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) found, a positive connection to school may be a factor in school success. Awareness of how children grow and develop can lead to designing better curriculum to meet social-emotional skill development needs in building those positive connections in early childhood classrooms. Mashburn and Pianta (2006) suggest mediating social relationships to maximize social-emotional skill development. Mashburn and Pianta (2006) find that an all-inclusive understanding of early childhood school readiness emphasizes the development and sustenance of relationships and interactions between families and teachers, children and families, and children and teachers. As supported by Vygotskian (1978) theory, such relationships build social-emotional competence and academic success through communication of information and positive social interactions. Research reveals that connections between teachers and children are especially important in the early childhood years and may be related to academic success. Teachers should provide a warm, open learning environment for children to have the best start in school (Noddings, 2005, 2007).

Valeski and Stipek (2001) conducted a study that indicated that students' connections with teachers may be able to predict their feelings about school and their academic engagement. In their study, 225 kindergartners' and 127 first graders' feelings about school were examined. The researchers discovered that when the children were less engaged and less connected to school, they were in a classroom environment that was highly academically structured and teacher centered.

Similarly, Pianta and Stuhlman's 2004 study uncovered data that revealed that the relationships that teachers and children build in preschool predicted children's academic and social

skills proficiency in first grade. The researchers studied 490 students and used measures of academic and cognitive achievement with the students while with the teachers, researchers used measures of behaviors, social competence and teacher relationships with the identified child. Researchers determined that the closer and more positive relationship a student had with their teacher, the more success the student had academically in first grade. Researchers further concluded that early teacher-child interactions have greater influence when children are young. As Vygotsky (1978) might point out using his principle of the zone of proximal development, young children may need more time and attention from the teacher, who acts as a mediator or as/along with a cultural artifact, until the child is older and can work more independently. If the interactions with the teacher and peers are positive, the child will likely have a more positive connection to school, thus the learning is more meaningful.

### **Social-Emotional Learning and Classroom Instruction**

Effective and developmentally appropriate instructional methods for teaching social-emotional learning skills are active, participatory, and engaging (Payton et al., 2008). In using developmentally appropriate practices, young children may be taught through modeling, coaching, discussion, and role play to recognize feelings and help them to apply the newly acquired social-emotional skills in various settings (Payton et al., 2008). These methods are in line with Vygotsky's (1978) thinking and are pertinent to this case study because the curriculum used in the study utilizes these methodologies to deliver social-emotional skills instruction.

There have been a variety of research studies that have attempted to identify if repeated exposure to teacher modeling would assist students in applying the appropriate strategies themselves, thus bearing out Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development and theory of mediation. For instance, the purpose of a qualitative study carried out by DeMasters and King

(2004) was to operationalize behaviors and teaching strategies used to resolve social issues and to explore if the repeated exposure to teacher modeling (teacher as mediator) the appropriate social-emotional skills resulted in students applying the skills to situations themselves (expanding the zone of proximal development). Twenty-two students participated in the study in which observations were made by the researchers, field notes taken, and then categorized. The data showed that after repeated modeling of appropriate social skills (identifying the problem, attacking the problem and not each other, listening and treating each other with respect, and taking responsibility for actions), students' ability to resolve issues independently increased. Students also owned up to their behaviors (self-awareness), and the classroom climate improved. In using a curriculum that focuses on teaching social-emotional skills through literature, teachers may be able to capitalize on instructional time in the formative kindergarten year of the students' reading development (Allington, 2002).

### **Integrated Social-Emotional Learning Curricula: Curriculum Evaluation**

Often, negative social issues between students requires teacher intervention usually because the children don't have proficiency with the skills needed to come to a solution with which all participants are satisfied (Johnson & Johnson, 1995a, 1995b). According to Johnson and Johnson, professors at the University of Minnesota, Co-directors of Cooperative Learning Center, and pre-NCLB pioneers in the field of conflict resolution and development of social-emotional learning curriculum, managing the increasing number of incidents of conflict is costly in terms of time lost to instruction, both because teachers' time is spent intervening and because students with behavioral issues are sometimes removed from the learning environment. In schools, Johnson and Johnson believed that to optimize learning, students must learn to solve

negative social issues without verbal or physical aggression and eventually, without adult intervention.

Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, and Acikgok (1995) and Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, and Magnuson (1995) conducted studies which were designed to determine empirically the effectiveness of the *Teaching Students to be Peacemakers* program. This curriculum uses a “total student body approach” which is similar in approach to the curriculum, *Strong Start*, used in this researcher’s study. The first study was conducted by Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, and Acikgok (1995) in a suburban elementary school. There were many post-treatment results. However, the result that pertains to this research study was the data gathered in post-treatment interviews of the school personnel. In the interviews, teachers commented frequently about their students’ willingness to involve themselves with positive conflict resolution and problem solving, and that issues among students became less frequent, less severe, and less destructive. Teachers stated they spent 80 percent less time resolving negative social issues for students because the students could resolve them on their own. The second study focused on how well students transferred skills, learned the steps of negotiation, applied the problem solving skills, and whether this knowledge was retained over time (Johnson et al., 1995). Two hundred twenty-seven students and 22 teachers in a middle class suburban elementary school were the subjects of this study conducted in a pretest/posttest control group design. Students were trained, for a total of nine hours, through theoretically sound instructional strategies similar to those in the *Strong Start* curriculum, such as role play, social interactions such as discussions, and direct instruction. The measures included a total recall test to assess students’ knowledge of the steps to successful negotiation, an essay test designed to evaluate students’ application skills, and an interview scale to survey teachers’ attitudes toward the program. The measures were given before and

immediately after training, and at the end of the school year. Immediately after training, 94% of the students recalled the problem solving procedures, and by the end of the year, 92% could still recall the procedures. After training, 42% of the students knew how to apply the skills appropriately, and teachers perceived the program to be constructive and helpful. The teachers reported more positive classroom environments and students becoming more self-regulated.

Another curriculum, *Second Step*, a total student body program that focuses on teaching students' anger management and empathy skills, has emerged as a popular choice for schools. Frey, Nolen, Edstrom, and Hirschstein (2005) carried out an efficacy study that attempted to validate *Second Step* as an "effective means of teaching children socially acceptable behavior and effective ways to resolve conflict" (p. 173). Fifteen elementary schools participated in the study. Seven of the schools served as control groups. The students were instructed using the *Second Step* curriculum in lessons on empathy, social problem solving, and anger management (self-regulation) in lessons two times per week. At other times during the school day, when the students were not engaged in *Second Step* lessons, the teachers prompted and coached (mediation) students to use the skills they were learning and recognized the students with positive feedback when they did, in keeping with teaching strategies that are in line with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory. As a method of data collection, teachers utilized rating scales to quantify their students' social-emotional competence during the fall prior to instruction and again in the spring after instruction. Results showed that among other positive effects, only 41 percent of students' negative social issues required adult help in order to resolve.

Munoz (2002) also conducted a study to examine the effects of the *Second Step* curriculum. There were 205 first graders from predominately low socio-economic public school settings who participated in the study, seventy-three percent of whom who came from single

parent homes. The data gathered through the program published report showed that students' risk factors such as low verbal ability and temperament, which place students at a disadvantage, can be ameliorated by connectedness to family, peers, school, and the community in terms of social-emotional skills and emotional awareness and emotional knowledge. Thus, Munoz (2002) concluded that any curriculum used in schools should have multiple components and be used across multiple contexts in order to make lasting positive change to the school's climate and culture. Munoz (2002) states that schools should, "start as early as possible building social-emotional competencies as there is a shrinking window of opportunity to intervene effectively" (p. 18).

As part of the *Strong Kids/Strong Teens* series, a curriculum that is specifically available for use with early learners in grades K-2 is called *Strong Start*. Whitcomb (2009), Caldarella, Christensen, Kraemer, and Kronmiller (2009) and Kramer, Caldarella, Christensen, and Shatzer (2010) conducted studies to examine the efficacy of the curriculum with kindergarteners, first and second graders. All three studies examined the impact the curriculum had on students' knowledge about emotion and social behaviors. A quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest control group design was utilized in all of the studies. While the measures to gather data were different, the results of all of the studies supported that when students' knowledge of emotion increased, positive peer related pro-social interactions increased and negative internalized behaviors decreased. Of particular note, *Strong Start* is the curriculum used as the experimental treatment (independent variable) in this case study.

There are several more curricula using either approach that have been commercially available to schools over the past several decades of which many efficacy studies (Powell, Muir-McClain, & Halasyamani, 1995; Van Scholack, 2000; Kam, Greenberg, & Kusche, 2004;

Schellenberg, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Novacek, Raskin, Hirschtein, & Cooper, 2006; Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007; Merrell, Isava, Gueldner, & Ross, 2008; Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010; Raver et al., 2011; Durlak et al., 2011) that have been conducted. In addition to the studies reviewed, the results of these efficacy studies are similar in that they all indicate that the use of a social-emotional learning curricula are beneficial to students in multiple domains and to the school environment in some way.

### **Academics in the Early Childhood Classroom**

While some early childhood classrooms emphasize social-emotional development and experiential learning (White; 2008), there are those that now focus on strictly academics. Children's social-emotional well-being were of utmost importance in the pre-high stakes testing era, and viewed as an essential foundation for learning early academic concepts (White, 2008). In the pre-high stakes testing environment, many early childhood educators supported learning opportunities that developed motor skills and provided purposeful play in concert with developing academic skills. Children shifted between different activities throughout the day, participating in a variety of activities that required full participation (White, 2008). Children could foster social-emotional competencies through cooperative play activities while teachers observed, encouraged, and modeled for them. Language and literacy skills were also developed through play but in addition to that, through music and stories (White, 2008).

In many schools, the view of what school readiness is has changed over time largely because of policies such as NCLB (The White House, 2002) and its focus on high stakes testing. Policies such as this have increased the focus on academics in the earlier primary grades with the hope of raising test scores even though children do not take the tests until third grade (White, 2008).

Wesley & Buysse (2003) conducted a study significant to the current case study because their research attempts to gain insight into kindergarten teachers' and parents' views on what they feel is significant in terms of how their children are prepared and the teachers' thoughts on their role in their students' social-emotional development. Researchers formed four focus groups: both preschool and kindergarten teachers, school administrators, and parents. Focus group questions placed an emphasis on what they believed students should be learning during their early childhood years, and what they defined as "ready" for kindergarten. Significant to the current case study are the teachers' reactions. Numerous teachers deliberated over having conflicting feelings about readiness. The teachers what readiness meant from a child development perspective. However, teachers also were aware that this was contradictory to what children were supposed to do considering the changes in programming and the new recent focus on academics in light of NCLB. For example, teachers did not think having students write during a kindergarten screening entrance examination was developmentally appropriate nor did they feel that shortening recess to 15 minutes was appropriate despite knowing that physical activity was beneficial to young children (Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

The early childhood educators also verbalized that they were concerned that the new academic requirements that they were required to deliver were not rooted in research but rather, handed down from legislators who knew nothing about education, especially the education of young children. Teachers were disturbed by the more academic environment of current kindergarten classrooms. Many children, who have a variety of backgrounds and experiences, are learning academic skills but lack ability to apply and comprehend the skills. For example, the teachers said some children can say know and say the letters, but do not comprehend what letters are used for or that they are the basis for language (Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

States adopting standards for early childhood learning are now beginning to include the social-emotional domains in addition to academic learning standards. It is expected by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that teachers will intentionally integrate knowledge of child development with the skills and concepts children need to progress satisfactorily both academically and socially. The Pennsylvania Early Learning Performance Standards state that students should be given time to develop social and emotional skills during the course of a kindergarten day. Kindergarten instruction should take place through active learning, centers, differentiated instructional techniques, and purposeful play. Instruction should be infused with literacy and language development (Office of Child Development and Early Learning, 2009). However, is this reality in many classrooms' because of the high stakes testing environment? The Pennsylvania Early Learning Performance Standards established are developmentally achievable and include considerations for age, gender, developmental stage, socio-economic status, cultural background, English language proficiency, and other factors to ensure that *all* students succeed (Office of Child Development and Early Learning, 2009). Gussin-Paley (2004) states that for many kindergarten children it may not be “the monsters they invented that frightened them in kindergarten; it was being told to sit still and pay attention for long periods of time” (p. 47). Academic development can't be separated from the social context (Diamond, 2010).

It is imperative to distinguish between “academic readiness” and “school readiness”. The idea of being ready for school is more general, and looks at a multitude of skills that prepare students for the primary grades. School readiness typically means factors such as core subject skills, general language ability, social-emotional skills, and gross and fine motor physical skills (White, 2008). The term, "academic readiness" denotes academic skills such as pre-reading skills, early math

concepts, and early writing skills (White, 2008). Emergent literacy and cognition influence each other's development to a significant extent. Not only do cognitive tasks such as executive functions (paying attention, controlling one's self) affect emergent literacy skills such as early reading and writing, but reading and writing affect the arrangement and fluidity of children's thought (Diamond, 2010). Like other forms of cognition, literacy skills are affected by social opportunities and motivational factors (Vygotsky, 1978; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; White, 2008). The next section will explain emergent literacy, typically an academic readiness skill, in a Vygotskian framework.

### **Development of Emergent Literacy Skills in Early Childhood Classrooms**

Vygotsky's (1978) higher mental processes, which include focused attention, deliberate memory, and symbolic thought are all needed for reading. Language plays a central function in the development of both higher mental processes and social-emotional skills in children. Books, stories, and social relationships are integral tools that teachers can use in developing and mediating these skills. Language conveys higher mental functions. Learning involves external experiences being converted into internal processes through means of language (Vygotsky, 1978; Blair & Diamond, 2008; Diamond, 2010).

Emergent literacy consists of proficiencies that are precursors to conventional reading (Sulzby & Teale, 1996; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Emergent literacy starts as a way to translate visual codes into meaningful vocabulary. It is a way of representing a child's environment in print (Seifert, 2006). For example, the word *Cherrios* on a box of cereal begins by representing "cereal" for the child. Eventually the child will learn that the function of print can't be as generalized as the function of oral language and will realize that *Cherrios* isn't just any cereal (Seifert, 2006). Context-oriented and memorized "reading" after repeated oral readings may develop later but a child won't be able, at that time, to tackle new and unfamiliar

words. A year or two later, when the child enters kindergarten, formal reading instruction begins. For most children, at around age six, that is when early reading skills begin developing (Rhyner, 2009).

### **The Five Essential Components of Reading Instruction**

The most important goal of formal reading instruction is to aid students in acquiring the skills and knowledge they need to read texts fluently and with understanding (Torgeson, Houston, Ressler, & Kosanovich, 2007). Snow et al. (1998) state that there are five areas of critical importance for students to master to become proficient readers: early understanding of print and how print works (concepts about print), alphabetic principle (letter identification and phonics), phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. These skills correspond to the same five skills later identified by the National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The synthesis of the results of the studies the National Reading Panel gathered showed reading instruction should address five critical areas they identified as: 1) phonemic awareness, which is the ability of the student to be able to hear and manipulate the smallest units of sound or phonemes (ex. cat /k/, /a/, /t/), 2) phonics and concepts about print, not to be confused with phonemic awareness, phonics is student's knowledge of sound/letter relationships while concepts about print is students being able to handle a book properly (ex. left to right progression, where the front of the book is, where to begin on the page, etc.), 3) fluency, which is the student's ability to read with proper expression and phrasing, 4) vocabulary, which is the student's ability to understand what a word means, and 5) comprehension is the level to which a student understands what he or she has read. Students must be able to make connections to what they have read. The student's comprehension is derived from the interaction between the words the student has read and the prior knowledge he

has generated outside the text/story. Comprehension is essential, not only to academic learning, but to lifelong learning (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

The National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) summarized findings which were drawn from many studies that were designed to test the effectiveness of reading strategies or materials in improving an essential reading strategy. The National Reading Panel utilized studies that met a prior established criteria of experimental design, populations that were large enough that the findings could be generalized to other schools, experimentally sound, could be replicated and judged worthwhile by the reading experts (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

From Vygotsky's (1978) view, there is a social aspect to comprehension. Language and books as cultural artifacts mediate people's actions with physical world. People are able to go beyond biological processes to use signs and symbols, the language and books as cultural artifacts, which develop over time in a progression of transformations, to make meaning (Vygotsky, 1978). The meaning of language, comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of reading, is molded by culture and then appropriated through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Reading Instruction in Early Childhood Classrooms**

All of the components of reading instruction need a solid foundation in order for a good reader to develop. If any of the components are weak or instruction is lacking in that area, the reader will most likely struggle. There are many approaches to teaching the skills in the five essential components of reading instruction. However, they are not all equally as effective. Instruction must be systematic and explicit. In addition, students should be reading accurately, fluently, and with good comprehension by the end of grade three for a positive outcome and a

continued trajectory of success (Snow et al., 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

The International Reading Association (2000) and Torgeson et al., (2007) suggest that each early childhood classroom initiate high quality initial reading instruction that targets all essential components and targeted, differentiated, small group instruction for students who are having difficulty mastering any of the essential components. Kindergarten students should be taught early phonemic awareness skills to help them identify sounds (phonemes) in spoken words and receive phonics instruction so that they can begin decoding words, which is key to becoming an independent reader by the end of first grade (Torgeson et al., 2007). In addition, kindergarten students should have repeated exposure to high frequency words and explicit and incidental teaching of the meaning of new words to expand students' vocabulary. Children should also have stories and other texts read aloud to them in order to build their oral reading comprehension abilities. This type of activity serves to build students' exposure to a variety of texts and expands their interests in different genres. It also establishes reading as a meaningful activity (Torgeson et al., 2007).

One important developmentally appropriate activity essential for building reading success appears to be reading aloud to children and asking questions about the text being read. Using read aloud books exposes students to concepts about print as well. The kindergarten classroom should be print and literature rich too. Labels, signs and other forms of print give the children opportunity to practice recognition of print around them. Children learn about the sounds of language through exposure to linguistic awareness games, nursery rhymes, songs, poems, and rhythmic activities and repeated and choral readings. Children acquire a working knowledge of the alphabetic system not only through reading but also through writing. The children should

have the opportunity to write and may use what is referred to as invented spelling until they are developmentally ready for conventional spelling (Bredenkamp & Copple, 2009).

While all components of reading instruction are important, for the purpose of this current case study, the next section will focus on word reading fluency and letter naming fluency.

Fluency, according to the National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000), is often neglected in classroom instruction. However, more recently, it has become recognized as integral to reading instruction because it has been linked to comprehension and long term reading success (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

### **The Importance of Fluency**

Fluent readers read orally with appropriate speed and accuracy. They also read with expression. If the text is read by a student in an inefficient and painstaking way, the student will usually have a difficult time remembering what has been read, and thus won't be able to apply appropriate comprehension strategies such as application of background knowledge to draw meaning from the text (Snow et al., 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

The progression from a student being unsuccessful at even the most basic skill of letter naming to lack of reading fluency leads to long-term reading failure (Ehri & Sweet, 1991; Snow et al., 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Torgeson et al., 2007). Children who have difficulty in kindergarten with critical phonological skills such as letter naming fluency and phonemic awareness may be destined to be poor readers in third grade and beyond because these students may find it hard and unpleasant to read. Because their decoding skills are poor, children who are at-risk for reading failure continue

in a downward spiral because they rely on tackling new words by memorizing them, a compensatory strategy, because they can't sound them out. Delayed development of reading skills has other effects that cause the outcome for at-risk readers to be even worse. Attitude and motivation to read lead to missed opportunities to practice and develop comprehension strategies. Therefore, those readers who were behind at the end of first grade may not acquire grade level skills by the end of elementary school. The gap between the struggling readers' skills and their same grade peers' skills continues to widen, an achievement gap known in reading as the "Matthew Effect". (Stanovich, 1986, 2000).

In early research conducted by Jansky and DeHirsch (1972), 508 kindergarten students in five New York City public schools participated in a study where the predictive validity of early reading skills on long term reading success were determined. The students were assessed in kindergarten using the researchers' screening index and then followed through second grade and tested with multiple measures of reading and achievement. The best predictors of long-term reading success were skills such as letter naming, picture naming, word matching, and sentence memory. There were important pieces of information for future reference that the researchers noted as well. Jansky and DeHirsch (1972) pointed out that some of the children were incorrectly labeled "at-risk", making the need for accurate cut-point scores, the use of multiple measures to determine students' needs, and the knowledge that quantitative measures may not always be singularly the most valid predictors of students' abilities critical for educators. In addition, Jansky and DeHirsch (1972) observed that children who were socioeconomically disadvantaged tended to land in the "at-risk" category. The researchers made the assumption that this was due to students having poor attitudes or lack of skills in social situations or not believing that school is worthwhile, rather than due to learning difficulties or lack of prior experience in such

situations. However, despite the limitations, early detection of reading difficulties, particularly the critical skill of fluency so that targeted help can be given seemed to be warranted based on Jansky and deHirsch's (1972) work.

Letter knowledge and phoneme segmentation fluency are phonemic awareness skills that enable beginning readers to adapt to the task of pointing to words as they read and figure out how the printed word corresponds to the spoken word (Ehri & Sweet, 1991). Schnatchneider, Fletcher, Francis, Carlson, and Foorman's 2004 study was to determine which early reading skills had the highest predictive correlation to long-term reading success. Their study had 945 student participants across three elementary schools. They used a cohort group of regular education students in which students were excluded if they had any emotional problems, visual, hearing, or neurological impairments. Students were followed for three years through grade 2. They were assessed five times; four times with a reading assessment and one time with a standardized achievement test.

Data from Schnatchneider's et al., (2004) study showed that phonemic awareness, rapid automatized naming of letters, knowledge of letter names, and knowledge of letter sounds had the highest predictive relationship from the students in kindergarten to their achievement in grade two. Interestingly, rapid automatized naming of letters had a higher correlation to the second grade achievement for the students than did phonemic awareness. These results provide support to certainly identifying specific early indicators that predict future reading success so that educators can screen students who may be having difficulty with even the most basic foundational skill to prevent future reading failure.

Teachers and students participate in instructional dialogues around literacy because teaching reading is not simply presenting a separate set of skills over time. There is a shared

involvement in the transformation and mediation of words into meaning by teacher and students, bringing in both students' prior knowledge and experiences to the text and mutually establishing the relationships connecting the two. It is the connection between the settings that becomes the zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Early childhood teachers must work carefully to unite the skills so that students can flourish. Kindergarten students need to take part in oral language activities to encourage growth in phonemic awareness early in the educational process. Eventually the teacher must guide (mediate) the students and show them how to merge their budding phonemic awareness skills with their beginning letter knowledge to encode and decode words in print in order to make meaning of what they are reading. The teacher leads the students through discussions about what they are reading and writing as well, with the ultimate goal of comprehension (Snow et al., 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). This is supported by the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) since literacy learning is a social activity and learning requires student interaction with peers and the teacher as a mediator and more knowledgeable other. The interactions show that the strong relationship between oral and written language is evident.

### **The Importance of Story Book Reading**

Another critical component making a contribution to enabling children to acquire early literacy skills in making later reading success is storybook reading. Trelease says, "children can hear and understand stories that are more complicated and more interesting than anything they could read on their own" (p. 37). Thus, within the zone of proximal development, the child is hopefully mediated forward by the reader, be it a teacher or parent who uses the book as the cultural tool for learning (Vygotsky, 1978). However, it is not just reading to children that

matters. It is how a book is read to children (Yaden, Rowe, and MacGillivray, 1999; Hargrave & Senechal, 2001).

In a quantitative meta-analysis of thirty-one studies over thirty years, Yaden et al. (1999) found that story book reading was a strong predictor of future reading achievement. In their search for studies to include in their meta-analysis, researchers looked for a specific methodology in which parents or teachers read to the children and engaged them in dialogue about the read aloud books. Their meta-analysis revealed that there was a significant improvement of scores on print concept measures and writing measures over students' peers who were read to regularly but not engaged actively during the reading.

Hargrave and Senechal (2001) also investigated the effects of storybook reading. They explored the effects of read alouds on the attainment of vocabulary of 36 preschool students who had low vocabulary skills. Researchers examined whether the effects of storybook reading would be higher when children actively participated in the read alouds with discussion and dialogue as compared to children who only listened to the story. Children were read the same book twice. The results indicated that children who had vocabulary issues learned new vocabulary from the active participation of shared read aloud sessions. They made significantly larger gains on expressive language outcomes as compared to the children who only listened to the books. Corroborating Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, Yaden et al. (1999) and Hargrave and Senechal, (2000) support sharing a read aloud story book and having an interactive dialogue with other students and adult mediators as a shared social interaction that makes learning more meaningful. In addition, if the routines for the read aloud sessions are scaffolded in such a way that the children gradually take more responsibility for participation in the read aloud, confidence in reading skills is solidified (Sulzby & Teale, 1987, 1996). This supports Vygotsky's (1978)

notion of reciprocal relationships rooted in instruction as natural dialogue, with the social context encouraging the learners, making acquired knowledge stronger.

### **Social-Emotional Learning and Story Book Reading: Using Literature to Teach Content and Understanding**

While students are actively listening to a read aloud and participating in subsequent discussions about the text, they are utilizing strategies for comprehension they will need for future reading achievement. While listening, the children are free from decoding. Oral reading by the teacher allows children to hear model phrasing, fluency, and expression (Fountas & Pinnell, 2007). Words are the primary foundation for constructing meaning (Vygotsky, 1986). They can be internalized through both the ears and eyes. Developmentally, the ears are ready to learn words before the eyes are ready. One predictor of success in literacy learning is the knowledge of vocabulary. One important activity to build the vocabulary required for eventual reading success is reading aloud to children (Trelease, 2007). Further, read alouds and repeated oral readings have a number of benefits for emergent readers. Many times, children gather around the teacher to listen to the teacher thus creating a sense of belonging and community (Trelease, 2007). Read aloud sessions can be playful or structured. Students can learn how to predict story plots, use illustrations to construct meanings, and learn the meanings of new words. Reading aloud to children can motivate them to read themselves and conditions the brain to associate reading with pleasure. A joy of reading can be instilled at a young age, right from a parent or teacher's knee (Knopf & Brown, 2009).

### **Bibliotherapy**

The curriculum used as the independent variable in this study, *Strong Start*, can be classified as “developmental bibliotherapy”. *Strong Start* utilizes dialogue with the read aloud

stories to engage the students in discussion with and among each other and the teacher to enhance the delivery of the social skills instruction while also building early reading skills. The use of children's literature with social-emotional content is the vehicle by which the read alouds are delivered. Books have been used by teachers for many years to teach concepts and facilitate understanding in content areas such as science and social studies, particularly during the course of thematic units (Rothlein & Meinbach, 1996). Bibliotherapy extends this notion into the social-emotional realm.

Bibliotherapy is a widely accepted means of teaching people how to deal with issues in their lives using books with specific, pertinent content (Pehrsson, 2007). As defined by Pehrsson (2007), it is the use of books to teach coping strategies, promote healing, or as a proactive intervention. Bibliotherapy has been used for many years in conjunction with other positive behavior supports such as school-wide behavior and mental health interventions, community-based programs, and direct counseling services. However, bibliotherapy is no longer simply used therapeutically to help people to cope. In developmental bibliotherapy, books may be used by teachers and librarians to facilitate normal social development (Pehrsson, 2007). Bibliotherapy can be a proactive means of promoting personality growth and development and produce affective change in children (Lenkowsky, 1987). When children are exposed to a good book and generate knowledge through meaningful classroom discussions and activities, then participate in conversations at home with their families about what they have done in school, the knowledge they have created has become their own (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). Books become the cultural artifacts and language becomes the cultural tools, and children are, in a sense, interacting with the author, constructing meaning from the text using experiences to influence what they gain from the book (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Books are the mediators of meaning. When children

discuss stories with their teachers and peers, they manipulate not only their language, but also their thoughts, which lead to higher mental processes (Vygotsky, 1978).

The use of literature to connect with students can be effective method of teaching social-emotional skills. Balanced literacy programs, which are filled with many different types of materials, can include novels with social and emotional themes. A core piece of literature, which is selected based on a common social-emotional theme, can be woven into the curriculum, inviting student inquiry, discovery, and predictive reasoning. In class, this approach to what is essentially “bibliotherapy” may look like literature circles, read alouds, shared or paired readings, book clubs, and reciprocal reading. Children not only read for comprehension but they purposefully respond in a variety of ways and make connections with the text with their own prior knowledge, personal experiences, and world events (Regan and Page, 2008) . Unfamiliar subject matter, such as social-emotional topics, is somewhat easier to understand if a child can connect to it in the context of a narrative. Through books, students can expand their horizons, be exposed to new situations, can allay fears they may have, and teach them appropriate behaviors (Trelease, 2007).

Entenman, Murnen, and Hendricks (2005) analyzed a sampling of literature for students in K-3 in order to determine the accuracy of the portrayal of negative social situations such as bullying in books. What the researchers found was that the books generally pictured accurately the information researchers know about negative social situations. For example, they found that many of the negative social situations described in the trade books that were portrayed in schools, such as incidences of name calling, teasing, verbal intimidation, had a bystander involved. These were accurate in terms of scholarly literature. However, it must be noted that there were inaccuracies as well. For instance, boys were stereotypically portrayed as the

purveyors of most of the negative social issues when, Entenman et al. (2005) point out that it is just as likely for girls to be involved in these types of interactions. Regardless, children's literature can be an effective means of helping children resolve social issues, it can provide examples of the ways to deal with situations they may encounter in real-life, and serve as a reflection of what children may see in their immediate environment (Entenman et al., 2005). Indeed, books provide an opportunity for real teachable moments (Trelease, 2007).

In kindergarten classrooms across America, the scene at school is no longer playtime, naptime, and snack. There is an increasing pressure on even the earliest grade levels to focus on academics. Promoting school success right from the beginning involves integrating skills in multiple domains (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Diamond, 2010). The development of emergent reading skills and social-emotional development are foundational needs for kindergarten students. Educators may need to an integrated curriculum so that early childhood teachers make both skills an integral part of the students' day, thereby supporting both social-emotional and academic learning.

***Strong Start* – Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum:**

**(Experimental Treatment/Independent Variable)**

*Strong Start* (Merrell, Parisi, & Whitcomb, 2007) is the first installment of a literature-based PreK-12 developmental social-emotional learning curriculum. It uses techniques that rely on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural ideals. For example, *Strong Start* uses developmentally appropriate practices such as modeling, role play, read aloud books, social discussion with adults and peers, and the use of puppets to address skills such as identifying emotions, building emotional vocabulary, recognizing emotions others are feeling, being a good friend, and how to solve problems or conflicts. *Strong Start* was

chosen because it has an integrated literature component, which has a certain allure to students because of their natural interest in interacting with stories and because it requires teacher to student, as well as student to student conversations about the stories to promote early literacy skills using picture books with social-emotional story content.

The premise behind the curriculum is that since it teaches and reinforces social-emotional skills concurrently with emergent literacy skills, and uses developmentally appropriate practices students can exercise their skills in both domains. That children learn by discussing their ideas and thoughts with their teacher and other students can certainly be supported by Vygotsky (1978).

The *Strong Start* curriculum is designed to be easily implemented because it is not resource intensive, requires little monetary output, and can be delivered easily. The skills can be practiced across multiple settings. The curriculum is organized by topic and includes tips for teachers as they help students apply the skills throughout the day. In support of the skills presented in the classroom, the curriculum provides a useful communication to parents (see Appendix I), which informs them of the skills being presented and how they can reinforce the skills and vocabulary at home. This allows a variety of knowledgeable others, or mediators (Vygotsky, 1978) to support the students as they continue to practice the social-emotional competencies presented at home.

The curriculum includes suggested popular trade books (see Appendix H) already available in the schools or in classroom libraries. Many of the books are familiar titles for teachers. All of the books contain social-emotional content. The teacher reads the book aloud, asking the children about the story content using the dialogic reading technique. Strategic questions can be posed to children to elicit discussion about the social-emotional

content, but may also include questions to determine children's level of comprehension. Discussion can also be used to model appropriate social interactions between the teacher and students. After reading the books, teachers follow with activities where social skills can be coached and cued. The use of prompts, modeling, role playing, and puppet play are some of the activities suggested.

The *Strong Start* curriculum includes ten 40 minute discrete activity based lessons (see Appendix H and I) on a particular social skill and two review lessons at the end of the program. One lesson is taught per week. Each lesson includes an explicit learning objective and vocabulary to assist the teacher in articulating new concepts, examples from real-life situations to illustrate the concepts taught, opportunities built in for practice, and ways in which the teacher can help students carry over the skills/concepts into other contexts and across a variety of situations. Informal formative assessment, such as showing a "thumbs up/down", is built into the program so that teachers can determine if the children understand the concepts presented.

Lessons at the beginning of the curriculum target developing students' emotional knowledge and emotional management capabilities (self-regulation) by clearly teaching students to identify the variety of facial/body and situational cues that will help them to classify and verbalize their own emotions and those of others, which relates to the Vygotskian notion of self-regulation. The emotions that are included in instruction in the curriculum have been identified by Ekman, Friesen, and Ellsworth (1972) as those that transcend culture. These emotions are represented by picture icons throughout the *Strong Start* program and have been repeated for continuity and recognizability on the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* (Schultz et al., 2004). Lessons presented later in the

curriculum focus on more complex skills such as handling problematic situations (conflict resolution), dealing with uncomfortable emotions, making and keeping friends (relationship skills), and problem solving.

Teachers who implement the curriculum use the shared-reading technique called dialogic reading. Dialogic reading, a method of reading aloud to children interactively, successfully enhances children's emergent literacy skills (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Teachers use the technique to talk with children about the children's literature they select from the list provided by *Strong Start*. The teacher using the technique, in addition to the content of the books, helps (mediates) children to connect to the characters and situations in the stories, thus enhancing children's early literacy skills and social-emotional skills simultaneously (ZPD) which supports Vygotsky's (1978) theory.

The books and discussion between the teacher and students creates a naturalistic collective ZPD because the participants are focused on sharing the same purpose but individually are at different developmental levels. Both the teacher and the students are sharing the process of problem-solving, discussing what situation is occurring in the story books. There is a cognitive, social, and emotional exchange between participants. Learning through the read aloud books and discussions serves to appropriate aspects of shared activity in which teacher and students are both engaged (Vygotsky, 1978).

Complex, yet accessible relationships with all the members of a classroom enrich the higher mental processes of the youngsters (Vygotsky, 1978). When the children have discussions about the social-emotional content of the stories their teacher reads aloud to them, the children can elaborate on their knowledge orally. This combination of social interaction with other students and the teacher, discussions with a more knowledgeable

other (the teacher), comprehending new experiences (social situations presented in the trade books), the students can flex their higher mental processes such as problem solving and critical thinking skills. In addition, with the use of trade books and the authentic learning experiences shared by a class of enthusiastic students, the group of children becomes a true community of eager learners (Vygotsky, 1978; Blair & Diamond, 2008).

### **Summary**

When dealing with a social issue, children may be taught that it can be an opportunity to create something positive as a result of dealing with the negative situation. Early childhood teachers play an important role in assisting children in developing foundational skills for regulating their thinking, emotions, and behavior (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Diamond, 2010). Finding developmentally appropriate ways to include the discrete teaching of social skills can be a key to early childhood educators building a social-emotional element into their already busy instructional day. In keeping with Vygotsky (1978) and sociocultural learning theory, the research findings in this chapter indicate that developing and practicing social-emotional skills should not detract from reading instruction. Instead, developing and practicing social-emotional skills may be critical to school success, therefore not a choice to be ignored. With the mounting emphasis on academic success and school accountability this may make social-emotional learning curricula more significant.

According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory, social learning precedes development. In social interactions a MKO mediates learning using cultural artifacts through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In applying Vygotsky's (1978) thinking to instructional design, a strong social context is required. Teacher and students have collaborative roles with

each other. Learning becomes a shared experience for both. The classroom becomes a community of learners as teachers and students mediate learning for one another through participatory activities and discussion. Teachers scaffold to provide opportunities for students to expand and bridge their ZPD. Students are engaged in learning. The teacher and students take turns leading discussions so that eventually roles are reversed and the students began to assume a teaching role (Vygotsky, 1978).

The current climate of academic performance and testing has created stress and a feeling of lack of time on early childhood teachers. The literature reviewed regarding existing curricula available to schools implies that having some variation of a social-emotional learning curriculum in a school can be beneficial to the climate of the school and in turn the social and academic achievement of the students within the school. Providing chances to develop emotional, academic and behavioral domains is important to creating an overall effective school environment. Teaching then modeling expected behaviors and reinforcing students is a more constructive method than the punitive approach of waiting for misbehavior to occur before issuing a consequence (Miller & Almon, 2009; Sugai et al., 2010).

Literature was also presented in this chapter explaining the five essential components of reading instruction and illustrates the importance of early instruction in those components as defined by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The five components of reading instruction need to be present in an effective reading program. According to the research studies presented, early childhood teachers must know how to blend the skills for each child's needs and identify any areas of weakness in order for the trajectory of future success to be on track.

Fluency, letter knowledge, and story reading are important predictors of future success for children and those adults who take on the challenge of teaching young children should continue to look for improved ways to assist children in gaining these critical competencies. The eventual goal of putting all the skills together successfully is making meaning from what is read. Children need to be self-sufficient in obtaining accurate information from text they read, remember it, evaluate it, and adapt it; all of which are higher mental processes

Sociocultural cognitive theory, essential social-emotional competencies, and the five pillars of literacy skills are relevant to this case study and the prior literature reviewed validates the critical role each plays in an early learner's development. There is data that shows the relationship between the emotional and cognitive domains that develops in the early childhood years, and becomes more permanent in secondary school age years. A child's path to success or failure may be more unresponsive to change as time goes on, so the earlier social-emotional competencies are developed, the better the outcome may be.

Since research reports that early childhood educators and their students may benefit from an effective literature-based social-emotional curriculum that combines the presentation of social skills and reading skills, the current research study sought to determine whether or not the implementation of a specific literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increased the use of pro-social behaviors, social awareness, and reading achievement in young children. Chapter 3 describes in detail the methodology of the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

Adequate development of children's social and emotional skills is vital to school readiness, and is a key building block to cognitive development and knowledge acquisition (Diamond, 2010). However, current policy is challenging educators to get their students to reach superior academic achievement as measured by high stakes tests. Early childhood teachers facing increased stress to reach high academic levels and may sense little or no scheduled time to dedicate to the development of the social-emotional skills of their students. Paradoxically, social-emotional skills in their students may be the most important element in their students reaching academic excellence and sustaining lifelong success (White, 2008; Diamond, 2010).

This chapter describes in detail the methodology used to carry out this case study. Included in this chapter is a description of the setting, the teacher and student participants, as well as the instrumentation. Procedures and criteria that the researcher used to select participants, identify experimental and control groups and conduct the experimental treatment implementation phase will be detailed. Data collection procedures, along with the techniques that were used to treat the data will be described in full. Assumptions and limitations of the study are outlined as well.

#### **Research Purpose**

This case study sought to explore whether or not the use of a social-emotional learning curriculum that integrated early literacy skills in developmentally appropriate ways would allow kindergarten teachers to maximize time and academic success for their students perhaps enabling

students to more effectively find their way through the complex world in a socially and emotionally proficient manner. The study also explored the teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding their students' preparation in the domain of social-emotional competencies, early reading skills and their students' social-emotional competencies as they relate to the classroom setting.

Academic accountability (The White House, 2002) and the pressures that have resulted have manifested themselves in the perception that kindergarten classrooms must strictly focus their attention on academics with little attention to social-emotional development (Michnick-Golinkoff et al., 2004). Early childhood teachers, and in the case of this study, kindergarten teachers in public school settings, may benefit from an effective social-emotional learning curriculum that successfully integrates social-emotional learning with early literacy skill advancement. Early childhood teachers also need to recognize how their students develop and practice social skills and how this may affect their more academically focused classrooms. With the increased expectations of the public schools to be accountable for adequate achievement in light of NCLB (The White House, 2002), instructional time is of the essence in the early childhood classroom (Allington, 2002).

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions guided this case study in which both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. The research questions were:

- 1) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' social awareness, recognition of emotions, and improve their use of pro-social skills and will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?

- 2) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' reading achievement and will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?
- 3) What are the kindergarten teachers' beliefs/perceptions regarding the following:
  - a. Social-emotional and emergent reading skills with which the students enter their classrooms
  - b. Strategies the students use to manage social issues and how the strategies change throughout the course of the semester
  - c. How, if at all, the classroom environment and/or students are affected by the whole class implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum

### **Methods and Rationale**

Case study research deeply examines one person, a single classroom, an individual school, or a distinct program. The case is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is the unit of analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). The researcher's emphasis is placed on the description and exploration of the case, then on making inferences about the case in that specific context (Gilgun, 1994; Stake, 1995).

There are a variety of reasons for choosing case study methodology. Case study methodology makes certain that the area of research under scrutiny is not explored through just one perspective, but through multiple lenses. Having multiple perspectives permits the area of inquiry being studied to be more fully understood (Stake, 1995). The researcher was able to gather quantitative data from students and qualitative data from teachers, take observational data, maintain email communications, and keep a researcher's journal in order to gain insight into the phenomenon in its present context.

According to Yin (2003), a case study methodology should be used when researchers wish to uncover contextual conditions that may be influential to the research questions. In the case of this research study, because this was an initial examination of the issue and a small case, a case study methodology was advantageous because a close collaborative effort between the researcher and participants enabled the researcher to observe participants in their environment and participants were able to tell their stories in context (Yin, 2003). It is through the participants' stories in context, accomplished through the data collected, that participants were able to describe their views of reality, which allowed the researcher the ability to better observe, comprehend, and report the participants' actions and perceptions (Yin, 2003).

The quantitative phase of the study occurred in a parallel manner with the qualitative phase of the study. In case study research, data are converged in the analysis phase rather than handled separately. Each source of data is a part of the whole to be contributed and to strengthen the researcher's understanding of the issue being studied (Yin, 2003). Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest that "rigorous case studies afford researchers the opportunity to describe phenomenon in context using a variety of data sources" (p. 544) and should include strategies to increase trustworthiness. Triangulation of data, which can increase trustworthiness, refers to the convergence and corroboration of data from different sources studying the same phenomenon. To increase a study's validity and interpretability, complementarity measures examine different facets of a phenomenon. For this case study, this is achieved by collecting, systematically handling and concurrently analyzing sources of qualitative and quantitative data. Development and expansion, which also increase a study's validity, requires that a study use multiple sources of data to widen the scope of inquiry to include multiple components (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). In this case study, the qualitative data are used to reveal perceptual data and curriculum processes while the researcher concurrently utilized quantitative data to assess

program outcomes. In this way, the researcher got a better understanding of the students' and teachers' experiences.

In exploratory case studies such as this, where initial examinations of phenomenon are studied in particular contexts, especially one that may have no single set of outcomes, binding a case will ensure that the study remains reasonable in scope (Patton, 2001). Defining the case on a small scale enhanced overall trustworthiness by allowing the researcher to establish a professional rapport with the participants, reducing the possibility for social desirability bias in the qualitative data. Multiple interviews with participant teachers and teacher reflective journals allowed teachers to add new or additional perspectives during the course of the study, while the email communication and researcher's journal added another point of view to the different facets of inquiry (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

Case studies use a constructivist paradigm. The meaning in the data is a subjective truth built upon the perceptions of whoever is examining the data (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). However, "the human creation of meaning doesn't reject outright the notion of objectivity" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). The researcher's journal helped to maintain objectivity.

For the quantitative phase of the study, a quasi-experimental pretest/posttest design was used to collect student data for this study. The data sets in this study addressed related facets of the research topic and were treated with equal importance as illustrated in Figure 1.

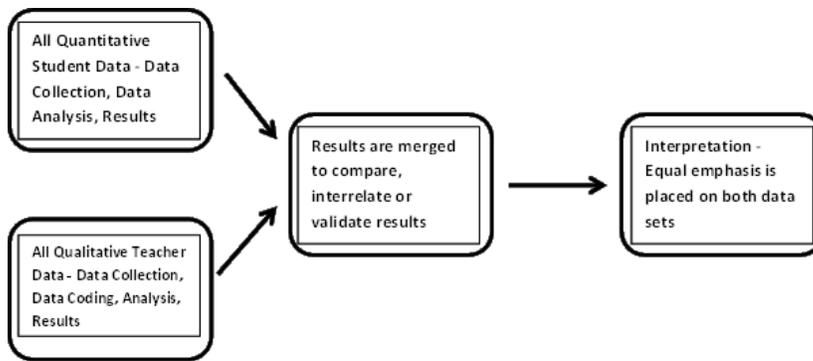


Figure 1. Diagram showing the study design. Adapted from Creswell & Clark (2011).

## The Setting

This case study was conducted beginning in the summer of 2012 and during the fall term of the 2012-2013 school year in a large, diverse, K-5 elementary school in a Monroe County school district, which is situated in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011a). The target school serves approximately 790 students in kindergarten through grade five. The building is a relatively new building and was in its third year of existence in 2012-2013. Following Institutional Review Board protocol for the Protection of Human Subjects approval (see Appendix O), the superintendent of schools was contacted via email communication about conducting the study in the target school. After meeting with and gaining permission from the superintendent, the superintendent assisted in making contact with the elementary principal in the building where the study was conducted.

## Participants

### Sampling

Purposeful sampling is based on the supposition that researchers may select participants from the population from whom researchers can learn, understand, or acquire the most information (Patton, 2001). Emergent readers are characteristically between the ages of four and six (Sulzby & Teale, 1996; Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999), which corresponds to the same age as

a typical public school kindergarten student. In addition, since the study was aimed primarily at examining the early childhood development of social and emotional skills and emerging literacy skills, and because the experimental treatment program implemented in the study, *Strong Start* (Merrell et al., 2007) is specifically designed to target students in kindergarten through grade two, both the teachers and students of the target schools' kindergarten classes were the purposeful targeted population for the study.

### **Teacher Participants**

All kindergarten teachers (N = 5) on staff in the target building received information regarding the study, including background about the study, required meetings, and information regarding expectations in terms of additional work load, journaling, and the interview components of the study. The kindergarten teachers were subsequently asked if they would like to volunteer to participate. Four of the five kindergarten teachers volunteered to participate in the study. Participants were asked to sign a letter of consent to participate. Two experimental and two control classrooms were chosen at random using a random numbers table, from those teachers who volunteered. All teacher participants were female teachers with different backgrounds and levels of experience. Table 1 outlines the teachers' experience, education, and backgrounds.

Table 1

*Teacher Demographics*

Teacher	Gender	Group	Grade Levels (Past Experience)	Years of Experience	Education Level	Other
TE1	Female	Experimental	3 <sup>rd</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , K	19 years	BS	Minor in Music, 1st Year in K
TE2	Female	Experimental	1 <sup>st</sup> , K	9 years	BS, M.Ed	Grad. Degree Reading
TC1	Female	Control	PreK, K	20 years	BS	
TC2	Female	Control	K	5 years	BS	

*Note.* The participant teachers are each identified using an identification code assigned to them during the quantitative phase of the study. The identification code assigned to each participant teacher is used to identify that individual when discussing the qualitative findings for the remainder of the study. Teacher TE1 and Teacher TE2 are the experimental teachers. Teacher TC1 and Teacher TC2 are the control teachers. TE1 = Experimental Teacher 1, TE2 = Experimental Teacher 2, TC1 = Control Teacher 1, TC2 = Control Teacher 2.

**Student Participants**

The student participants in this study were kindergarten students enrolled in the target elementary school and who were on the experimental and control classrooms' rosters. Each class was an intact class for the purpose of investigation. Each class roster that was used in the investigation was determined prior to the study in accordance with the district class roster formulation protocol. The protocol for class roster formulation in the school district, according to the principal, include procedures for balancing boys and girls to each class, balancing high, average, and low achieving students based on the district kindergarten screening assessment, as well as balancing any known behavioral issues. The total number of students whose parents signed consent to participate in this case study was fifty-three students (N = 53) out of a total of 75 students (N = 75) in the kindergarten classes. After being requested by the principal of the site

school, a revision was made to the Institutional Review Board for permission for the students who did not have signed parental consent to remain in the experimental classrooms during the once per week *Strong Start* lessons and be exempt from only the social skills assessment portion of the study. This request was approved (see Appendix O). Students in the control classrooms participated, as they normally would, in their typical reading lessons each day. *DIBELS Next* data was not collected or used by the researcher for any student who did not have signed parental consent to participate in the study. Table 2 shows an accounting of the number of parental consents returned by classroom.

Table 2

*Number of Consents Returned by Classroom and Totals with Attrition Rates*

<b>Experimental Classes</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>		<b>Control Classes</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>
<b>Teacher TE1</b>			<b>Teacher TC1</b>	
Total Students Sept. 4, 2012	18		Total Students Sept. 4, 2012	19
Consents Returned	15		Consents Returned	8
Students Moved/Absent at Pretest	4		Students Moved/Absent at Pretest	1
Did Not Give Consent	1		Did Not Give Consent	0
Students Assessed Pretest	12		Students Assessed Pretest	7
Students Assessed Posttest	11		Students Assessed Posttest	7
Students Moved/Absent Posttest	1		Students Moved/Absent Posttest	0
<b>Teacher TE2</b>			<b>Teacher TC2</b>	
Total Students Sept. 4, 2012	19		Total Students Sept. 4, 2012	19
Consents Returned	17		Consents Returned	15
Students Moved/Absent at Pretest	0		Students Moved/Absent at Pretest	1
Did Not Give Consent	0		Did Not Give Consent	1
Students Assessed Pretest	8		Students Assessed Pretest	13
Students Assessed Posttest	7		Students Assessed Posttest	11
Students Moved/Absent Posttest	1		Students Moved/Absent Posttest	2
<b>Totals</b>				
No. Students in K Classes	75		No. Students in Experimental Classes	37
			No. Students in Control Classes	38
Total Number Returned Consents	55	73%		
Number of Consents Returned with NO	2		Number of Consents Not Returned	20
Number of Students Assessed Pretest	40		Number of Students Assessed Posttest	36
			Attrition due to moves or absences of prior pretested students. Attrition figured into data analyses via <i>SPSS</i>	Small sample size: figured into data via Cohen's d Effect Size statistic

Experimental and control group students were determined by on which teachers’ rosters they appeared. However, due to time constraints placed on the researcher by the school district, quantitative data were taken for only forty students (N = 40) of the fifty-three students who had signed permissions to participate. Table 3 illustrates the demographic breakdown of both the experimental and control group students in terms of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (based on free or reduced lunch). Table 4 shows the demographic breakdown of the students by classroom roster. Because there were ethnicity subgroups too small to separately report, a category of “other” was created for statistical purposes. Demographic information was provided to the researcher by the school district.

Table 3

*Experimental and Control Group Demographics*

Demographic Group	No. of Students/ Percentage Exp. Group		No. of Students/ Percentage Cont. Group	
Girls	10	50%	13	65%
Boys	10	50%	7	35%
White	13	65%	9	45%
African Am.	6	30%	4	20%
Other	1	5%	7	35%
Low SES	6	30%	10	50%

*Note.* \*Exp. Group N = 20, Control Group N = 20 Also note that because there were subgroups too small to separately report, a category of “other” was created for statistical purposes.

Table 4

*Demographic Breakdown of Students Assessed by Classroom*

<b>Class</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>
<b>Teacher TE1</b>		<b>Teacher TC1</b>	
Students Assessed Pretest	12	Students Assessed Pretest	7
Students Assessed Posttest	11	Students Assessed Posttest	7
Girls	5	Girls	5
Boys	7	Boys	2
White	8	White	2
African American	3	African American	2
Other	1	Other	3
F/R Lunch	2	F/R Lunch	4
<b>Teacher TE1</b>		<b>Teacher TC2</b>	
Students Assessed Pretest	8	Students Assessed Pretest	13
Students Assessed Posttest	7	Students Assessed Posttest	11
Girls	5	Girls	8
Boys	3	Boys	5
White	4	White	6
African American	3	African American	6
Other	1	Other	1
F/R Lunch	4	F/R Lunch	10

*Note.* \*Because there were sub-groups too small to separately report, a category of “other” was created for statistical purposes.

***Strong Start: Experimental Treatment (Independent Variable)***

As stated in detail in Chapter 2, the *Strong Start* literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum is a short, ten week easy to implement series of lessons designed to promote the social-emotional development of young children. *Strong Start* is designed to be both a prevention and early intervention curriculum and can fit a wide range of needs and settings (Whitcomb, 2009). The lessons are intended to be enjoyable and activity-based. All the lessons utilize popular children's literature to assist in emphasizing the main social-emotional skill concepts while the read aloud sessions serve to strengthen both the social-emotional and emergent literacy skills through mediation with the teacher and through peer interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

## **Procedures**

### **Pilot Study: Validation of the Interview Questions**

After gaining the appropriate permissions, the researcher met with the building principal and Response to Intervention (RtI) Coordinator in order to conduct the initial pilot study to validate the teacher interview questions prior to beginning the primary project. The primary project began at the conclusion of the pilot study validating the interview questions. Please note that for the remainder of the study, the RtI Coordinator served as the researcher's primary contact at the research site in order to assist with teacher contacts, parent contacts, materials distributions, scheduling assessments, room reservations for assessments and similar tasks.

Experts in the field of early childhood education were asked to review the interview questions to check for clarity and appropriateness. An "expert" in the field of early childhood education is defined as an individual who has a minimum of 2.5 years of experience with 40 hours per week for 50 weeks per year of focused efforts in the field to be considered (Norman, 1980; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Sternberg & Horvath, 1995). Educators who had experience working with children in grades K-2 (including reading specialists, special education teachers, the school psychologist, counselors, and teachers in other grade levels who had been moved into other grade levels, but excluding any current kindergarten teacher who would be potential participants in the primary project) received a letter from the researcher describing the intent of the study and a copy of the proposed interview questions (see Appendix B). The letter also explained why an expert panel was needed to validate the interview questions. Instructions in the letter included how the experts could provide feedback to the researcher on the interview questions' clarity and/or need for revision or removal. Six educators from the target school who qualified as experts who returned the interview questions with feedback and contact information

were used as the expert panel. They were then consulted for revisions as necessary if there was a question that at least four of the six experts deemed needed modification, the question was rewritten or removed and the process was repeated until all questions were accepted.

### **Primary Project Procedures**

After receiving the appropriate permissions through the IRB process and enlisting the assistance of the district superintendent, the researcher met with the building principal and the RtI Coordinator and planned the initial contact meeting with the kindergarten teachers in the target building. Table 5 illustrates the chronology of the study.

Table 5

*Study Chronology of Activities*

Primary Project Chronology - Date and Activity
July 17, 2012 – Researcher met with site school principal and RtI Coordinator to discuss study overview and logistics. Site school principal invited researcher to speak about study at Kindergarten Orientation. Site school principal requested revision to parent consents to reflect assessments only and to allow students to remain in class during <i>Strong Start</i> read aloud activities since they are similar to what they students normally have during <i>Scott Foresman</i> shared reading time.
July 18, 2012 – Revised IRB and parent consent letters approved.
August 1, 2012 – Researcher delivered parent informational flyers to the site school to be prepared for the Kindergarten Orientation. The flyers were to be included in the parents’ “Welcome” packets.
August 16, 2012 – Researcher met with parents of kindergarten students who were in attendance at the site school’s Kindergarten Orientation. Parent informational flyers were distributed for review. Researcher met with all possible kindergarten teacher participants. Teacher consents distributed for review. Email correspondence begins between RtI Coordinator, participant teachers and researcher. Teacher participants chosen and assigned to randomly assigned experimental/control group classrooms.
August 17, 2012 – Researcher delivered <i>Strong Start</i> materials to the site school. Researcher coordinated the delivery of materials with the RtI Coordinator.
August 18, 2012 – Researcher followed up with the RtI Coordinator on materials distribution and data format and to expect another email regarding scheduling the social skills pretesting.
August 23, 2012 – Researcher followed up with the RtI Coordinator and teacher participants regarding materials distribution, study logistics, and directions for collection of parent consents. Cut-off date for parent consent forms set for September 27, 2012.
August 27, 2012 – First Day of the Semester
September 6, 2012 – Researcher delivered parent consent forms to site school and communicated with RtI Coordinator regarding distribution, duplication, collection, and follow-up if not returned of same.
September 21, 2012 – Researcher met with principal and RtI Coordinator to schedule the pre-implementation social skills assessments and first interview sessions.
October 1-2 and October 4, 2012 - Researcher administered the social skills (ACES) pretests (only students with consents). First session of teacher interviews were conducted and teacher reflective journals were distributed.
October 4, 2012 – Researcher collected <i>DIBELS Next</i> Data from RtI Coordinator (only students with consents). Email communications with RtI Coordinator and participant teachers continues.
October 14, 2012 - Experimental group teachers began teaching the <i>Strong Start</i> curriculum. The curriculum has ten lessons. One lesson was taught each week adjusting for school closings.
October 26, 2012 - Hurricane Sandy - Schools were closed all week. <i>Strong Start</i> lessons required a one week adjustment.
November 15, 2012 – Researcher conducted fidelity check #1.
January 3, 2013 – Researcher conducted fidelity check #2.
January 22-23, 2013 – Experimental group teachers taught final lessons of <i>Strong Start</i> .
January 29-30, 2013 - Researcher administered the social skills (ACES) posttests (only students who were pretested). Second/Final session of teacher interviews were conducted and teacher reflective journals were collected.
February 9 - Researcher received the Winter <i>DIBELS Next</i> Data from the RtI Coordinator (only students with consents).

The building principal allowed the researcher access to any parents who attended the annual Kindergarten Orientation, which was being held on the same day as the planned initial meeting with the teachers. Parents of kindergarten students in the target building received a flyer (see Appendix K) informing them of the study in a Welcome Back packet which was either

distributed at the Kindergarten Orientation or given out the first day of school. The researcher was able to address parents who were present at Kindergarten Orientation, answer any questions parents had at that time and offer contact information in person so that parents could make a personal connection to the researcher. Parent consent forms (see Appendix C) were distributed to student participants on the first day of school.

During the initial August Kindergarten Orientation meeting with the kindergarten teachers, a brief overview of the study was given using the teacher flyer information (see Appendix K). It was at this time that teachers were asked to volunteer formally. All five kindergarten teachers assigned to teach kindergarten for the 2012-2013 school year were interested but one teacher had just been transferred to the school and to kindergarten, a new grade level for her, therefore she decided not to participate in the study. The four remaining teachers volunteered freely. All teacher participants were asked to sign consent forms (see Appendix C) at this meeting. A random numbers table was used to determine which two teachers would implement the experimental treatment (*Strong Start*, the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum). The meeting concluded with the researcher speaking with all teacher participants in order to give detailed information about the study, historical context, review of the timeline, study design and assessment protocol. This information was critical for both experimental and control group teachers to know.

Following this meeting, the researcher followed up with the RtI Coordinator to ensure collection of parental consent forms (see Appendix C) prior to data collection or implementation of the social-emotional learning curriculum and how the RtI Coordinator should collect and submit the district reading data to the researcher. The researcher also followed up with the RtI Coordinator on instructions to ensure proper distribution of the *Strong Start* curriculum materials

which were being stored in the RtI office until pre-implementation assessments were completed. Only experimental group teachers would receive curriculum materials during the study. Control group teachers would receive curriculum materials for their classroom use after the study was completed. Until that time, the materials would be stored in the RtI Coordinator's office.

### **Prior to *Strong Start* Implementation**

During the first week of October, 2012, experimental and control group teachers were interviewed prior to *Strong Start* implementation. All participant teachers were asked to keep reflective journals for the ten week duration of the study. The participant teachers received their journal materials at the first interview sessions. Teachers responded to journal prompts (see Appendix L) provided by the researcher in addition to writing any other open-ended free thoughts they might have during their participation in the study. Students who had parental consents signed in both the experimental and control classes were to be administered the pretest social skills measures by the researcher. However, due to time constraints the researcher was only able to assess a total of forty (N = 40) students. In addition, all students were administered the fall reading assessments by school district staff as per regular district protocol. The RtI Coordinator provided the researcher with the fall *DIBELS Next* reading assessment data for only the students with parental consent to participate in the study. Only the scores for the forty students assessed were used for analysis.

### ***Strong Start* Implementation**

Teachers in the experimental group implemented the *Strong Start* literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum for 10 weeks. There was one 40 minute social skills lesson per week delivered during Shared Reading or Read Aloud time. Teachers in the control group delivered their regular reading program during Shared Reading or Read Aloud time. At the

request of the principal and with IRB approval, all students in each of the intact experimental classes remained in the classrooms during the *Strong Start* lessons. The experimental and control classrooms received their reading instruction using the school district adopted reading materials, *SF Reading* (Scott Foresman, 2002) and the supporting supplementary materials. *Strong Start* replaced one Shared Reading or Read Aloud time per week for the experimental group classrooms.

The teachers and students in the experimental and control classrooms addressed any negative social issues or conflicts occurring within the classroom using the district-wide student code of conduct and discipline code (see Appendix G). Only the experimental classrooms received the addition of instruction using *Strong Start*.

The teachers in the experimental group used *Strong Start* lesson materials and suggested trade books to instruct students in the targeted social skill of the week. The teachers followed the lessons outlined in the *Strong Start* curriculum and conducted social and emotional skill-building activities and reinforced them throughout the week. Since all students were approved to remain in the experimental classrooms during the *Strong Start* lessons, the *Strong Start* parent communication letters (see Appendix I) were sent home to all experimental group children's families so that they knew the weekly target social-emotional skill and were encouraged to be involved by reinforcing the skills at home with the children. However, because it was not within the school environment, neither the teachers nor the researcher could guarantee that parents followed through with their involvement. For the implementation period of ten weeks, the experimental group teachers used dialogic reading techniques with at least one book they selected from the approved list of books with strong social and emotional content to teach the weekly focused target social-emotional skill.

During the ten week implementation period, the researcher observed each of the experimental group teachers twice using the *Strong Start* fidelity checklists (see Appendix J) to ensure fidelity of lesson delivery. The researcher also checked in via email communication with all the participant teachers and with the RtI Coordinator to monitor any issues that may have arisen. A communication log was kept detailing the content of those communications which varied in content and included items such as whether or not to teach an alternate social skills curriculum the teachers received or whether a teacher was allowed to type her journal responses.

Another major issue with which the researcher and participants dealt was the timeline adjustment due to the weather closing of schools during Hurricane Sandy in October, 2012. The weather closing delayed *Strong Start* lessons for one week but the experimental teachers picked up where they left off as soon as classes resumed. The full communication log can be found in Appendix M.

### **After *Strong Start* Implementation**

At the conclusion of the curriculum implementation period in January, 2013, the forty (N = 40) students who had been pretested from the experimental and control groups were administered the posttest social skills assessment by the researcher. However, there were four (N = 4) students who had either moved or were absent whose scores could not be collected at posttest. The winter *DIBELS Next* reading assessments were administered by the district staff as per district protocol. The students' scores of children who had parental permission to participate were provided to the researcher by the RtI Coordinator. Only the forty (N = 40) students' scores who were pretested were kept and used for analysis. At this time, all participant teachers were interviewed again to gather additional qualitative data. All participant teachers' reflective journals were collected as well.

## Data Sources

### Quantitative Measures

**Student social skills data – *Assessment of Children’s Emotion Skills (ACES)*.** The five essential core social-emotional competencies as identified by Zins et al. (2007) include self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. As stated in Chapter 2, children who may not be able to regulate their actions or emotions, do not have the appropriate emotional knowledge, or lack proficient skills in building and maintaining relationships with others may not be able to benefit fully from their kindergarten experience. On the other hand, those children who are proficient in those social competencies are more likely to be able to more fully attend to cognitive tasks (Vygotsky, 1978; Raver et al., 2002; Durlak & Weissberg, 2005; Zins et al., 2007; Payton et al., 2008).

Research Question #1 asks: will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students’ social awareness, recognition of emotions, and improve their use of pro-social skills and if so, will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status? In order to answer Research Question #1, this study utilized the *Assessment of Children’s Emotion Skills* or ACES (Schultz et al., 2004). Permission to utilize this assessment was granted by the authors via email communication (see Appendix N). Understanding feelings, empathizing with others and recognizing emotions based on facial features allows children to establish and maintain positive social relationships with others. The accurate evaluation of social-emotional skills such as social awareness and emotional awareness has benefits connected to mental health, academic and other outcomes (Humphrey, et al., 2011; Denham et al., 2012). Non-verbal communication, such as recognizing the meanings imparted through facial expressions, is important because emotions

can be conveyed without spoken words. Having the ability to interpret others' emotions, whether through language or facial expressions, and being able to respond mindfully and constructively are important in problem solving (Schulz, Izard & Bear, 2004; Trentacosta, et al., 2006; Diamond, 2010). The ACES was chosen for this case study because it evaluates children's social awareness (the ability to understand feelings and empathize with others) and emotional awareness (being able to correctly identify an emotion, in this case through facial expressions, and respond accordingly).

ACES is a performance based standardized assessment geared to elementary aged children. It consists of three subtests: Facial Expressions, Social Situations, and Social Behaviors. The Social Situations and Social Behaviors subtests are made up of fifteen short scenarios (1-3 sentences). The children respond by labeling what they perceive the protagonist's feelings are. Responses can be happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling. Since the children may enter kindergarten with little or no ability to read the feeling words, the response sheets were altered to reflect picture representations of each of the feeling words using the pictures children would see throughout the *Strong Start* program (Whitcomb, 2009). The Social Situations and Social Behaviors subtest items describe situations or behaviors that are associated with certain emotions. There are three items on each subtest that describe behaviors or situations that are not exclusively identified with one specific emotion and as such, are ambiguous. All items are randomized throughout each subtest.

The Facial Expressions section features 26 photographs of children posing with different facial expressions. There are four each of children posing happy, sad, mad, or scared. There are an additional 10 photographs that do not identify with one specific emotion and as such, are ambiguous. Figure 2 shows an example of the test items on each of the subtests.

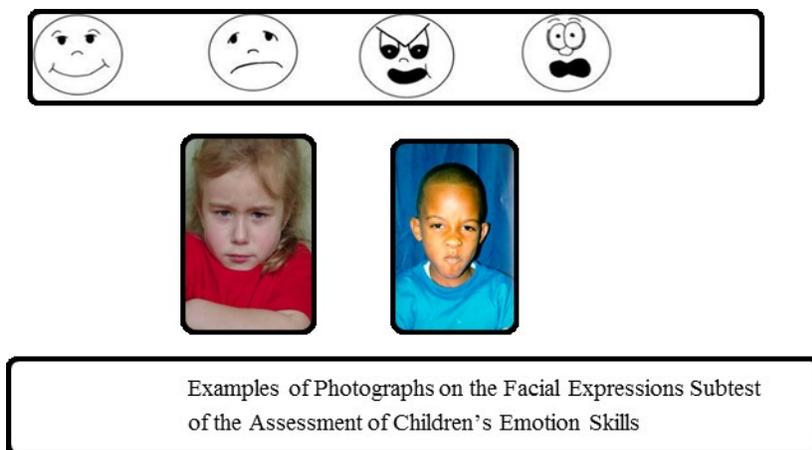


Figure 2. Sample facial figures on student answer sheets (happy, sad, mad, scared). Picture samples seen on the Facial Expressions (Faces) Subtest – ACES – See Appendix F for full assessment.

Scoring the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* (Schultz et al., 2004) for social awareness and emotional awareness is completed by determining how many of the 40 items students correctly identified that have an assigned specific emotion (happy, sad, mad, or scared). Emotional bias can be determined by looking at how the children identified the 16 ambiguous items. For this study, these items were given but not scored because emotional bias was not one of the areas of research inquiry. These items were given no consideration in the data analysis.

There have been previous research studies which utilized the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* (Schultz et al., 2004; Trentacosta et al., 2006) that resulted in emotion attribute scores that correlated reasonably well (Cronbach's alpha = .68-.71). Therefore the ACES has an acceptable level of reliability. Only the children who had parental consent to participate in the assessment portion of the study were evaluated using the ACES assessment in this case study.

**Student reading data – *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS Next)*.** In order to quantify the student participants' reading achievement and answer Research Question #2 the students' scores on the *DIBELS Next* reading assessment (see Appendix D and E) were used. This assessment is given as a matter of course in the school district and as such,

data was gathered from the school district after the regularly scheduled fall and winter district-wide administrations of the assessment. At the building level, the RtI coordinator assisted the researcher in obtaining the *DIBELS Next* data.

The *DIBELS Next* (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011) was developed based on procedures for Curriculum-Based Measurement or CBM (Deno, 1985). Like CBM, *DIBELS Next* was intended to be an efficient and relatively inexpensive way to track students' progress toward achievement of a general goal or benchmark. *DIBELS Next* is designed to measure early reading skills that are related to early reading success. As stated in Chapter 2, children who have trouble in kindergarten with critical early reading skills such as letter naming, first sound fluency, and phonemic awareness have a high probability of being poor readers in third grade and beyond because these students may find it problematic to read and eventually grow to dislike it. The assessment was chosen for this study because it probes for phonemic awareness and fluency, two of the key foundational skills for kindergarteners to master (Ehri & Sweet, 1991; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Torgeson et al., 2007). *DIBELS Next* was also chosen because it is a reading assessment already utilized in the research setting and it may have a correlation to the site school's regular reading curriculum.

*DIBELS Next* consists of a set of short, one minute probes that can be administered to children in grades kindergarten through grade six. In this research setting, and as per *DIBELS Next* protocol, probes are given individually. Reading specialists administer the probes to students whose scores are then compared to benchmarks three times per school year. However, students who are identified as "at-risk" can be probed more often. Subtests of the *DIBELS Next* assessment include fluency probes for initial "first" sounds, letter naming, phoneme segmentation, nonsense words, oral reading, oral retelling, and word use. Students in

kindergarten are given the first sound fluency and letter naming fluency probes in the fall and again in the winter with the addition of the phoneme segmentation and nonsense word fluency probes. The first sound fluency (FSF) probe is a direct measure of a student's fluency in identifying the beginning sound in a word. As stated in Chapter 2, the ability to isolate initial sounds in words is an important beginning reading skill called phonemic awareness. Letter naming fluency (LNF) is a measure of a student's fluency in recognizing and saying the letter names with automaticity, which has been found to be a strong indicator of future reading success. To keep the assessments consistent, only first sound fluency and letter naming fluency probes were used for both pre and posttest analysis.

There have been a continuing series of studies conducted to document reliability and validity of the measure for the *DIBELS Next* (Powell-Smith, Good, & Atkins, 2010; Cummings, Kaminski, Good, & O'Neil, 2011; Dewey, Latimer, Kaminski, & Good, 2011; Powell-Smith, Good, Latimer, Dewey, & Kaminski, 2011).

The first sound fluency probes have sufficient alternate test form reliability to make screening and intervention decisions for individual students and with repeated assessments across multiple forms for progress monitoring, reliability increases substantially. With one month between the first administration and second administration of the probes, the alternate test form reliability level was .82 (373 reliability coefficient), ( $p < .001$ ). With another month between the second administration and the third, the reliability level was still a fairly strong .74 (355 reliability coefficient), ( $p < .001$ ).

Inter-rater reliability is high. Based on the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula, the inter-rater reliability for the first sound fluency probes .94 while the inter-rater reliability for the letter naming fluency probes is .99, ( $p < .001$ ). The probes are consistently marked across different

scorers. In terms of content validity, *DIBELS Next* is linked directly to foundational early literacy skills and sensitive to instruction or intervention in those areas. In measuring *DIBELS Next*'s criterion-related validity such as concurrent validity and predictive validity, students' scores on *DIBELS Next* probes were compared to their scores on several other assessments such as the phonics, phonemic and phonological awareness tests for kindergarten on the *Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation* (GRADE), the *Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing* (CTOPP), and the *Woodcock Johnson* (WJ) readiness test. Overall, the validity of all the *DIBELS Next* measures are supported by the GRADE, the CTOPP, and the WJ readiness test (Powell-Smith et al., 2010; Cummings et al., 2011; Dewey et al., 2011; Powell-Smith et al., 2011). Table 6 shows the criterion-related validity data for each of the assessments.

Table 6

*Criterion Related Validity Statistics – DIBELS Next as Compared to Other Standardized Tests*

<b>Criterion Related Validity</b>	<b>TEST</b>	<b>Time of Year</b>
Predictive Validity	K - GRADE	Beginning
	FSF	0.52
	LNF	0.39
Predictive Validity	K - GRADE	Middle
	FSF	0.40
	LNF	0.35
Concurrent Validity	TEST	Time of Year
	K-GRADE	End
	LNF	0.35
	WJ Readiness	Middle
	Test	0.54
	CTOPP Phon. Awareness	Middle
	Composite	0.52
	CTOPP Rapid Naming	Middle
	Composite	0.58

## **Qualitative Measures**

Case studies are analyses that give a multi-view perspective. In a case study, the researcher studies not just the perspective of the participants, but the interaction between the participants as well. This is one feature characteristic that this case study holds. The multiple sources of data allows for a rich description of the phenomena in the classrooms in the research setting. Semi-structured interviews and teacher reflective journals allowed the researcher to gather in-depth information about teacher beliefs and perceptions. Field observations provided the researcher opportunity to check fidelity of the lesson delivery of the experimental curriculum and also gather observational data through field notes. The observations also gave the researcher an opportunity to view the experiences on which the realities the interview answers and journal entries were based (Tjora, 2006). The researcher maintained a communication log recording emails and in person contacts with the teachers and a researcher's journal further maintaining an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Teacher Perceptual Data – Semi-Structured Interviews**

The purpose of the teacher interview component of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives and beliefs and to understand the their experiences with children relative to social-emotional learning in the teachers' own language and setting (Creswell & Clark, 2011). A semi-structured format for conducting the teacher interviews in this study was selected because it allowed the researcher to gather perceptual information but there was flexibility in interviewing the participants. It enabled the researcher to pursue participants' responses for more detail or clarification if the need arose. Figure 3 shows the interview protocol the researcher used once it was validated by the pilot study.

<p><b>Before Implementation of the Literature-Bases Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum/Study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a kindergarten teacher, what have you found to be the social skill students are the most proficient in when they enter your classroom initially? Why do you think this is? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Add Follow Up: What have you found to be the case for social skills initially in terms of students entering your classroom as transfers?</b></li> <li><b>Give examples of social skills if needed for clarity.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>As a kindergarten teacher, do you think you should have a role in the social-emotional development of your students? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Add Follow Up: Why do you feel that way?</b></li> <li><b>Add Follow Up: What is your current role in the development of your students' social emotional skills?</b></li> <li><b>Add Follow Up: What do you feel should be the school district's role in the development of your students' social emotional skills?</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Before and After Implementation of the Literature-Bases Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum/Study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you handle some of the social issues that occur in your classroom? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Add Follow Up: What are some of the social issues you've had to deal with and how have you handled them? Elicit examples of social issues.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>In your opinion, do you believe that there is a connection between social-emotional skills and academic success? Can you give an example that illustrates this?</li> <li>In your opinion, what are some of the strengths (and/or weaknesses) of having a social-skills curriculum?</li> </ul>
<p><b>After Implementation of the Literature-Bases Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum/Study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In your opinion, did you see a difference in the behavior of your students in your classroom after you finished a social skills curriculum? (adapted for control teachers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Add Follow Up: If you do see a difference, what are some of the differences you see?</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>In your opinion, did you see a difference in the classroom environment after the implementation of a social skills curriculum? (adapted for control teachers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Add Follow Up: If you do see a difference, what are some of the differences you see?</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>Have your interactions with students changed? If so, how (have your interactions changed)?</li> <li>Did you find the trade book you used appropriate? Did the students enjoy them? Were they connected well to the weekly topics? (or for control teachers was the social skills curriculum you've used in the past not tied to literature?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Add Follow Up: Which trade book title did you feel was the most effective title that got the weekly message across? (adapted for control teachers)</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>Did you find the activities in the social skills curriculum to be developmentally appropriate? (adapted for control teachers)</li> <li>Were there comments made about your students' social skills or the program by people such as parents, other teachers, visitors, etc. before, during, or after curriculum delivery? (adapted for control teachers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Add Follow Up: What comments were made about the students' social skills or the program?</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Figure 3. Teacher interview protocol once validated by pilot study. See Appendix B for actual document on which researcher took notes.

Using questions based on the study's major focus ensured some consistency across each of the interviews (Bernard, 1988; Knox & Burkard, 2009). Semi-structured interview questions validated during the pilot study were asked to elicit information regarding the teachers' thoughts about their students' social-emotional readiness for school, the experimental treatment curriculum implementation, social-emotional skills in the classroom, the strategies the students use to manage social issues and whether these strategies were different after the students were exposed to the social-emotional learning curriculum, if the classroom environment has been affected by the implementation of the curriculum, comments from parents or others made about students related to social-emotional skills, and any other information that participants wanted to share. The semi-structured nature of the interview format enhanced quantitative data because it allowed the researcher some divergence from the set questions when a particularly interesting or unexpected answer was given or to adapt the questions for the teachers in the control group since they did not implement the *Strong Start* curriculum. The researcher was in control of the progression of gaining information from the interviewees, but allowed follow up as it resulted from answers given (Bernard, 1988; Knox & Burkard, 2009).

The interviews occurred in a face-to-face format so that non-verbal information such as facial expressions and gestures could enrich the spoken words that were gathered. In addition, multiple interviews were conducted (pre-implementation of the social skills curriculum and post-implementation of the social skills curriculum) to allow the researcher to follow up on information from the first interview session if necessary and so the participant teachers could offer any additional thoughts they wanted to share in regards to issues/information or discoveries they made during the course of the study (Knox & Burkard, 2009). For ease in scheduling, some interviews were conducted with two teachers interviewing together as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

*Teacher Interview Schedule*

Date	Teacher Interviewed
Pre-Implementation Interviews	
10/1/2012	Teacher TE1
10/2/2012	Teacher TE2 and TC1
10/4/2012	Teacher TC2
Post-Implementation Interviews	
1/29/2013	Teacher TE1 and Teacher TC1
1/30/2013	Teacher TE2 and Teacher TC2

According to Seymour, Dix, and Eardley (1995), joint interviewing is helpful because it can establish a friendly atmosphere where the participants can answer questions with comfort and confidence. Joint interviews can also assist to fill in information when one participant has forgotten something that a colleague has remembered. Because joint interviews are qualitatively different than one-to-one conversations, the data gathered presents a collaborative picture. Any conflict such as domination over the conversation by one participant is the exception rather than the rule, but should be a consideration when planning the joint interviews (Seymour et al., 1995). This did not seem the case with the teacher groups in this case study. The interviews were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word by the researcher.

In terms of trustworthiness, the set questions did not change, therefore there was continuity in the questions asked to all participant teachers. The richness of the data gathered through verbatim transcripts and the fact that the respondents answered the questions freely outweighed any threats to the trustworthiness (Maxwell, 1996). To improve trustworthiness of interview data, Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Maxwell (1996) suggest making comparisons

between cases. Since there were four teachers interviewed, it was possible to make comparisons between and among the different interview transcripts for ideas that either repeated or were in disagreement across each teacher's context. These would be helpful to the researcher in establishing findings that are beyond the research sample (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1996).

Member checking is a critical technique for establishing credibility of the data gathered through qualitative interviewing. Member checking is a tool for increasing trustworthiness in a study. Transcribed interviews were returned to participants to check for clarity and accuracy before coding and analysis to increase the trustworthiness of this study (Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Teacher participants were instructed to contact the researcher with any changes and/or corrections to the interview transcripts if the teachers felt any changes and/or corrections were needed. If none were needed, the teachers were instructed to contact the researcher via email or the researcher followed up in person to ensure that the transcripts satisfactorily reflected the interviews.

### **Teacher Perceptual Data - Teacher Reflective Journals**

Reflective journal writing presents teachers with a method of learning about what they do. It is a tool that teachers can use on a daily basis and has the capacity to be the basis of a great deal of professional learning. "...I wish that teachers could be enticed to document progress in a systematic fashion so that the magic that happens can be studied and evaluated" (Wrigley, 1995, p. 137).

In addition, reflective journal writing is an effective method of data gathering as teachers put into practice what they are doing and learning. Reflective journaling can be used to record details of teachers' classroom experiences. These records are invaluable when sharing what is

learned with others. There is an interaction of writing, thinking, and making meaning (Simmons & Damico, 2001).

All the teacher participants were asked to keep reflective journals during the entire ten week duration of the study in order to gather perceptual data regarding their beliefs in terms of students' social-emotional and reading skills when they enter kindergarten, beliefs about social-emotional and reading skills instruction, and to focus teachers' attention on observation of their students during social interaction times and students' reading behaviors. Teachers were instructed to write in their journals at least once per week and were given ten weekly prompts at the beginning of the study to answer (one per week) but there were open-ended opportunities to write as well. Figure 4 illustrates the Journal Prompts the teachers were given.

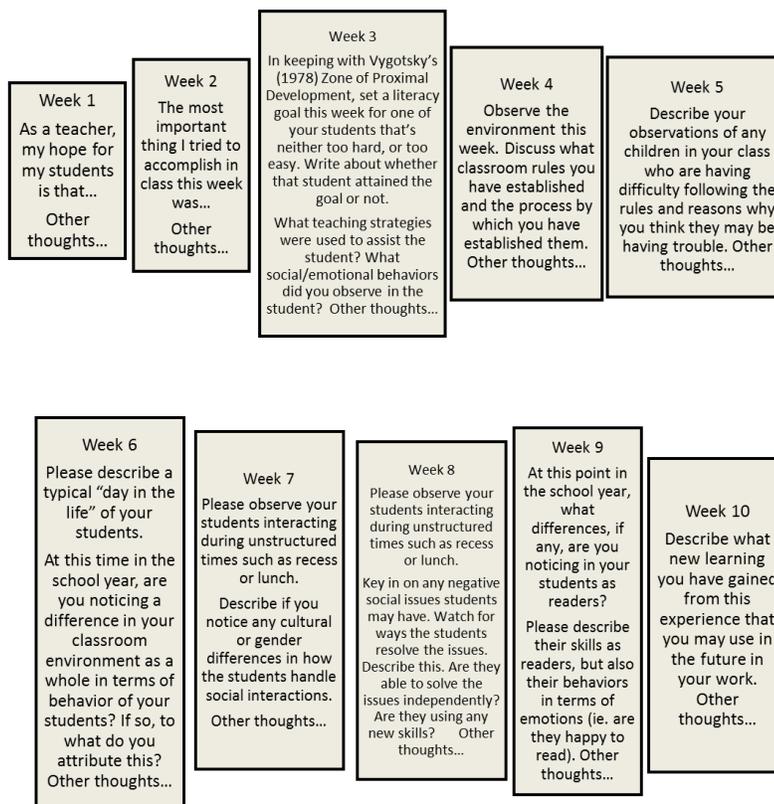
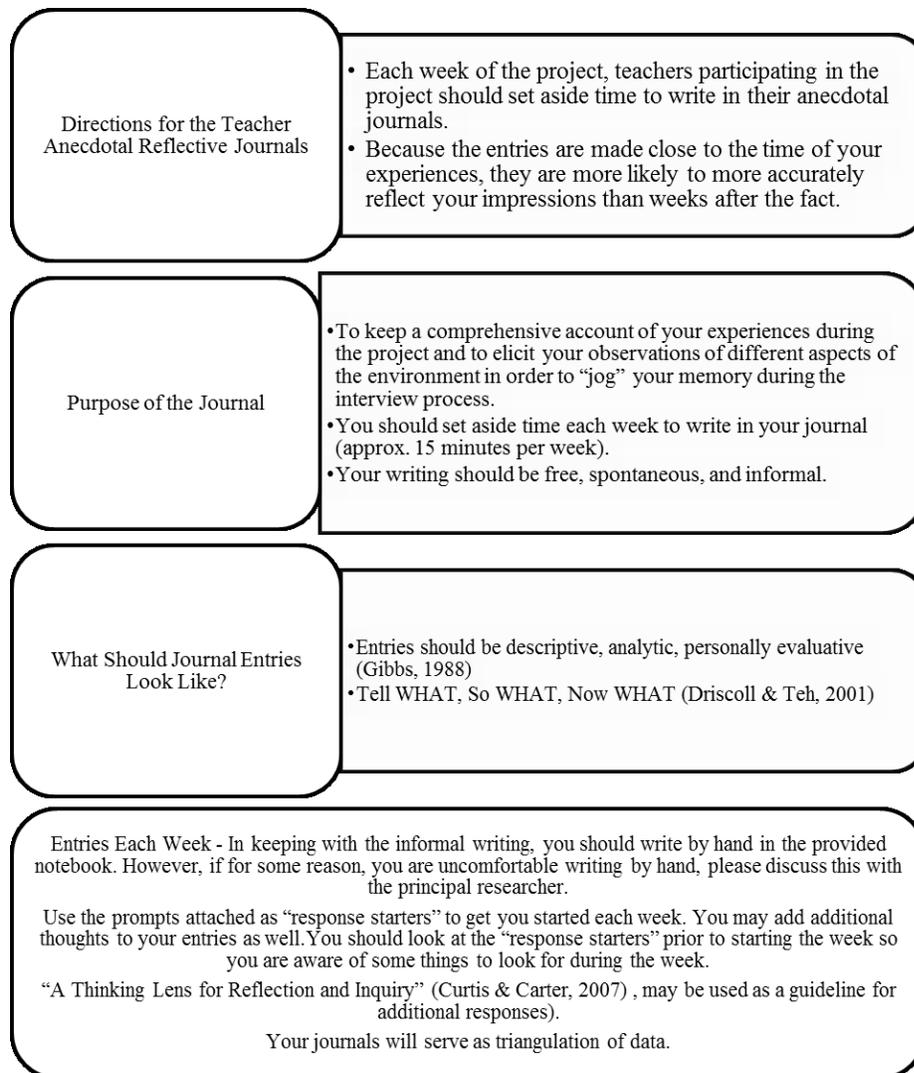


Figure 4. Teacher journal prompts. See Appendix L for the actual document teachers received from the researcher.

The prompts were adapted from “*A Thinking Lense for Reflection and Inquiry*” (Curtis & Carter, 2007) and “*The Power of Observation*” (Jablon, Dombro, & Dichtel-Miller, 2007). The sources were used because they directed teachers to observe the children then examine their own feelings about their students relative to their social interactions, social problem solving, and reading behaviors. Anecdotal writing then allowed the participants to reflect, dig deeper into events, behaviors (their own and their students’), and their beliefs. In addition, having the teacher participants keep a journal offered another way to triangulate the interview and observation data and support or refute the quantitative data. The journals were a type of member check done on paper (Janesick, 1999). Figure 5 represents the instructions teachers were given to follow for implementing the reflective journals.



*Figure 5.* Directions provided for teachers in completing their journal prompts each week. See Appendix L for the actual document teachers received from researcher.

When the teachers attended the post-implementation interview session, the researcher collected the reflective journals for data analysis. Reflection by way of the journals provided an avenue for gathering data in a non-linear way. The teacher journals assisted in building a holistic representation of the relationship between the individual teachers’ histories, providing insight into their current state of mind in terms of the research questions (Janesick, 1999).

In terms of reporting the findings in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, when using direct quotes from any of the qualitative data sources, to maintain integrity of the data, citation protocol

as defined by the American Psychological Association (Publication Manual, 6th Ed., 2010) was followed. Three ellipsis points are used to identify the omission of original material within a sentence. Four ellipsis points indicate the omission of material between two sentences. Brackets are used when words are inserted for clarification purposes.

### **Program Fidelity and Observation Data - Researcher Field Observations**

Fidelity of instruction is the presentation of curriculum in the manner in which it was designed to be delivered. Ensuring that a curriculum is presented in the way it was meant to be presented within the guidelines set forth is integral in maximizing its effectiveness when evaluating student outcomes. Positive student outcomes may be related to factors such as fidelity of implementation at the school level, the degree to which the selected curriculum is empirically supported, and fidelity of instruction at the teacher level (Kovaleski, Gickling, & Marrow, 1999).

When exploring the effects of a specific literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, it is essential to be able to give commentary on the fidelity with which it was implemented so that any gains or loss in student achievement may be accurately attributed to the curriculum under examination (O'Connell, 2008). Teachers in the control group were not observed for the purpose of controlling for fidelity of *Strong Start* instruction since they were not delivering the social skills curriculum. However, the control group teachers were monitored weekly via email communication to ensure that they were completing required weekly journal entries and maintaining pace along with the experimental group teachers with the district reading curriculum, which the control group teachers taught at their regularly scheduled times.

The teachers in the experimental group were observed to control for fidelity of instruction of the *Strong Start* curriculum. In the case of this study, the researcher emphasized to the teachers in the experimental group that the opportunity to implement a system of fidelity checks

would be within the context of a collaborative and positive environment, not an evaluative one. The researcher obtained permission to utilize the *Strong Start* fidelity checklists (Whitcomb, 2009) from the author via email communication (see Appendix J). There is a fidelity checklist for each *Strong Start* lesson which allows an observer to objectively record whether each required component of the lesson was fully implemented, partially implemented, or not implemented at all. The checklist allows an observer to record how many times the instructor gives students an opportunity to respond to questions or to the read aloud and how many student responses are actually given. There is a place to record teacher praise and reprimands in addition to an area incorporated into the form in which to record open ended anecdotal field notes.

At the conclusion of the observed lesson, the fidelity checklist allows the observer to calculate the percentage of components the instructor completed fully, partially or not at all. The fidelity checklists give an observer an avenue to gather focused field notes as well. For the purpose of this case study, the researcher utilized the fidelity checklists to observe two lessons for each teacher in the experimental group. Each lesson began with a review of previous material and then an introduction of new information. The checklists were then used to take notes regarding student behaviors and social interactions among the participants during the lessons. The results of all data collected during the observations are reported in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

The teachers in the experimental group were aware that non-evaluative fidelity check observations were a condition of participation before signing the participation consent forms. After several *Strong Start* lessons were complete, the first fidelity check observations were scheduled with the teachers. For ease in scheduling, the researcher scheduled these back to back with the teachers so that they could coordinate their schedules together. When the researcher

arrived in the teachers' classrooms for the first fidelity observation, the teachers were reminded that the observation was not to evaluate them but to watch the lesson. The second visit came two weeks later (after the one week time line adjustment due to Hurricane Sandy) and again, the researcher coordinated the visit so that the two teachers could be observed one after the other.

The fidelity checklists allowed the researcher to objectively note whether the teachers fully followed the lesson plan components prescribed by the *Strong Start* curriculum or not in addition to recording field notes regarding student behaviors during the lessons, social interactions between students, and interactions between teacher and students (Vygotsky, 1978). The combination of the fidelity checklists and the ability to enhance them with field notes helped to represent a more complete picture of what was happening in each of the experimental teachers' classrooms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

### **Researcher Journal and Communication Log**

In qualitative data collection, further trustworthiness and credibility can be enhanced through an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this case study, trustworthiness and credibility was enhanced through a written account throughout the data gathering and analysis process by maintaining a researcher's journal and communication log. The researcher's journal outlined a chronological list of research activities such as consultation with participants, entries into the field, maintaining a list of interviews conducted, coding efforts, and any research notes made. The researcher kept field notes when entering the research site and those were examined periodically to expose any unexpected information, relationships, and commonalities that arose and their possible significance (Patton, 2001). The communication log documented email communications between the researcher, RtI Coordinator, site school principal, and teacher participants. These communications served as important verification of data.

Beginning the qualitative phase of the study with the teacher interviews and subsequently conducting fidelity check observations and taking field notes, the researcher gained an independent view of the experience on which the teachers' language constructed their reality. Adding additional qualitative data from post-implementation interviews, teacher reflective journals, communication log and a researcher journal served to make the data interactive for the researcher at analysis.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

#### **Quantitative Measures**

Since the student participants in the study were minors and as such are protected, parental permission for the students to participate in the study was sought using parental consent forms (see Appendix C) before any data was collected. Students who were assessed had parental consent to participate in the study.

*Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills.* The researcher gathered data prior to treatment implementation (delivery of the *Strong Start* curriculum, the literature-based social skills curriculum) and after treatment implementation. These assessment sessions were scheduled in cooperation with the RtI Coordinator at the school's convenience. There were fifty-three (N = 53) students who had consent to participate in the assessment portion of the study. Because of time constraints placed on the researcher by the school district, forty (N = 40) of those students were assessed by the researcher in small groups of 3-5 students at a time (Whitcomb, 2009), using the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* (Schultz et al., 2004). The researcher explained to the children who she was, read the statement of assent (see Appendix C), and then administered the social skills assessment. In order for students to do their own work and not share answers, the students were set up for privacy using laminated manila folders (student

“offices”). The researcher read the test questions aloud to the students who indicated their answers on paper in pictorial form (see Figure 2, pg. 89). During the Facial Expressions subtest, since students had to indicate their answers verbally, students were prompted by the researcher to “think for yourself”, “make sure you give me your own answer”.

During the assessment sessions, if the students looked like they needed a break, had to use the restroom, or needed to leave the room for any reason, they were allowed to do so. Students were given a “bucket filler” sticker (their school positive behavior support theme) for their participation. Tests were hand scored by the researcher, then loaded into the *IBM Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)* version 21 software program for analysis. This procedure was followed for both the pretest and posttest assessment sessions.

***DIBELS Next.*** As stated previously, there were fifty-three (N = 53) students who had parental consent to participate in the assessment portion of the study. In the case of the *DIBELS Next* assessments (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011), the researcher received the data for the fall probes (first sound fluency and letter naming fluency) and the winter probes (Note: to be consistent with the pre-implementation data, all the winter probe scores were collected, however only the first sound fluency and letter naming fluency probes were used for analysis) from the target school’s RtI Coordinator for those fifty-three students since district staff followed their typical district-wide protocol for assessment administration. Data gathered was given to the researcher in Microsoft Excel file format. However, only the scores of the forty (N = 40) students pre and posttested with the social skills assessment were entered into the *SPSS* version 21 software for analysis. This procedure was followed for the pretest (fall) and posttest (winter) administration of the *DIBELS Next* probes.

## Qualitative Measures

**Teacher interviews and teacher reflective journals.** At the beginning and again at the conclusion of the study, participating teachers were interviewed in a semi-structured manner to gather qualitative data concerning their beliefs and perceptions about how prepared their students are upon entering kindergarten in terms of social-emotional development and reading skills, perceptions they had regarding social skills curriculum implementation past or present, effect the current social-emotional learning curriculum (or any others they have experienced) may or may not have had on the classroom environment or students, and any other information they care to share with the researcher. At the post-implementation interviews, the teacher reflective journals were collected. One teacher kept her journal on the computer while the other three teachers handwrote their journals. The researcher provided all participant teachers with the ten weekly prompts (see figure 4, pg. 98) and an opportunity for journaling open-ended thoughts.

**Program fidelity and researcher field observations.** Observations were scheduled with each experimental teacher at mutually agreed upon times with the teachers. *Strong Start* fidelity checklists (Whitcomb, 2009) were utilized to collect data and observation field notes during the two lessons with each experimental teacher. The researcher observed Teacher TE1 delivering Lesson 4 and Lesson 7 of the *Strong Start* curriculum. The researcher observed Teacher TE2 delivering Lessons 5 and Lesson 8 of the *Strong Start* curriculum. Table 8 illustrates the order in which data collection occurred.

Table 8

*Data Collection Sequence*

	Beginning of Semester	Beginning of Semester	Beginning of Semester		End of Semester	End of Semester	End of Semester
Groups	Teacher Data Interviews	Teacher Data Journals Distributed	Pretest <i>DIBELS</i> ACES	Treatment 10 weeks	Teacher Data Interviews	Teacher Data Journals Collected	Posttest <i>DIBELS</i> ACES
G1 Kindergarten	TE1	TE1	O1	<b>X1 Strong Start</b> - Traditional reading instruction/Code of Conduct	TE1	TE1	O5
G2 Kindergarten	TE2	TE2	O2	<b>X1 Strong Start</b> - Traditional reading instruction/Code of Conduct	TE2	TE2	O6
G3 Kindergarten	TC1	TC1	O3	<b>Control</b> - Traditional reading instruction/Code of Conduct	TC1	TC1	O7
G4 Kindergarten	TC2	TC2	O4	<b>Control</b> - Traditional reading instruction/Code of Conduct	TC2	TC2	O8

**Data Analysis**

The quantitative and qualitative data in this case study were analyzed based on the procedures deemed most appropriate for each research question. Detailed analyses will be presented in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

## **Quantitative Data Analysis Procedures**

The two quantitative research questions that were the basis for this study were:

- 1) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' social awareness, recognition of emotions, and improve their use of pro-social skills and if so, will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?
- 2) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' reading achievement and if so, will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?

Data collected from the quantitative measures were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical inquiry techniques. For each of the quantitative research questions, a general linear model comparison of means from pretest to posttest for different groups (whole group before x whole group after; experimental x control group) using paired sample t-test analyses were made. A paired samples t-test measures whether mean scores from within-subjects test groups vary over two test conditions (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). An examination of interaction effects between different sub-groups of students such as group x group, gender, ethnicity, and/or socioeconomic status were made using a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique (Gay et al., 2006). These analyses were done using the *SPSS* version 21 computer software program.

## **Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures**

A third research question required the collection and analysis of qualitative data. It was:

- 3) What are the kindergarten teachers' beliefs/perceptions regarding the following:
  - a. Social-emotional and reading skills with which the students enter their classrooms

- b. Strategies the students use to manage social issues and how the strategies change throughout the course of the semester
- c. How, if at all, the classroom environment and/or students are affected by the whole class implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum

During the qualitative research portion of the case study, interview and teacher reflective journal data collection and data analysis occurred concurrently. The multi-stage process involved gathering and analyzing data, characterizing and interpreting the data. Throughout the qualitative data analysis process, researchers chunk, examine their data for patterns then categorize the data (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1985). During this study, interviews were audio-recorded electronically and then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. During the analysis process, transcribed interview data was chunked into smaller units such as words and phrases, ordered into categories and continually reviewed and categorized throughout the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). Figure 6 illustrates the analysis process the researcher took in order to create the categories found within the qualitative data.

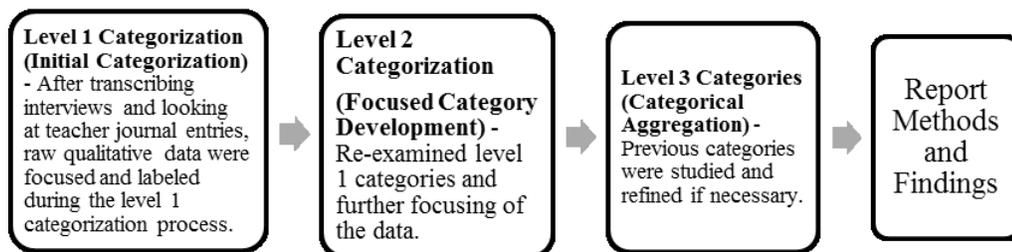


Figure 6. Process used to code the qualitative data. Adapted from Yin (2003).

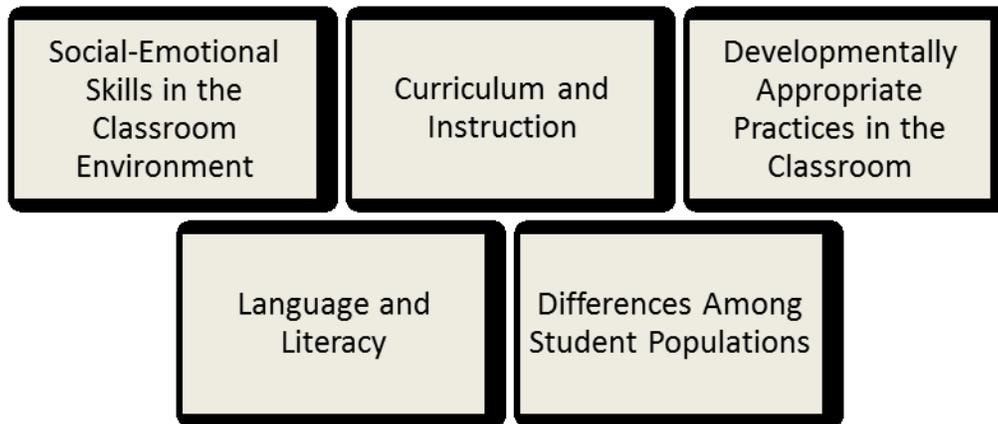
The researcher utilized a very basic computer-aided qualitative data analysis tool for the qualitative data analysis. *Weft Qualitative Data Analysis Program* (QDA) is simple to use, free,

open-source software for the analysis of textual data such as interview transcripts, field notes and other documents. The current version is *1.0.1*, which the researcher used in this study, was released in April 2006. The software allows documents to be imported directly into it for analysis.

Researchers can easily 'code-and-retrieve' the document text using the software. The software is also useful for adding notes called memos to codes or categories, searching the text, calculating codes statistically (if the study calls for that), and manipulating text if necessary. *Weft QDA* proposes a basic set of features for working with text documents, and doesn't make any particular assumptions about how to think about or take a broad view of the data (Fenton, 2012). *Weft QDA* uses an uncluttered interface. It's particularly aimed at those researchers who have a general familiarity with computer software, but no prior experience using qualitative data analysis software tools, making it perfect for this project and this researcher (Fenton, 2012).

Once the text of the interview transcripts, which were transcribed using Microsoft Word, were uploaded into the *Weft QDA* software, key words and phrases were marked in the document using the *Weft QDA* interface. Key words and phrases were marked and categorized using the software based on ideas or themes that appeared repeatedly throughout the text. Marked text was easily retrievable subsequently for visual representation, comparison, and/or review. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend diagramming data revealed in a visual matrix for analyzing patterns of responses for intra and cross-case analysis. In this way, when new categories were revealed, and as data were added, the data could be easily re-categorized if necessary (Merriam, 1988). As patterns in the data appeared, the researcher began placing the data in a color coded "code book" which was organized by category. Figure 7 represents the common aggregated categories (Yin, 2003) that were revealed after all three qualitative data sources were analyzed.

These categories became the themes by which the data is reported in Chapter 4 in this dissertation.



*Figure 7.* This figure illustrates the aggregated categories found in the qualitative data.

Teacher reflective journals were coded in the same way as the interview transcripts but did not need to be transcribed since they were already in written form. The fidelity checklists and observation data was put into a chart and coded similarly. A fidelity percentage was also figured based on the number of components of a lesson each experimental group teacher was able to complete for each observation giving each teacher a “fidelity of delivery score” for each lesson.

After all qualitative data was coded and quantitative data was collected and analyzed, the researcher was able to draw conclusions using connected results from both phases of the study in order to answer the research questions and progress the goals of the study forward (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

### **Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

As a researcher, in order to strengthen data, it is imperative to try to see everything that happens in a setting, and not just look for what suits the researcher’s bias or purpose in doing the research. A researcher should make an effort to understand the setting or context as a whole in order to make impartial interpretations of what is seen and heard (Berg & Smith, 1988). The

researcher should be direct about any latent beliefs and maintain procedural safeguards when collecting and reporting data (Berg & Smith, 1988). The following sections outline assumptions and limitations of this case study as well as the strategies the researcher took to minimize bias and strengthen the study data.

### **Measures, Population, Treatment, Time, Location**

In this case study, it was assumed that the data collected from the quantitative measures accurately evaluated what they were intended to measure. Care was taken in choosing the measures in that regard. The study was limited to kindergarten students due to the nature of the experimental treatment program. *Strong Start* is specifically designed for use with students in grades K-2. Therefore, this specific program's efficacy could not necessarily be generalized to older students. While the positive potential of the experimental treatment program used in this case study is recognized by the researcher, the findings of the study may not be generalized to other social-emotional learning curricula available to schools. The data collection was limited to the fall term of the 2012-2013 school year. Therefore, long range effects of the experimental treatment were not determined by this study. The study was conducted in a large, diverse elementary school in a northeastern county of Pennsylvania so there may be geographic limitations to the study.

As a case study design, this study used a variety of data sources which were collected to confirm and compare results while increasing trustworthiness and credibility. Multiple visits to the research setting and multiple contacts with the participants were made. Triangulation of data by making multiple visits to the research setting and multiple contacts with participants served to help minimize bias (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The data collected from the various methods in the study are time limited, since data collection occurred during a period, one school semester,

and cannot point to a sequence of events connected to the results of the study. Therefore, it is not possible to extrapolate causality from the case. However, in studies concerning kindergarten students, short-term duration studies may be integral as an initial exposure to a line of inquiry.

The small number of teacher participants in the study may have an effect on the study results. In addition, the researcher's role as a principal, albeit in another school district may have a role in teacher responses in the interviews and teacher reflective journals. There are four teacher participants involved in the qualitative data collection. However, because the researcher was able to establish a professional rapport and because there was a variety of data sources enabling rich, descriptive data to be gathered, this may not have played a significant role.

### **Attrition and Sample Size**

Class size in the target elementary school is small (control classes: N = 19, N = 19, experimental classes: N = 19, N = 18). There were a total of 75 students total across the four kindergarten classes (N = 75). Fifty-three students (N = 53) had parental consent to participate in the assessment portion of the study. Due to time constraints placed on the researcher by the school district, forty (N = 40) students were pre and posttested. There were four teacher participants. The small sample size allowed the researcher the ability to gain an in-depth, initial look at an area of inquiry requiring that boundaries be set for the case in order to make the case reasonable in scope (Patton, 2001). The small sample size gave the researcher a detailed look into what may be a typical context in a large public elementary school.

One can anticipate the natural movement of students through new enrollments, withdrawals, and/or absences. There was not a large attrition rate during the study. However, there were four students (N = 2 in the experimental group, N = 2 in the control group) who did not complete the study. This attrition rate was taken into account when the data analyses were

performed because *IBM SPSS* figures in attrition rate in the statistical analyses. This study uses a very small sample size. For this reason, the findings in this study cannot be broadened to the general population based on this study alone. However, the findings do point out the need for further and larger studies in the area of integration of social-emotional and academic development.

### **Contamination of Data**

Contamination of data was a concern due to the possibility that control group students would influence experimental group participants outside the classroom and vice-versa. However, based on the interview responses from the teachers, contamination of data did not become a concern for the researcher in terms student data because the children had minimal contact with each other during the course of the study. Selecting an additional group for comparison from a kindergarten class in one of the school district's other elementary schools, separate from the target schools and with similar demographics may have been used to offset this problem if it became an issue or if the study should ever be replicated.

### **Fidelity of Instruction**

Fidelity of teacher instruction was an initial worry to the researcher. Consequently, control classroom teachers were monitored via weekly email communication to ensure that district reading and language arts materials were taught consistently and on pace with the experimental group teachers. Experimental group teachers were monitored via weekly email communication to ensure that district reading and language arts materials were taught consistently as well as to ensure that the *Strong Start* lessons were delivered in a timely fashion. The experimental group teachers were periodically observed by the researcher using the *Strong Start* fidelity checklists (see Appendix J). To maintain consistency, teachers delivering the

*Strong Start* lessons were not permitted to deviate from the titles of the trade books suggested in the curriculum even though the curriculum allows for this under typical circumstances. Fidelity of instruction may have had bearing on the study data. Specific training should occur for a particular curriculum if one is to be implemented in a building in order to get the best possible outcome for the students (Kovaleski, Gickling, & Marrow, 1999; O'Donnell, 2008).

### **Maturation Effect**

In the case of research where children are involved across time, at the completion of a study, a researcher may not be able to determine whether the discrepancy between the beginning of the study to the end is due to time (permanent changes such as normal cognitive growth or maturation), or the treatment variable. In this study, the addition of a control group which was not exposed to the treatment variable helped to reduce the maturation effect of time (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

### **Researcher Bias**

The researcher has been an early childhood/elementary educator for over 25 years and a school principal for ten of those years. Many of the early years as an educator were formerly spent in the research setting's district so the researcher had tacit knowledge of the setting. In addition, although the researcher was not observing the teachers in an evaluative role, it is difficult to maintain total objectivity when one was an insider to the research setting and had tacit knowledge of the setting and is typically in an evaluator's role. To prevent researcher bias and increase trustworthiness, detailed field notes were taken as observations were made. These were made on the *Strong Start* fidelity checklists. The fidelity checklists were set up in a way to allow the observers to be neutral, rather than judgmental, in making observations, minimizing bias from the observations. A positive rapport was established with the teacher participants therefore

a relationship of intimidation was not a concern in this study. Transparency in the research process during this study was also maintained by logging in the researcher's journal the researcher's experiences, thoughts, values and how they influenced the researcher's presuppositions, doubts about any ideas, prejudices, expectations, and actions during the research process and referring to the researcher's journal when examining the data (Berg & Smith, 1988; Denzin, 1994).

### **Summary**

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum on kindergarten students' development and practice of pro-social behaviors, social awareness skills, and emergent reading skills and if there is a difference for children based on gender, ethnicity and/or socioeconomic status. Both the experimental and control groups were administered standardized social skills assessments before and after treatment, in addition to a district administered reading assessment which was also given before and after treatment implementation, in order to determine what effects, if any, the experimental treatment, *Strong Start* had on the kindergarten student participants for the study. The teacher interviews revealed the teachers' thoughts and beliefs on how their students arrive in kindergarten in terms of readiness in the social-emotional and emergent reading domains, how social-emotional skills affected the classroom environment and whether the literature based social-emotional learning curriculum had an effect on the students and classroom environment. The participant teachers kept reflective journals for the duration of the study (ten weeks) in order to record their thoughts and observations of their students. The researcher kept a communication

log, a researcher's journal and conducted field observations and fidelity of instruction checks to collect additional data. In Chapter 4 of this dissertation, all findings related to the research questions are reported.

CHAPTER 4  
RESEARCH FINDINGS

**Introduction**

The purpose of this case study was to explore the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum on kindergarten students' development and practice of pro-social behaviors, social awareness skills and emergent reading skills and to investigate kindergarten teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding the social-emotional and reading skills their students have when they enter the kindergarten classroom, the development and practice of social-emotional skills of their students and how their classes and/or the students are affected by the implementation of a social-emotional learning curriculum.

A case study design was chosen to address two different aspects of investigation reflected by the research questions:

- 1) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' social awareness, recognition of emotions, and improve their use of pro-social skills and if so, will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?
- 2) Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' reading achievement and if so, will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?
- 3) What are the kindergarten teachers' beliefs/perceptions regarding the following:
  - a) Social-emotional and emergent reading skills with which the students enter their classrooms
  - b) Strategies the students use to manage social issues and how the strategies change throughout the course of the semester

- c) How, if at all, the classroom environment and/or students are affected by the whole class implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum

The data sets in this case study addressed interrelated facets of the research topic and were treated with the same level of importance (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Creswell & Clark, 2011). Quantitative results will be presented followed by qualitative findings in order of research questions. Conclusions will be made based on both quantitative and qualitative findings.

There were fifty-three (N = 53) kindergarten students with permission to participate in the assessment portion of this study. The kindergarten students were all registered in the target elementary school. There were two experimental and two control classrooms. Due to time constraints placed on the researcher by the school district, forty (N = 40) of the students were assessed by the researcher using the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* pre and post implementation of Strong Start, the literature-based social-emotional curriculum. *DIBELS Next* fall and winter scores, for those forty students were provided to the researcher by the school district. *DIBELS Next* is administered as part of the district's normal testing protocol. The experimental and control groups, chosen randomly from the four kindergarten classes, had twenty (N = 20) student participants each. Each class's roster was determined prior to the study in accordance with the district class roster formulation protocol. Each class was considered an intact class for the purposes of investigation. See Tables 3 and 4 (p. 78) for specific demographics of each group.

Teacher participants were individuals who were teachers on staff at the target building who also met two criteria: (1) they were currently assigned to teach kindergarten in the target building and (2) they willingly volunteered to participate in the study. See Table 1 (p. 75) for teacher demographics. The data analyses for these research questions were done using the *IBM*

SPSS version 21 and *Weft Qualitative Data Analysis* version 1.0.1 computer software programs.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis in this case study happened as part of a multi-step process. The process included gathering and analyzing (characterizing and interpreting) all data. The process also encompassed integrating, comparing and contrasting the qualitative data with the quantitative data to support or refute findings. Formulation of possible theories to further explore was part of the data analysis process as well, since this small study was an initial look into an issue in a particular case and context.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

For each of the quantitative research questions, the data will be presented and analysis reported. The quantitative data analysis will be presented by each measure's subtest section and skill assessed.

**Students' social-emotional development.** Students' social-emotional skills data (social awareness/emotional accuracy) was collected using the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* (ACES). As previously noted, ACES is a standardized assessment for children consisting of three subtests: Social Behaviors, Social Situations, and Facial Expressions. In two of the subtests, children responded to short scenarios by labeling on paper what they believe the character's feelings are (happy, mad, sad, scared). In the third subtest, children responded verbally to what feelings (happy, mad, sad, scared) they thought photographs of children's facial expressions depicted (see Figure 2, pg. 89). Items are randomized throughout each subtest. There are items on each subtest that are ambiguous in describing behaviors, situations or depicting emotions that are not exclusively identified with one specific emotion. The ambiguous items on each subtest were given but not scored. These answers were not considered in the data analysis.

All other items were either scored as correct or incorrect answers.

The scoring for the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* (Schultz et al., 2004) for social awareness and emotional accuracy was completed by determining how many of the 40 items that are assigned a specific emotion (happy, sad, mad, or scared) were correctly identified by students. The ambiguous items were given but not scored. Each subtest of the ACES, Social Behaviors, Social Situations, and Facial Expressions, for each of the 40 students was scored and uploaded into *SPSS* for analysis. This was done for both the students' pretest and posttest scores.

Research Question #1 was measured using the *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills* (Schultz et al., 2004). The  $\alpha$  value for Research Question #1 is set at  $p < .05$ . Results for each subtest are reported separately.

**Social awareness/emotional awareness – social behaviors.** During the Social Behaviors subtest, the researcher read brief scenarios aloud to the students who had to identify on paper how they felt best described the protagonist's feelings (happy, sad, mad, scared – see Figure 2, p. 89) given the behavior from the scenario (see Appendix F). A paired samples t-test measures whether mean scores from within-subjects test groups vary over two test conditions (Gay et al., 2006). In this case, a paired samples t-test was used to compare the entire group's mean scores ( $N = 40$ ) before (Time 1) and after (Time 2) the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, *Strong Start*, was delivered. There was a no significant difference from pretest ( $M = 5.15$ ,  $SD = 2.14$ ) to posttest ( $M = 5.70$ ,  $SD = 2.77$ ),  $t(39) = -1.313$ ,  $p = .20$  for all groups ( $N = 40$ ) when scores were taken together. No effect size was calculated due to a non-significant result. There was also no significant difference for the experimental group ( $N = 20$ ) from pretest ( $M = 5.70$ ,  $SD = 2.30$ ) to posttest ( $M = 5.70$ ,  $SD = 2.66$ ),  $t(19) = .000$ ,  $p = 1.00$ . In addition, there was no statistically significant change for the control group ( $N=20$ ) from pretest ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD$

=1.88) to posttest ( $M = 5.70$ ,  $SD = 2.94$ ),  $t(19) = -1.74$ ),  $p = .10$ . These results, as shown in Table 9, only bear on Research Question #1 in regard to the mean scores for the group. Gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were not controlled for these analyses.

Table 9

*Paired Samples T-Test Bivariate Results ACES Social Behaviors Subtest Mean Scores*

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (two-tailed)
Experimental Group – Time 1	5.70	2.30	0.00	19	1.00
Experimental Group – Time 2	5.70	2.66			
Control Group – Time 1	4.60	1.88	-1.31	19	0.20
Control Group – Time 2	5.70	2.94			
Whole Group – Time 1	5.15	2.77	-1.74	39	0.10
Whole Group – Time 2	5.70	2.14			

**Social behaviors factorial analysis.** Factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used when a researcher wants to consider the effect of more than one factor on variations in the dependent variable. A factorial analysis is an analysis in which each level of each factor is paired up or overlapped with each level of every other factor. Factorial analysis gives the researcher an avenue to determine if there are interactions between the independent variables or other factors to be taken into account. An interaction infers that differences in one of the factors depend on differences in another factor (Gay et al., 2006).

In addition to a paired samples t-test, a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the data. Data were also analyzed to determine whether the basic assumptions of ANOVA procedures were satisfied. Levene's Test of Equality of Homogeneity of Variance was non-significant for both the experimental group and control group together suggesting that the data are homoscedastic. That is, there is equality of covariance; thus, this assumption is met. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance is also non-significant suggesting there is equality of covariance; thus this assumption is also met. Experimental group students' mean scores from pretest ( $M = 5.70$ ) to post test ( $M = 5.70$ ) did not gain at all, while the students in the control group's mean scores did improve slightly from pretest ( $M = 4.60$ ) to posttest ( $M = 5.70$ ). However, by comparison, this is not statistically significant when contrasted with the experimental group.

Wilk's Lambda was statistically non-significant ( $\Lambda = .96, p = .19$ ) for the main effect of time. This suggests that scores over time did not significantly change within each group. No effect size was calculated due to a non-significant result. Wilk's Lambda was also statistically non-significant ( $\Lambda = .96, p = .19$ ) for the interaction effect of time and group. This indicates no effect between time, treatment and group. No effect size was calculated again due to non-significant results. The main effect of group was non-significant ( $F(1,38) = 6.05, p = .19, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ) which implies that there was no statistical difference between the experimental group and control group. These results lead to the conclusion that the treatment, the *Strong Start* curriculum, did not have an overall effect between the groups and the experimental group's change over time was not associated with the treatment being delivered in terms of the Social Behaviors subtest and the measurement of social awareness and emotional accuracy skills.

In order to examine whether gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and group contributed to the scores students received, a between-subjects analysis revealed that neither gender ( $F(1,35) = 3.62, p = .07, \eta_p^2 = .09$ ), ethnicity<sup>1</sup> ( $F(1,35) = 2.12, p = .16, \eta_p^2 = .06$ ), socioeconomic status ( $F(1,35) = 0.46, p = .50, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ), nor group ( $F(1,35) = 0.87, p = 0.36, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ) made a statistically significant contribution to the overall findings. Based on these results it can be concluded that there were no differences in test scores among children as a function of their gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Please note that because sample size was not large enough, ethnicity was dichotomized as white versus “other” for purposes of analysis. The results of the aforementioned analyses are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

*Test Results of Between-Subjects Effects ACES Social Behaviors Subtest*

Group	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender (17 boys/ 23 girls)	3.62	1,35	0.07	0.09
Ethnicity (21 white/ 19 “other”)	2.12	1,35	0.16	0.06
SES (7 Low SES/ 33 Non-Free/ Reduced Lunch)	0.46	1,35	0.50	0.01
Group	0.87	1,35	0.36	0.02

When taken together, it is evident that while the scores did change over pretest and posttest administrations of the ACES Social Behaviors subtest for the experimental and control groups, the change in mean scores of the groups from pretest to posttest was not significantly different. Therefore any change in test scores cannot be attributed to the treatment delivered

(*Strong Start*, the social-emotional learning curriculum). Additionally, according to the Social Behaviors subtest results, there is no substantiation that gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or group had any interaction effect on any of the Social Behaviors subtest scores.

**Social awareness – use of social skills in social situations.** During the Social Situations subtest, the researcher read brief scenarios aloud to the students who identified on paper what they felt best described the protagonist's feelings (happy, sad, mad, scared) in the situation presented (see Appendix F). A paired samples t-test was again used to compare the entire group's mean scores (N=40) before (Time 1) and after (Time 2) the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, *Strong Start*, was delivered to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on students' social awareness and emotional accuracy based on the ACES Social Situations subtest scores using a comparison of means analysis. There was a no significant difference from pretest ( $M = 5.78, SD = 2.67$ ) to posttest ( $M = 6.28, SD = 3.00$ ),  $t(39) = -.84, p = .41$  for all groups (N=40) when scores were taken together. No effect size was calculated due to a non-significant result. There was no significant difference for the experimental group (N=20) from pretest ( $M=6.00, SD=2.28$ ) to posttest ( $M=6.35, SD=3.20$ ),  $t(19) = -.39, p = .70$ . In addition, there was no statistically significant change for the control group (N=20) from pretest ( $M=5.55, SD=2.61$ ) to posttest ( $M=6.20, SD=2.88$ ),  $t(19) = -.80, p = .43$ . These results, as shown in Table 11 only bear on Research Question #1 in regard to the mean scores for the entire group. Gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were not controlled for these analyses. Nevertheless, these results suggest that there was no main effect over time in any of the groups.

Table 11

*Paired Samples T-Test Bivariate Results ACES Social Situations Subtest Mean Scores*

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (two-tailed)
Experimental Group – Time 1	6.00	2.28	-0.39	19	0.70
Experimental Group – Time 2	6.35	3.20			
Control Group – Time 1	5.55	2.61	-0.80	19	0.43
Control Group – Time 2	6.20	2.88			
Whole Group – Time 1	5.78	2.67	-0.84	39	0.41
Whole Group – Time 2	6.28	3.00			

**Social situations factorial analysis.** As was done for the first subtest, a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the data to determine if there were interactions among the independent variables and the outcome variable. Data were also analyzed to determine whether the basic assumptions of ANOVA procedures were satisfied. Levene's Test of Equality of Homogeneity of Variance was non-significant for both the experimental and control groups suggesting that the data are homoscedastic. That is, there is equality of covariance so this assumption is met. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance is also non-significant suggesting there is equality of covariance so this assumption is also met. Experimental students' mean scores from pretest ( $M = 6.00$ ) to post test ( $M = 6.35$ ) gained slightly, while the students in the control group's mean scores improved slightly more from pretest ( $M = 5.55$ ) to posttest ( $M = 6.20$ ). However, by comparison, this is still not statistically significant when compared to the experimental group.

Wilk's Lambda is statistically non-significant ( $\Lambda = .98, p = .41$ ) for the main effect of time. This suggests that scores over time did not significantly change within each group. No effect size was calculated due to a non-significant result. Wilk's Lambda is also statistically non-significant ( $\Lambda = .10, p = .81$ ) for the interaction effect of time and group. This indicates no interaction effect between time, treatment and group. No effect size was calculated again due to a getting a non-significant result. The main effect of group was non-significant ( $F(1,38) = 0.20, p = .66, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ) which implies that there was no statistical difference between the experimental group and control group, which also helps the researcher to conclude that the treatment did not have an overall effect between the groups. That is, the experimental group's change over time did not necessarily have to do with the treatment, *Strong Start*, being delivered in terms of the Social Situations subtest an in evaluating social awareness and emotional accuracy skills in social situations.

Further analysis to examine whether gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and/or group contributed to the scores students received revealed that neither gender ( $F(1,35) = 3.62, p = .22, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ), ethnicity<sup>1</sup> ( $F(1,35) = 2.12, p = .21, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ), socioeconomic status ( $F(1,35) = 0.54, p = .47, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ), nor group ( $F(1,35) = 0.00, p = .99, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ), made a statistically significant contribution to the overall model. From this the conclusion can be drawn that there are no differences in the results for children based on gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and group. Please note that because sample size was not large enough, ethnicity was dichotomized as white versus "other" for purposes of analysis. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

*Test Results of Between-Subjects Effects ACES Social Situations Subtest*

Group	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender (17 boys/ 23 girls)	1.60	1,35	0.22	0.04
Ethnicity (21 white/ 19 “other”)	1.61	1,35	0.21	0.04
SES (7 Low SES/ 33 Non-Free/ Reduced Lunch Group)	0.54	1,35	0.47	0.02
	0.00	1,35	0.99	0.00

When taken together, just as in the case of the Social Behaviors Subtest, there is evidence to suggest that while the scores did shift from pretest and posttest administrations of the ACES Social Situations subtest for the experimental and control groups, the mean scores of the groups from pretest to posttest were not significantly different. Therefore any change in test scores cannot be fully attributed to the treatment delivered (*Strong Start*, the social-emotional learning curriculum). Additionally, according to the Social Situations subtest results, there is no substantiation that gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or group had any interaction effect on any of the Social Situations subtest scores. Nevertheless, these results suggest that there was no main effect over time in any of the groups.

**Recognition of others’ emotions/emotional awareness – facial expressions.** During the Facial Expressions subtest, the researcher showed photographs of children to students. Each photograph depicted a child showing an emotion through a facial expression. The students

verbally indicated what emotion (happy, sad, mad, scared) they thought each photograph best depicted. A paired samples t-test was again used to compare the entire group's mean scores (N=40) before (Time 1) and after (Time 2) the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, *Strong Start*, was delivered to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on students' ability to recognize emotions of others based on the ACES Facial Expressions subtest scores using a comparison of means analysis.

As Table 13 shows, there was a statistically non-significant difference in scores from pretest ( $M = 13.05$ ,  $SD = 2.63$ ) to posttest ( $M = 12.23$ ,  $SD = 4.74$ ),  $t(39) = 1.19$ ,  $p = .24$  for all groups (N=40) when scores were taken together. No effect size was calculated due to a non-significant result. There was also a statistically non-significant difference in mean score for the experimental group (N=20) from pretest ( $M = 14.00$ ,  $SD = 1.97$ ) to posttest ( $M = 12.45$ ,  $SD = 5.06$ ),  $t(19) = 1.33$ ,  $p = .20$ . In addition, there was a statistically non-significant difference for the control group as well (N=20) from pretest ( $M = 12.10$ ,  $SD = 2.90$ ) to posttest ( $M = 12.00$ ,  $SD = 4.52$ ),  $t(19) = .14$ ,  $p = .89$ . Gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were not controlled for in these analyses and these results only bear on Research Question #1 in regard to the mean scores for the entire group. Nevertheless, these results suggest that there was no main effect over time in any of the groups.

Table 13

*Paired Samples T-Test Bivariate Results ACES Facial Expressions Subtest Mean Scores*

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (two-tailed)
Experimental Group – Time 1	14.00	1.97	1.33	19	0.20
Experimental Group – Time 2	12.45	5.06			
Control Group – Time 1	12.10	2.90	0.14	19	0.89
Control Group – Time 2	12.00	4.52			
Whole Group – Time 1	13.05	2.63	1.19	39	0.24
Whole Group – Time 2	12.23	4.74			

**Facial expressions factorial analysis.** As in the last two models, a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to determine what, if any, the effects factors such as gender, ethnicity, and/or socioeconomic status had on variations on the dependent variable, in this case, the social skill assessment results. Data were also analyzed to determine whether the basic assumptions of ANOVA procedures were satisfied. Levene's Test of Equality of Homogeneity of Variance was non-significant for both the experimental and control groups suggesting that the data are homoscedastic. That is, there is equality of covariance so this assumption is met. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance is also non-significant suggesting there is equality of covariance so this assumption is also met. Experimental students' mean scores from pretest ( $M = 14.00$ ) to post test ( $M = 12.45$ ) decreased, while the students in the control group's mean scores also dropped, although less so, from pretest ( $M = 12.10$ ) to posttest ( $M = 12.00$ ). However, by

comparison, this is still not statistically significant when compared to decrease made by the experimental group.

Wilk's Lambda is statistically non-significant ( $\Lambda = .96, p = .24$ ) for the main effect of time. This suggests that scores over time did not significantly change within each group. No effect size was calculated due to a non-significant result. Wilk's Lambda is also statistically non-significant ( $\Lambda = .97, p = .30$ ) for the interaction effect of time and group. This indicates no interaction effect between time, treatment and group. No effect of size was calculated again due to a getting a non-significant result. The main effect of group was non-significant ( $F(1,38)=1.41, p = .24, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ) which points towards no statistical difference between the experimental group and control group. This leads to the conclusion that the treatment did not have an overall effect between groups. It cannot be concluded that the experimental group's change over time did not have to do with the treatment, *Strong Start*, being delivered in terms of the Facial Expressions subtest.

Furthermore, when an analysis to examine whether gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and/or group contributed to the scores students was received was completed, data revealed that neither gender ( $F(1,35)=1.51, p = .23, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ), ethnicity<sup>1</sup> ( $F(1,35)=.69, p = .41, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ), socioeconomic status ( $F(1,35)=.00, p = .99, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ) nor group ( $F(1,35)=1.06, p = .31, \eta_p^2 = .03$ ) made a statistically significant contribution to the overall model. From this, the assumption can be made that there are no differences in the results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Please note that because sample size was not large enough, ethnicity was dichotomized as white versus "other" for purposes of analysis. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

*Test Results of Between-Subjects Effects ACES Facial Expressions Subtest*

Group	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender (17 boys/ 23 girls)	1.51	1,35	0.23	0.04
Ethnicity (21 white/ 19 “other”)	0.69	1,35	0.41	0.02
SES (7 Low SES/ 33 Non-Free/ Reduced Lunch)	0.00	1,35	0.99	0.00
Group	1.06	1,35	0.31	0.03

Just as in the case of the Social Behaviors and Social Situations subtests, when taken together, there is evidence to suggest that while the scores did shift from pretest and posttest administrations, in this case there was a decrease in scores of the ACES Facial Expressions subtest for the experimental and control groups, the mean scores of the groups from pretest to posttest were not significantly different and cannot be fully attributed to the treatment delivered (*Strong Start*, the social-emotional learning curriculum). Moreover, according to the Facial Expressions subtest data, there is nothing to validate that gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status or group had any interaction effect on any of the Facial Expressions subtest scores.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis – Research Question # 2**

Research Question #2 was evaluation using the *DIBELS Next* reading assessment. The researcher obtained the *DIBELS Next* reading data for students who had parental permission to participate in the assessment portion of the study and then subsequently used only the scores of

the forty (N = 40) students who were also assessed with the social skills assessment. The reading data was obtained from the building RTI Coordinator since the assessment is part of the normal school district testing protocol. The school district staff administers the *DIBELS Next* reading assessment (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011) three times per year (fall, winter, and spring). However, for purposes of this case study only the fall and winter letter naming fluency and first sound fluency scores were used for data analysis.

*DIBELS Next* is designed to measure early literacy skills that are the basis for early reading success. The assessment consists of a set of procedures that can be administered to children in grades kindergarten through six. They are short, one minute probes and are typically given individually to students and are compared to benchmarks three times per school year. Subtests of the *DIBELS Next* assessment include fluency probes for initial “first” sounds, letter naming, phoneme segmentation, nonsense words, oral reading, oral retelling, and word use. Students in kindergarten are given the first sound fluency (FSF) and letter naming fluency (LNF) probes in the fall and again in the winter with the addition of the phoneme segmentation and nonsense word fluency probes in the winter. To keep the assessments consistent, only FSF and LNF probes were used for both pre and posttest analysis. Unless otherwise noted, the  $\alpha$  value for Research Question #2 is set to  $p < .001$ .

As previously noted, the second research question asked whether or not the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increased the students’ reading achievement. The subsection of the second research question asked whether there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status.

***DIBELS Next* first sound fluency (FSF).** During the first sound fluency probe, students are asked to identify as many initial sounds/sound clusters in words as they can in a one minute

timed session. Just as with the social skill assessment, this study used a paired samples t-test to compare the entire group's *DIBELS Next* mean scores ( $N = 40$ ) before (Time 1 – the fall administration of the test) and after (Time 2 – the winter administration of the test) the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, *Strong Start*, was implemented. The FSF probe measured the students' ability to identify the first sounds in words, an early predictor of reading achievement (Ehri & Sweet, 1991; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Torgeson et al., 2007) using a comparison of means analysis.

There was a significant difference from pretest ( $M = 15.15$ ,  $SD = 12.89$ ) to posttest ( $M = 38.70$ ,  $SD = 13.91$ ),  $t(39) = -8.79$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $d = 1.75$ ) for all groups ( $N = 40$ ) when scores were taken together. The effect size for this analysis was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a *very* large effect. There was also a significant improvement in mean score for the experimental group ( $N = 20$ ) from pretest ( $M = 19.70$ ,  $SD = 11.13$ ) to posttest ( $M = 33.05$ ,  $SD = 15.21$ ),  $t(19) = -4.63$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $d = 1.00$ ). The effect size for this analysis was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a *very* large effect as well. In addition, the control group significantly improved from pretest to posttest as well ( $N = 20$ ) from ( $M = 10.60$ ,  $SD = 13.17$ ) to posttest ( $M = 44.35$ ,  $SD = 9.93$ ),  $t(19) = -10.56$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $d = 2.89$ ). The effect size for this analysis was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a *very* large effect also. Gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were not controlled for these analyses and these results, as summarized in Table 15 only bear on Research Question #2 in regard to the mean scores for the entire group. Nevertheless, when taken together, the results suggest statically significant increases in scores for all three groups from time 1 (fall) to time 2 (winter).

Table 15

*Paired Samples T-Test Bivariate Results DIBELS FSF Subtest Mean Scores*

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (two-tailed)
Experimental Group – Fall	19.70	11.12	-4.63	19	0.001
Experimental Group – Winter	33.05	15.21			
Control Group – Fall	10.60	13.17	-10.56	19	0.001
Control Group – Winter	38.70	9.93			
Whole Group - Fall	15.15	12.89	-8.79	39	0.001
Whole Group – Winter	44.35	13.91			

**FSF factorial analysis.** Just as in Research Question #1, a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to determine what, if any, effects factors that gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and/or group had on variations on the dependent variable, which in this case, is the *DIBELS* reading FSF probes. Data were also analyzed to determine whether the basic assumptions of ANOVA procedures were satisfied. Levene's Test of Equality of Homogeneity of Variance was non-significant for both the experimental and control groups suggesting that the data are homoscedastic. That is to say, there is equality of covariance so this assumption is met. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance is also non-significant suggesting there is equality of covariance so this assumption is also met.

Wilk's Lambda is statistically significant ( $\Lambda = .24, p = .00, \eta_p^2 = .76$ ) for the main effect of time. This suggests that scores did significantly change over time within each group with a large effect size. Wilk's Lambda is also statistically significant ( $\Lambda = .63, p = .00, \eta_p^2 = .37$ ) for the

interaction effect of time and group. This indicates an interaction effect between time of treatment and group, which is to be expected. The effect size is moderate. The main effect of group was non-significant ( $F(1,38)=.11, p = .74, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ), which points towards no statistical difference between the experimental group and control group. Thus the researcher concludes that the treatment did not have an effect between groups and that the groups' change over time did not necessarily have to do with the treatment, *Strong Start*, being delivered in terms of FSF subtest.

In addition, further analysis to examine whether gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and/or group contributed to the scores students was received was completed, data revealed that neither gender ( $F(1,35)=.77, p = .39, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ), ethnicity<sup>1</sup> ( $F(1,35)=.01, p = .93, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ), socioeconomic status ( $F(1,35)=.000, p = .98, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ), nor group ( $F(1,35)=.02, p = .88, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ) made a statistically significant contribution to the overall model. From these findings it can be stated that there are no differences in the results for children based on gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and group. Please note that because sample size was not large enough, ethnicity was dichotomized as white versus "other" for purposes of analysis. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 16.

Table 16

*Test Results of Between-Subjects Effects DIBELS FSF Probes*

Group	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender (17 boys/ 23 girls)	0.77	1,35	0.23	0.04
Ethnicity (21 white/ 19 “other”)	0.01	1,35	0.93	0.00
SES (7 Low SES/ 33 Non-Free/ Reduced Lunch)	0.00	1,35	0.98	0.00
Group	0.02	1,35	0.88	0.00

When taken together, there is substantiation that scores changed from pretest to posttest administration for the experimental and control groups with respect to the first sound fluency scores. However, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the experimental group had significantly higher scores over time as compared to the control group nor can the scores be fully attributed to the treatment delivered (*Strong Start*, the social-emotional learning curriculum). Furthermore, according to the FSF subtest data, there is nothing to validate that gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or group had any interaction effect on any of the FSF subtest scores.

***DIBELS Next letter naming fluency (LNF).*** During the letter naming fluency probe, students are presented with upper and lower case letters in random order and must identify as many as they can in a minute long timed session. As with the FSF probes, a paired samples t-test was also used to evaluate the impact of the social-emotional learning curriculum, *Strong Start*, on students’ ability to identify letters (upper and lower case) presented in random order, an early

predictor of future reading success (Ehri & Sweet, 1991; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Torgeson et al., 2007), using a comparison of means analysis. The study used of a comparison of means analysis to compare the entire group's (N = 40) mean scores from before (Time 1 – fall administration of the assessment) to after (Time 2 – winter administration of the assessment) the implementation of the curriculum.

There was a significant difference from pretest ( $M = 25.33$ ,  $SD = 14.86$ ) to posttest ( $M = 42.51$ ,  $SD = 43.77$ ),  $t(38) = -8.60$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $d = 1.16$ ) for all groups (N = 40) when scores were taken together. The effect size for this analysis was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a *very* large effect. There was also a significant improvement in mean score for the experimental group (N = 20) from pretest ( $M = 31.68$ ,  $SD = 14.24$ ) to posttest ( $M = 43.42$ ,  $SD = 14.30$ ),  $t(18) = -5.21$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $d = .82$ . The effect size for this analysis was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a strong effect.

In addition, the control group significantly improved from pretest to posttest as well (N = 20) from ( $M = 19.30$ ,  $SD = 13.07$ ) to posttest ( $M = 41.65$ ,  $SD = 15.51$ ),  $t(19) = -7.85$ ),  $p = .00$ ,  $d = 1.56$ . The effect size for this analysis was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a *very* large effect also. Gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were not controlled for these analyses and these results, as summarized in Table 17 only bear on Research Question #2 in regard to the mean scores for the entire group.

Table 17

*Paired Samples T-Test Bivariate Results DIBELS LNF Subtest Mean Scores*

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (two-tailed)
Experimental Group – Fall	31.68	14.24	-5.20	19	0.001
Experimental Group – Winter	43.42	14.30			
Control Group – Fall	19.30	13.17	-7.85	19	0.001
Control Group – Winter	41.65	15.51			
Whole Group - Fall	25.33	14.86	-8.60	39	0.001
Whole Group – Winter	42.51	14.77			

**LNF factorial analysis.** As before with previous models, a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine what, if any, the effects factors such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and/or group had on variations on the dependent variable, in this case, the *DIBELS* subtest letter naming fluency. Data were also analyzed to determine whether the basic assumptions of ANOVA procedures were satisfied. Levene's Test of Equality of Homogeneity of Variance was non-significant for both the experimental and control groups suggesting that the data are homoscedastic. That is, there is equality of covariance so this assumption is met. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance is also non-significant suggesting there is equality of covariance so this assumption is also met.

Wilk's Lambda is statistically significant ( $\Lambda = .30, p = .00, \eta_p^2 = .70$ ) for the main effect of time suggesting that scores did significantly change over time within each group with a large

effect size. Wilk's Lambda is also statistically significant ( $\Lambda=.81, p = .00, \eta_p^2 = .19$ ) for the interaction effect of time and group. This indicates an interaction effect between time of treatment and group, which is to be expected. The effect size is relatively weak. The main effect of group was non-significant ( $F(1,37) = 2.83, p = .10, \eta_p^2 = .07$ ), which points towards no statistical difference between the experimental group and control group. Thus the researcher concludes that the treatment did not have an effect between groups and that the groups' change over time were unrelated to the treatment, *Strong Start*, being delivered in terms of the LNF subtest.

Further analysis was also conducted to determine the effect that gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and/or group had in terms of the scores students received and the data revealed that gender ( $F(1,34) = .56, p = .25, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ), socioeconomic status ( $F(1,34) = 3.58, p = .67, \eta_p^2 = .10$ ) and group ( $F(1,34) = 3.05, p = .90, \eta_p^2 = .08$ ) did not make a statistically significant contribution to the overall model. However, *ethnicity*<sup>1</sup> ( $F(1,34) = 4.69, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .12$ ), does appear to make a significant contribution to the predictive model. From this it can be concluded that although there are no differences in the results for children based on gender, socioeconomic status and group, being white will lead to an improvement in test scores.

When taken together, there is evidence to suggest that scores did change over time for the experimental and control groups with respect to the *DIBELS* LNF subtest; however, no evidence exists to suggest that the experimental group for LNF had higher scores over time that were statistically different from those of the control group. The only evidence with respect to the second research question and the LNF subtest is that white students did better than non-whites in the sample. Please note that because sample size was not large enough, ethnicity was

dichotomized as white versus “other” for purposes of analysis. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 18.

Table 18

*Test Results of Between-Subjects Effects DIBELS LNF Probes*

Group	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender (17 boys/ 23 girls)	0.56	1,35	0.46	0.02
Ethnicity (21 white/ 19 “other”)	4.69	1,35	0.04	0.12
SES (7 Low SES/ 33 Non-Free/ Reduced Lunch	3.58	1,35	0.67	0.10
Group	3.05	1,35	0.90	0.08

***DIBELS Next Benchmark Progress Group to Group Posttest Comparison***

Benchmarks are steps along the way to of learning a new skill. Benchmarks give teachers and other school staff a system off monitoring all students’ toward mastering the new skill. In the case of this study, teachers in the target research site use the *DIBELS Next* assessment to determine the extent to which students have mastered early reading skills (Olson, 2005; Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011). First sound fluency (FSF) and letter naming fluency (LNF) probes were used in this case study to answer Research Question #2 which asks whether the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum will increase the students’ reading achievement and if so, will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status. *DIBELS Next* was used as the measure to answer

this research questions. Figure 8 shows the fall and winter benchmark cut scores for the first sound fluency (FSF) probes for the *DIBELS Next* assessment administered to the participant students. There are no benchmark cut scores set for the letter naming fluency (LNF) probes because it is expected by the end of kindergarten students will recognize all 26 upper case and 26 lower case letters (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011).

Measure	Score Level	Likely Need for Support	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year
FSF	At or Above Benchmark	Likely to Need Core Support	10 +	30 +	
	Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Strategic Support	5 - 9	20 - 29	
	Well Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Intensive Support	0 - 4	0 - 19	

*Figure 8.* This chart shows the benchmark cut scores for the fall and winter first sound fluency probes for the *DIBELS Next* assessment (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011).

As previously noted, despite the lack of significant findings in the quantitative data for the social skills assessment scores overall, the students did make gains except in the area of identifying facial expressions. In comparing the experimental group children to the control children, the control group children made slightly better gains in terms of both the letter naming fluency and first sound fluency scores with controls for gender, socioeconomic, ethnicity, and group effects. The only exception to this was that white students scored slightly better than “other” students on the letter naming fluency probes. Teacher effects were not controlled for in the data results, which could potentially be a cause for the difference in scores between the experimental and control group children. The experimental group children spent one 45 minute instructional period per day per week working in *Strong Start*, the literature-based social skills curriculum used as the treatment variable in this case study. The experimental group teachers

replaced the regular read aloud/shared reading time and taught social skills content through the *Strong Start* read aloud stories and various activities that complement the stories versus the control group classes which continued to utilize their regular district reading curriculum/read aloud time. In determining whether or not the children in the experimental group lost reading achievement ground as compared to the control group children, the researcher compared the number of children in each group who reached the winter benchmark scores for each probe. Table 19 illustrates a summary of those results against the *DIBELS Next* established winter benchmarks.

Table 19

*Student DIBELS Benchmark Information by Classroom (Post-Implementation)*

Winter Benchmarks <i>DIBELS Next</i>	No. of Students Per Class Reaching Benchmark Goals	Overall Percentage
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) - None set by Assessment 26 Upper Case Letters/26 Lower Case Letters - 42/80%		
Teacher	TE1 – 7 TE2 – 3	Experimental 50%
Teacher	TC1 – 5 TC2 - 3	Control 40%
	Total - 18/40	Total 45%
First Sound Fluency (FSF) - 30 At Benchmark and Above		
Teacher	TE1 - 8 TE2 - 6	Experimental 70%
Teacher	TC1 – 11 TC2 - 7	Control 90%
	Total - 32/40	80%

*Note.* \*Benchmark levels according to *DIBELS Next* assessment (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011)

At the winter time point, not every participant student knew all 52 letters, but the students had until the end of the year to meet that expectation. However, using 42 (80%) of the letters

known as a cut point, 50 percent of the assessed participant experimental group students met that benchmark, while 40 percent of the participant control group students met that benchmark. As it would seem to the researcher, the experimental group children did not lose any reading ground in terms of the specific skill of letter naming fluency. The benchmark goal in winter for the first sound fluency skill is for children to be able to identify 30 sounds or more successfully in a one minute time period. Control group children did slightly better with this skill with 90 percent of the children meeting the benchmark as compared to the experimental group children of which 70 percent met the benchmark. Overall, the whole group did not lose ground in reading. Eighty percent of the children have a solid foundation with their initial sounds and they had the remainder of the year to improve on this in addition to adding phoneme segments and whole words read. In addition, teachers did not indicate that they had any grave concerns regarding the students' reading progress through their journal entries or interview statements.

### **Summary of the Quantitative Findings**

The data taken from the ACES suggests that while the scores did change slightly (*increased*) from pre-test and post-test administrations of the ACES Social Behaviors and Social Situations subtests for the experimental and control groups, the mean scores of the groups from pre-test to post-test were not statistically significantly different over time. Thus changes in scores cannot be attributed to the implementation of *Strong Start*, the social-emotional learning curriculum. Additionally, according to both subtest results, there is no evidence that gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status had any interaction effect on either of the subtests' scores. In terms of the Facial Expressions subtest, there is evidence to suggest that while the scores did change (*decreased*) for the experimental and control groups, the mean scores of the groups from pre-test to post-test was not a statistically significantly different in scores. Thus any change in

scores cannot be attributed to the delivery of *Strong Start*, the social-emotional learning curriculum. Moreover, according to the Facial Expressions subtest data, there is nothing to validate that gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status had any interaction effect on any of the Facial Expressions subtest scores.

For the reading assessments, *DIBELS Next* first sound fluency and letter naming fluency probes, there is data to corroborate that scores changed (*increased*) from pre-test to post-test administration for the experimental and control groups. This was to be expected because of the time effect. Some of the reading data were clearly contradictory to expectations. The initial expectation was that students would show growth over time and that the experimental group children would show greater gains in FSF and LNF. While not statistically significant, exactly the reverse happened – the control group students showed greater gains in FSF and LNF. This may have been caused by a statistical phenomenon called regression to the mean (RTM) which is a statistical regression artifact (Stigler, 1997).

Many interaction effects were controlled for in the data analyses. However, teacher effect was not. It may be plausible, given other information such as teacher background and experience at the kindergarten level and other qualitative data the researcher gathered (observation data), that this may have led to this contradictory result as well. None of the changes in test scores for any of the groups can be attributed to the delivery of *Strong Start*, the social-emotional learning curriculum. Furthermore, there is no evidence to confirm that gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status had any interaction effect on any of the FSF subtest scores. With respect to the LNF probes, however, there is evidence in the LNF subtest data that white students did better than “others” in the sample. This result points to a critical issue that underscores the need to be

addressed even at this early grade level considering the ongoing achievement gap in American public schools (Jencks & Phillips, 1998).

Research has reported using children's literature for teaching social-emotional skills can be very useful to both students and teachers. Literature is a resource for teaching social-emotional skills while incorporates methods for teaching early reading skills. In terms of this case study, the data suggests the experimental group students benefitted in the exposure to the social skills through the literature while they did not lose ground in reading instruction since their winter reading benchmark scores were close to or exceeded the control group students' winter benchmark scores.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

**Research question #3.** The purpose of the qualitative phase of the study was to allow the researcher an opportunity to investigate teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding the following: What are the kindergarten teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding the social-emotional and emergent reading skills with which the students enter their classrooms, the strategies the students use to manage social issues and how those strategies change throughout the course of the semester and how, if at all, the classroom environment and/or students are affected by the implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum. Knowing what teachers' beliefs and perceptions are in terms of social-emotional development and academic readiness may help bridge the gap between policy and practice (Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

The qualitative data collected and analyzed in this case study was as part of a multi-step process. The process included gathering data, characterizing and interpreting the data, integrating and comparing and contrasting the qualitative data with the quantitative data. Interviews were

recorded electronically and were transcribed by the researcher in Microsoft Word. Teachers, as part of a member checking system, were given the transcripts to review for accuracy prior to the coding process. During the analysis process, interview data was chunked into units, coded, ordered into categories and continually reviewed and re-coded (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher employed *Weft QDA*, a very basic computer-aided qualitative data analysis tool for the qualitative data analysis. Words, segments of words and phrases (the codes) were marked based on emerging categories that showed a relationship to any of the research questions. The categories became the themes by which the data will be reported. Teacher reflective journals were coded in the same way. In addition, the fidelity check observations and field notes were coded in a similar manner with the exception of the fidelity scores, which are given in a numerical percentage. All of the elements of qualitative data helped to further explain quantitative findings (and vice versa) and provide a more comprehensive picture of the lines of inquiry by providing a rich, descriptive picture of the teachers' and students' context.

**Qualitative data - categorical analysis and the development of themes.** Once the interview data was transcribed from the audio recordings, the journals collected and the observations completed, data analysis and reduction began with reading and re-reading of the qualitative data. The categories began to emerge with the initial reading of each transcript, journal entry, and observation notes. Next, an open coding procedure was utilized for the identification of emergent categories which then became themes for reporting purposes. The themes that developed for reporting purposes were as follows: (1) social-emotional skills in the classroom environment, (2) curriculum and instruction, (3) developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom, (4) language and literacy and (5) differences among student populations.

The pages that follow present the teachers' views and experiences as expressed in the interviews and/or journal entries and are the major findings that emerged in accord with each theme. All of the elements of qualitative data helped to further explain or contradict quantitative findings and provide a more comprehensive picture of the lines of inquiry. Table 20 illustrates sources of the qualitative data using a key showing whether a teacher's response was generated from an interview prior to or after implementation of the *Strong Start* curriculum or whether the response was from one of the ten weekly journal prompts (see Figure 4, p. 98 for a list of journal prompts). The data is extremely complex, interrelated and crosses several themes. Therefore, for reporting purposes, the researcher made decisions about where the data should be reported. However, in many cases, the qualitative data could have been reported across several themes.

Table 20

*Sources of Qualitative Data – Responses Generated*

Type of Response	Code
Pre-Implementation Interview	IN1
Post-Implementation Interview	IN2
Journal Response Week 1	J1
Journal Response Week 2	J2
Journal Response Week 3	J3
Journal Response Week 4	J4
Journal Response Week 5	J5
Journal Response Week 6	J6
Journal Response Week 7	J7
Journal Response Week 8	J8
Journal Response Week 9	J9
Journal Response Week 10	J10

**Teacher interviews and reflective journals.** Teachers participants (N = 4) were interviewed because it provided the opportunity for the researcher to gather rich, descriptive data in relation to Research Question #3 in the teachers' own language. Having contextual knowledge in participants' own language, which can be gained through interviews, is significant in understanding the teachers' perspective. All teachers were interviewed before and after the literature-based social skills curriculum *Strong Start* was implemented in the experimental group classrooms in order to gather data over time. Both experimental group teachers and control group teachers were interviewed to ascertain differences in perspectives among the both groups of teachers. An interview protocol (see Figure 3, p. 94), validated in the pilot study, and based on the research questions, was developed to guide the interview process. This structure ensured that the same questions were asked of each participant and that the interview process was conducted with consistency. However, interviews were semi-structured allowing for the teachers to answer freely if they wanted to expand upon answers. This format also allowed the researcher to probe additional avenues when the opportunity presented itself and allows flexibility with questions if the need arose. Participant teachers, in a process called member checking, were given the interview transcripts to review prior to the coding process to ensure accuracy of responses. There were no changes or comments made by the teachers after their review of the transcripts.

As part of the overall data collection strategy, all four participant teachers in the dataset were asked to keep reflective journals for the ten week duration of the study. The teacher reflective journals served to center the teachers' attention on scrutinizing their students' social interaction and reading behaviors. The journal prompts forced teachers to observe the children then examine their own feelings about their students in relation to their social interactions, social problem solving, reading behaviors and own teaching behaviors. Additionally, by keeping a

record of their teaching and learning experiences during the study, participants may have pushed themselves ahead on their own professional development and changed their initial belief systems and methods of mediating social-emotional skills with students.

Journals were collected from the teachers during the second interview session. The journals were not transcribed because they were already in written form. Teachers were required to respond to the prompts (see Figure 4, pg. 98) each week but were also able to free write any thoughts they wanted in an open-ended manner if they chose to do so. The written journal text was coded and is reported in a manner similar to the interview transcripts for analysis.

Qualitative data from the teacher interviews and reflective journals are reported through the following themes.

**Social-emotional skills in the classroom.** In their first interviews, all four teachers stated that they believed children were most proficient with the ability to relate to their peers when the children arrived in their classrooms at the beginning of the school year. To support this, all teachers gave the specific answers of “being friendly”, “sharing”, and “interacting with other kids” (IN1). When the teachers were asked to what they attributed the children’s proficiency in relating to their peers, one reason given was that the teachers saw the students’ parents constantly telling their children to share. Teacher TC2 specifically remarked that she hears parents saying, “Share, share, share” all the time (IN1). The other answer that all four teachers shared was that they believed that the experiences the children have received from preschool or daycare settings is a major factor. Teacher TE2 stated that she “sees a major difference in those who have not come from a preschool program. The kids who don’t are shy...the kids who do come from that [type of experience] are interactive right off the bat with each other...” (IN1). Teacher TC2 mentioned that the students from daycare settings have the ability to “wait and take turns” (IN1).

This indicates that the teachers believe those children who have better developed skills in the areas of self-regulation and forming and maintaining relationships have had the opportunity to practice in a social environment such as one that might be provided in a daycare or preschool setting.

Teachers TC2 and TE2 indicated that there were situational differences in social skill proficiencies. Students could show that they mastered a skill in one context but not be able to transfer that same skill to another situation. For example, the students were able to self-regulate their behavior in a controlled environment but were not yet able to master this skill in an “open”, unstructured environment. To illustrate, both Teacher TC2 and Teacher TE2 stated that the children could take turns and wait nicely for materials in the classroom, where there is a teacher to mediate behaviors, but the same students found it difficult to wait and take turns on the playground **(IN1)**. Teacher TE2 stated that “they were never taught how to share the ball and take turns with the playground equipment...we just end up taking it away” **(IN1)**. It would seem as if the children have mastered self-regulation in the classroom. However, as Teacher TE2 pointed out, the children may need a more knowledgeable other (MKO) to mediate or assist with them on learning how to take turns with the playground equipment (Vygotsky, 1978). It is also interesting to note that this data falls in line with the prior research findings indicating that unstructured times during the day such as recess, cafeteria time, and transitions, which are not as supervised by adults, are particularly difficult for children when negative social issues occur (Denham & Weissberg, 2004; Sanchez, 2008).

While not mentioning reading skills specifically, the teachers expressed uncertainty about the connection social-emotional development may have to cognitive development and academic success. For example, Teacher TE1 stated:

I'm not sure there is a connection [between social-emotional skills and academic success] because I've seen a lot of children with no social skills do very well academically you know, even in other grades. I don't know. I think it helps with their emotional well-being **(IN1)**.

Teacher TC2 related academic success to emotional motivation with her statement:

I think the kids who have more responsibility at home and who are more independent seems to lead them to wanting to succeed versus kids who have had less structure. Not that those kids aren't or can't be successful. It just seems they are more motivated or it's more difficult for the others to succeed **(IN1)**.

Teacher TE2 echoed this uncertainty by saying that she didn't know "because if I look at my shy kids who don't really know much that doesn't mean they aren't progressing, you know what I mean **(IN1)**?" It is interesting to note that the teachers' uncertainty about the connection emotions have to cognition comes prior to the implementation of the social skills curriculum.

In their first interviews, all four teachers pointed out that the strategies children use to resolve their social issues were dependent on the particular social issues the students were facing. Some of the examples provided by the teachers were students arguing over a toy, fighting over a place in line, or calling each other names **(IN1)**. For instance, Teacher TE1 stated that she has a student who struggles with anger and cannot calm down. Teacher TE1 commented that when the student gets angry, she "would threaten to kill me...and refuse to do anything...she would go under a desk **(IN1)**." In a similar fashion, Teacher TC2 stated that she needed to use a great deal of positive reinforcement with her students especially with those who were doing well with the use of social skills in order to cue other students. For example, Teacher TC2 stated:

I handle the issues by providing a lot of positive reinforcement for good behaviors I see. I point out other students I see who are doing the correct behaviors as a cue to the other students. Instead of saying what the kids should not do, I turn it around and make it more positive. Some of the examples of issues I see are kids who don't share, kids who push because they want to be first in line and kids who don't know how to emotionally handle things that upset them **(IN1)**.

Worthy of mention is that the teachers spoke about the students having issues with sharing and getting along in giving their examples of social situations with which the students would have to deal. This is a contradiction to what the teachers pointed to as one of the skills that students were most proficient when they entered the classroom initially. In the case of the teacher reflective journals, the teachers noted skills with which the students had difficulty rather than skills with which the students were proficient. For example, Teacher TE2 wrote that, "One student talks constantly during instruction and can be disrespectful. I believe she comes from a home where respect isn't demanded and a daycare that was unstructured. She is on a behavior plan **(J5)**."

In another case, Teacher TE2, penned that at social center time the students "fight over things **(J5)**." Another teacher, Teacher TC1 recorded that she had "a boy who bickers, I try to sit him near role models and flood him with positive reinforcement **(J5)**."

Upon analysis of these particular journal entries, the data exposed inconsistencies with the interview statements the teachers made prior when they reported that the students were proficient with dealing with student peers. In addition, it would seem that the reason for which the students' proficiency with peer relationships previously noted in the interviews, preschool or

daycare experience, needs to be further categorized, according to Teacher TE2, as “structured” to be socially effective.

Because the topic of discussing problem solving was identified during data collection, the researcher took the opportunity to discuss problem solving with Teacher TE2 and Teacher TC1. Both of these teachers described occasions when they might typically delve into the subjects covered by a social-emotional learning curriculum (**IN1**). Teacher TE2 stated that “in the morning I might read them a read aloud book”. Teacher TC1 acknowledged that there were many opportunities she uses to discuss problem solving and reflected on common practices the school used as a whole. For instance, Teacher TC1 explained that Christmas is an opportunity that allows her to talk about problem-solving and other social-emotional topics. Teacher TC1 gave the example of Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer and how that character was bullied, how she uses a “No Bully Zone” that is set up in her classroom, and how she utilizes art projects centered on character education themes in her classroom. Teacher TC1 also noted how at the school there are “problem solving” assemblies the school has held, how the school-wide Bucket Filling Program was valuable, and how the guidance counselors make themselves available to the teachers and will sometimes come into their classrooms to teach character education themed lessons to the children (**IN1**). Teacher TC1, as the most experienced of the four teachers, appears to be able to use her twenty years of experience as a pre-k/kindergarten teacher to masterfully utilize the flow of the school and her classroom to mediate specific issues and problem solving for her students. This experience, as well as other teachers’ demographics, may play a role in other student outcome variables.

The teachers also wrote about their feelings concerning the type of environment they would want to establish in their classrooms (**J1**). For instance, Teacher TC1 hopes:

...every student loves coming to school, is eager to learn and is happy with their accomplishments. I hope that they reach the goals of kindergarten, I hope the students are not afraid to make mistakes and hopes the [students] reach their full potential. I want to build a strong foundation to build on for later years, and hope I have an environment that will be socially, emotionally, and academically successful for [my] students **(J1)**.

Teacher TC2 similarly noted in her journal:

...that I hope my students hit all the K benchmarks, hope I am able to meet all the needs and learning styles [of my students], hopes they build friendships, gain self-confidence, continue learning through their adult lives and hope my students reach their full potential **(J1)**.

As with their interviews, all four teachers described in their journals about how their classrooms are welcoming. The teachers used descriptive words such as “bright”, literature rich” and “print rich” **(J3)**. Unlike the control group teachers’ journal entries, the experimental group teachers’ entries regarding classroom environment **(J1)** focused solely on either the physical layout of the room, establishing the rules, providing reinforcements such as tickets or points and having students work in small groups. Teacher TE2 wrote that she wanted to create a “stronger connection to the home” and to “help students solve their problems.” What differentiates the experimental group teachers’ journal entries from the control group teachers’ entries is that neither academics nor reaching kindergarten benchmarks is mentioned. The entry was made during the first week of *Strong Start* implementation. This raises the question in terms of the teachers’ reflection process: Was there a change in the teachers’ beliefs and practices from the first week of curriculum implementation? *Strong Start* may be a tool that mediates the teachers’

own learning and the teachers' learning can be reflected by the teachers' writing in their journal entries similar to Vygotsky's (1978) notion of inner speech.

**Language and literacy.** Vygotsky (1978), Yaden et al. (1999) and Hargrave and Senechal, (2000) suggest that sharing read aloud stories and having interactive dialogue with adult mediators and other students makes learning more meaningful. In support of that research, the experimental group teachers expressed that they did notice differences in their students after implementing the *Strong Start* curriculum in some respects **(IN2)**. For example, in her second interview, Teacher TE1 stated:

I have kind of a rough class. My class, you know, ah, they have learned how to um deal with their own emotions a little better and I think that's from the [curriculum], when they get really angry or something like that, you know we taught them skills to use and I do see them using some of it. As far as the kindness thing goes, most of my students are kind, but I have a few that, I don't know, are still working hard on it **(IN2)**

Teacher TE2 stated in her second interview that the social-emotional vocabulary and problem-solving skills the students are using post-implementation of the social-emotional learning curriculum is more advanced than in past years. This is evidenced by her following statement **(IN2)**:

I think in my case the language that they use is much different and more developed compared to past years. Um problem solving is better because we talked a lot about you know dealing with friends and trying to work things out on their own. [*Follow Up by Researcher – Can you give an example of the language?*] They'll come off with something like, "I'm very frustrated right now" or someone said something this morning, I

don't remember what it was but, it's just not "happy" and "sad". They're using more of those six, or is it nine? ...emotions [vocabulary words from the curriculum] (IN2).

Much like her interview responses, Teacher TE2 logged in her journal that the students had developed a more descriptive vocabulary in terms of being able to express their feelings by the end of the implementation period. She noted the following information in one of her journal entries (J8):

Students have always used simple terms to describe feelings (sad, happy, mad). Now the students are using more descriptive words for these feelings. Students also are focused during the *Strong Start* lessons. They listen during the discussions and are excited when *Strong Start* is in the schedule (J8).

Teacher TE2 also wrote that the "students' problem solving skills are more concrete now. They seem better at resolving problems". Teacher TE1 wrote that her students are still dependent on the teacher. However, she sees them solving some issues on their own. She writes that "Some skills they are depending on the teacher. Some [students are] taking problems into their own hands. [They are] talking it out, walking away (J8)."

The researcher's journal reveals evidence of the change in the children's social-emotional vocabulary as well. For instance, in the entry dated January 29, 2013, the researcher noted that during the posttesting sessions, the experimental group children used words such as "angry, grumpy, disappointed, tired" instead of "mad" and "lonely, sick, weird" instead of "sad" to describe the facial expressions during the Facial Expression subtest administration of the ACES assessment. This prompted the researcher to remind the children that those were not choices on the subtest. The choices the students were to use were happy, mad, sad, scared.

Upon further examination of the data, it would seem that the students' emotional vocabulary has advanced beyond the assessment making it extremely difficult to get an accurate measure of the students' true abilities since even after prompting regarding the word choices, some students insisted on using words that were synonyms (and more descriptive versions) of the correct words, but then could not be given credit for the correct answers during the assessment. For example, a student could not be given credit for angry if the facial expression represented on the picture shown was mad.

Despite the non-significant quantitative social skills data, the qualitative evidence the teachers revealed show that the children, as they verbalize their emotions, are developing social awareness through their use of the emotions language and problem solving skills. The students' progression through talking through problems (private speech) shows they are learning how to resolve negative social issues in positive ways (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, the data suggests that through the use of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, the teachers and children established a common language for resolving social problems.

In response to a line of questioning regarding the social language students have learned to use and share as a result of their participation in the *Strong Start* curriculum, Teacher TE2 mentioned that "One of the kids' parents in my class whose mom's a teacher here [in the district] says he always goes home talking about what we talk about during that because the parent letters went home (IN2)". In alignment with this sentiment, Teacher TE2 stated that when she puts *Strong Start* on their schedule board the children shout, "Yay! *Strong Start* today!" Teacher TE2 says the students love it (IN2). This provides evidence that, while the researcher and teachers could not guarantee that the parent letters would be shared with absolute certainty, some information did make it to the home environment, thus parents became mediators as well.

Information gathered in the researcher's field notes revealed that email communications between staff members at the research site support the positive impact of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum. The school nurse mentioned in an email that one of the children from Teacher TE2's class, upon visiting her office, said that was he was hurt but didn't want to "tattle" and mention the other child's name because of what he learned during a *Strong Start* lesson.

All teachers were prompted to set goals for students and discuss the strategies teachers would use to assist the students in reaching those goals (**J3**). The experimental group teachers wrote about the reading skills students lacked, using a deficit model of reporting their students' reading skills. Teacher TE1's journal entry revealed that she had a student that has trouble identifying alphabet letters. According to Teacher TE1's entry, the student "has no confidence, and gives up easily". Teacher TE1 used strategies such as songs and flash cards to help the student meet her goal (**J3**). In a similar situation described in Teacher TE2's journal, she has a student who is having difficulty identifying the letter C sound and because of this is "frustrated, has a hard time focusing, has tantrums, and gives up". Teacher TE2 used comparable strategies as well to assist the student (**J3**).

In terms of reading behaviors, the experimental group teachers wrote that they have seen marked differences from the beginning of the study as a result of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum (**J9**). For instance, Teacher TE1 wrote in one entry that her students "are reading on levels K-3" and they are "Very proud, enthusiastic, and can't wait to share what they can read. [They are] excited to read on their own. Teacher TE2 wrote the following entry (**J9**):

My students can identify letters and sounds, sight words, vocab, decode unknown words, and can read patterned readers. Most students are excited to read. They are noticing they can apply letter/sound relationships to print. Some are writing, journal messages, and labeling pictures **(J9)**.

Similarly, the control teachers found that their students grew in reading. This may be due to normal student maturation. Teacher TC2 wrote that “[most of my children] are excelling in reading. They are proud and take more risks **(J9)**”. Teacher TC1 wrote that while her “students are at different levels, several know sight words, some sound words out.” She also wrote that “They love to get hugs and I love to tell them how amazing they read, and they get excited.” It’s important to note that Teachers TE2 and TC2 wrote that there are also those students at this time who are still struggling. The students who struggle are not enthusiastic according to an entry by Teacher TE2 and are frustrated and afraid according to one of Teacher TC2’s journal entries **(J9)**.

The qualitative data regarding the students’ positive feelings toward reading when they are successful at early reading skills versus negative feelings when they are having difficulty corroborates the research studies cited in Chapter 2 (Snow et al., 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Torgeson et al., 2007). Though statistically insignificant, these qualitative results corroborate the results of the *DIBELS Next* scores in that the students did make progress from pretest to posttest across both groups of students.

Teacher TC1’s journal entry referencing her comments made to her students revealing a significant positive teacher-student relationship are also critical to make mention of. A close, initial positive relationship students have with their kindergarten teachers has, according to past

research, been a key element to students making a connection to school, making their learning more significant, enhancing their future success in school and beyond (Valeski & Stipek, 2001; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Sanchez, 2008).

**Curriculum and instruction.** Teacher TE1 expressed that her interactions with the children have changed as a result of the implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum. Teacher TE1 is not only aware of social-emotional learning, but mediates social-emotional learning differently for her students using the common language they have established and modeling. For instance, Teacher TE1 can demonstrate what she looks like when she is angry and her children know “exactly what I am doing (IN2)”. Teacher TE1 states she can now “kind of let them know when I am angry and I can do that by counting because that’s what I taught the kids to do...and by breathing (IN2)”.

Teacher TE2 indicated that while many of the strategies in the curriculum are things she had done in the past, they weren’t things that she explicitly taught, thus her conversations with students were really much more focused as a result of the *Strong Start* curriculum (IN2). It would seem that Strong Start gave the experimental group teachers a tool by which to mediate social skills with their students. There is now purposeful teaching and learning of social-emotional skills occurring. Teacher TE 2 articulated:

I’m able to discuss with them pieces that they’ve learned from the program in my conversations but really it’s you know stuff that I normally do but it’s never been explicitly taught like that (IN2).

Both these examples illustrate semiotic mediation of social skills and are exemplary ways to show children how to recognize feelings and emotions and how to apply them to various

situations and settings through the use of a common language between student and teacher, who is the mediator and MKO (Vygotsky, 1978; DeMasters & King, 2004; Payton et al., 2008).

Teacher TE1 indicated during the initial teacher interviews that the children need to be taught some social skills. She stated that they “need to learn to follow the rules...listen to directions, even how to react to one another, if someone grabs something from someone you have to teach them to compromise”. She followed that the role of the school should be to provide “books and other materials to teach social skills **(IN1)**”.

Teacher TC2 brought up the need for social skills instruction in school because she believes that it is a foundation for the future in addition to there being a lack of instruction in the home. She stated that she, as a kindergarten teacher, should have a role in the social-emotional development of her students because kindergarten is the building block for school...“where these skills should be taught. A lot of the kids don’t get the skills at home so we have to teach them at school **(IN1)**”.

Like Teacher TE1, Teacher TC2 also believes that the school should provide teachers with appropriate tools with which to teach social-emotional skills. During her first interview, she expressed that she believed the school should, “provide the teachers a curriculum that incorporates teaching the skills into the day **(IN1)**”.

An avenue of inquiry that presented itself during the interview process was the teachers’ views of the strengths and weaknesses of implementing any social-emotional learning curriculum, literature-based or otherwise. In response to this line of questioning, Teacher TE1 stated that ... “one of the weaknesses is that our schedule is so scripted for us. That I would say is the only con. I think the rest is good to teach them....**(IN1)**” Teacher TC2 espoused similar thoughts by noting that, “Some strengths are that for those kids who don’t get the skills at home,

it provides exposure to social skills. If it's integrated into the curriculum, it's good. A weakness is if that it is a time block it takes away from the mandated things we need to get to **(IN1)**."

The comments of Teacher TE2 dovetail with those of the other two teachers. Teacher TE2 maintains, "Well, the strengths are they're going to improve you know, the students' behavior overall in the classroom and interacting with other kids and make for a better life! Because there's skills that need to be taught – they can be learned just through interaction but I think if it's something that's taught it's going to stick better. Weaknesses, the time issue **(IN1)**".

These comments made by the teachers indicate that the teachers find value in implementing a social-emotional learning curriculum. The teachers indeed recognize that their students could benefit socially and emotionally. The teachers still may be rather confused as to whether the students could benefit from a social-emotional learning curriculum academically at this phase of the study since this data was collected prior to implementation of *Strong Start*, but it is clear that the teachers struggle with when they would fit yet another mandate into an already "scripted" and busy day to meet what is required of them unless the social-emotional learning curriculum can be integrated since they seem to have the obligation of ensuring their students are meeting the kindergarten benchmarks.

This same sentiment was echoed in the field during the first of the fidelity observations. The researcher's field notes revealed comments mentioned by Teacher TE2 and then supported by Teacher TE1 when the experimental group teachers shared a kit of materials with the researcher. The kit contained materials for a new curriculum called *Second Step* the team had recently received, which the teachers stated the upper grades had already implemented. Both experimental group teachers were concerned that the *Second Step* curriculum, which was to be

implemented after the study was ended, was an additional block of time they would need to take away from core subjects.

During the interviews, the researcher explored what the experimental group teachers thought about the components of the *Strong Start* curriculum in terms of their developmental appropriateness (IN2). Regarding Henry Bear (puppet):

Teacher TE1 stated that: I really enjoyed the program. I did. I liked Henry. I liked the scenarios that they had with Henry. You know, Henry did this what could he do or you know, Henry would misbehave and I would act it out. You saw me do that. I love that stuff. That was great.

Regarding the trade books, Teacher TE1 stated that she thought they “really dealt with the feelings (IN2)”. Teacher TE1 also indicated the following:

Most of the books were age appropriate, they were related to [the students], they had problems they deal with often and it is something I think you could incorporate into the reading curriculum. I wouldn't necessarily make it separate. I did this time. I had a separate block set off for *Strong Start* right now. [*Follow Up by Researcher – How would you change that?*] Well, I would incorporate more reading skills along with the social aspect of it during reading time. Like we have a dry week in our reading curriculum where it's a repeat of the stories from the past two weeks and that's really a time where you can throw some other things in there and mix it up and I think that would be a good time (IN2).

Both experimental group teachers had their favorite read aloud titles as they indicated in the second interviews. Teacher TE1 loved *Mootisse*, while Teacher TE2 loved the *Chocolate Covered Cookie Tantrum* (IN2). As Teacher TE2 noted, “The girl looked like she was a volcano

ready to explode. They always refer to it when they are angry...Like being like a volcano (IN2).” Teacher TE1 mentioned that there was a great deal of “repetition, which I think helped them (IN2)”. These statements reveal that the teachers seem to believe that *Strong Start*, or perhaps a similar social-emotional learning curriculum may be a successful tool for mediating social skills for students. Additionally, the teachers’ statements paired with the students’ declarations of excitement when *Strong Start* is on the schedule seems to point towards a level of enjoyment that may serve to strengthen social bonds as students practice social-emotional skills they are taught, while building and strengthening the students’ early reading skills as Vygotsky’s (1978) theory and the research studies reviewed suggest (Diamond, 2010; Durlak, et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2011). Indeed, the statement made by Teacher TE2 that the students were utilizing the analogy of the volcano that they had heard in one of the stories to describe their feelings of anger shows that students had internalized the language they had learned and were using higher order thought processes.

In terms of changing teacher behaviors, Teacher TE1 wrote in her journal that she thinks now “it is important to teach students to deal with emotions and give students tools to cope with negative emotions”. Teacher TE2 also echoed that reaction by entering in her journal that she “often thinks about only core subjects. Now [I will think about] the importance of feelings and incorporating [them] into core subjects (J10).” This journal entry was completed on week ten, at the end of *Strong Start* implementation. Therefore the transition in the experimental group teachers’ belief system may have shifted from an indecisive, uncertainty to a more convinced and assured importance of teaching social-emotional skills to students.

While the control teachers didn’t deliver the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, the data revealed that they too changed throughout the course of the semester. For

instance, one of Teacher TC2's journal entries states that she is "learning that teaching skills is not only whether [the students] learned the skill...the environment makes [the students] feel confident, comfortable, stable and it's just as important. I will take notice of student behaviors **(J10)**." In addition, Teacher TC1's wrote that she "needs to let students work out and resolve issues on their own as much as possible and model resolving negative social issues in different ways." Teacher TC1 further clarifies this statement in her entry by stating that she was "always afraid that [the issue] would escalate into a physical confrontation so as the teacher I would step in **(J10)**". While they did not teach the *Strong Start* curriculum, the control group teachers seemingly, through their reflective journals, have become more aware of the social-emotional issues in their classrooms and realized that they should change their mediation techniques with regard to allowing students to resolve social-emotional issues in students' ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) by modeling and then independently resolving the issues rather than stepping and resolving the issues for students right away.

Both Teacher TC1 and Teacher TC2 did not deliver the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum because they were the control group teachers. However, during their second interviews, both teachers did express that even though they did not deliver the curriculum, their students did show progress during the course of the study. Teacher TC1 states that she uses a "gathering time" each day to speak to students about the daily expectations. She goes on to explain:

But ah, my class I definitely see a difference from the beginning of the year till now. Um, they know what they're allowed to do in the classroom and how to speak to[each] other, we've talked about speaking to each other and being bucket fillers so they are much better with um using courtesy in their speech and actions towards each other **(IN2)**.

Teacher TC2 mentioned that her students have matured in the sense that they know what's expected and if the students see someone doing something they aren't supposed to be doing, they help rather than be critical. She also states that her classroom routine "flows better **(IN2)**".

Entries in the researcher's journal revealed that there were changes observed in the students in terms of what appeared to be attention span (self-regulation skills) for some students. In entries dated October 1-2, 2012, the researcher anecdotally noted that during the pretest sessions, students had difficulty staying on task and following directions. Multiple entries were made on January 29-30, 2013 anecdotally noted that during the posttest sessions, children were better able to attend to the assessments and follow directions. Anecdotal notes detailed an improvement in motor coordination and knowledge of the material in addition to noted regarding the students' desire to tell the researcher stories about the ACES vignettes relating to their own lives.

**Developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom.** The teacher reflective journals described what the teachers do to resolve student issues rather than what the students do **(J4)**. The data suggests that students seemed to require teacher interventions to resolve social issues. According to the teachers' entries, all four teachers have clearly posted rules in their classrooms. As described in her journal **(J4)**, Teacher TE1 takes the opportunity to "practice and re-practice [the rules with the students]. The rules are: 1) Names on board, 2) Warning, 3) Three checks on board after three checks and recess lost 4) Phone call home.

Teacher TE2 notes the details regarding her class rules in her journal **(J4)**: 1) Speak politely, 2) Follow directions, 3) Keep hands feet objects to self, 4) Raise hand, 5) Use walking feel, 6) Stay in seat or area. Entries for Teacher TE2 writes that she "discuss[es] why there are

rules – [to] stay safe and [establish a] friendly learning environment.” Students who have continued difficulties, she further noted, sometimes require a “behavior plan”. Entries for Teacher TC2 mentioned how she establishes rules (**J4**). These are posted “on the first day” and then “reviewed every day for the first few weeks....[students are given] reminders. [There are] discussions as necessary.” Teacher TC1 repeated the same theme as Teachers TE2 and TC2. She wrote “I discuss [the] rules often” but goes on to in the entry to mention that she gives “praise to the children for following the rules.” However, in her class, there are “two children that need a little more attention. They are the students with the adult paras (**J4**).” This journal entry indicates that these two children need a constant adult mediator.

In examining the classroom rules, none of the teachers indicated that they get student input into the creation of the rules, In addition, Teacher TE1 uses what might be considered punitive consequences rather than developmentally appropriate expectations for behavior. As the literature review points out, use of punitive consequences may only be a short term solution for student behavior issues (Sanchez, 2008; Greene, 2009; Sugai et al., 2010). Coupled with the ethical issue of behaviors that may simply be a manifestation of a student’s developmental stage, caused by a student’s skill-deficit or by students being presented with materials that are developmentally inappropriate, positive, preventative instructional strategies may be a more effective, long term strategy for resolving student social-emotional and/or behavioral issues (Sanchez, 2008; Greene, 2009; Sugai et al., 2010). The journal entries revealing the rules established in Teacher TE1’s classroom in comparison to the other teachers’ classroom rules perhaps is evidentiary of the difference in the teachers’ background experiences as well, and may have bearing on outcome variables. For instance, Teacher TE1 had no prior experience in kindergarten until the 2012-2013 school year. Up until that time she taught older students (grade

3 and 5) who were at a different developmental level. Even the least experienced teacher of the remaining three has five years of experience with kindergarten students.

As indicated by their journal responses, all four teachers had predictable schedules that were similar. Teacher TE2 noted that all the teachers' schedules were given to them by the principal. As an illustration, this is a list of Teacher TE2's schedule of daily activities (**J6**):

- Morning Work
- Gathering Board (Calendar and Morning Meeting Activities)
- Math
- Lunch
- Special Areas (Physical Education, Library, Art, Music)
- Communication Arts
- Recess
- Reading and E/I (Enrichment/Intervention Time)
- Kidwriting
- Snack/Centers
- Pack up/Dismissal

Teacher TE1 noted that with Hurricane Sandy and snow days, the students did act out more because of the break in routine. She journaled:

Children are more aware of routine. They are more at ease. They know what to expect on certain days, now they are chatty, comfortable with peers. The challenge has been with snow days and breaks. There is a lack of attention due to inconsistency of schedule (**J6**).

While the researcher did not observe any of the teachers for an entire day and cannot, with certainty, make a determination regarding the appropriateness of all the activities held during each lesson. However, in inspecting the daily schedule, it would seem that students' days are packed with more teacher directed activities, perhaps to ensure that the kindergarten benchmarks are met as the teachers stated in other journal entries. The admittance by the teachers in the journal entries that the schedule was handed to them as an administrative mandate would seem to indicate, given the other data in this investigation, that making benchmarks by

spending a required amount of time on academics is important contrary to the research studies in Chapter 2 suggest (Michnick-Golinkoff et al., 2004; Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Elkind, 2007; Miller & Almon, 2009).

There were a number of instructional practices noted in the teacher journals that emerged repeatedly. For example, Teacher TC2 noted the use of “multiple readings” in order to help students with learning new sight words (**J3**). Teacher TC1 chronicled the use of songs, videos, poems, and games to demonstrate, teach, and reinforce skills in her journal entry (**J3**). Teacher TC1 noted that she uses repeated (or multiple) reading, picture cards, word families (**J3**). Teacher TE2 also uses songs and pictures (**J3**). Developmentally appropriate practice, contrary to what some believe, is academically rigorous (Bredekamp, 1992; Elkind, 2007). While these activities noted in the teachers journal entries don’t qualify as paper and pencil tasks, the activities listed may fall into the category of rote learning, which is not developmentally appropriate for kindergarten students. Activities should be intellectually engaging and challenge children’s thinking (Bredekamp, 2004; Bredekamp & Copple, 2009).

**Differences among student populations.** The journal entries revealed that the teachers did not take note of ethnic or socioeconomic differences in the children’s behaviors (**J7**). However, the teachers’ journal entries also revealed that they did notice differences in or show bias towards students in terms of gender. Table 21 is a reminder of the demographics of each classroom (based on participant students).

Table 21

*Student Participant Demographics by Classroom*

<b>Class</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>
<b>Teacher TE1</b>		<b>Teacher TC1</b>	
Students Assessed Pretest	12	Students Assessed Pretest	7
Students Assessed Posttest	11	Students Assessed Posttest	7
Girls	5	Girls	5
Boys	7	Boys	2
White	8	White	2
African American	3	African American	2
Other	1	Other	3
<b>Teacher TE1</b>		<b>Teacher TC2</b>	
Students Assessed Pretest	8	Students Assessed Pretest	13
Students Assessed Posttest	7	Students Assessed Posttest	11
Girls	5	Girls	8
Boys	3	Boys	5
White	4	White	6
African American	3	African American	6
Other	1	Other	1

To illustrate the bias found in the data, the teachers wrote the following entries (**J7**):

Teacher TE1 wrote that she noticed “no cultural differences” but also wrote “Of course, there are gender differences. Boys are rougher and play fighting games. Girls chat and walk around more. Both genders enjoy chasing each other.”

Teacher TE1 noticed and wrote about how girls “hold their ground, don’t back down, or tell on each other” while “boys back down and give up.”

Teacher TC1 wrote that “culture or gender don’t matter. [She] finds boys frequently playing house [or] kitchen and girls playing blocks [or] cars”. Her entry continues with her belief that “All students want to be accepted. Friends are just people”.

Teacher TC2 wrote her observations of students in her journal. She observed “Girls playing in the housekeeping area, one girl acting as director. Boys are playing dreidel and

crashing it, being loud. One boy is SPED with an IEP. [He] demands time. [He] thought the loud playing was awesome!”

The field notes bear out data regarding ethnicity. During the fidelity check observations for Teacher TE1, it was recorded that she redirected two students (the same students) a total of 16 times across the two lessons. The two students were non-white. This may be a bias of which she is unaware.

**Fidelity Checklists and Field Observations.** Fidelity checklists (Whitcomb, 2009) were employed with experimental group teachers while they were observed by the researcher to monitor fidelity of instruction. Control group teachers were not observed as they did not deliver the Strong Start curriculum. However, the control group teachers were monitored for timely and coordinated delivery of the regular SF Reading (Scott Foresman, 2002) curriculum through weekly email communications.

Fidelity of instruction is the presentation of curricular materials in the manner in which they were intended to be delivered. Making certain that a curriculum is presented in the way it was meant to be delivered within the guidelines required is important in taking full advantage of its effectiveness when evaluating student outcomes. Student outcomes may be related to factors such as fidelity of instruction especially at the teacher level (Kovaleski, Gickling, & Marrow, 1999).

The checklists were also a way to take focused field notes regarding social interactions between participants because there are open ended sections incorporated on the checklist forms for that purpose (see Appendix J). For example, there were several times when the experimental group teachers gave students in the classroom an opportunity to respond to questions or to the read aloud and the fidelity check was used to see how many student responses were actually

given. There was also a place to record teacher praise and/or reprimands as well. The researcher observed each experimental group teacher two times. The experimental group teachers taught a different *Strong Start* lesson during each observation. The lessons observed were prescheduled with each teacher at a mutually acceptable time. Student participants with parental permission took part in the *Strong Start* lessons the researcher observed. In addition, with prior IRB permission, the remaining students stayed in the classroom to participate in the *Strong Start* lessons the researcher observed as well.

The fidelity checklists allow for a fidelity percentage to be calculated based on the number of required lesson components the teachers complete during each lesson. It is important to note that instructional fidelity is a measure of the degree to which a teacher's instructional behaviors align with programmatic guidelines or principles of an instructional approach and this can correspond to how well students do in a curriculum as a result (O'Donnell, 2008). The fidelity and observation data was put into a chart and coded in a similar fashion as the teacher interview transcripts and journals. A percentage was figured based on the number of components of a lesson each teacher was able to complete for each observation and giving each teacher a "fidelity of delivery" score for each lesson. Field notes were summarized and put into the chart for coding. The fidelity percentages are reported in this chapter.

The researcher scheduled the experimental group teachers' observations in advance in mutual agreement with the teachers. The researcher worked the times out so that the times could be consecutive (back-to-back), observing one teacher then going immediately to the next teacher directly. Once the observation was completed with one teacher, the researcher moved on to observe the second experimental teacher. During her first lesson, Lesson Number 4 (When You are Angry), Teacher TE1 partially implemented 50 percent of the required components and fully

implemented the other 50 percent. During her second lesson, Lesson 7 (Understanding Other People's Feelings), she did not fully complete any component of the lesson. She only partially completed 66 % percent of the components. Teacher TE2's fidelity rate for her first lesson, Lesson 5 (When You Are Happy) was 70% for fully completed components and 30% for partially completed components. When the researcher observed the second lesson, Lesson 8 (Being a Good Friend), six of seven components were observed because the new material was introduced after the review, which occurred during the first ten minutes of the lesson. The fidelity score is based only on the components after the review was completed. In this case, Teacher TE2 completed 66% of the components and partially completed 33% of the components. During the researcher's observations, there were no *Strong Start* lessons that were completed with 100% fidelity.

During the lesson observations on January 2, 2013 the researcher made note that Teacher TE1's students were rolling on the floor while she delivered Lesson 7 (Understanding Other People's Feelings). Teacher TE1's redirections were specifically at regrouping students to focus on her lesson. Students did not seem to be attentive to the teacher or the lesson content. In the researcher's perception, Teacher TE1 seemed to be "rushed" although the time spent on the components that were partially completed doesn't bear this out in reality because the total time spent on the lesson was 55 minutes. The field notes taken during the observation in Teacher TE2's classroom during Lesson 8 (Being a Good Friend) revealed that as students worked on the activity following the read aloud story, the students worked well together. The students also helped each other with the learning task as they were sounding out the words. Teacher TE2 gave little redirections and the students were able to attend to the work with one or two students being the exception. Teacher TE2's fidelity scores are higher than Teacher TE1's scores. In addition,

data taken from the researcher's journal noted that Teacher TE2 seemed to "stick to the framework of the lesson" and her students seemed "more regulated" than Teacher TE1's students. If fidelity of instruction and self-regulation may be the key to student success, then this observation may be evidence of the importance of both.

While even research-based curricula can have a clear and positive impact on student achievement and social-emotional development, those curricula should be put into practice in the manner that the designers planned for the curricula to have the intended effect (O'Connell, 2008). Because of this, in addition to teacher effect such as each experimental group teacher's individual instructional decision-making and their own unique experiences with students in this developmental age group, coupled with the lack of lesson components completed (no lesson had 100% completed components) during instruction of the *Strong Start* lessons, these fidelity results may have had a bearing on the student outcomes in terms of the quantitative social skills data.

### **Summary of Qualitative Findings**

The purpose of the qualitative phase of the study was to explore what the kindergarten teachers' perceptions were regarding what social-emotional and reading skills the students have prior to entering the kindergarten classrooms, the strategies the students use to manage social interactions, how those strategies may throughout the course of the semester, and how, if at all, the classroom environment and/or students are affected by the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum. The summary of the qualitative findings are reported by the themes that emerged in the data.

**Social-emotional skills in the classroom.** The qualitative data collected revealed that teachers believed the skill their students arrived at their classroom doors most proficient in was the ability to relate to other students. Sharing, being friends, and interacting with peers were

mentioned as strengths and this experience was gained from the preschool or daycare settings. However, when later probed, these same skills were also mentioned as difficulties (tattling, anger issues) and that the skills were apparently situational (playground and unstructured environments vs. classroom).

All the teachers felt that the school and they, as teachers have a role in the development of their students' social-emotional skills. The teachers continued to have to intervene with children's social issues because students often dealt with issues in negative ways such as threatening and tattling.

**Language and literacy.** In the experimental group teachers' view, the students came away with a more developed social-emotional vocabulary, a shared vocabulary both students and teachers could use to express emotions and social issues, more enthusiastic attitude about reading, a more developed ability to problem solve by talking things out. The experimental group teachers also gained more knowledge, according to their interview answers and journal entries, because they are now able to hold more focused discussions with their students about their feelings, explicitly teach social-emotional skills, take more notice of student behaviors, let students work out and resolve issues on their own rather than step in right away, and are able to model solving problems more.

**Curriculum and instruction.** All four participating teachers felt, according to their interview statements and journal entries, felt that there are strengths and weaknesses of having a social-emotional learning curriculum. The experimental group teachers felt there were positive results that arose from the implementation of the literature-based social emotional learning curriculum and in the case of the control group teachers, in participating in the study.

In addition, according to the experimental group teachers' interview statements, there

were positive statements made by parents, staff, substitutes, and the children about the curriculum. Both the experimental group teachers stated that they would like to deliver the curriculum again, if given the chance. Fidelity of instruction is important to student learning outcomes.

The fidelity observations revealed that there were more than half of the components that were only partially delivered. No lesson was fully delivered. If essential components of a curriculum are not presented as prescribed, as in this case study, the curriculum may not have its intended outcome or perhaps the outcomes may be better than intended.

**Developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom.** The teachers use positive reinforcement, teaching and re-teaching of social skills through morning meetings, read aloud books, teachable moment opportunities, repeated review, art projects, individual behavior plans and other activities as a mode of presenting social-emotional skills to students. In addition, the teachers reflected common practices and school-wide resources available to them in terms of assisting students with problem solving. The teachers mentioned a school-wide positive behavior system in place (Bucket Filling), past school-wide assemblies for students, and guidance counselors who made themselves accessible to teach periodic classroom bullying or character education lessons. However, there were some developmentally inappropriate practices in use as well such as a punitive system of rules in one teacher's classroom.

**Differences among student populations.** While not noticed on the teachers' part, there was some data suggesting bias in terms of student gender and ethnicity which was revealed through the teachers' journal entries and researcher field observations. Teachers wrote about their students' behaviors in the reflective journals and classified the some student behaviors as gender specific. There was also qualitative data taken in the field observations indicating that

Teacher TE1 focused many more redirections on students of non-white ethnicity. There were no other biases found in the qualitative data.

In this case study, the qualitative data, along with the quantitative data confirmed or expanded the results. The qualitative data further described, in context, the quantitative data snapshot, holistically (Patton, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the research findings for this case study. The research questions and data analyses were discussed according to the concurrent nature of the research design with the quantitative data and qualitative being treated with equal emphasis.

The social skills data suggests that while the scores increased from pretest to posttest administrations of the ACES Social Behaviors and Social Situations subtests and decreased for the Facial Expressions subtest for the experimental and control groups, the mean scores were not statistically significantly different over time. According to all subtest results, there is no evidence that gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status had any interaction effect on the subtests' scores. Thus any change in scores cannot be attributed to the delivery of *Strong Start*, the social-emotional learning curriculum. For the reading assessment, the data shows that scores increased from pretest to posttest administration for the experimental and control groups. The control group had slightly higher scores in both subtests at posttest. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the control group had significantly higher scores over time as compared to the experimental group. Furthermore, there is no evidence to confirm that gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status had any interaction effect on any of the FSF subtest scores. Teacher effect was not controlled for. There is evidence in the LNF subtest data that white students did better than “other” students. In terms of the experimental group students meeting the *DIBELS Next*

kindergarten benchmarks as a result of participating in Strong Start lessons once per week during the Read Aloud/Shared Reading time, as compared to the control group student who continued with their regular Read Aloud/Shared Reading time, the experimental group students met the same or nearly the same criteria for the kindergarten winter benchmark requirements.

The qualitative data collected revealed five categories that emerged as themes after analyses, social-emotional skills in the classroom, curriculum and instruction, developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom, language and literacy, and differences in student populations.

From the interviews, data showed teachers believed the skill their students arrived at their classroom doors most proficient in was the ability to relate to peers and students gained those skills in prior settings such as day cares. Conversely, these same skills were mentioned as difficulties and the skills did not transfer to every setting suggesting that further social skills instruction is needed for students to be able to transfer the skills successfully. The teachers also revealed through their interview statements that prior preschool or daycare experience was valuable but later through journal entries qualified this statement stating that “structured” environments were important in the preschool/daycare settings.

The data showed that teachers feel that the school and they have a part in the development of their students’ social-emotional skills. The teachers continued to have to mediate the children’s social issues because students often managed issues in negative ways. Teachers and guidance counselors use positive reinforcement, teaching and re-teaching of social skills through morning meetings, read aloud books, teachable moment opportunities, repeated review, art projects, individual behavior plans and other activities as a mode of presenting social-emotional skills to students.

All four participating teachers felt that there are strengths and weaknesses to having a social-emotional learning curriculum. The primary strengths the teachers mentioned were exposing the children to social-emotional skills formally and having a formal mediation tool with materials the teachers can utilize while the one major weakness the teachers mentioned was the lack of time in the instruction day. The experimental group teachers mentioned that *Strong Start* was a curriculum that, in their view, was successful and could be integrated into a regular reading program. From the experimental group teachers' perspective, the students realized a more developed social-emotional vocabulary, a more passionate attitude about reading, and a more developed ability to problem solve by talking things out. The students also developed a shared and common social-emotional vocabulary with which to solve problems.

The experimental group teachers also gained more knowledge about holding explicit discussions regarding social-emotional skills. Teachers mentioned that they will now make sure to model problem-solving, take more notice of student behaviors, let students resolve issues on their own. There were positive statements made by others about the curriculum. The experimental group teachers had a positive experience with and would implement the curriculum again. The curriculum mediated the teachers' instructional behavior.

Fidelity of instruction is important to student outcomes when looking at efficacy. The fidelity checklists exposed that the experimental teachers only partially delivered some of the lesson components of the lessons observed. There was some data suggesting bias in terms of student gender and ethnicity.

As illustrated by the teachers' interviews and journal entries that are packed with set schedules given to them by their principal and comments made that the teachers "need" and "want" their children to "meet benchmarks", current educational policy is demanding that even

early childhood educators get their students to reach academic goals, many times without using developmentally appropriate practices (Michnick-Golinkoff et al., 2004; Elkind, 2007; Diamond, 2010). However as the literature points out in multiple cases, and supported by evidence found in the data revealed in this study, the development of social-emotional competencies in students may be the critical element in students building the foundation for academic success (Zins et al., 2004; Miller & Almon, 2009; Diamond, 2010).

Further discussion and implication of these case study findings and suggestions for future research are presented in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION

#### **Introduction**

This study sought to explore whether the use of a social-emotional learning curriculum that meshes early literacy skill development into language arts in an integrated and developmentally appropriate way would help early childhood teachers to develop both social-emotional and reading skills in their students so that students have the best opportunities for success. The study also examined the beliefs and perceptions kindergarten teachers have in terms of what social-emotional and reading skills students possess when they enter their kindergarten classrooms, how those skills progress over time and how social-emotional issues affect the kindergarten classrooms.

This case study was conducted in a large, highly diverse, elementary school during the fall term of the 2012-2013 school year. Four kindergarten teachers participated in the study. Two teachers were the “experimental” group teachers who delivered the *Strong Start* literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum to their students, while the two remaining teachers served as the comparison “control” group teachers. There were a total of 53 students whose parents signed consent to participate in the study. The researcher was able to assess forty students; twenty (N = 20) experimental group and twenty (N = 20) control group children.

The three research questions that guided this study were:

#### **Research Questions #1 and #2**

1. Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students’ social awareness, recognition of emotions, and improve their use of pro-social skills and if so, will there be differences in results

for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?

2. Will the implementation of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum increase the students' reading achievement, and if so, will there be differences in results for children based on gender, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status?

### **Research Question #3**

Several forms of qualitative data were collected in this study to answer the third research question which was to explore the kindergarten teachers' perceptions regarding the following:

- a) Social-emotional and reading skills with which the students enter their classrooms
- b) Strategies the students use to manage social issues and how the strategies change throughout the course of the semester
- c) How, if at all, the classroom environment and/or students are affected by the whole class implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Finding #1 – Students Developed a Rich, Descriptive, Shared Social-Emotional Vocabulary**

According to the researcher's journal notes made during the posttesting sessions, supported by the statements made during the second round of teacher interviews and several teacher journal entries, the students' social-emotional vocabulary had become more developed and descriptive than in past years. In fact, it seemed that the experimental group students' social-emotional vocabulary became so developed it was beyond the parameters that the ACES assessment would allow. The experimental group students needed multiple prompts to adhere to the assessment terms "happy, sad, mad, and scared" when identifying the emotions pictured in

the facial expression photographs because their social-emotional vocabulary had far exceeded the assessment terms, perhaps allowing for an inaccurate evaluation of the students' skill development in terms of emotional awareness. After prompting the experimental group students, some remained insistent on using their new found rich, descriptive words to describe the emotions pictured. The students seemed very proud of their showing their abilities.

Similar to DeMasters and King's (2004) findings which showed that after repeated modeling of appropriate social skills students' ability to resolve problems independently increased, the experimental group teachers in this case study felt, according to their interview statements and journal entries, there were other positive results that came out of teaching the literature-based social emotional learning curriculum. For instance, in the teachers' view, the students were better able to problem solve by talking things out. This may be because the students had gained a shared and common social-emotional vocabulary with which to do so. In addition, in the area of reading, the students developed a more advanced, rich, descriptive vocabulary, and a more passionate attitude about reading.

This case study data suggests that while the quantitative findings for the social skills assessment were statistically inconclusive, the experimental group students benefitted from their participation in the *Strong Start* curriculum having come away with an enhanced, more developed, social-emotional vocabulary, having been mediated to a higher level by the stories and activities in the curriculum as Vygotsky's (1978) theories would suggest. The students were mediated to a more advanced level than the social skills assessment would allow as evidenced by researcher's posttest session field notes, the teachers' interview statements and teachers' journal

entries. *Strong Start* or other curricula like it give teachers a focused mediation tool with which to assist students who may need guidance in bridging through their zone of proximal development reflecting their social-emotional development.

## **Finding #2 – An Integrated Curriculum Can Be a Successful Social-Emotional Skills**

### **Mediation Tool**

When given the opportunity to join in participatory activities (puppet play, role play) as provided in the *Strong Start* curriculum, the qualitative data such as the teachers' interview statements and journal entries collected in this case study revealed that the students and, indeed the teachers, enjoyed and learned from the *Strong Start* lessons. This positive reaction to the curriculum suggests that *Strong Start* can be a successful tool in mediating focused, purposeful social-emotional skills instruction. As the research studies reviewed in Chapter 2 suggests, kindergarten instruction should occur through participatory learning, free exploration centers and differentiated instructional techniques, all of which are child centered. Vygotsky's (1978) work, followed by the work of Bodrova & Leong (2007), Miller and Almon, (2009), and Diamond (2010) show that child centered activities promote executive function skills like private speech, memory, and attention. As stated in the literature and contrary to what this case study discovered in the participating classrooms, the findings suggest the bulk of the day in the participating classrooms are teacher directed activities.

While none of the changes in scores for either the social skill assessments or reading probes could be connected to the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, qualitative data suggest that the positive change in experimental group students was attributed by the experimental group teachers to the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum they taught. Vygotsky's thoughts about mediation suggest (1978) that sharing read aloud books with

adults and having interactive dialogue with the adults and other students where children's books are the tools and the other participants are the mediators, makes learning more meaningful.

The read aloud sessions in the experimental group classrooms were scaffolded in such a way that those children gained more confidence in their reading, thus their skills, particularly their social-emotional vocabulary, became more varied and enhanced, providing the children a shared way to mediate problems together. While the social skills assessment data in this particular study do not bear out statistically significant gains in the social-emotional domain, they demonstrate that teachers can impart or mediate new social-emotional content through an integrated curriculum. By using read aloud books with social-emotional content during an already established portion of their day, the teachers did not lose ground in reading instruction. In addition, at the conclusion of the study, the students' reading scores, when relating the experimental group children to the control group children, were comparable, and where they were to be expected at the winter benchmark (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2011).

In terms of reading data, the findings for this study are similar to those found by Yaden, et al. (1999) and Hargrave and Senechal, (2000) supporting the use of read alouds and social discussion in enhancing early literacy skills such as phonemic awareness. This also supports the findings of Trelease (2007) who found that sharing read aloud books was one of the most important activities to building vocabulary and creating a social environment in the classroom community. Furthermore, the read aloud books with the social-emotional content, in addition to teaching the social-emotional content, can build the confidence the children need to become stronger readers (Sulzby & Teale, 1987, 1996).

The teachers' interview statements revealed that the students' negative social issues seem to occur during unstructured times. For example, there were more likely to be negative social

issues occurring with a ball on the playground requiring a teacher intervening, rather than in a classroom setting. Likely, students are not able to transfer skills from one environment to another without the help of a mediator. Thus, further continuous instruction, through modeling and practice is necessary for the transfer of skills to take place. A curriculum like *Strong Start*, which gives teachers a new and focused tool to mediate social skills can assist with integrating social-emotional content into an already busy day for educators who are increasingly worried about “making kindergarten benchmarks”. Denham and Weissberg’s (2004) and Sanchez’s (2008) findings were similar as the data uncovered in this case study.

As with the student who was experiencing such anger that she threatened the teacher, those students experiencing difficulty with social issues are “unavailable” for academic learning. Moving ahead with any learning activity when a student is bogged down emotionally is impossible (Greene, 2009). Vygotsky (1978) would stress that students’ higher mental processes are dedicated to the negative feelings, behaviors, and impulses rather than the cognitive tasks.

Sanchez (2008) and Greene (2009) suggest that classrooms have an alternative to punitive discipline. Rather than imposing adult power and the use of punishments, which do not mean anything to a child who may not possess self-regulation skills such as the ability to “wait and take turns”, teachers can engage the students in collaboration, working out solutions to behavior issues together. With this more social strategy, the student is fully invested in the positive outcome of the negative social issue. This requires the specific teaching of skills, perhaps through a curriculum such as *Strong Start*, and is consistent with Vygotsky’s (1978) mediation of learning and zone of proximal development and the notion that the teacher is the more knowledgeable other (MKO) assisting the student in gaining and practicing social-emotional skills.

According to the teachers' interview statements, there were positive statements made by parents, staff, substitute teachers, and the children about the curriculum. This follows Munoz's (2002) findings which concluded that, in order to effect positive, lasting change to a school's population, any curriculum utilized in schools must have multiple components and must share an association to family, peers, school, and the community in terms of teaching the social skills and knowledge to all constituents. Parents and other adults, through informational connections such as the *Strong Start* parent letters, became mediators of the social skills as well. As a result of the implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum, students and teachers were mediators and simultaneously co-learners as the teachers learned and changed their behaviors as explained in the next section.

### **Finding #3 – Teachers Made Changes in Their Behavior**

The experimental group teachers' journal entries indicated that they are taking more notice of student behaviors post-implementation of the Strong Start curriculum rather than simply being focused on core instruction. Even though the control group teachers did not deliver the curriculum they too have been alerted to social-emotional issues by participating in the study.

The data indicated that the teachers' perceptions were sometimes contradictory to what their reality was. The perceptions of the teachers' experiences as well as the implications of those experiences are an example of the manifestation of the pressure to perform on standardized tests which is the current state of early childhood education. The finding that the teachers are given a schedule mandated by administration, that seems largely academic in nature, teacher driven and with one period a day for free exploration center time, is problematic. Given what Miller and Almon (2009) have coined as the "crisis in kindergarten" (p. 1) and the focus on practices that are

teacher centered as evidenced by the administrative mandated teachers' schedules which leave little room for child centered activities, this was an interesting finding. Consider Wesley & Buysse's (2003) data concerning the number of early childhood educators who are conflicted about the academic environment of present kindergarten classrooms across the nation. Teachers in this case study noted similar conflicts in their thinking. For example, Teacher TC2 made a point to write that she "hopes her students hit all the K benchmarks" but also "hopes they build friendships and gain self-confidence". It would seem difficult to interact socially, gain friendships and build self-confidence if children were sitting at a desk doing pencil and paper tasks consistently, and even more difficult if children had difficulty with self-regulation.

The teachers' journals and interview statements revealed that the experimental group teachers are now able to hold more pointed and specific discussions with their students about feelings. They are able to implicitly instruct students in social-emotional skills when prior to participating in the study that was something done only on an informal basis. There is a common language with which the experimental group teachers and their students can communicate about feelings and emotions.

In teacher interviews, adult intervention was mentioned as a solution when students had negative social situations, but by the date of the last journal entry, one teacher was able to write that she would now be "letting students work out and resolve issues on their own rather than step in right away, and model solving problems more". This would be something she would now change for future practice. The use of modeling techniques and then letting the students try to apply the skills independently illustrate the concept of scaffolding. The adults are acting as mediators or more knowledgeable others (MKO) while teaching students a new skill. All of the activities involve social interactions and adults assisting children in new learning. For example,

teachers and students acting out scenarios from the read aloud stories and discussing the events, using the puppet Henry Bear to model scenarios illustrating social-emotional issues and discussing the issues with students, having students role play with peers with teacher guidance with discussion afterwards all involve social-emotional content, interaction and linguistic development and practice.

As the findings of Diamond (2010) and Liew and McTigue (2010) suggest, supported by the statements of the teachers in this case study, the best outcomes for simultaneous language, literacy, and social-emotional development for children are realized if they are combined with integrated read aloud discussions, social interactions, and activities. Those practices then become integral parts of the classroom.

As stated in Chapter 2, kindergarten teachers, similar to the teachers in this study are under the stress to get their students to certain academic benchmarks by a certain time. Child-centered classrooms (Miller & Almon, 2009) have shifted focus towards academics. Evidence from this case study supports that this has occurred in some early childhood classrooms. It is concluded by the researcher, based on the evidence uncovered in the interview and journal data, that each teacher participant showed a strong sense of responsibility to their students social-emotionally. The teachers also felt pressure to meet the curriculum mandates. The researcher also concluded, based on the evidence, that this may sometimes be to the detriment of the students' social-emotional development when the teachers felt as though they needed to "step in" to resolve issues for the students on multiple occasions rather than letting students resolve negative social issues on their own.

## **Finding #4 – Teacher Demographics, Instructional Decision Making and Fidelity of Instruction**

Given the positive results from the research studies cited in the literature review (Schultz et al., 2004; Trentacosta & Izard, 2007; Blair & Razza, 2007; Oades-Sese et al., 2011), the quantitative data from the social skills measure was rather unanticipated. It was expected that the experimental group students would gain significant social-emotional skills with the presentation of new information as a result of the implementation of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum. However, according to the quantitative data results, the experimental group students gained minimally in social awareness skills across two subtests (Social Behaviors and Social Situations).

Teacher demographics, skill level and experience may have played a role in the inconclusive social-emotional skills student outcomes. For example, Teacher TE1 is a teacher who has many years of experience but those years were all spent with older children (Grade 3 and 5). The 2012-2013 school year was Teacher TE1's first experience with kindergarten children. In examining Teacher TE1's classroom rules and instructional decision-making, her classroom may have been better suited for older children.

In terms of fidelity of instruction, there were four *Strong Start* lessons the researcher observed, two lessons in each of the experimental group teachers' classrooms. No lesson was completed with 100% fidelity. While no curriculum is foolproof, adherence to each component of the lessons, with room for instructor flexibility within the framework of the curriculum to address student needs, is beneficial for the curriculum to be effective. Exposure to every element that is required of the curriculum, quality of the delivery, enthusiasm of the teacher, program specificity, and student responses are essential to pay attention to when evaluating student

outcomes at the classroom level (Kovaleski, Gickling, & Marrow, 1999). Because no lesson was completed with 100% fidelity, this may have had a bearing on student social skills outcomes not being as positively significant as anticipated.

Early childhood teachers who demonstrate their pleasure and joy of teaching their students by interacting with them in a receptive and respectful manner go far in establishing a critical positive connection to school. These are teachers who proffer students assistance by replying to their questions in a reasonable time frame and offer them a boost in meeting their needs academically and socially. These teachers rarely appear aggravated toward their students. Teacher style and demeanor may make a difference for young children when their initial contact with school is their kindergarten teacher.

#### **Finding #5 – The Beginning of the Achievement Gap**

The data from the *DIBELS Next* first sound fluency (FSF) and letter naming fluency (LNF) probes show that scores increased from pretest to posttest administration for the both groups of students. The change in test scores can't be correlated directly to the delivery of *Strong Start*, the social-emotional learning curriculum. There is no evidence to confirm that gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status had any interaction effect on any of the first sound fluency subtest scores. However, with respect to the letter naming fluency probes, while all students gained, white students had an even greater gain than the "other" in terms of the letter naming fluency subtest scores.

These data corroborates research findings regarding the beginning of an ethnic achievement gap. However, if one looks at achievement nationwide, the scores on the reading assessments shouldn't be surprising. The reasons cited for the achievement gap have been many from a variety of sources including teachers and students themselves (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2011b). The reasons have been anything ranging from lack of family structure, parenting skills, lack of school funding and materials, curricular shortcomings, student motivation, neighborhood violence, teacher apathy, poverty, and cuts to early childhood programs such as Head Start. Programs like Head Start, which saw its first major budget cut in 2006, are often the first opportunity for children to gain social experiences with peer groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011b). Many of these reasons cited translate into the absence of opportunities for children to interact with books, literature, and social language which in Vygotskian (1978) theory would be critical to children's linguistic and social-emotional development.

Along with the quantitative data, there was qualitative data suggesting the possibility of gender and/or ethnicity bias. While all four teachers were white females, the teachers' journal entries made no mention of ethnic or socioeconomic differences in their classrooms. The demographic make-up of the classrooms is diverse. It is interesting to observe that the teachers' journal entries revealed that teachers noticed differences in or showed bias towards students in terms of gender. Three of the teachers generally characterized girls as "chattier, more social, holding their ground, and wanting to play in the housekeeping area" at recess, while they characterized the boys as "rougher, playing with blocks, and crashing toys" at recess.

The data from this case study revealed five major findings. Students gained a depth of knowledge in solving problems using a shared social-emotional vocabulary that was more developed than in past years. Teachers attributed this to the literature based social-emotional curriculum, which became a successful tool to mediate social-emotional skills. Teachers mediated their own learning in such a way that they became models of social-emotional skills, they became focused instructors of social-emotional skills, and they became more attentive to

their students' social-emotional development instead of just the core curriculum. The data revealed that teacher decision making, experience, and instructional fidelity may have played a role in student learning outcomes and that there may be an achievement gap that starts as early as kindergarten. Because this case study is an initial look at a problem in a particular context, future research to extend the knowledge base is presented in the next section.

### **Implications of the Findings and Future Research**

#### **Future Research**

This small case study adds to the body of educational research because it investigated the effects a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum had on emergent readers' social skill *and* reading skill development. As a result of this case study, several issues arose that require future study.

- There should be further exploration of the power of a shared language of emotions.
- Efficacy studies of various social-emotional learning curriculum in terms of interpreting social-emotional skills and academics on a wide range of age groups across time and with larger datasets.
- The state of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood classrooms should be explored.
- Early childhood skills test validity should be examined.

A replication study is suggested in a similar setting with a similar population.

Replication studies are significant, particularly since similar findings in multiple studies gives credence to the validity of the current study. Because of the existing climate of accountability, future research should continue to include assessments of academic outcomes. This must

continue to be a high priority. However, since this study calls into question assessment choices for young children, alternative measures may be chosen as the dependent variables, especially those that collect academic achievement and social skill development (Durlak et al., 2011). Measuring and evaluating implementation of any social-emotional curriculum should be regarded as a basic and vital part of a prospective program and efforts should be made to take into account factors such as fidelity of instruction, availability of materials, teacher perceptions and opinions, that can hinder or promote effective delivery of the new curriculum.

A separate qualitative study may be done to distinguish the teacher perceptual data from the student outcomes. This type of study may yield more conclusive data in regard to quantitative efficacy information in terms of student reading and social skills quantitative data.

The grade level in this study was not a full grade range of students covered in an entire elementary school. Future researchers should take this into account when proposing participants for new studies. Additionally, it is important that future research addresses diverse student populations. The changing demographics across the United States warrants this especially as a concern. Geographic considerations should also be taken into account when considering participants. This case study took place in a small township school in northeastern Pennsylvania. Therefore another geographic location such as an urban setting may be suggested for future research.

Long range research such as a research lasting longer than a semester or longitudinal studies beginning with students in kindergarten following cohorts of students up through and including high school should occur so that the long range effects of the literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum can be studied. This study was conducted with 53 student

participants, 40 assessed students, and 4 teacher participants. Similar studies should be conducted on a grander scale with many more participants.

Research is required to make certain that schools may implement the most effective curricula for their students. During this case study, none of the lessons was delivered with 100% fidelity. Future research should investigate the distinctive influences different curricula available to schools (efficacy/fidelity of instruction/curriculum design studies) has on students and the classrooms in which they are implemented, both in terms of the social-emotional effects and the academic effects, which, according to Durlak et al. (2011) has largely been ignored. The research should address whether it is possible to improve the impact of the curricula on either of these student outcomes when multiple approaches are utilized in concert. Research should also explore the collective effects of an integrated classroom, school-based, and family social-emotional approach to social-emotional programming. In addition, curricula should be designed with developmentally appropriate practices and teacher flexibility in mind. However, it should be understood that extensive teacher training may support fidelity by giving teachers a strong repertoire of instructional skills that they can use to modify the lessons within the framework of the curriculum in response to students' perceived needs. As the literature in Chapter 2 points out, there are unintended consequences when curriculum is scripted and policies are highly controlled (Miller & Almon, 2009).

### **Implications of the Findings**

**Pre-service training and professional development for practicing teachers, administrators, and support personnel.** In the future, schools and institutions of higher education should provide sufficient/on-going training and continued professional development for

practicing teachers in the area of social-emotional development of children, including the implementation of social-emotional learning curricula that meet the needs of the population with which they are working. As the literature suggests (Payton et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011) and data from this case study supports with school administrators, *all* staff, including support personnel, and pre-service teachers will benefit from on-going dedicated, specific training in how to develop children's social-emotional skills, classroom positive behavior management, and supporting family involvement as part of their undergraduate and in-service training. For example, Teacher TE1's staffing situation in this researcher's opinion was not the best situation for the students. Having taught grade 5 then grade 3 for many years to be shifted to kindergarten for the first time would require some professional development on the needs of an early childhood aged student. The students in that age group are very different than fifth graders! The classroom management and rules established in Teacher TE1's classroom are evidence of the need for ongoing professional development.

Having children's social-emotional development on the professional development plan may show that social-emotional development, not just academics or sports, ranks as a main concern for school districts, thus warranting budgetary consideration, resources, and time.

The on-going, specific professional development should provide clear guidance and expectations for children's social-emotional competencies in teacher training frameworks and licensing requirements. There should be explicit attention to the social-emotional development of children in the laws and regulations. Accordingly, there should be required coursework addressing social-emotional development of children, in addition to coursework that addresses how to establish a welcoming school climate and school culture, behavior management training, and frequent/on-going adult-student interactions in pre-service training. Support personnel and auxiliary

staff such as coaches, lunch room monitors, bus drivers, and paraprofessionals are often ignored during professional development opportunities. However, their interactions with students often require knowledge of children's social-emotional development and effective strategies in dealing with negative social issues with students. Therefore, they should receive professional development as well.

**Restoration of developmentally appropriate practices.** As the data from this study reveals, the students in the experimental classrooms did not lose any reading ground as they heard the read aloud stories with the social-emotional content and participated in the developmentally appropriate activities during the *Strong Start* lessons. Although the scores on the social skills assessments from pretest to posttest were not statistically significantly different from the control group's scores, they were higher on two subtests. The experimental group children seemingly outperformed the social skills assessment as well. Despite not being able to be attributed to the delivery of *Strong Start*, the qualitative data shows that the experimental group students' emotional vocabulary and problem solving was more defined and richer than prior to the delivery of the literature-based curriculum. Conclusions drawn from this case study may inform schools about the importance of restoring developmentally appropriate practices into classrooms and ending the inappropriate use of standardized tests and the overuse of paper and pencil tasks in kindergarten. Data from this case study may also support educators in learning that child centered, developmentally appropriate practices may enhance social-emotional skill development. Then, as the data reveals in this study, students can begin applying problem solving skills independently on a more frequent basis. While a curriculum such as *Strong Start* may not be appropriate for the population with which a school is working, an integrated curriculum remains a mediation tool that focuses instruction, provides a common language for

students and teachers to share, and provides a framework in which there are some developmentally appropriate instructional activities that assists teachers in guiding students through their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Changing the instructional practices in the kindergarten classrooms will also require a shift in mindset on the part of the school both in terms of what a *typically developing* five year old should be able to do academically and social-emotionally. That is to say, a shift from thinking “we must meet the DIBELS benchmarks” to thinking zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and accommodating the children’s needs accordingly. For example, as the teachers’ journals revealed, each teacher had classroom rules established. To be sure, teachers would need to recognize that different behavioral patterns should not be wrongly labeled as misbehaviors, attention disorders, or learning disabilities. Teachers also should not presume that kindergarten students should be able to reach those academic benchmarks more matched to first-grader students. If the kindergarten students cannot reach those lofty benchmarks, educators should not label them as learning disabled or retain them.

**Establishing a positive school climate and culture.** Positive relationships with the adults in a school go a long way in establishing a positive climate in school (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). The teachers’ journal responses repeatedly mentioned that the children loved when their work was rewarded with a positive response from their teachers. A positive relationship with an adult is an essential connection to learning that students need in order to adjust effectively and achieve academically to their fullest potential (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Sanchez, 2008; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Also supported by Vygotsky’s (1978) theory, a significant relationship to a more knowledgeable other must be present for a student to learn, as the MKO acts as the mediator for learning. It is important to

note that *Strong Start* encourages a dialogue with and between students and adults possibly solidifying the connection to learning students require, which supports Vygotsky's (1978) theory. The curriculum, through the discussions, establishes a positive environment, a community of learners. As noted in the Teacher TE2's journal, the children enjoyed seeing Strong Start was on the schedule for the day and looked forward to the lesson. This also may reveal a potential importance of social-emotional learning curricula as a way to perhaps encourage the strong connection between student and teacher required to make future academic gains.

Kindergarten students are being suspended because of what are seemingly developmentally on target behaviors in an environment ruled by adult constructs. It would be easy to believe that students need only be shown the correct social skills to use in the classroom but it is just not that simple as teachers struggle to meet the demands of the high stakes testing accountability placed on them. Codes of conduct in most schools are reactive rather than preventative and usually remove students from learning are ineffective techniques, yet remain the standard and traditional approach for maintaining student management (Miller & Almon, 2009; Sugai et al., 2010). Reactionary discipline systems, such as the one seen in TE1's classroom may not effective and end in more problem behaviors, rather than in improvements them. In a perfect learning environment, children are focused, fully attentive, motivated, and engaged, and enjoy their work. There are rituals and routines established to prevent punitive actions for social issues. Similarly, caring relationships with teachers and other students increase students' desire to learn. Strong school-family partnerships support students in doing better. Additionally, students who are more confident in their abilities make more effort to try harder.

**Purposeful social-emotional skills instruction.** As with many of the research studies reviewed, this case study found that children benefitted from the read aloud stories with social-emotional content. The students, according to the experimental group teachers' journals and interviews, gained an enriched, shared, social-emotional vocabulary while honing their problem solving skills in addition to remaining on track with their reading development as compared to their control counterparts. As Payton et al. (2008) and Durlak et al. (2011) found in their research as well, there is clear evidence for the various advantages of embedded social-emotional learning curricula which focuses the purposeful teaching of social skills for all students. Both qualitative and quantitative data supports students who participate in such curricula show development in their social-emotional and literacy development. In addition, if the students are successful, they build a positive connection to school. The students also create and maintain social relationships that have long term benefits.

Curricula that are integrated and emphasize teaching students at an early age how to connect to others verbally and non-verbally, problem solve, deal with anger and frustration through developmentally appropriate activities should be required. The curricula used should stress the five core social-emotional competency areas: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. However, schools should be able to decide which curricula are appropriate for the particular population and use data to ensure its efficacy.

**Alternate assessment methods for young children.** Regularly administered standardized tests such as *DIBELS Next* or other standardized tests such as ACES in early grades are a reason for great unease given this case study's findings. Miller and Almon (2009) state that standardized tests are inaccurate in measuring young children's abilities and can't be relied upon

as indicators of future school success. To illustrate, the experimental group children in this case study may have tested above the parameters of what the ACES assessment allowed. If educators were utilizing data driven decision making to assign students to at-risk intervention groups, the scores for the ACES assessment would not be an accurate valuation of the students' social-emotional skill level.

Kindergarten children are not able to complete most standardized tests adequately due to their developmental lack of attention, lack of knowledge of testing procedures, or undeveloped reading skills (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). Activities that require children to remain seated, without movement for lengthy periods of time are developmentally inappropriate. Children need to move and interact with the environment. While *DIBELS Next* and ACES are short in nature, some standardized tests do not allow freedom of movement. In addition, modifications for students' different learning styles are not taken into account in standardized testing. Therefore, the scores may not accurately reflect a student's ability. Educators and policymakers may wish to examine the nature of standardized tests and their appropriateness at the earliest grade levels.

Alternate forms of assessments for students in the early grades should be used and may be more developmentally appropriate. These may be informal assessments such as teacher-made checklists or anecdotal records in which a child's performance is recorded and compared over a period of time. Other informal assessments that may be used in early childhood classrooms as alternates to standardized tests are rating scales, interviews, and video or audiotape recordings. Student portfolios can be a comprehensive look at a child's development in the early grades as well. Portfolios may include multiple items such as work samples, drawings, information about the child which can be contributed by teachers, parents, and other staff members such as speech therapists, specialists, and special education teachers. It is important in selecting the assessment

method in answering why the information is needed. The answer should guide the educator in selecting the assessment method. None of the assessment methods should require students to sit for lengthy periods or perform a task that can't be modified for an individual student.

As the data from this study revealed, teachers had a desire to develop their students' social-emotional and cognitive domains, but sometimes did not have the time in their schedules because they felt they had to reach the kindergarten benchmarks. A larger and more pressing issue is the "push down" of the curriculum into the kindergarten classroom and the lack of acknowledgement that developmentally appropriate can be academically rigorous. Parents, educators, and policy makers need to be confident children are in no danger of being "left behind" academically in the balanced, child-centered environments in which early childhood teachers inspire, mediate, and attend to the developmental needs of their students in not only the academic but in the social and emotional domains as well. As this case study's evidence bears out through the teachers' interview comments and journal entries the children experienced negative feeling when they were unsuccessful in their reading skills. As long as the kindergarten classroom has provided an engaging, active and participatory environment, children should not experience undue behavior and/or social-emotional issues from academic pressure at the start of their school careers that could have possible long-term negative effects.

### **Conclusion**

Success starts when children are young, and it is crucial for schools and educators to help children realize their fullest potential by assisting them in all facets of development. As Dr. Martin Luther King (1947) so eloquently reminded us with his words: "Education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society... We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education."

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## Appendix A

### Site Permission

March 22, 2012

Mrs. Sharon Laverdure  
Superintendent  
East Stroudsburg Area School District  
50 Vine Street  
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301

Re: Permission to Conduct Research Study – Site Authorization

Dear Mrs. Laverdure:

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your institution, East Stroudsburg Elementary School in the East Stroudsburg Area School District. I am currently enrolled in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania/East Stroudsburg University and am in the process of writing my dissertation, *AN EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF A LITERATURE-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM ON THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSES IN A SMALL TOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL*.

I hope that the school administration will allow me to contact and recruit volunteer expert teachers at East Stroudsburg Elementary School to validate the interview questions included in the study as part of the pilot study. I would also like to contact all kindergarten teachers at East Stroudsburg Elementary School and recruit four volunteer kindergarten teachers from among them and their students to participate in the study. Two of the teachers and his/her class will pilot a literature-based social-emotional learning program while the others will serve as a comparison group. I do not anticipate the risks associated with the study to be greater than any risks participants would encounter on a day-to-day basis. However, as required, teachers and the parents of the students in their classes will be provided with a consent form to be signed prior to participation. In the case of the students, their parent/guardian will need to sign consent. Teachers implementing the program will be interviewed at the beginning and at the conclusion of the study as well, to get their perceptions of the program and other thoughts they have about the nature of social-emotional learning for their students and the social skills with which the students come to school.

If approval is granted, student participants will be pre- and post-tested using a standardized social skills assessment. District administered reading assessment data for each participating student will be harvested from the principal. The teachers in the pilot group will augment the district reading program by utilizing Strong Start, a literature-based social-emotional learning program which includes shared reading books with social-emotional content. The program should last approximately 12 weeks and requires forty minutes of instructional time per week. Teachers in the pilot group will be required to submit their weekly lesson plans and be observed

non-evaluatively to ensure fidelity of instruction of the experimental program in addition to being asked to keep an anecdotal journal. Students who are not in the pilot group will be able to take part in the Strong Start program after the conclusion of the study.

Data from the project will remain absolutely anonymous, secured, and confidential. Should this study be published, only aggregated data will be documented. No cost will be incurred by your school district. The benefits to the district will be that teachers will hopefully be able to integrate the practice of pro-social behaviors and emergent literacy skills in developmentally appropriate ways without the loss of valuable instructional time, interact with students about social issues during shared read-alouds, parents will be informed about their students' social skill practice through a weekly social skills newsletter included in the program, in addition to possibly helping to add to the body of knowledge regarding students' social-emotional development.

Your approval to conduct this study and assistance in making future contact with staff and parents will be greatly appreciated. I will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact me via email at [swerky@ptd.net](mailto:swerky@ptd.net) or [swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org) or by phone at (570) 476-5343 (h), (570) 807-1420 (cell). My home address is 3 Hillside Court, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301. This project will be submitted to the Institutional Review Board at East Stroudsburg University for review. Information on East Stroudsburg University policy and procedure for research involving humans can be obtained from Dr. Shala Davis, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, (570) 422-3336, Koehler Fieldhouse, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301, or you may email Dr. Davis at [sdavis@po-box.esu.edu](mailto:sdavis@po-box.esu.edu).

Sincerely,

Susan N. Werkheiser

Enclosures

Cc: Dr. Margot Vagliardo – Co-Chair, Dissertation Committee, Dr. Mary Anne Hannibal - Co-Chair, Dissertation Committee, Dr. Susan Harlan, Dr. Patricia Pinciotti – Dissertation Committee Members



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for Curriculum and Instruction  
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Business Manager

**Sharon S. Laverdure**  
**Superintendent**

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March 22, 2012

Institutional Review Board  
East Stroudsburg University  
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301

Dear IRB Members,

After reviewing the proposed study, AN EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF A LITERATURE-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM ON THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSES IN A SMALL TOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL presented by Mrs. Susan N. Werkheiser, a graduate student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania/East Stroudsburg University, I have granted permission for the study to be conducted at East Stroudsburg Elementary School in the East Stroudsburg Area School District .

The purpose of the study is to determine the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum on kindergarten students' development and practice of pro-social behaviors, social awareness skills, and emergent reading skills. It also explores the opinions kindergarten teachers have in terms of what social skills the teachers believe students possess when they enter their kindergarten classrooms, the perceptions teachers have regarding the development and practice of social-emotional skills the students make throughout the course of a semester, and the affect social-emotional issues have on the classroom environment and students' realizing their academic potential. The primary activity will be administering a social skills assessment to students, gathering district reading data, monitoring teachers who are implementing a literature-based social skills curriculum, and interviewing teachers. Only teachers and students who teach/are in kindergarten (or K-2 for the pilot) are eligible to participate.

I understand that the study will occur for approximately one full semester – the literature-based social skills curriculum will be implemented for 12 weeks during normal classroom instruction, and during students' regularly scheduled shared read-aloud time. There is a formal lesson each week with lessons lasting 40 minutes. The social skills can be reinforced throughout the rest of the week. I expect that this project will end not later than March 1, 2013. Mrs. Werkheiser will contact and recruit our teachers and students and will collect data at East Stroudsburg Elementary School.

I understand that Mrs. Werkheiser will receive consent from teacher participants and parental/guardian consent for all student participants, and have confirmed that she will have the cooperation of the principal and classroom teachers. Mrs. Werkheiser has agreed to provide to my office a copy of all East Stroudsburg University IRB-approved, stamped consent documents before she recruits participants on campus. Any data collected by Mrs. Werkheiser will be kept confidential and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in her office. Mrs. Werkheiser has also agreed to provide to us a copy of the aggregate results from her study. If the IRB has any concerns about the permission being granted by this letter, please contact me.

Sincerely,

  
Mrs. Sharon S. Laverdure, Superintendent  
East Stroudsburg Area School District

The East Stroudsburg Area School District hires only individuals legally authorized to work in the United States and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in the admission of access to, or in the provision of services, programs or employment. 9/19/07

## Appendix B

### Consent Pilot

#### **INFORMED CONSENT – Teachers - Pilot**

##### **For a Research Study entitled**

##### **AN EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF A LITERATURE-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM ON THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSES IN A SMALL TOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Susan Werkheiser, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The intent of the study is determine the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning program on students' social awareness, the use of pro-social behaviors and reading achievement in addition to how social skills may affect the kindergarten classroom environment. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a primary grade teacher with at least 2.5 years of experience in early childhood education and you teach in the East Stroudsburg Elementary School in the East Stroudsburg School District.

The study includes an interview component. The interview protocol was developed by the researcher and must be validated by “experts” in the field of early childhood education. The questions were designed to determine teachers' perceptions regarding:

- Social-emotional skills with which students enter their classrooms
- Strategies the students use to manage social issues
- Whether these strategies are different after the students are exposed to a social-emotional learning curriculum
- If the classroom environment has been affected by the implementation of a social-emotional learning curriculum
- If there have been references made about their students' social skills by anyone such as parents or other teachers
- Other issues regarding social-emotional skills in the classroom

Ideally, the researcher would like to have at least 6 (six) experts review the interview questions for clarity. An “expert” in the field of early childhood education is defined as an individual who has a minimum of 2.5 years of experience with 40 hours per week for 50 weeks per year of focused efforts in the field (Norman, 1980; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Sternberg & Horvath, 1995).

If there is a question that four of the six experts deem need modification, the question will be rewritten or removed and the process will be repeated until all questions are accepted. Attached you will find the interview questions with instructions on giving your expert feedback. I will ask

**Participant's Initials** \_\_\_\_\_

**Page 1 of 5**

that you verify your name and years of experience so that your expertise can be verified. You will also be asked to sign your consent on the form as well.

The anticipated risks for participation in this project are no more than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. The researcher will be taking identifiable data to verify years of experience (“expert” status) and a way to communicate for clarification purposes. However, if you do not wish to give this information, simply do not respond.

If you participate in this project you may benefit by knowing that your participation may add to the body of knowledge regarding children’s social-emotional and reading development. I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

If you decide to participate, you will not incur any out of pocket expense of your own.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time during the study. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your position in the East Stroudsburg Area School District, your school, principal, or students in any way.

This project has been approved by the East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact Susan Werkheiser at (570) 476-5343 (h), (570) 421-7277 (w), (570) 807-1420 (c), 3 Hillside Court, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301 or you may email [swerky@ptd.net](mailto:swerky@ptd.net) (h), or [swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org) (w). You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Margot Vagliardo at (570) 422-3858 or by email [mvagliardo@po-box.esu.edu](mailto:mvagliardo@po-box.esu.edu) . If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board by phone (570)-422-3336 or e-mail at [sdavis@po-box.esu.edu](mailto:sdavis@po-box.esu.edu). A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Participant Signature      Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator obtaining consent      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

AN EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF A LITERATURE-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM ON THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSES IN A SMALL TOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Teacher Interview Protocol – PILOT**

**Early Childhood Expert Instructions – Please fill out the demographics below to verify your name and “expertise” (Norman, 1980; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Sternberg & Horvath, 1995) in the field. If modifications need to be made to interview questions, this ensures that the researcher can consult with the expert to make revisions according to experts’ suggestions. The researcher is looking for at least 6 (six) expert opinions. Your participation in this project is voluntary. Please mark each question as “*acceptable*” if you believe the question is sufficiently clear. If the question is not clear, please write suggested revisions, or “*remove*” if you feel the question should be completely removed from the interview protocol. Return the entire form to Susan Werkheiser in the included self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thanks in advanced for your time and expertise!**

**Expert’s Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Years of Experience in Early Childhood Education** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**How would you prefer I contact you if I have follow up questions regarding your feedback?**

---

**Interview Protocol - Prior to interview:**

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Susan Werkheiser and I would like to talk to you about your experiences participating in this project and about the Strong Start Program and how it has affected, if at all, your students/classroom environment.

The interview should take less than a planning period (approximately 40 minutes). If you don’t mind I will be taping the session. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I can’t possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Because we’re on tape, please be sure to speak up so that I don’t miss your comments. Your responses will be transcribed verbatim.

All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses will only be shared with my dissertation committee members. I will ensure that any information I include in my dissertation does not identify you as the respondent. Remember, you don’t have to talk about anything you don’t want to and you may end the interview at any time. **Page 3 of 5**

Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

---

**Demographics:**

Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Education Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Years Teaching: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Levels Taught: \_\_\_\_\_

***Before Implementation of the Social Skills Curriculum:***

As a kindergarten teacher, what have you found to be the social skill students are the most proficient in when they enter your classroom initially? Why do you think this is?

As a kindergarten teacher, do you think you should have a role in the social-emotional development of your students?

***Before and After Implementation of the Social Skills Curriculum:***

How do you handle some of the social issues that occur in your classroom?

In your opinion, do you believe that there is a connection between social-emotional skills and academic success? Can you give an example that illustrates this?

In your opinion, what are some of the strengths (and/or weaknesses) of the having a social-skills curriculum?

***After Implementation of the Social Skills Curriculum:***

In your opinion, did you see a difference in the behavior of your students in your classroom after you finished a social skills curriculum?

In your opinion, did you see a difference in the classroom environment after the implementation of a social skills curriculum?

Have your interactions with students changed with students? If so, how?

Did you find the trade book titles you used appropriate? Did the students enjoy them? Were they connected well to the weekly topics? (or was the social skills curriculum you've used in the past not tied to literature?)

Did you find the activities in the social skills curriculum to be developmentally appropriate?

Were there comments made about your students' social skills or the program by people such as parents, other teachers, visitors, etc. before, during, or after curriculum delivery?

Can you share any other thoughts you have about the program, project, impressions, issues you had?

***Questions may be posed to participants during curriculum implementation if a line of inquiry presents itself.***

## Appendix C

### Consents/Statement of Assent Primary Project

#### **INFORMED CONSENT - Teachers**

##### **For a Research Study entitled**

##### **AN EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF A LITERATURE-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM ON THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSES IN A SMALL TOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Susan Werkheiser, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The intent of the study is determine the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning program on students' social awareness, the use of pro-social behaviors and reading achievement in addition to how social skills may affect the kindergarten classroom environment. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a kindergarten teacher in the East Stroudsburg Elementary School in the East Stroudsburg School District.

If you participate, you will be asked to implement a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum. This program will explore social-emotional content through the use of and interaction with shared reading books. The curriculum will be a supplement to the district's regular reading program (12 weeks @ 40 minutes per week during shared reading time). You will be asked to submit your weekly lesson plans and be observed non-evaluatively periodically to ensure fidelity of implementation. You will also be asked to keep an anecdotal journal throughout implementation. You will be interviewed at the beginning and at the conclusion of program to collect data regarding your perceptions of the program and other factors. The interviews will be face-to-face, set up at a mutually agreeable time, and, with your permission, will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews should last no more than 40 minutes. If a line of inquiry presents itself during program implementation, there may be additional interview questions asked. At a later date you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript record for accuracy.

Your students will take standardized tests assessing their emotion/social skills both before and after the program has been implemented, in addition to the regular school district curriculum based assessments. No identifying information will be taken on the standardized tests. Your students' PA Secure ID numbers, addresses, phone numbers, etc. will be replaced with an alternate code number. However, demographics will be recorded for the purpose of data analysis.

The anticipated risks for participation in this project are no more than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Your additional work load for participation is minimal. If you and your class are randomly chosen as a comparison group, you will not be implementing the pilot

**Participant's Initials** \_\_\_\_\_

**Page 1 of 2**

program until later in the year. In order to maintain confidentiality, any lesson plans, observations, or communications will be marked with a code number and your name will be removed. The research records will be private and will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher will have access to the research records.

If you participate in this project you will have the likely added benefit of the helping your students to practice social skills and the opportunity to interact with students as the book discussions and other activities occur. You may also benefit by knowing that your participation may add to the body of knowledge regarding children's social-emotional and reading development. I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

If you are one of the teachers selected at random from the teachers who volunteer to participate, you will be compensated with a \$50 Visa Gift Card at the conclusion of the study.

If you decide to participate, you will not incur any out of pocket expense of your own and you may keep the materials you are given while you participate.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time during the study. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your position in the East Stroudsburg Area School District, your school, principal, or students in any way.

This project has been approved by the East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact Susan Werkheiser at (570) 476-5343 (h), (570) 421-7277 (w), (570) 807-1420 (c), 3 Hillside Court, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301 or you may email [swerky@ptd.net](mailto:swerky@ptd.net) (h), or [swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org) (w). You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Margot Vagliardo at (570) 422-3858 or by email [mvagliardo@po-box.esu.edu](mailto:mvagliardo@po-box.esu.edu) . If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board by phone (570)-422-3336 or e-mail at [sdavis@po-box.esu.edu](mailto:sdavis@po-box.esu.edu). A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

_____	_____	_____	_____
Participant Signature	Date	Investigator obtaining consent	Date
_____	_____	_____	_____
Printed Name		Printed Name	

**Page 2 of 2**

**INFORMED CONSENT – Parental Consent for Student Participants**  
**For a Research Study entitled**  
**AN EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF A LITERATURE-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING**  
**CURRICULUM ON THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSES A SMALL TOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Your child is invited to participate in a research study being led by Susan Werkheiser, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The aim of the study is to determine if a social skills curriculum that is taught using children’s books has an effect on how students recognize emotions and use their social skills. Another goal of the study is to try to find out if the use of the curriculum effects the kindergarten classroom environment as a whole. Your child has been selected as a possible participant because he/she is a kindergarten student in the East Stroudsburg Elementary School.

If you allow your child to participate in this project, your child will be able to take part in a program called Strong Start. This program helps children practice social-emotional skills through the use of and interaction with stories and read aloud books. This program will be a supplement to your child’s regular reading program. The program will be delivered during Shared Reading/Read Aloud Time. Some children will get the program at the beginning of the year while some will have it later on in the year.

Your child will take the regular school district reading assessments that all students take. Your child will also take a standardized test to assess his/her social skills both before and after completing the program. This test consists of three sections. For two of the sections, your child will be read aloud short stories and asked how they think the child in the story feels (happy, sad, angry, scared, no feeling). Your child will be asked to circle a picture answer. In the third section, your child will be shown a photo of a child and asked how they think the child feels (happy, sad, angry, scared, no feeling). Your child will be asked to circle a picture answer. The social skills assessment will be scheduled in cooperation with your child’s teacher and in a way so that your child will not miss core instruction.

The anticipated risks for participation in this project are no more than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. No identifying information will be taken on the standardized tests. To maintain confidentiality, your child’s name, ID number, address, phone number, and other data will be replaced with an alternate code number. Data will not be reported for individual students. The research records will be private and will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office. Only the researcher will have access to the research records.

If your child participates in this project he/she will have the likely added benefit of more read aloud stories and more opportunity to interact in groups with other students as the book discussions and other activities occur. There is also a parent newsletter informing you of the skills/stories read in class so that you can talk with your child at home about what he/she learned in school! You and your child may benefit from knowing that your child’s participation may help us learn more about how students learn social skills and reading. I cannot promise you that your child will receive any or all of the benefits described.

**Parent’s Initials** \_\_\_\_\_

**Page 1 of 2**

There is no monetary compensation for participating in this study.

If you decide to allow your child to participate, you will not incur any out of pocket expense of your own.

Your child's participation is completely voluntary. If you change your mind about your child participating, you can withdraw your child from participation at any time during the study. If you choose to withdraw your child, your child's data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. If you choose not to have your child participate, your child will be able to enjoy the read aloud story portion of the study as this is an everyday, typical activity for students using regular well-known trade books. However, he/she will be given an alternate activity during the social skills assessment portions of the study. Taking part in this project is entirely up to you, and no one will hold it against your child if you decide not to allow him/her to participate.

This project has been approved by the East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact Susan Werkheiser at (570) 476-5343 (h), (570) 421-7277 (w), (570) 807-1420 (c), 3 Hillside Court, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301 or you may email [swerky@ptd.net](mailto:swerky@ptd.net) (h), or [swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org) (w). You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Margot Vagliardo at (570) 422-3858 or by email [mvagliardo@po-box.esu.edu](mailto:mvagliardo@po-box.esu.edu) . If you have questions about your child's rights as a research participant, you may contact the East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board by phone (570)-422-3336 or e-mail at [sdavis@po-box.esu.edu](mailto:sdavis@po-box.esu.edu). A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO HAVE YOUR CHILD PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO HAVE YOUR CHILD PARTICIPATE.**

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent Signature**                      **Date**                      Investigator obtaining consent      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name                                      Printed Name

## **STATEMENT OF ASSENT**

**Hi, [child's name].**

**My name is Mrs. Werkheiser, and I am trying to learn more about how kids feel.**

**I would like you to listen to some stories and tell me how you think the kids in the stories feel. I also want to show you some pictures of some kids and tell me how you think they feel by looking at their faces.**

**Do you want to do this?**

**Do you have any questions before we start?**

**If you want to stop at any time just tell me.**

# Appendix D

## Reading Measure Sample *DIBELS Next* Probes - Student Copy

DIBELS | benchmark assessment

### DIBELS® Next Student Materials Kindergarten/Benchmark Assessment

Roland H. Good III  
Ruth A. Kaminski

with:  
Kelli Cummings, Charis Dufour-Martel, Kathleen Peterson,  
Kelly Powell-Smith, Stephanie Stalar, and Joshua Wallin

Dynamic Measurement Group, Inc.



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▶ s J z v e X T t V D  
f F W Q P q l c O o  
R n B w g E d u p y  
S m x L k Z a Y H j  
i K U M G r A N h C  
I b S F f u L A m B  
V T Y G e W E a N X  
l b M C q z P x i Q  
g J O s d Z K o v j  
D t h w R U c r I k  
n H y p s J z v e X

▶ C R o d y j A g O H  
r Y G N x f a D Z z  
V B T s h k l W b F  
M P u m n S L Q e c  
U q K p E t J i w X  
I v F X U m w H h s  
g L D i N d T S r B  
Q C b y q c o M p E  
O n A P W f G v u a  
I J x z V K Y l e t  
k Z j R C R o d y j

DIBELS Benchmark Assessment  
Letter Naming Fluency

Page 1  
GBenchmark 1

DIBELS Benchmark Assessment  
Letter Naming Fluency

Page 2  
GBenchmark 2

sog mip

▶ sut kiz es jal dos  
lav muk vos ij hep  
jov kul jit les laj  
im rov vak nel hus  
ip vuf fes han dov  
tof yaj lec sij yuc  
fif uz wab toz bep  
soc nez vug fak ic  
ruc nav joj kep jid  
jil ap rez fum dol

▶ G A u b p x w R W f  
Q E v L e k J l M c  
y r a D I d B z Z H  
q n P O t i S C h T  
g F U o X V N m K j  
s Y D Y h c p y C n  
t E d A U L v F o X  
i J V Q w a x k e I  
B b T P r O M q s W  
R g z H f Z j G l K  
N m u S G A u b p x

DIBELS Benchmark Assessment  
Letter Naming Fluency

Page 1  
GBenchmark 1

DIBELS Benchmark Assessment  
Nonword Reading Fluency

Page 1  
GBenchmark 1

DIBELS Benchmark Assessment  
Letter Naming Fluency

Page 1  
GBenchmark 1

		▶	bim	fuv	ob	vef	tam
			pez	nif	vob	az	nuf
			yez	bup	zab	kob	siv
			el	piv	zum	kom	das
	sog		af	vin	bon	kub	kez
			min	yoz	heb	sav	vud
			lib	ov	yan	nej	luc
			rog	kuz	wim	rel	al
			rok	mej	wij	lan	zug
	mip		vop	ub	kej	nik	pak

Figure 9. Sample DIBELS Next student reading probes.

# Appendix E

## Reading Measure Sample *DIBELS Next* Probes – Teacher Copy

Dynamic Measurement Group  
132 E. Broadway, Suite 636  
Eugene, Oregon 97401  
http://dibels.org/



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GRADE  
**K**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ School Year: \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_  
School: \_\_\_\_\_

### Benchmark Assessment Kindergarten Scoring Booklet

	1 Beginning	2 Middle	3 End
Date			
FSF			
LNf			
PSF		CLS	CLS
NWF		WWR	WWR

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Revised 12/00/10

### 1 DIBELS® First Sound Fluency Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the directions in the *DIBELS Assessment Manual* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

► Practice item #1) Listen to me say this word, "man." The first sound that you hear in the word "man" is /mmm/. Listen. /mmm/. "Man." What is the first sound you hear in the word "man"?

Correct response /mmm/ or /ma/	Good. /mmm/ is the first sound in "man."	(Present practice item #2.)
Incorrect response Student does not respond within 3 seconds or responds incorrectly.	/mmm/ is the first sound you hear in the word "man." Listen. /mmm/. "Man." Say it with me. /mmm/. Let's try it again. What is the first sound you hear in the word "man"?	Correct response Good. (Present practice item #2.)
	Incorrect response /mmm/. Say /mmm/.	Correct Good. (Present practice item #2.) Incorrect Okay. (Present practice item #2.)

► Practice item #2) Listen to me say another word, "moon." What is the first sound you hear in the word "moon"?

Correct response /mmm/ or /moo/	Good. /mmm/ is the first sound in "moon."	(Present practice item #3.)
Incorrect response Student does not respond within 3 seconds or responds incorrectly.	/mmm/ is the first sound you hear in the word "moon." Listen. /mmm/. "Moon." Say it with me. /mmm/. Let's try it again. What is the first sound you hear in the word "moon"?	Correct response Good. (Present practice item #3.)
	Incorrect response /mmm/. Say /mmm/.	Correct Good. (Present practice item #3.) Incorrect Okay. (Present practice item #3.)

► Go to the next page.

### 3 DIBELS® Nonsense Word Fluency Grade K/Benchmark 3

	CLS	WWR
► b i m f u v o b v e f t a m	/14 (14)	
p e z n i f v o b a z n u f	/14 (28)	
y e z b u p z a b k o b s i v	/15 (43)	
e l p i v z u m k o m d a s	/14 (57)	
a f v i n b o n k u b k e z	/14 (71)	
m i n y o z h e b s a v v u d	/15 (86)	
l i b o v y a n n e j l u c	/14 (100)	
r o g k u z w i m r e l a l	/14 (114)	
r o k m e j w i j l a n z u g	/15 (129)	
v o p u b k e j n i k p a k	/14 (143)	

NWF Response Patterns:

- Says correct sounds out of order (sound-by-sound)
- Makes random errors
- Says correct sounds, does not recode
- Says correct sounds, recodes out of order
- Says correct sounds, recodes with incorrect sound(s)
- Says correct sounds and correctly recodes
- Doesn't track correctly
- Tries to turn nonsense words into real words
- Makes consistent errors on specific letter sound(s)
- Other

Total Correct Letter Sounds (CLS): \_\_\_\_\_

Total Whole Words Read (WWR): \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 DIBELS® Nonsense Word Fluency

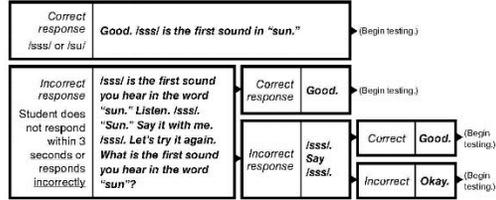
Directions continued

<b>Timing</b>	1 minute. Start your stopwatch after telling the student to begin. Place a bracket ( ) and say <b>Stop</b> after 1 minute.
<b>Wait</b>	If the student responds sound-by-sound, mixes sounds and words, or sounds out and recodes, allow 3 seconds, then provide the correct letter sound. If the student responds with whole words, allow 3 seconds, then provide the correct word.
<b>Discontinue</b>	If the student has no correct letter sounds in the first line, say <b>Stop</b> and record a score of 0.
<b>Reminders</b>	If the student does not read from left to right, say <b>Go this way.</b> (Sweep your finger across the row.) (Allowed one time.) If the student says letter names, say <b>Say the sounds, not the letter names.</b> (Allowed one time.) If the student reads the word first, then says the letter sounds, say <b>Just read the word.</b> (Allowed one time.) If the student says all of the letter sounds correctly in the first row, but does not make any attempt to blend or recode, say <b>Try to read the words as whole words.</b> If the student stops (and it's not a hesitation on a specific item), say <b>Keep going.</b> (Repeat as often as needed.) If the student loses his/her place, point. (Repeat as often as needed.)

### 1 DIBELS® First Sound Fluency

Directions continued

► Practice item #3) **Let's try another word, "sun."** (Wait up to 3 seconds for student to respond.) If the student does not respond, ask, **What is the first sound you hear in the word "sun"?**



► Begin testing. **Now I am going to say more words. You tell me the first sound you hear in the word.** Say the first word from the list in the scoring booklet.

<b>Timing</b>	1 minute. Start your stopwatch after saying the first test item.
<b>Wait</b>	If the student does not respond within 3 seconds on a word, mark a slash ( / ) through the zero and say the next word.
<b>Discontinue</b>	If no sounds are correct in the first five words, discontinue and record a score of 0.
<b>Reminders</b>	If you think the student may have forgotten the task, say <b>Remember to tell me the first sound that you hear in the word.</b> Immediately say the next word. (Repeat as often as needed.) If the student says the name of the letter, say <b>Remember to tell me the first sound in the word, not the letter name.</b> Immediately say the next word. (Allowed one time.)

### 1 DIBELS® First Sound Fluency

Grade K/Benchmark 1

Test Items	Correct/2 points	Correct/1 point	Incorrect
1. laughed	/l/	/la/	0
2. pine	/p/	/pie/	0
3. skirt	/s/	/sk/ /sker/	0
4. flag	/f/	/fl/ /fla/	0
5. rang	/r/	/ra/	0
6. crow	/k/	/kr/	0
7. hide	/h/	/hie/	0
8. blame	/b/	/bl/ /blai/	0
9. deck	/d/	/de/	0
10. crab	/k/	/kr/ /kra/	0
11. bright	/b/	/br/ /brie/	0
12. knock	/n/	/no/	0
13. trash	/t/	/tr/ /tra/	0
14. list	/l/	/li/	0
15. spring	/s/	/sp/ /spr/ /spru/	0
16. chief	/ch/	/chea/	0
17. grand	/g/	/gr/ /gra/	0
18. sweat	/s/	/sw/ /swe/	0
19. shelf	/sh/	/she/	0
20. heard	/h/	/her/	0
21. crisp	/k/	/kr/ /kri/	0
22. plow	/p/	/pl/	0
23. hat	/h/	/ha/	0
24. sad	/s/	/sa/	0
25. swan	/s/	/sw/ /swo/	0
26. voice	/v/	/voy/	0
27. grapes	/g/	/gr/ /grai/	0
28. shell	/sh/	/she/	0
29. top	/t/	/to/	0
30. steal	/s/	/st/ /stea/	0

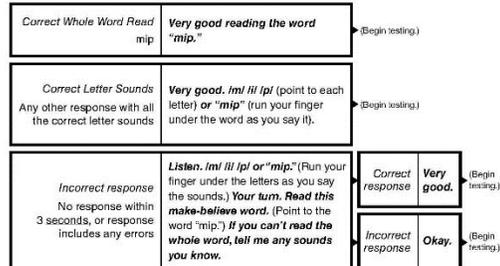
2-pt responses: \_\_\_\_\_  
x 2: \_\_\_\_\_ + 1-pt responses: \_\_\_\_\_ = Total: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 DIBELS® Nonsense Word Fluency

Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the directions in the *DIBELS Assessment Manual* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

► **We are going to read some make-believe words. Listen. This word is "mog."** (Run your finger under the word as you say it.) **The sounds are /m/ /o/ /g/ (point to each letter). Your turn. Read this make-believe word (point to the word "mog"). If you can't read the whole word, tell me any sounds you know.**



► Begin testing. **I would like you to read more make-believe words. Do your best reading. If you can't read the whole word, tell me any sounds you know.** (Place the student copy in front of the student.) **Put your finger under the first word. Ready, begin.**

### 3 DIBELS® Phoneme Segmentation Fluency Grade K/Benchmark 3

				Score
cave /k/ /aɪ/ /v/	take /t/ /aɪ/ /k/	holes /h/ /oʊ/ /l/ /z/	wake /w/ /aɪ/ /k/	/13
sides /s/ /aɪ/ /d/ /z/	hat /h/ /a/ /t/	world /w/ /ɜr/ /l/ /d/	sick /s/ /ɪ/ /k/	/14
match /m/ /a/ /tʃ/	told /t/ /oʊ/ /l/ /d/	wife /w/ /aɪ/ /f/	own /oʊ/ /n/	/12
clock /k/ /l/ /ɒ/ /k/	bush /b/ /u/ /ʃ/	goose /g/ /oʊ/ /s/	played /p/ /l/ /eɪ/ /d/	/14
will /w/ /ɪ/ /l/	stopped /s/ /t/ /ɒ/ /p/ /t/	bus /b/ /u/ /s/	look /l/ /u/ /k/	/14
head /h/ /eɪ/ /d/	shelf /ʃ/ /eɪ/ /l/ /f/	like /l/ /aɪ/ /k/	near /n/ /ɪr/	/13

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

PSF Response Patterns:

- Repeats word
- Makes random errors
- Says initial sound only
- Says onset rime
- Does not segment blends
- Adds sounds
- Makes consistent errors on specific sound(s)
- Other

### 1 DIBELS® Letter Naming Fluency Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the directions in the *DIBELS Assessment Manual* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

**I am going to show you some letters. I want you to point to each letter and say its name.**  
(Put the page of letters in front of the student.)

Begin testing. **Start here** (point to the first letter at the top of the page). **Go this way** (sweep your finger across the first two rows of letters) **and say each letter name. Put your finger under the first letter** (point). **Ready, begin.**

<b>Timing</b>	1 minute. Start your stopwatch after telling the student to begin. Place a bracket ( ) and say <b>Stop</b> after 1 minute.
<b>Wait</b>	If the student does not name a letter within 3 seconds, mark a slash ( / ) through the letter and say the correct letter name.
<b>Discontinue</b>	If no letters are named correctly in the first row, say <b>Stop</b> and record a score of 0.
<b>Reminders</b>	If the student names letters from top to bottom, or points to letters randomly, say <b>Go this way</b> . (Sweep your finger across the row.) (Allowed one time.) If the student skips four or more consecutive letters, say <b>Try to say each letter name</b> . (Allowed one time.) If the student says letter sounds, say <b>Say the letter name, not its sound</b> . (Allowed one time.) If the student stops (not a hesitation on a specific item), say <b>Keep going</b> . (Repeat as often as needed.) If the student loses his/her place, point. (Repeat as often as needed.)

### 1 DIBELS® Letter Naming Fluency Grade K/Benchmark 1

▶ s J z v e X T t V D  
f F W Q P q l c O o  
R n B w g E d u p y  
S m x L k Z a Y H j  
i K U M G r A N h C  
I b S F f u L A m B  
V T Y G e W E a N X  
l b M C q z P x i Q  
g J O s d Z K o v j  
D t h w R U c r I k  
n H y p s J z v e X

Total Correct: \_\_\_\_\_

LNF Response Patterns:

- Makes random errors
- Makes consistent errors on specific letter(s)
- Says letter sound instead of letter name
- Doesn't track correctly
- Other

### 3 DIBELS® Phoneme Segmentation Fluency Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the directions in the *DIBELS Assessment Manual* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

**We are going to say the sounds in words. Listen to me say all the sounds in the word "fan." /f/ /a/ /n/. Listen to another word, (pause) "jump." /j/ /u/ /m/ /p/. Your turn. Say all the sounds in "soap."**

<b>Correct response</b> /s/ /oʊ/ /p/	<b>Very good saying all the sounds in "soap."</b> (Begin testing.)				
<b>Incorrect response</b> anything other than /s/ /oʊ/ /p/	<b>I said "soap," so you say /s/ /oʊ/ /p/. Your turn. Say all the sounds in "soap."</b> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Correct response</b></td> <td><b>Good.</b> (Begin testing.)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Incorrect response</b></td> <td><b>Okay.</b> (Begin testing.)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Correct response</b>	<b>Good.</b> (Begin testing.)	<b>Incorrect response</b>	<b>Okay.</b> (Begin testing.)
<b>Correct response</b>	<b>Good.</b> (Begin testing.)				
<b>Incorrect response</b>	<b>Okay.</b> (Begin testing.)				

Begin testing. **I am going to say more words. I will say the word, and you say all the sounds in the word.** (Say the first word from the list in the scoring booklet.)

<b>Timing</b>	1 minute. Start your stopwatch after saying the first test item.
<b>Wait</b>	If the student does not respond within 3 seconds, say the next word.
<b>Discontinue</b>	If no sound segments are correct in the first five words, discontinue and record a score of 0.
<b>Reminders</b>	If the student spells the word, say <b>Say the sounds in the word</b> . Immediately say the next word. (Allowed one time.) If the student repeats the word, say <b>Remember to say all the sounds in the word</b> . Immediately say the next word. (Allowed one time.)

### 3 DIBELS® Letter Naming Fluency

Grade K/Benchmark 3

▶ G A u b p x w R W f  
 Q E v L e k J I M c  
 y r a D I d B z Z H  
 q n P O t i S C h T  
 g F U o X V N m K j  
 s Y D Y h c p y C n  
 t E d A U L v F o X  
 i J V Q w a x k e I  
 B b T P r O M q s W  
 R g z H f Z j G I K  
 N m u S G A u b p x

Total Correct: \_\_\_\_\_

LNF Response Patterns:

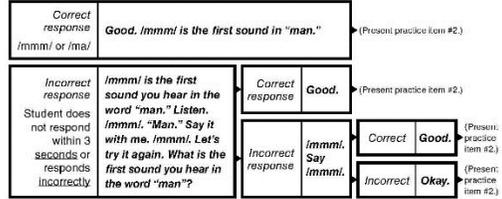
- Makes random errors
- Makes consistent errors on specific letter(s)
- Says letter sound instead of letter name
- Doesn't track correctly
- Other

### 2 DIBELS® First Sound Fluency

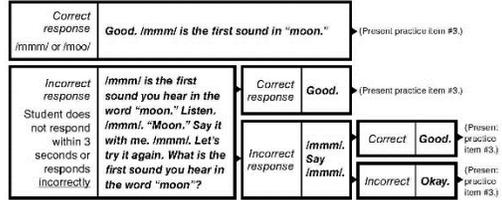
Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the directions in the *DIBELS Assessment Manual* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

▶ Practice item #1) Listen to me say this word, "man." The first sound that you hear in the word "man" is *immm!*. Listen. *immm!*. "Man." What is the first sound you hear in the word "man"?



▶ Practice item #2) Listen to me say another word, "moon." What is the first sound you hear in the word "moon"?

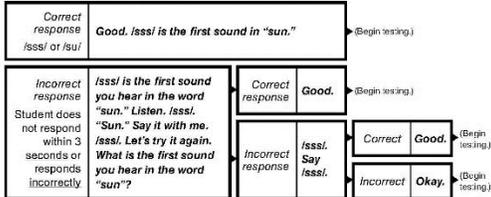


▶ Go to the next page.

### 2 DIBELS® First Sound Fluency

Directions continued

▶ Practice item #3) Let's try another word, "sun." (Wait up to 3 seconds for student to respond.) If the student does not respond, ask, What is the first sound you hear in the word "sun"?



▶ Begin testing. Now I am going to say more words. You tell me the first sound you hear in the word. Say the first word from the list in the scoring booklet.

<b>Timing</b>	1 minute. Start your stopwatch after saying the first test item.
<b>Wait</b>	If the student does not respond within 3 seconds on a word, mark a slash ( / ) through the zero and say the next word.
<b>Discontinue</b>	If no sounds are correct in the first five words, discontinue and record a score of 0.
<b>Reminders</b>	If you think the student may have forgotten the task, say <b>Remember to tell me the first sound that you hear in the word.</b> Immediately say the next word. (Repeat as often as needed.)  If the student says the name of the letter, say <b>Remember to tell me the first sound in the word, not the letter name.</b> Immediately say the next word. (Allowed one time.)

### 3 DIBELS® Letter Naming Fluency

Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the directions in the *DIBELS Assessment Manual* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

▶ I am going to show you some letters. I want you to point to each letter and say its name. (Put the page of letters in front of the student.)

▶ Begin testing. Start here (point to the first letter at the top of the page). Go this way (sweep your finger across the first two rows of letters) and say each letter name. Put your finger under the first letter (point). Ready, begin.

<b>Timing</b>	1 minute. Start your stopwatch after telling the student to begin. Place a bracket ( ) and say Stop after 1 minute.
<b>Wait</b>	If the student does not name a letter within 3 seconds, mark a slash ( / ) through the letter and say the correct letter name.
<b>Discontinue</b>	If no letters are named correctly in the first row, say Stop and record a score of 0.
<b>Reminders</b>	If the student names letters from top to bottom, or points to letters randomly, say <b>Go this way.</b> (Sweep your finger across the row.) (Allowed one time.) If the student skips four or more consecutive letters, say <b>Try to say each letter name.</b> (Allowed one time.) If the student says letter sounds, say <b>Say the letter name, not its sound.</b> (Allowed one time.) If the student stops (not a hesitation on a specific item), say <b>Keep going.</b> (Repeat as often as needed.) If the student loses his/her place, point. (Repeat as often as needed.)

## 2 DIBELS® Nonsense Word Fluency

Grade K/Benchmark 2

	CLS	WWR
▶ sut kiz es jal dos	/14 (14)	
lav muk vos ij hep	/14 (28)	
jov kul jit les laj	/15 (43)	
im rov vak nel hus	/14 (57)	
ip vuf fes han dov	/14 (71)	
tof yaj lec sij yuc	/15 (86)	
fif uz wab toz bep	/14 (100)	
soc nez vug fak ic	/14 (114)	
ruc nav joj kep jid	/15 (129)	
jil ap rez fum dol	/14 (143)	

### NWF Response Patterns:

- Total Correct Letter Sounds (CLS): \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Whole Words Read (WWR): \_\_\_\_\_
- Says correct sounds out of order (sound-by-sound)
  - Makes random errors
  - Says correct sounds, does not recode
  - Says correct sounds, recodes out of order
  - Says correct sounds, recodes with incorrect sound(s)
  - Says correct sounds and correctly recodes
  - Doesn't track correctly
  - Tries to turn nonsense words into real words
  - Makes consistent errors on specific letter sound(s)
  - Other

## 2 DIBELS® First Sound Fluency

Grade K/Benchmark 2

Test Items	Correct/2 points	Correct/1 point	Incorrect
1. land	/l/	/la/	0
2. gift	/g/	/gi/	0
3. snail	/s/	/sn/ /sna/	0
4. stove	/s/	/st/ /stoa/	0
5. mild	/m/	/mie/	0
6. stream	/s/	/st/ /stri/ /strea/	0
7. pairs	/p/	/pe/	0
8. flare	/f/	/fle/	0
9. peace	/p/	/pea/	0
10. sly	/s/	/sl/	0
11. plate	/p/	/pl/ /plai/	0
12. thank	/th/	/tha/	0
13. sweet	/s/	/sw/ /swea/	0
14. life	/l/	/lie/	0
15. blank	/b/	/bl/ /bla/	0
16. doll	/d/	/do/	0
17. sling	/s/	/sl/ /sli/	0
18. stairs	/s/	/st/ /ste/	0
19. knees	/n/	/nea/	0
20. peek	/p/	/pea/	0
21. cream	/k/	/kri/ /krea/	0
22. clang	/k/	/kla/	0
23. bag	/b/	/ba/	0
24. ride	/r/	/rie/	0
25. fruit	/f/	/fri/ /froi/	0
26. porch	/p/	/pot/	0
27. flour	/f/	/fli/ /flow/	0
28. race	/r/	/rai/	0
29. chin	/ch/	/chi/	0
30. steam	/s/	/st/ /stea/	0

2-pt responses: \_\_\_\_\_

x 2: \_\_\_\_\_ + 1-pt responses: \_\_\_\_\_ = Total: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 DIBELS® Letter Naming Fluency

Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the directions in the *DIBELS Assessment Manual* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

- ▶ **I am going to show you some letters. I want you to point to each letter and say its name.** (Put the page of letters in front of the student.)
- ▶ Begin testing. **Start here** (point to the first letter at the top of the page). **Go this way** (sweep your finger across the first two rows of letters) **and say each letter name. Put your finger under the first letter (point). Ready, begin.**

<b>Timing</b>	1 minute. Start your stopwatch after telling the student to begin. Place a bracket ( ) and say <b>Stop</b> after 1 minute.
<b>Wait</b>	If the student does not name a letter within 3 seconds, mark a slash ( / ) through the letter and say the correct letter name.
<b>Discontinue</b>	If no letters are named correctly in the first row, say <b>Stop</b> and record a score of 0.
<b>Reminders</b>	<p>If the student names letters from top to bottom, or points to letters randomly, say <b>Go this way</b>. (Sweep your finger across the row.) (Allowed one time.)</p> <p>If the student skips four or more consecutive letters, say <b>Try to say each letter name</b>. (Allowed one time.)</p> <p>If the student says letter sounds, say <b>Say the letter name, not its sound</b>. (Allowed one time.)</p> <p>If the student stops (not a hesitation on a specific item), say <b>Keep going</b>. (Repeat as often as needed.)</p> <p>If the student loses his/her place, point. (Repeat as often as needed.)</p>

## 2 DIBELS® Nonsense Word Fluency

Directions continued

<b>Timing</b>	1 minute. Start your stopwatch after telling the student to begin. Place a bracket ( ) and say <b>Stop</b> after 1 minute.
<b>Wait</b>	<p>If the student responds sound-by-sound, mixes sounds and words, or sounds out and recodes, allow 3 seconds, then provide the correct letter sound.</p> <p>If the student responds with whole words, allow 3 seconds, then provide the correct word.</p>
<b>Discontinue</b>	If the student has no correct letter sounds in the first line, say <b>Stop</b> and record a score of 0.
<b>Reminders</b>	<p>If the student does not read from left to right, say <b>Go this way</b>. (Sweep your finger across the row.) (Allowed one time.)</p> <p>If the student says letter names, say <b>Say the sounds, not the letter names</b>. (Allowed one time.)</p> <p>If the student reads the word first, then says the letter sounds, say <b>Just read the word</b>. (Allowed one time.)</p> <p>If the student says all of the letter sounds correctly in the first row, but does not make any attempt to blend or recode, say <b>Try to read the words as whole words</b>.</p> <p>If the student stops (and it's not a hesitation on a specific item), say <b>Keep going</b>. (Repeat as often as needed.)</p> <p>If the student loses his/her place, point. (Repeat as often as needed.)</p>

## 2 DIBELS® Nonsense Word Fluency

### Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the directions in the *DIBELS Assessment Manual* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

► **We are going to read some make-believe words. Listen. This word is "sog."** (Run your finger under the word as you say it.) **The sounds are /s/ /o/ /g/** (point to each letter). **Your turn. Read this make-believe word** (point to the word "mip"). **If you can't read the whole word, tell me any sounds you know.**

Correct Whole Word Read mip	Very good reading the word "mip."	(Begin testing.)
Correct Letter Sounds Any other response with all the correct letter sounds	Very good. /m/ /i/ /p/ (point to each letter) or "mip" (run your finger under the word as you say it).	(Begin testing.)
Incorrect response No response within 3 seconds, or response includes any errors	Listen. /m/ /i/ /p/ or "mip." (Run your finger under the letters as you say the sounds.) <b>Your turn. Read this make-believe word.</b> (Point to the word "mip.") <b>If you can't read the whole word, tell me any sounds you know.</b>	Correct response Very good. (Begin testing.)
		Incorrect response Okay. (Begin testing.)

► Begin testing. **I would like you to read more make-believe words. Do your best reading. If you can't read the whole word, tell me any sounds you know.** (Place the student copy in front of the student.) **Put your finger under the first word. Ready, begin.**

## 2 DIBELS® Letter Naming Fluency

### Grade K/Benchmark 2

► C R o d y j A g O H  
r Y G N x f a D Z z  
V B T s h k l W b F  
M P u m n S L Q e c  
U q K p E t J i w X  
I v F X U m w H h s  
g L D i N d T S r B  
Q C b y q c o M p E  
O n A P W f G v u a  
I J x z V K Y l e t  
k Z j R C R o d y j

Total Correct: \_\_\_\_\_

LNF Response Patterns:

<input type="checkbox"/> Makes random errors	<input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't track correctly
<input type="checkbox"/> Makes consistent errors on specific letter(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Says letter sound instead of letter name	

## 2 DIBELS® Phoneme Segmentation Fluency

### Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the directions in the *DIBELS Assessment Manual* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

► **We are going to say the sounds in words. Listen to me say all the sounds in the word "fan."** /f/ /a/ /n/. **Listen to another word, (pause) "jump."** /j/ /u/ /m/ /p/. **Your turn. Say all the sounds in "soap."**

Correct response /s/ /o/ /p/	Very good saying all the sounds in "soap."	(Begin testing.)
Incorrect response anything other than /s/ /o/ /p/	I said "soap," so you say /s/ /o/ /p/. <b>Your turn. Say all the sounds in "soap."</b>	Correct response Good. (Begin testing.)
		Incorrect response Okay. (Begin testing.)

► Begin testing. **I am going to say more words. I will say the word, and you say all the sounds in the word.** (Say the first word from the list in the scoring booklet.)

<b>Timing</b>	1 minute. Start your stopwatch after saying the first test item.
<b>Wait</b>	If the student does not respond within 3 seconds, say the next word.
<b>Discontinue</b>	If no sound segments are correct in the first five words, discontinue and record a score of 0.
<b>Reminders</b>	If the student spells the word, say <b>Say the sounds in the word.</b> Immediately say the next word. (Allowed one time.) If the student repeats the word, say <b>Remember to say all the sounds in the word.</b> Immediately say the next word. (Allowed one time.)

## 2 DIBELS® Phoneme Segmentation Fluency

### Grade K/Benchmark 2

				Score
► sack	hole	trip	game	/13
/s/ /a/ /k/	/h/ /o/ /l/	/t/ /r/ /i/ /p/	/g/ /a/ /i/ /m/	
fox	toes	star	sheep	/13
/f/ /o/ /k/ /s/	/t/ /o/ /z/	/s/ /t/ /a/ /r/	/s/ /h/ /e/ /a/ /p/	
pine	forth	fought	which	/12
/p/ /i/ /e/ /n/	/f/ /o/ /r/ /t/ /h/	/f/ /o/ /t/	/w/ /i/ /t/ /t/ /h/	
cold	shout	bit	send	/14
/k/ /o/ /l/ /d/	/s/ /h/ /o/ /u/ /t/	/b/ /i/ /t/	/s/ /e/ /n/ /d/	
would	dreamed	red	sell	/14
/w/ /u/ /l/ /d/	/d/ /r/ /e/ /a/ /m/ /d/	/r/ /e/ /d/	/s/ /e/ /l/ /l/	
dug	kicked	chin	him	/13
/d/ /u/ /g/	/k/ /i/ /k/ /t/	/t/ /h/ /i/ /n/	/h/ /i/ /m/	

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

PSF Response Patterns:

<input type="checkbox"/> Repeats word	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not segment blends
<input type="checkbox"/> Makes random errors	<input type="checkbox"/> Adds sounds
<input type="checkbox"/> Says initial sound only	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes consistent errors on specific sound(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Says onset rime	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Figure 10. Sample DIBELS Next reading probes teacher copy.

## Appendix F

### *Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills*

#### **Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills (ACES): SITUATIONS Subtest (used with permission by author David Schultz)**

**Subject # \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ SES \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_**

*I'm going to tell you about some kids your age, and I want you to tell me if you think they would feel happy, sad, mad, or scared. Sometimes you might think they feel two emotions, like both mad and sad. If so, I want you to pick the feeling you think they would have more strongly. Sometimes they may not feel any emotion strongly, and you can tell me that by saying, 'no feeling.' Don't say 'no feeling' just because you're not sure how they would feel, though. If you think they would feel anything, I want you to take a guess at what it is, okay?*

1. Tim's parents told him that they would take him to the fair. When it is time to go, his parents say that none of them can go. Do you think Tim feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
2. Kelly just finished coloring a picture. You tell her that it looks nice. Do you think Kelly feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
3. Jasmine took care of her kitten, which she loved very much. One day the kitten disappeared and never came back. Do you think Jasmine feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
4. Juan walks down the hall. A big kid walks right at Juan and tells him to get out of the way. Do you think Juan feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
5. Melissa is building a big tower of blocks. Another kid comes over and knocks it over and laughs. Do you think Melissa feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
6. Scott lets Ryan play with his favorite toy. Ryan plays with the toy, and it breaks. Do you think Scott feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
7. Lonnie is in line for lunch. Darren steps in front of him without asking. Do you think Lonnie feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
8. Sarah was riding her bike. She went down a big hill and started going faster than she wanted. Do you think Sarah feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
9. Alex made a nice card for his friend Josh. Josh likes the card a lot. Do you think Alex feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
10. Mary's grandfather died. Do you think Mary feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
11. Adrian's parents are having a fight in the bedroom. He can hear them yelling. Do you think Adrian feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
12. Brian was at the park, and his mother bought him an ice cream cone. Brian took one lick and then accidentally dropped the ice cream cone. Do you think Brian feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
13. James brings his favorite candy bar to school in his book bag. A boy sees the candy bar, takes it, and eats it. Do you think James feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
14. Michael is playing in the woods with Andy. Andy runs away and leaves Michael alone in the woods. It's getting dark. Do you think Michael feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
15. It is the first day of school. Your friend Maria hasn't seen you all summer. She sees you in class. Do you think Maria feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

**Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills (ACES): Situations Subtest**  
 (As modified by Whitcomb (2009) - used with permission)

**KEY**



Happy



Sad



Angry



Scared

No Feeling

**Subject #** \_\_\_\_\_ **Gender** \_\_\_\_\_ **SES** \_\_\_\_\_ **Eth** \_\_\_\_\_

1.     No Feeling

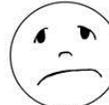
2.     No Feeling

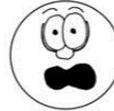
3.     No Feeling

4.     No Feeling

5.     No Feeling

6.     No Feeling

7.     No Feeling

8.					No Feeling
9.					No Feeling
10.					No Feeling
11.					No Feeling
12.					No Feeling
13.					No Feeling
14.					No Feeling
15.					No Feeling

**Total Score** \_\_\_\_\_

Schultz, D., Izard, C., & Bear, G. (2004) – Assessment of Children’s Emotion Skills

Whitcomb, S. (2009) – Modifications to the response form for the Assessment of Children’s Emotion Skills

Pictorial representations of emotions based on Strong Start symbols (Merrell, Parisi, & Whitcomb, 2007), Ekman, Friesen, and Ellsworth (1972).

**Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills (ACES): SITUATIONS Subtest - Scoring**  
**Subject # \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ SES \_\_\_\_\_ Eth \_\_\_\_\_**

*I'm going to tell you about some kids your age, and I want you to tell me if you think they would feel happy, sad, mad, or scared. Sometimes you might think they feel two emotions, like both mad and sad. If so, I want you to pick the feeling you think they would have more strongly. Sometimes they may not feel any emotion strongly, and you can tell me that by saying, "no feeling." Don't say "no feeling" just because you're not sure how they would feel, though. If you think they would feel anything, I want you to take a guess at what it is, okay?*

1. Tim's parents told him that they would take him to the fair. When it is time to go, his parents say that none of them can go. Do you think Tim feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy Sad Mad Scared No Feeling

2. Kelly just finished coloring a picture. You tell her that it looks nice. Do you think Kelly feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

**Happy** Sad Mad Scared No Feeling

3. Jasmine took care of her kitten, which she loved very much. One day the kitten disappeared and never came back. Do you think Jasmine feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy **Sad** Mad Scared No Feeling

4. Juan walks down the hall. A big kid walks right at Juan and tells him to get out of the way. Do you think Juan feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy Sad Mad **Scared** No Feeling

5. Melissa is building a big tower of blocks. Another kid comes over and knocks it over and laughs. Do you think Melissa feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy Sad **Mad** Scared No Feeling

6. Scott lets Ryan play with his favorite toy. Ryan plays with the toy, and it breaks. Do you think Scott feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy Sad Mad Scared No Feeling

7. Lonnie is in line for lunch. Darren steps in front of him without asking. Do you think Lonnie feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy Sad **Mad** Scared No Feeling

8. Sarah was riding her bike. She went down a big hill and started going faster than she wanted. Do you think Sarah feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy Sad Mad **Scared** No Feeling

9. Alex made a nice card for his friend Josh. Josh likes the card a lot. Do you think Alex feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

**Happy** Sad Mad Scared No Feeling

10. Mary's grandfather died. Do you think Mary feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy **Sad** Mad Scared No Feeling

11. Adrian's parents are having a fight in the bedroom. He can hear them yelling. Do you think Adrian feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy Sad Mad Scared No Feeling

12. Brian was at the park, and his mother bought him an ice cream cone. Brian took one lick and then accidentally dropped the ice cream cone. Do you think Brian feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy **Sad** Mad Scared No Feeling

13. James brings his favorite candy bar to school in his book bag. A boy sees the candy bar, takes it, and eats it. Do you think James feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy Sad **Mad** Scared No Feeling

14. Michael is playing in the woods with Andy. Andy runs away and leaves Michael alone in the woods. It's getting dark. Do you think Michael feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy Sad Mad **Scared** No Feeling

15. It is the first day of school. Your friend Maria hasn't seen you all summer. She sees you in class. Do you think Maria feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

**Happy** Sad Mad Scared No Feeling

**Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills (ACES): BEHAVIORS Subtest**  
(used with permission by author David Schultz)

Subject # \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ SES \_\_\_\_\_ Eth \_\_\_\_\_

*I'm going to tell you about some kids your age, and I want you to tell me if they would feel happy, sad, mad, or scared. Sometimes you might think they would feel two emotions, like both mad and sad. If so, I want you to pick the feeling you think they would have more strongly. Sometimes they may not feel any emotion strongly, and you can tell me that by saying, "no feeling." Don't say "no feeling" just because you're not sure how they would feel, though. If you think they would feel something, I want you to take a guess at what it is, okay?*

1. Jack doesn't feel like playing ball at recess. Instead, he just sits alone. Do you think Jack feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
2. You see Shelley hit Yvonne. When Shelley hit Yvonne, do you think Shelley felt happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
3. Instead of playing with his new toy, Marquis just sits there. Do you think Marquis feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
4. At recess you watch Mark play with some other kids. Mark gets the ball, and his body seems to freeze. Do you think Mark feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
5. You see Terry running to join you and the other kids in the game. Do you think Terry feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
6. Mark doesn't want anyone to talk to him. Do you think Mark feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
7. When the teacher asks Laurie a question, you see Laurie look down. Do you think Laurie feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
8. Jeff is being nice to everybody. Do you think Jeff feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
9. David calls Kevin a bad name. When David called Kevin a bad name, do you think David felt happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
10. Jill talks softly, and her eyes seem watery. Do you think Jill feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
11. A group of kids are called into the principal's office. You see Patrice walking at the back of the group slowly. Do you think Patrice feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
12. Rosa has her arms crossed. Do you think Rosa feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
13. Janell doesn't feel like playing ball at recess. Instead, she sits alone. Do you think Janell feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
14. You see Joanne skipping down the hallway and whistling. Do you think Joanne feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
15. Jenn walks slowly with her head down. Do you think Jenn feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

**Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills (ACES): Behaviors Subtest**  
 (As modified by Whitcomb, 2009 - used with permission)

**KEY**



Happy



Sad



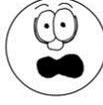
Angry



Scared

No Feeling

**Subject #** \_\_\_\_\_ **Gender** \_\_\_\_\_ **SES** \_\_\_\_\_ **Eth** \_\_\_\_\_

1.     No Feeling

2.     No Feeling

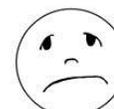
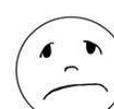
3.     No Feeling

4.     No Feeling

5.     No Feeling

6.     No Feeling

7.     No Feeling

8.					No Feeling
9.					No Feeling
10.					No Feeling
11.					No Feeling
12.					No Feeling
13.					No Feeling
14.					No Feeling
15.					No Feeling

**Total Score** \_\_\_\_\_

Schultz, D., Izard, C., & Bear, G. (2004) – Assessment of Children’s Emotion Skills  
 Pictorial representations of emotions based on Strong Start symbols (Merrell, Parisi, & Whitcomb, 2007) and Ekman, Friesen, and Ellsworth (1972)  
 Whitcomb, S. (2009) – Modifications to the response form for the Assessment of Children’s Emotion Skills

## Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills (ACES): BEHAVIORS Subtest - Scoring

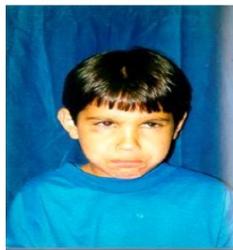
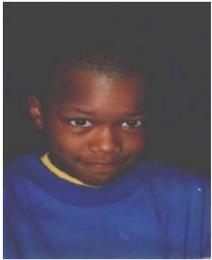
Subject # \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ SES \_\_\_\_\_ Eth \_\_\_\_\_

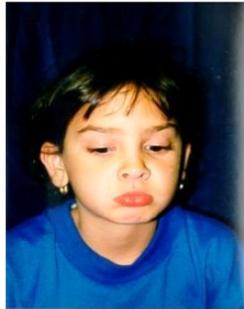
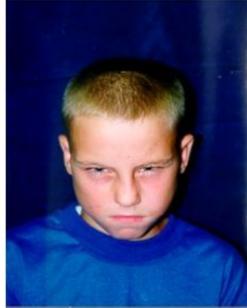
*I'm going to tell you about some kids your age, and I want you to tell me if they would feel happy, sad, mad, or scared. Sometimes you might think they would feel two emotions, like both mad and sad. If so, I want you to pick the feeling you think they would have more strongly. Sometimes they may not feel any emotion strongly, and you can tell me that by saying, "no feeling." Don't say "no feeling" just because you're not sure how they would feel, though. If you think they would feel something, I want you to take a guess at what it is, okay?*

1. Jack doesn't feel like playing ball at recess. Instead, he just sits alone. Do you think Jack feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?

Happy	<b>Sad</b>	Mad	Scared	No Feeling	2. You see Shelley hit Yvonne. When Shelley hit Yvonne, do you think Shelley felt happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	Sad	<b>Mad</b>	Scared	No Feeling	3. Instead of playing with his new toy, Marquis just sits there. Do you think Marquis feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	Sad	Mad	Scared	No Feeling	4. At recess you watch Mark play with some other kids. Mark gets the ball, and his body seems to freeze. Do you think Mark feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	Sad	Mad	<b>Scared</b>	No Feeling	5. You see Terry running to join you and the other kids in the game. Do you think Terry feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
<b>Happy</b>	Sad	Mad	Scared	No Feeling	6. Mark doesn't want anyone to talk to him. Do you think Mark feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	Sad	Mad	Scared	No Feeling	7. When the teacher asks Laurie a question, you see Laurie look down. Do you think Laurie feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	Sad	Mad	<b>Scared</b>	No Feeling	8. Jeff is being nice to everybody. Do you think Jeff feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
<b>Happy</b>	Sad	Mad	Scared	No Feeling	9. David calls Kevin a bad name. When David called Kevin a bad name, do you think David felt happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	Sad	<b>Mad</b>	Scared	No Feeling	10. Jill talks softly, and her eyes seem watery. Do you think Jill feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	<b>Sad</b>	Mad	Scared	No Feeling	11. A group of kids are called into the principal's office. You see Patrice walking at the back of the group slowly. Do you think Patrice feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	Sad	Mad	<b>Scared</b>	No Feeling	12. Rosa has her arms crossed. Do you think Rosa feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	Sad	<b>Mad</b>	Scared	No Feeling	13. Janell doesn't feel like playing ball at recess. Instead, she sits alone. Do you think Janell feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	Sad	Mad	Scared	No Feeling	14. You see Joanne skipping down the hallway and whistling. Do you think Joanne feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
<b>Happy</b>	Sad	Mad	Scared	No Feeling	15. Jenn walks slowly with her head down. Do you think Jenn feels happy, sad, mad, scared, or no feeling?
Happy	<b>Sad</b>	Mad	Scared	No Feeling	

**Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills (ACES): FACIAL EXPRESSIONS Subtest**  
(used with permission by author David Schultz) Schultz, D., Izard, C., & Bear, G. (2004)





### ACES: Facial Expressions Subtest Scoring

Subject # \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ SES \_\_\_\_\_ Eth \_\_\_\_\_

*Now I'm going to show you some pictures of kids, and I want you to tell me how each kid feels*

	Happy	Sad	Mad	Scared
1. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?			X	
2. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?	X			
3. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				
4. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?		X		
5. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				X
6. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				
7. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				
8. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?	X			
9. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?		X		
10. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				X
11. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?			X	
12. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				
13. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				
14. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?		X		
15. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				

16. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				
17. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?	X			
18. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				
19. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?			X	
20. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				X
21. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				
22. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?			X	
23. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?		X		
24. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				X
25. Does he feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?	X			
26. Does she feel happy, sad, mad, or scared?				

# Appendix G

## East Stroudsburg Area School District Universal Code of Conduct Source – District Parent/Teacher Handbook

ESASD Code of Student Conduct (Grades K-12)

Level I Expected Behavior	Possible Level I Infractions	Possible Disciplinary Action for Infraction of Code of Student Conduct
<p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow the Code of Student Conduct by displaying respect toward all members of the school community in the classroom, hallways, cafeteria, lavatory, school buses, during assemblies and on school-sponsored trips and/or activities.</li> <li>Arrive on time, come prepared and actively engage in tasks.</li> <li>Decorate appropriately as defined in the Code of Student Conduct.</li> <li>Eat and drink only in designated areas during the scheduled time.</li> <li>Refrain from excessive public displays of affection.</li> <li>Refrain from bringing to school objects not required for the student learning day or that distract from the learning environment.</li> <li>Refrain from using electronic devices during the school day. Inappropriate use of communication devices, while on school property (including school buses) and/or while a student is engaged in a school-sponsored activity, is prohibited and will result in disciplinary consequences as defined under "Electronic Devices" in the Code of Student Conduct.</li> <li>Refrain from violating rules regarding student expression/ distribution and posting of materials.</li> <li>This is only a listing of some of the expected behaviors and possible disciplinary action for those students who violate the District's Code of Student Conduct and/or Board Policies; the list is not all-inclusive.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disrespect to Staff/School</li> <li>Lateness/Tardiness to School</li> <li>Unprepared for Class</li> <li>Distractions</li> <li>Disruptive Display/Public Affection</li> <li>Inappropriate Article/Prohibited Item</li> <li>Electronic Device/Cell Phone Violation</li> <li>Violation of Student Expression/Distribution and Posting of Materials</li> <li>This is only a listing of some of the possible Level I Infractions and possible disciplinary action for those students who violate the District's Code of Student Conduct and/or Board Policies; the list is not all-inclusive.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Grades Kindergarten-Grade 5:</b> Discipline may include any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Verbal warning/discussion of inappropriate behavior</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Documented warning/discussion of inappropriate behavior and parent contact within 24 hours, in addition to parent notification form</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: Teacher interventions including, but not limited to, conference with student, parent contact within 24 hours and/or conference with parent, in addition to parent notification form, conference with guidance staff, student detention(s), lunch/buss, modified instructional programming, socially designed assignment, behavior contract, denial of privileges</li> <li>4<sup>th</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, detention, but not limited to, lunch detention and/or recess detention</li> <li>5<sup>th</sup> Offense: See Level II 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense disciplinary action</li> </ul> <p><b>Grades 6-12:</b> Discipline may include any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Documented verbal warning/class consequences</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: After school detention</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: 2 After school detentions</li> <li>4<sup>th</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, internal suspension</li> <li>5<sup>th</sup> Offense: See Level II 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense disciplinary action</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Violations may carry a loss of privileges as well.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Students who receive any type of suspension will be prohibited from attending and/or participating in after-school activities for the duration of their suspension. However, students receiving an internal suspension will be required to attend any scheduled after-school activities. No student, during the term of an internal suspension will be permitted on school grounds.</i></p>

ESASD Code of Student Conduct (Grades K-12)—cont. pg.2

Level II Expected Behavior	Possible Level II Infractions	Possible Disciplinary Action for Infraction of Code of Student Conduct
<p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect others' right to learn.</li> <li>Respect school property and be responsible for District issued material.</li> <li>Arrive to school at the designated time and not accumulate unexcused tardies.</li> <li>Attend all classes and obtain a pass when leaving the classroom, proceeding directly to the designated area without any unexcused stops. Students are expected to return in a timely manner.</li> <li>Remain in the building during the school day and not leave the premises without parental and administrative approval.</li> <li>Use appropriate language at all times. Profanity, vulgarity and/or obscene gestures will not be tolerated.</li> <li>Refrain from propelling any type of projectile.</li> <li>No tobacco, physical fighting or verbal abuse on campus.</li> <li>Conduct oneself in a safe manner by keeping hands, feet and all body parts and possessions to themselves.</li> <li>Demonsrate honest behavior and conduct oneself in a cooperative manner. This shall include refraining from gambling, forgery, cheating and plagiarism.</li> <li>Not participate in one-school related activities/sales/boating.</li> <li>Refrain from repeated violations of Level I Expected Behaviors.</li> <li>This is only a listing of some of the expected behaviors and possible disciplinary action for those students who violate the District's Code of Student Conduct and/or Board Policies; the list is not all-inclusive.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom Disruption</li> <li>Inappropriate Use of School Property</li> <li>Late/Tardy to Class</li> <li>Class Size</li> <li>Abuse of Pass/Leaving</li> <li>Use of Profanity/Offense Gestures</li> <li>Propelling Projectiles</li> <li>Discourtesy/Intimidating/Physical Posturing</li> <li>Verbal Abuse</li> <li>Inappropriate Behavior</li> <li>Camouflage</li> <li>Forgery</li> <li>Cheating</li> <li>Theft</li> <li>Substance</li> <li>This is only a listing of some of the possible Level II Infractions and possible disciplinary action for those students who violate the District's Code of Student Conduct and/or Board Policies; the list is not all-inclusive.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Grades Kindergarten-Grade 5:</b> Discipline may include any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Teacher interventions including, but not limited to, conference with student, parent contact within 24 hours and/or conference with parent, in addition to parent notification form, conferences with guidance staff, student detention(s), lunch/buss, modified instructional programming, socially designed assignment, behavior contract, denial of privileges</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, detention, but not limited to, lunch detention and/or recess detention</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, multiple detentions, but not limited to, lunch detentions and/or recess detentions</li> <li>4<sup>th</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, after school detention</li> <li>5<sup>th</sup> Offense: See Level III 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense disciplinary action</li> </ul> <p><b>Grades 6-12:</b> Discipline may include any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, internal suspension</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, multiple internal suspensions</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: Referral letter mailed to parent, external suspension</li> <li>4<sup>th</sup> Offense: Referral letter mailed to parent and/or guidance referral, multiple external suspensions</li> <li>5<sup>th</sup> Offense: See Level III 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense disciplinary action</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Violations may carry a loss of privileges as well.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Students who receive any type of suspension will be prohibited from attending and/or participating in after-school activities for the duration of their suspension. However, students receiving an internal suspension will be required to attend any scheduled after-school activities. No student, during the term of an internal suspension will be permitted on school grounds.</i></p>

ESASD Code of Student Conduct (Grades K-12)—cont. pg. 3

Level III Expected Behavior	Possible Level III Infractions	Possible Disciplinary Action for Infraction of Code of Student Conduct
<p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize appropriate strategies when dealing with a conflict such as reporting the issue to an adult. Students will not engage in any verbal, physical aggression and/or unlawful gestures or acts.</li> <li>Demonstrate responsibility by attending all assigned internal suspension classes and complying with teacher directives.</li> <li>Show respect for authority by complying with teacher/ administrative directives.</li> <li>Demonstrate responsibility to the school community by not creating hazardous situations or possessing matches and/or lighters.</li> <li>Conduct oneself in an appropriate manner by not violating the Acceptable Use of Computer's Network, Internet, Electronic Communications and Information Systems Policy.</li> <li>Refrain from repeated violations of Level I or Level II expected behaviors.</li> <li>This is only a listing of some of the expected behaviors and possible disciplinary action for those students who violate the District's Code of Student Conduct and/or Board Policies; the list is not all-inclusive.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verbal Altercation</li> <li>Physical Aggression</li> <li>Unlawful Gestures or Acts</li> <li>Insubordination</li> <li>Inappropriate Article/Prohibited Item of a Dangerous Nature</li> <li>Violations of Acceptable Use of Computer's Network, Internet, Electronic Communications and Information Systems Policy</li> <li>This is only a listing of some of the possible Level III Infractions and possible disciplinary action for those students who violate the District's Code of Student Conduct and/or Board Policies; the list is not all-inclusive.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Grades Kindergarten-Grade 5:</b> Discipline may include any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, multiple detentions, but not limited to, lunch detentions and/or recess detentions</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, multiple after school detentions</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator for parent contact, internal suspension</li> <li>4<sup>th</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator and letter mailed to parent, external suspension</li> <li>5<sup>th</sup> Offense: See Level IV 1<sup>st</sup> Offense disciplinary action</li> </ul> <p><b>Grades 6-12:</b> Discipline may include any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Referral letter mailed to parent, external suspension</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Referral letter mailed to parent and/or guidance referral, multiple external suspensions</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: Will include above disciplinary action, in addition to behavior contract</li> <li>4<sup>th</sup> Offense: See Level IV 1<sup>st</sup> Offense disciplinary action</li> </ul> <p><i>Violations may carry a loss of privileges as well.</i></p> <p><i>Students who receive any type of suspension will be prohibited from attending and/or participating in after-school activities for the duration of their suspension. However, students receiving an internal suspension will be required to attend any scheduled after-school detentions. No student, during the time of an external suspension will be permitted on school grounds.</i></p>

ESASD Code of Student Conduct (Grades K-12)—cont. pg. 4

Level IV Expected Behavior	Possible Level IV Infractions	Possible Disciplinary Action for Infraction of Code of Student Conduct
<p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will not engage in any threats, fighting, reckless endangerment, assault and/or battery and disorderly conduct.</li> <li>Exhibit empathy by not engaging in the harassment of others ~ sexual, racial, verbal, physical, bullying and/or cyberbullying.</li> <li>Not engage in any type of sexual offenses, including pornography.</li> <li>Refrain from indecent exposure and/or lewd acts.</li> <li>Respect others' property by not committing acts of theft, possession, or sale of stolen property.</li> <li>Respect District and school property by not trespassing, committing acts of vandalism and/or arson.</li> <li>Respect school property by not initiating bomb threats and/or false fire alarms.</li> <li>Care for the health of self and others by not smoking/ possessing tobacco.</li> <li>Care for the health or self and others by not possessing, consuming and/or selling controlled substances, including OTC or look-alike drugs.</li> <li>Value the rights of others by not committing acts of extortion.</li> <li>Care about their community by not promoting and/or advocating gang activities or affiliations.</li> <li>Care for the safety of self and others by not possessing weapons including look alike weapons.</li> <li>Comply with all federal, state, local and school District regulations.</li> <li>Refrain from repeated violations of Level I, Level II and/or Level III expected behaviors.</li> <li>This is only a listing of some of the expected behaviors and possible disciplinary action for those students who violate the District's Code of Student Conduct and/or Board Policies; the list is not all-inclusive.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Altercation and/or Fighting</li> <li>Reckless Endangerment</li> <li>Aggravated or Simple Assault</li> <li>Disorderly Conduct</li> <li>Harassment/Intimidation/Bullying/Cyberbullying</li> <li>Sexual Harassment</li> <li>Sexual Offenses</li> <li>Racial/Ethnic Intimidation</li> <li>Threatening Staff or Student</li> <li>Robbery/Burglary/Theft</li> <li>Arson/Vandalism</li> <li>Trespassing</li> <li>Bomb Threat</li> <li>Threats/Terroristic Threats</li> <li>Distribution/Possession/Use of Alcohol or Tobacco</li> <li>Possession of Controlled Substance</li> <li>Extortion</li> <li>Gang Policy Violation</li> <li>Possession of Weapon</li> <li>Possession of Knife</li> <li>Possession of Other Weapon</li> <li>Any other Unlawful Acts</li> <li>This is only a listing of some of the possible Level IV Infractions and possible disciplinary action for those students who violate the District's Code of Student Conduct and/or Board Policies; the list is not all-inclusive.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Grades Kindergarten-5:</b> Discipline may include any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Referral to Administrator and letter mailed to parent, multiple external suspensions</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Will include above disciplinary action, in addition to behavior contract</li> </ul> <p>Depending on the level of the incident, may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignment to an alternative educational setting</li> <li>Police Referral/Action for all unlawful offenses</li> <li>Expulsion</li> </ul> <p><b>Grades 6-12:</b> Discipline may include any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Referral letter mailed to parent, multiple external suspensions</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Will include above disciplinary action, in addition to behavior contract</li> </ul> <p>Depending on the level of the incident, may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignment to an alternative educational setting</li> <li>Police Referral/Action for all unlawful offenses</li> <li>Expulsion</li> </ul> <p><i>Violations may carry a loss of privileges as well.</i></p> <p><i>Students who receive any type of suspension will be prohibited from attending and/or participating in after-school activities for the duration of their suspension. However, students receiving an internal suspension will be required to attend any scheduled after-school detentions. No student, during the time of an external suspension will be permitted on school grounds.</i></p>

Figure 11. ESASD behavioral expectations from the student code of conduct.

## Appendix H

### Sample Book Titles and Lessons from *Strong Start*

Books by Kevin Henke such as *Julius*, *The Baby of the World* about a jealous sibling, *Chrysanthemum*, which deals with bullying, and *Wemberly Worried*, which illustrates worrying and fear through the eyes of a mouse are examples of the books found in the program. In addition, there are books that deal with recognizing feelings (*Feelings*, by Aliki), dealing with disappointment (*Mean Soup*, by Betsy Everitt), and anger management (*The Chocolate Covered Cookie Tantrum*, by Deborah Blumenthal).

<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Content</b>
Lesson 1 The Feelings Exercise Group	Establishing expectations and introduction of the concept of emotional strength.
Lesson 2 Understanding Your Feelings (Part 1)	Six Basic Emotions - Which feelings make us feel “good:” or “not good”.
Lesson 3 Understanding Your Feelings (Part 2)	Identifying ways for handling feelings...”OK” ways and “Not OK” ways.
Lesson 4 When You’re Angry	Other ways to say “angry” - identifying body cues showing anger, strategies for dealing with anger.
Lesson 5 When You’re Happy	Other ways to say “happy” - introduction to positive thought.
Lesson 6 When You’re Worried	Identifying body cues showing “worry”, strategies for letting go of worry.
Lesson 7 Understanding Other People’s Feelings	Learning body cues indicating other people’s feelings - how to recognize how someone else is feeling.
Lesson 8 Being a Good Friend	How to initiate and keep a friendship.
Lesson 9 Solving Problems	Strategies for negotiating conflicts and dealing with emotions.
Lesson 10 Wrapping Up	Review of key concepts.
Booster Lessons (optional)	Review of key concepts.

(Merrill, Parisi, & Whitcomb, 2007)

## Appendix I

### Sample Lesson Plan and Family Bulletin from the *Strong Start* Curriculum

#### **Lesson 5 - When You're Happy**

**Purpose** - To teach students to feel happy and use positive thinking

**Objectives:**

- Students will accurately describe how their bodies feel when they are happy.
- Students will describe actions and situations that make them feel happy.
- Students will accurately list synonyms for the word happy.
- Students will understand the ABCs of Positive Thinking.

**Materials Needed:**

- Henry (stuffed animal mascot)
- Blank overhead transparency or chart paper
- Supplement 5.1
- Supplement 5.2
- Book from Literature List (or one of your choice)
- Drawing paper
- Crayons
- Strong Start Bulletin

**Review - 2 minutes**

To activate prior knowledge, review and discuss previous topics and main ideas. Make sure to provide feedback and refer to the steps of the Stop, Count, In, Out strategy.

**Sample Script**

During our last meeting, we discussed feeling angry. Raise your hand if you can tell me Ways that Help you feel better when you are angry. How about a Way that Hurts?

**Introduction - 2 minutes**

Communicate the lesson's purpose and objectives clearly.

**Sample Script**

Today, we will talk about feeling happy. Everyone feels happy sometimes. It is a good feeling. Today, we will talk about what our bodies and minds feel like when we are happy, and we will also talk about times that made us feel happy. We will think about how we can make ourselves feel happy when we are mad or sad.

## **Read a Book from the Literature List - 10 minutes**

**Read a book from the following list of examples or choose your own book to share with students.**

- Super Completely and Totally the Messiest by Judith Viorst
- I Like Me! by Nancy Carlson
- The Secret Remedy Book: A Story of Comfort and Love by Karin Cates
- Fun is a Feeling by Chara M. Curtis
- Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day by Jamie Lee Curtis
- A Bad, Bad Day by Kirsten Hall

**Be sure to point out all of the actions or ways in which the characters behave when they are acting on their feelings. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:**

- ✓ Which character was happy?
- ✓ Do you think it was a good or not good feeling?
- ✓ What did the character look like when he or she was happy?
- ✓ What did the character do when he or she was happy?

## **Show and Define Happiness - 15 minutes**

Use Supplement 5.1 to show children different examples of happy faces.

### **Sample Script**

- This is happy. Happy is a good feeling. What does happy look like in this picture? Raise your hand if you've ever felt happy. What did your body look or feel like?
- Have students describe what their bodies felt like when they were happy. Examples include felt comfortable, felt relaxed, and felt energetic.
- Engage in a Think/Pair/Share activity. Have students think about a time when they felt happy. Then, have them turn to their neighbors and share their ideas.
- Reconvene and have two students who are willing share their ideas with the whole group.
- Using a blank overhead transparency or chart paper, have students help you generate a list of synonyms or words that make them think of happiness.
- Examples include glad, excited, pleased, joyful, cheerful, content and delighted.

## **Positive Thinking - 15 minutes**

Introduce the concept of Positive Thinking. Consider replacing the term Positive Thinking with

Happy Thinking for younger children who may not understand the concept. As the concept of Positive or Happy Thinking requires a higher level of cognitive thought, it might be helpful to emphasize examples given through animated delivery and movement.

**Sample Script**

Today, we are also going to talk about Positive Thinking. We will learn what this is and how it can help us to feel better when we are sad or mad. Remember, it is always okay to have not good feelings like anger or sadness, but when we use Positive Thinking, we have the feeling that everything is going to be okay. Positive Thinking also helps us to feel better if we are experiencing feelings that are not good. Positive Thinking is like jogging or playing because the more we do it, the healthier we are. We are strong on the inside just as we are strong on the outside. When we don't use Positive Thinking, we might get stuck feeling sad or mad. For example, Henry was not picked to be his teacher's special helper. This gave him feelings that were not good. He thought he'd never be able to be the helper. He was not using Positive Thinking. Instead, if Henry was using Positive Thinking, he would have made himself feel better by remembering that all of the students in the class get to take turns being the teacher's special helper and his turn would come soon.

**Introduce the ABCs of Positive Thinking using Supplement 5.2 as a helpful tool to remember how to achieve positive thinking.**

- A A problem                                      Whenever there's a problem . . .
- B Bad feelings                                    that gives you a not good feeling . . .
- C Comfort yourself                              comfort yourself by thinking about it in a way that makes you feel better.

**Use the following examples to assess children's understanding of the concept of Positive Thinking.**

Problem	What Henry does	Is it Positive Thinking or Not Positive Thinking?	How can Henry use Positive Thinking?
Henry's older brother wanted to play with his toys by himself for a while.	Henry thought, "I hate my brother. I'll never be able to play with his toys ever.	It's Not Positive Thinking.	Henry found something else to do and realized he could play with his Toys another time.
Henry's pencil broke when he was doing his homework.	Henry thought, "I'll never get my homework done."	It's Not Positive Thinking.	Henry knew he could sharpen his pencil or find another one that worked.
Henry missed his favorite TV show.	Henry said, "I'll see it next week."	It's Positive Thinking.	

Henry's favorite baseball team lost the game by one run.

Henry knew they could win the next time.

It's Positive Thinking.

Henry spilled red juice on his white T-shirt.

Henry began to cry and thought that he'd never wear the shirt again.

It's Not Positive Thinking.

Henry thought he could ask his mom to wash his shirt.

Henry didn't get to be his friend Robbie's partner in math class.

Henry thought, "That's okay. Maybe next time."

It's Positive Thinking.

---

### Activity - 5 minutes

Have students draw a picture of a time when they had a problem and thought about it in a way that made them feel better or have younger children color a happy badge to remind them to think positively when they have problems.

**Closure - 1 minute**

**Gather your students together, and review the lesson objectives.**

### Sample Script

Today, we learned about feeling happy and Positive Thinking. Everyone feels happy. It is a good feeling. If we use Positive Thinking, we can make ourselves feel happy even if we are having not good feelings.

### Applying What We Learned

#### Anticipate

Encourage your students to use the ABCs of Positive Thinking when they are feeling badly. This may be particularly helpful before events that may cause negative feelings, such as partner activities, recess, and competitions.

#### Remind

If you find a student who is not using Positive Thinking, remind him or her to use the ABCs of Positive Thinking. The student may need help in determining ways to comfort (letter C) him- or herself.

#### Acknowledge

If you are able to observe students using Positive Thinking, be sure to applaud their application of this

complex skill.

---

### **I'm Happy! - Supplement 5.1**

This is photographs of people who illustrate what being happy facially looks like.

### **The ABCs of Positive Thinking - Supplement 5.2**

- |          |                         |   |
|----------|-------------------------|---|
| <b>A</b> | <b>A Problem</b>        | <b>Whenever there's a problem</b>   |
| <b>B</b> | <b>Bad feelings</b>     | <b>that give you bad feelings</b>   |
| <b>C</b> | <b>Comfort yourself</b> | <b>comfort yourself by thinking about it in a way that makes you feel better.</b> |

### **Strong Start Bulletin**

Dear Family,

This week, our Strong Start lesson focused on teaching students about happiness. We discussed how our bodies feel when we are happy and what actions or situations make us feel happy. We also listed synonyms for the word happy. In this lesson, Henry helped us understand positive thinking. We talked about how positive thinking can make us feel better when we are sad or mad. The ABCs of Positive Thinking is one strategy for positive thinking.

- |   |                  |  |
|---|------------------|--|
| A | A problem        | Whenever there's a problem . . .   |
| B | Bad feelings     | that gives you a not good feeling . . .                                    |
| C | Comfort yourself | comfort yourself by thinking about it in a way that makes you feel better. |

To better understand happiness, we read:

---

Following are great examples of relevant stories that you may want to read at home:

- Super Completely and Totally the Messiest by Judith Viorst
- Fun is a Feeling by Chara M. Curtis
- Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day by Jamie Lee

## Curtis

When your child becomes sad or mad at home, remind him or her to remember the ABCs of Positive Thinking noted above. The “comfort yourself” part can be hard, and your child might need your help to think about a problem in a better way. For example, if your child loses a baseball game, an example of Positive Thinking might be, “That’s okay. I’ll try again next game,” rather than “I’ll never win.”

**Thanks for all of your support in helping your child to be a positive thinker!**

(From *Strong Start*, Merrell, Parisi, & Whitcomb, 2007)

Appendix J

Fidelity Checklists for the *Strong Start* Lessons

Fidelity Checklist (Used with Permission by Author Sara Whitcomb, 2007)  
Lesson 1: The Feelings Exercise Group

Observation start time: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tally of opportunities to respond</b>	<b>Tally of student responses</b>
<b>Tally of total praise statements</b>	<b>Tally of total reprimands given</b>

**III. Introduction**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Explains to students that new curriculum will be started.
- Gives examples of what will be taught and importance to social and emotional health.
- Introduction to “Henry.”

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Defining Behavior Expectations**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Lists three rules for the group.
- Discusses importance of each expectation.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Discussion of Confidentiality**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Shares that students can choose to share personal stories or not.
- Teaches students to tell stories without naming names.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. Introduction to the Topics Covered**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Supplement 1.1 is used to introduce topics.
- Teacher orally reviews topics.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**V. Read a Book from Literature List**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Book Title/Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Characters' feelings and behaviors identified.
- Questions used to guide discussion.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

**VI. Closure**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Teacher reviews with students that they will be learning about life skills.
- Teacher reminds students about class rules.

Circle One: Not Implemented      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Observation finish time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Not Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Partially Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Fully Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fidelity Checklist**  
**Lesson 2: Understanding Your Feelings, Part I**

**Observation start time:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tally of opportunities to respond</b>	<b>Tally of student responses</b>
<b>Tally of total praise statements</b>	<b>Tally of total reprimands given</b>

### III. Review

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Refers to previous lesson describing the Feelings Exercise Group.
- Questions students regarding what has been learned.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### II. Introduction

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Communicates that students will talk about naming feelings.
- Communicates that there are feelings that make us feel **good** or **not good** on the inside.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Feelings Identification

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Communicates that we all have feelings wherever we go.
- Generates a list of feelings.
- Identifies feelings as those that make us feel **good** and **not good**.
- Engages children in practice activity (thumbs up/thumbs down).
- Describes that it is hard to determine whether some feelings make us feel **good** or **not good** on the inside.
- Encourages students to pay attention to feelings in their bodies, expressions on their faces, and thoughts in their minds that help them name feelings.
- Leads students in singing *If You're Happy and You Know It*.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### IV. How do you feel?

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Brainstorms times/situations when we might have certain feelings.
- Engages students in Think/Pair/Share activity.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### V. Read a Book from Literature List

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title/Author: \_\_\_\_\_

- Characters' feelings and behaviors identified.
- Uses relevant questions to guide discussion.

Circle One: Not Implemented

Partially Implemented

Fully Implemented

**VI. Closure**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Teacher reviews with students that naming feelings is important.
- Teacher reminds students that we have feelings everywhere we go.
- Teacher reviews that some feelings make us feel **good** and others make us feel **not good**.

Circle One: Not Implemented

Partially Implemented

Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Observation finish time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Not Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Partially Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Fully Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fidelity Checklist**  
**Lesson 3: Understanding Your Feelings, Part II**

**Observation start time:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tally of opportunities to respond</b>	<b>Tally of student responses</b>
<b>Tally of total praise statements</b>	<b>Tally of total reprimands given</b>

**III. Review**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Reviews previous topics/main ideas. Prompts students to remember six basic feelings.

Circle One: Not Implemented

Partially Implemented

Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Introduction**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Communicates that students will talk more about naming feelings.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Read a Book from Literature List**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Book Title/Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Characters' feelings and behaviors identified.
- Uses relevant questions to guide discussion.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

**IV. Identify Actions that Follow Feelings**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Conveys that everyone has feelings and they are different at different times.
- Communicates that we can have more than one feeling at the same time.
- There are different ways to show feelings and other people may not feel the same way.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. Having Multiple Feelings at Once**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Uses example situations to demonstrate having multiple feelings at same time.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**V. Review Emotions/Ways of Showing Feelings**

- Uses Supplement 3.1 to review basic emotions.
- Prompts students to provide examples.
- Describes difference between **okay** and **not okay** ways of showing feelings, gives examples.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**VI. Identifying Okay vs. Not Okay Ways of Showing Feeling**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Provides examples that reflect the situations children may share.
- Reads examples provided in Supplement 3.2
- Students stand up if **okay**, stay seated if **not okay**.

Circle One: Not Implemented      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**VII. Closure**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Teacher reviews that there are different ways to show our feelings, **okay** and **not okay**.
- Teacher reminds that other people may not feel the same way as they do.

Circle One: Not Implemented      Partially Implemented      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Observation finish time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Not Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Partially Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Fully Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fidelity Checklist**  
**Lesson 4: When You're Angry**

**Observation start time:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tally of opportunities to respond</b>	<b>Tally of student responses</b>
<b>Tally of total praise statements</b>	<b>Tally of total reprimands given</b>

**III. Review**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Refers to previous lesson **Understanding Your Feelings**.
- Refers to feelings that make us feel **good** and **not good** on the inside.
- Refers to **Ok** and **Not Ok** ways of showing feelings.

Circle One: Not Implemented      Partially Implemented      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Introduction**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Communicates that students will talk about anger.

- Communicates that students will learn about what anger looks like and feels like.
- Communicates that students will learn about when anger might occur and how they can deal with their anger.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Read a Book from Literature List**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Book Title/Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Characters' feelings and behaviors identified.
- Uses relevant questions to guide discussion about anger.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

**IV. Show and Define Anger**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Shows pictures or gives examples of what angry faces look like.
- Encourages students to share what their bodies feel like when they are angry.
- Encourages children to share times when they experienced anger.
- Brainstorms synonyms for anger.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. Ways of Handling Anger**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Introduces **Ways that Help** and **Ways that Hurt** in handling anger.
- Uses an overhead or visual of Supplement 4.2 to show the **Stop, Count, In, Out** strategy.
- Provides multiple examples (**Ways that Help**) and non-examples (**Ways that Hurt**) for handling anger.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**V. Activity**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Introduces hands-on activity that children will complete showing **Ways that Help**.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**V. Closure**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Teacher reviews with students that everyone feels angry sometimes.
- Teacher reminds students to use **Ways that Help** in handling anger.

Circle One: Not Implemented Partially Implemented Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Observation finish time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Not Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Partially Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Fully Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fidelity Checklist**  
**Lesson 5: When You're Happy**

**Observation start time:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tally of opportunities to respond</b>	<b>Tally of student responses</b>
<b>Tally of total praise statements</b>	<b>Tally of total reprimands given</b>

**III. Review**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Refers to previous lesson **Feeling Angry**.
- Reviews **Ways that Help** and **Ways that Hurt** in dealing with anger.
- Refers to steps of Stop, Count, In, Out strategy.

Circle One: Not Implemented Partially Implemented Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Introduction**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Communicates that students will talk about feeling happy.
- Communicates that students will learn what their minds and bodies feel like when happy.
- Communicates that students will learn about how to make themselves feel happy when mad or sad.

Circle One: Not Implemented Partially Implemented Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Read a Book from Literature List

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title/Author: \_\_\_\_\_

- Characters' feelings and behaviors identified.
- Uses relevant questions to guide discussion about feeling happy.

Circle One:    Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

### IV. Show and Define Happiness

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Shows pictures (Supplement 5.1) or gives examples of what happy faces look like.
- Encourages students to share what their bodies feel like when they are happy.
- Encourages children to share times when they felt happy.
- Have students generate list of words that make them think of happiness.

Circle One:    Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### V. Positive/Happy Thinking

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Introduces concept of *positive thinking*, explains term as *happy thinking* if needed.
- Explains to students that positive thinking can make them feel better when they experience not good feelings. Provides examples
- Introduces ABCs of Positive Thinking.
- Uses examples to assess children's understanding of concepts.

Circle One:    Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### VI. Activity

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Introduces hands-on activity (drawing experience / coloring badge) that children will complete showing positive thinking.

Circle One:    Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### VII. Closure

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Teacher reviews with students that everyone feels happy sometimes.
- Teacher reminds students to use **Positive Thinking** when they are having not good feelings.

Circle One: Not Implemented Partially Implemented Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation finish time: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Not Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Partially Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Fully Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

**Fidelity Checklist**  
**Lesson 6: When You're Worried**

Observation start time: \_\_\_\_\_

Tally of opportunities to respond	Tally of student responses
Tally of total praise statements	Tally of total reprimands given

**III. Review**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Refers to previous lesson **When You're Happy**.
- Reviews **positive (happy) thinking**.

Circle One: Not Implemented Partially Implemented Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Introduction**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Communicates that students will talk about feeling worried.
- Communicates that students will learn about how to deal with worries.

Circle One: Not Implemented Partially Implemented Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Read a Book from Literature List**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title/Author: \_\_\_\_\_

- Identifies characters' feelings and behaviors.

- Uses relevant questions to guide discussion about feeling worried.

#### IV. Show and Define Worry

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Shows pictures or gives examples of what worried faces look like.
- Encourages students to share what their bodies feel like when they are worried.
- Encourages children to share times when they experienced worry.
- Brainstorms synonyms for worry.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

#### V. Letting Go of Worries

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Uses the **ABC's of Positive Thinking** and **Stop, Count, In, Out** strategies to explain how to let go of worries.
- Provides multiple examples and non-examples for **Letting Go of Worries**.
- Engages students in problem-solving how to let go of worries when non-examples are provided.
- Engages in relaxation exercise or explains that students will engage in one in the near future.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

#### VI. Closure

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Teacher reviews with students that everyone feels worried sometimes.
- Teacher reminds students to use **ABC's of Positive Thinking** and **Stop, Count, In, Out** strategies to let go of worries.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation finish time: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Not Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Partially Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Fully Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

### Fidelity Checklist Lesson 7: Understanding Other People's Feelings

Observation start time: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tally of opportunities to respond</b>	<b>Tally of student responses</b>
<b>Tally of total praise statements</b>	<b>Tally of total reprimands given</b>

### III. Review

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Refers to previous lesson **When You're Worried**.
- Reviews ABCs of Positive Thinking, and the Stop, Count, In, Out strategy.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### II. Introduction

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Communicates that students will talk about understanding how other people feel.
- Communicates that students will learn to notice what other people's bodies and faces look like when they are feeling different ways.

Circle One: Not Implemented   Partially Implemented   Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Name and Define Skill / Modeling / Charades

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Explains how to tell other's feelings by looking for visual cues of face and body.
- Shows faces from supplement 7.1, identifies visual cues.
- Models body clues for various emotions.
- Has students act out feelings for each other.
- Points out how understanding others' feelings helps us get along better.

Circle One: Not Implemented   Partially Implemented   Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### IV. Read a Book from Literature List

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title/Author: \_\_\_\_\_

- Identifies characters' feelings and behaviors.
- Notes how different characters have different feelings in same situation.
- Uses relevant questions to guide discussion.

Circle One: Not Implemented Partially Implemented Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**V. Real World Examples**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Reviews how same experience can lead to different feelings in different people.
- Provides examples of when this might occur.

Circle One: Not Implemented Partially Implemented Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**VI. Closure**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Reviews ways to tell how others are feeling.
- Explains how to look for visual cues.
- Reminds students that others may have different feelings and understanding them helps to be good friends.
- 

Circle One: Not Implemented Partially Implemented Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation finish time: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Not Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Partially Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Fully Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

**Fidelity Checklist  
Lesson 8: Being a Good Friend**

Observation start time: \_\_\_\_\_

Tally of opportunities to respond	Tally of student responses
Tally of total praise statements	Tally of total reprimands given

### III. Review

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Refers to previous lesson **Understanding Other People's Feelings.**
- Reviews body clues that tell us how others are feeling

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### II. Introduction

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Communicates that students will talk about being good friends.
- Communicates that students will learn about how to use words, eyes, ears and bodies to help make friends.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Read a Book from Literature List

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title/Author: \_\_\_\_\_

- Identifies characters' feelings and behaviors.
- Uses relevant questions to guide discussion about being a good friend.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### IV. Talking and Listening

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Encourages students to use a nice voice (soft and gentle) when talking to friends.
- Encourages students to use their eyes, ears, and bodies to show that they are listening to friends.
- Models examples of using a nice voice and being a good listener.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### V. Approaching Others

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Explains how to begin a friendship or activity with friends.
- Brainstorms list of ways to show others you want to be a friend.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**VI. Sharing and working together/Activity**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Explains that good friends share and work together.
- Encourages students to think of a time when they have shared or worked together.
- Engages students in making a class book based on Supplement 8.1 or explains this as an activity that will be completed later.

Circle One: Not Implemented      Partially Implemented      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**VII. Closure**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Reviews concepts related to being a good friend (e.g. using nice voices, listening ears, kind words.)
- Reviews that being a good friend makes it easier to work together and share.

Circle One: Not Implemented      Partially Implemented      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation finish time: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Not Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Partially Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Fully Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

**Fidelity Checklist  
Lesson 9: Solving People Problems**

Observation start time: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tally of opportunities to respond</b>	<b>Tally of student responses</b>
<b>Tally of total praise statements</b>	<b>Tally of total reprimands given</b>

**III. Review**

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Refers to previous lesson **Being a Good Friend**.

- Questions students on how to be a friend.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Introduction

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Communicates that everyone has problems.
- Communicates that when we disagree we may feel mad or sad.
- Explains that we will learn to solve problems and make ourselves feel happy.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## III. Read a Book from Literature List

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title/Author: \_\_\_\_\_

- Identifies characters' feelings and behaviors.
- Uses relevant questions to guide discussion about how to solve problems.

## IV. Define types of People Problems

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Explains idea of disagreement, uses examples.
- Encourages students to share times they have encountered people problems.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## V. Comforting Yourself / Solving Problems

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Reviews the **ABC's of Positive Thinking** and **Stop, Count, In, Out** strategies to help us feel better when we have a problem.
- Communicates importance of being a friend when brainstorming solutions.
- Uses examples to deepen understanding of problem solving.
- Has children role-play problem solving strategies.

Circle One: Not Implemented                      Partially Implemented                      Fully Implemented  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## VI. Closure

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Teacher reviews with students that everyone has problems sometimes

- Teacher reminds students to use **ABC's of Positive Thinking** and **Stop, Count, In, Out** strategies to solve problems

Circle One: Not Implemented          Partially Implemented          Fully Implemented  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Observation finish time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Percentage of Components Not Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Percentage of Components Partially Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Percentage of Components Fully Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fidelity Checklist**  
**Lesson 10: Finishing UP!**

**Observation start time:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tally of opportunities to respond</b>	<b>Tally of student responses</b>
<b>Tally of total praise statements</b>	<b>Tally of total reprimands given</b>

**III. Introduction**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Explains that this is the final lesson and will be a review of previous lessons.
- Points out that skills learned are vital to social emotional health (healthy on the inside.)
- Questions students on what has been learned.
- Uses supplement 10.1 picture cues to review topics.

Circle One: Not Implemented          Partially Implemented          Fully Implemented  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Read a Book from Literature List**

**Minutes:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Book Title/Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Identifies characters' feelings and behaviors.
- Uses relevant questions to guide discussion.

Circle One: Not Implemented          Partially Implemented          Fully Implemented  
 Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Closure

Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Quick overview of what has been learned.
- Encourages students to work hard to remember skills/lessons learned.

Circle One: Not Implemented      Partially Implemented      Fully Implemented

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation finish time: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Components Not Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_ Percentage of Components Partially Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_ Percentage of Components Fully Implemented: \_\_\_\_\_

Fidelity Checklists used with permission by Author (Whitcomb, 2009).

## Appendix K

### Advertisements Recruiting Participants

#### Flyer – Parents/Students – Primary Project

## **BE A PART OF AN EXCITING OPPORTUNITY FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS!**



**When?** Fall, 2012

**What?** Take part in a research study about kindergarteners' social-emotional skills and how these skills affect the kindergarten classroom environment.

**Purpose of the Study?** The intent of the study is to find out if a literature-based social-emotional learning program makes a difference in students' social awareness, their use of pro-social behaviors and to their reading achievement. It is also trying to find out how social skills may affect the kindergarten classroom environment.

**Who is Leading the Study?** The study is being led by Susan Werkheiser, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The study has been approved by the University, by Mrs. Laverdure, East Stroudsburg Area School District Superintendent, and by Mrs. Livingston, Principal of East Stroudsburg Elementary School.

#### **What Will Participating Students Do?**

- Take part in a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum (12 weeks, 1 time per week, one 40 minute lesson per week during shared reading time).
- Activities will include read aloud stories with social-emotional themed topics, and other activities such as discussion, role playing and puppet play.
- Weekly parent newsletters sent home to keep parents informed of the social-emotional themes being discussed in the classroom so that discussions can carry over to the home setting.

#### **What are the Benefits of Participation for Teachers?**

- It may help your child to practice the important social skills they need to be successful.
- It may give your child the opportunity to interact with other children as the book discussions and other activities occur.
- You and your child may benefit by being able to discuss the social skills at home as a result of the parent newsletter component of the study.

- You and your child may benefit by knowing that your participation may add to the body of knowledge regarding children's social-emotional development and reading.

#### **Which Children Can Participate in the Study?**

- Children in participating teachers' kindergarten classrooms at East Stroudsburg Elementary School in Fall 2012
- ***You will receive a parental consent form to sign prior to participation.*** If you have any questions, please contact: Susan Werkheiser @ 570-421-7277, 570-807-1420 or [swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org)

## **HELP WANTED - Seeking Kindergarten Teachers for Participation in a Study of Children’s Social-Emotional Skills in the Classroom Environment!**



**When?** Fall, 2012

**What is the purpose of this study?** The intent of the study is determine the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning program on students' social awareness, the use of pro-social behaviors and reading achievement in addition to how social skills may affect the kindergarten classroom environment.

**Who is leading the study?** The study is being led by Susan Werkheiser, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The study has been approved by the University, by Mrs. Laverdure, Superintendent, and by Mrs. Livingston, the building principal.

### **What will participating teachers do?**

- Teachers can attend an informational meeting. Once volunteers are established, participants will be chosen from the volunteers at random.
- Participants **MUST** sign a consent form.
- Implement a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum (12 weeks, 1 time per week, one 40 minute lesson per week during shared reading time).
- Submit your weekly lesson plans (name will be removed).
- Be observed non-evaluatively periodically to ensure fidelity of curriculum implementation (name will be removed from observation and advanced notice given).
- Keep an anecdotal journal of students' social behaviors throughout implementation.
- Participate in an interview at the beginning and at the conclusion of program (there may be additional interview questions asked if a line of inquiry presents itself).

### **What are the benefits of participation for teachers?**

- Help your students to practice the important social skills they need to be successful.
- Give your students the opportunity to interact with each other as the book discussions occur.
- Benefit by knowing that your participation may add to the body of knowledge regarding children's social-emotional development and reading.

**Added BONUS! If you are one of the teachers selected at random from the teachers who volunteer to participate, you will be compensated with a \$50 Visa Gift Card at the conclusion of the study.**

**Which teachers can participate in the study?** Teachers teaching in a kindergarten classroom at East Stroudsburg Elementary School in Fall 2012

If you are interested in participating, please contact -**Susan Werkheiser @ 570-421-7277. 570-807-1420** or [swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org)

## Sample Email Message to Teachers – Primary Project

**From:** Susan Werkheiser  
**To:** [swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org)  
**Date:** Sunday - February 19, 2012 11:55 AM  
**Subject:** Call for Participation in Study  
HELP WANTED - Seeking Kindergarten Teachers  
for Participation in a Study of Children's Social-Emotional Skills in the Classroom Environment!  
When? Fall, 2012

What is the purpose of this study? The intent of the study is determine the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning program on students' social awareness, the use of pro-social behaviors and reading achievement in addition to how social skills may affect the kindergarten classroom environment.

Who is leading the study? The study is being led by Susan Werkheiser, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The study has been approved by the University, by Mrs. Laverdure, Superintendent, and by Mrs. Livingston, Principal at East Stroudsburg Elementary School.

What will participating teachers do?

- Teachers can attend an informational meeting. **The meeting will be held on \_\_\_\_\_ for ESE teachers.** Once volunteers are established, participants will be chosen from the volunteers at random.
- Participants **MUST** sign a consent form. There will be one more informational meeting after consents are signed.
- Implement a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum (12 weeks, 1 time per week, one 40 minute lesson per week during shared reading time).
- Submit your weekly lesson plans (name will be removed).
- Be observed non-evaluatively periodically to ensure fidelity of curriculum implementation (name will be removed from observation and advanced notice given).
- Keep an anecdotal journal of students' social behaviors throughout implementation.
- Participate in an interview at the beginning and at the conclusion of program (there may be additional interview questions asked if a line of inquiry presents itself).

What are the benefits of participation for teachers?

- Help your students to practice the important social skills they need to be successful.
- Give your students the opportunity to interact with each other as the book discussions occur.
- Benefit by knowing that your participation may add to the body of knowledge regarding children's social-emotional development and reading.

Added BONUS! If you are one of the teachers selected at random from the teachers who volunteer to participate, you will be compensated with a \$50 Visa Gift Card at the conclusion of the study.

Which teachers can participate in the study?

- Teachers teaching in a kindergarten classroom at ESE in Fall 2012

If you are interested in participating, please contact:

Susan Werkheiser @ 570-421-7277, 570-807-1420 or [swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org)

Susan Werkheiser  
Principal  
Clearview & Ramsey Elementary Schools  
Stroudsburg Area School District  
Have You Filled a Bucket Today?

## Letter to Teachers – Re: Informational Meeting – Primary Project

### **Dear ESE Kindergarten Teachers,**

I am seeking volunteer Kindergarten Teachers at ESE Elementary School to participate in a research study involving the development of students' social-emotional skills. The intent of the study is to determine the effects of a literature-based social-emotional learning program on students' social awareness, the use of pro-social behaviors and reading achievement in addition to how social skills may affect the kindergarten classroom environment.

The study is being led by Susan Werkheiser, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The study has been approved by the University, by Mrs. Laverdure, Superintendent and by Mrs. Livingston, ESE Principal.

### **What will participating teachers do?**

- Teachers can attend a short informational meeting to find out more about the study. **The meeting will be held on \_\_\_\_\_**. Once volunteers are established, participants will be chosen from the volunteers at random.
- Participants **MUST** sign a consent form. There will be one more informational meeting after consents are signed.
- Teachers will implement a literature-based social-emotional learning curriculum (12 weeks, 1 time per week, one 40 minute lesson per week during shared reading time).
- Submit your weekly lesson plans (names will be removed to protect confidentiality).
- Be observed non-evaluatively periodically to ensure fidelity of curriculum implementation (names will be removed from observation and advanced notice given).
- Keep an anecdotal journal of students' social behaviors throughout implementation.
- Participate in an interview at the beginning and at the conclusion of program (there may be additional interview questions asked if a line of inquiry presents itself).

### **What are the benefits of participation for teachers?**

- Help your students to practice the important social skills they need to be successful.
- Give your students the opportunity to interact with each other as the book discussions occur.

- Benefit by knowing that your participation may add to the body of knowledge regarding children's social-emotional development and reading.

***Added BONUS! If you are one of the teachers selected at random from the teachers who volunteer to participate, you will be compensated with a \$50 Visa Gift Card at the conclusion of the study.***

**Which teachers can participate in the study?**

- Teachers teaching in a kindergarten classroom at ESE in the Fall, 2012.

**Student data:** Researcher will harvest reading achievement data from the district and administer a social skills test both before and after the program implementation. Permission slips will be given to parents to sign prior to the program implementation.

**If you are interested in participating, please contact:**

Susan Werkheiser @ 570-421-7277, 570-807-1420 or [swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org)

## Appendix L

### Teacher Journal Prompts

#### **Teacher Journal Prompts**

##### **Directions:**

Each week of the project, teachers participating in the project should set aside time to write in their anecdotal journals. The purpose of the journal is to keep a comprehensive account of your experiences during the project and to elicit your observations of different aspects of the environment in order to “jog” your memory during the interview process. Because the entries are made close to the time of your experiences, they are more likely to more accurately reflect your impressions than weeks after the fact.

- You should set aside time each week to write in your journal (approx. 15 minutes per week).
- Your writing should be free, spontaneous, and informal.
  - Entries should be descriptive, analytic, personally evaluative (Gibbs, 1988)
  - Tell WHAT, So WHAT, Now WHAT (Driscoll & Teh, 2001)
- In keeping with the informal writing, you should write by hand in the provided notebook. However, if for some reason, you are uncomfortable writing by hand, please discuss this with the principal researcher.
- Use the prompts attached as “response starters” to get you started each week. You may add additional thoughts to your entries as well.
- You should look at the “response starters” prior to starting the week so you are aware of some things to look for during the week.
- “A Thinking Lens for Reflection and Inquiry” (Curtis & Carter, 2007) , may be used as a guideline for additional responses).

- Your journals will serve as triangulation of data.

## **PROMPTS**

### **WEEK #1**

As a teacher, my hope for my students is that...

Other thoughts...

### **WEEK #2**

The most important thing I tried to accomplish in class this week was...

Other thoughts...

### **WEEK #3**

In keeping with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, set a literacy goal this week for one of your students that's neither too hard, or too easy. Write about whether that student attained the goal or not. What teaching strategies were used to assist the student? What social/emotional behaviors did you observe in the student?

Other thoughts...

### **WEEK #4**

Observe the environment this week. Describe the learning environment you have established. Is it the same as when you first started teaching? If not, how has it changed? How do you feel about this? Do you think this has affected the students?

Other thoughts...

### **WEEK #5**

Discuss what classroom rules you have established and the process by which you have established them.

Describe your observations of any children in your class who are having difficulty following the rules and reasons why you think they may be having trouble.

Other thoughts...

### **WEEK #6**

Please describe a typical “day in the life” of your students.

At this time in the school year, are you noticing a difference in your classroom environment as a whole in terms of behavior of your students? If so, to what do you attribute this?

Other thoughts...

### **WEEK #7**

Please observe your students interacting during unstructured times such as recess or lunch. Describe if you notice any cultural or gender differences in how the students handle social interactions.

Other thoughts...

### **WEEK #8**

Please observe your students interacting during unstructured times such as recess or lunch. Key in on any negative social issues students may have. Watch for ways the students resolve the issues. Describe this. Are they able to solve the issues independently? Are they using any new skills?

Other thoughts...

### **WEEK #9**

At this point in the school year, what differences, if any, are you noticing in your students as readers? Please describe their skills as readers, but also their behaviors in terms of emotions (ie. are they happy to read).

Other thoughts...

### **WEEK #10**

Describe what new learning you have gained from this experience that you may use in the future in your work.

Other thoughts...

# A Thinking Lens for Reflection and Inquiry

- **Knowing yourself**
  - What captures my attention as the children engage, explore and interact?
  - What delights me as I watch and listen?
  - What in my background and values is influencing my response to this situation and why?
  - What adult perspectives, i.e. standards, health and safety, time, goals are on my mind?
- **Finding the details of children's competency that engage your heart and mind**
  - What do I notice in the children's faces and actions?
  - Where do I see examples of children's strengths and competencies?
  - What do I think is valuable about this experience?
- **Seeking the child's point of view**
  - What is the child drawn to and excited about?
  - What might the child be trying to accomplish?
  - Why might the child be interacting with others this way?
  - What developmental themes, ideas or theories might the child be exploring?
- **Examining the physical/social/emotional environment**
  - How is the organization and use of the physical space and materials impacting this situation?
  - How could we strengthen relationships here?
  - How are schedules and routines influencing this experience?
- **Considering multiple perspectives**
  - How might the child's culture and family background be influencing this situation?
  - What questions might we ask to get the perspective of the child's family?
  - Who else or what other perspectives should we consider?
  - What child development or early learning theories should we consider in this experience?
  - What desired early learning outcomes do I see reflected here?
- **Considering opportunities and possibilities for next steps**
  - What values, philosophy and desired outcomes do I want to influence my response?
  - What new or existing relationships could be strengthened?
  - Which learning goals could be focused on here?
  - What other materials and activities could be offered to build on this experience?
  - What new vocabulary could we begin to use?

(Curtis & Carter, 2007)

## Appendix M

### Communication Log Between Researcher, RtI Coordinator and Participant Teachers

<b>Date and Nature of Communication</b>
July 17, 2012 – Researcher met with site school principal and RtI Coordinator to discuss study overview and logistics. Site school principal invited researcher to speak about study at Kindergarten Orientation. Site school principal requested revision to parent consents to reflect assessments only and to allow students to remain in class during <i>Strong Start</i> read aloud activities since they are similar to what they students normally have during <i>Scott Foresman</i> shared reading time.
July 18, 2012 – Revised IRB and parent consent letters approved.
August 1, 2012 – Researcher delivered parent informational flyers to the site school to be prepared for the Kindergarten Orientation. The flyers were to be included in the parents’ “Welcome” packets.
August 16, 2012 – Researcher met with parents of kindergarten students who were in attendance at the site school’s Kindergarten Orientation. Parent informational flyers were distributed for review. Researcher met with all possible kindergarten teacher participants. Teacher consents distributed for review. Email correspondence begins between RtI Coordinator, participant teachers and researcher. Teacher participants chosen and assigned.
August 17, 2012 – Researcher delivered <i>Strong Start</i> materials to the site school. Researcher coordinated the delivery of materials with the RtI Coordinator.
August 18, 2012 – Researcher followed up with the RtI Coordinator on materials distribution and data format and to expect another email regarding scheduling the social skills pretesting.
August 23, 2012 – Researcher followed up with the RtI Coordinator and teacher participants regarding materials distribution, study logistics, and directions for collection of parent consents.
August 23, 2013 – Researcher followed up with participant teachers regarding question about <i>Second Step</i> (character education) implementation (a district initiative). Instructed teachers to wait on implementing the program if it was not mandatory. Since it was not mandatory at that time, the teachers were waiting until after the study to explore <i>Second Step</i> .
August 26, 2013 – Researcher followed up with teachers regarding instructions about materials distribution, study logistics, and directions for collection of parent consents and a reminder about not implementing <i>Second Step</i> until after the study was concluded.
September 6, 2012 – Researcher delivered parent consent forms to site school and communicated with RtI Coordinator regarding distribution, duplication, collection, and follow-up if not returned of same.

September 7, 2012 – Researcher answered parent email inquiry regarding study.
September 10, 2012 – Researcher communicated with RtI Coordinator regarding parent consent collection and follow up, <i>DIBELS</i> data collection, and to schedule a meeting to plan logistics for pretest sessions/interviews.
September 21, 2012 – Researcher met with principal and RtI Coordinator to schedule the pre-implementation social skills assessments and first interview sessions.
September 24, 2012 – Researcher communicated with RtI Coordinator regarding data tracking template to utilize for recording <i>DIBELS</i> data. Template sent via email attachment.
September 28, 2012 – Researcher communicated with RtI Coordinator to be sure all was on track and data for <i>DIBELS</i> was entered into template. Researcher verified dates/times for pretest/interview sessions.
October 1-2 and October 4, 2012 - Researcher administered the social skills (ACES) pretests (to only those students with permissions). First session of teacher interviews were conducted and teacher reflective journals were distributed.
October 4, 2013 – Researcher collected <i>DIBELS</i> Data (for only those students with permissions) from RtI Coordinator. Email communications with RtI Coordinator and participant teachers continues.
October 5, 2012 – Researcher communicated with participant teachers regarding first week of study implementation (post-interview/journals/lessons). Individual responses received. Researcher also sent an e-copy of the journal prompts for their convenience.
October 5, 2012 – Researcher communicated separately with the experimental group teachers regarding scheduling their fidelity checks and with a reminder that they should do one lesson of <i>Strong Start</i> per week. Through our email communication, we pre-arranged to have the researcher observe lessons 5 and 7.
October 5, 2012 – Communicated via email responding to Teacher TE2 in response to a question regarding her teacher journal. She asked if she could respond to her prompts on the computer even though the directions say “handwrite the responses”. Researcher granted permission for this and then her journal can be printed at the conclusion of the study. She mentioned in her email that her 1 <sup>st</sup> lesson “was great.” She had a student say to her after he went to the nurse that he told her “someone” scratched him rather than the kid’s actual name (because he didn’t want to tattle). She mentioned it made her “giggle. Glad to be a part of this.”
October 14, 2012 - Experimental group teachers began teaching the <i>Strong Start</i> curriculum. The curriculum has ten lessons. One lesson was taught each week adjusting for school closings.
October 23, 2012 – Researcher communicated with all participant teachers as a general check in and a reminder to journal each week. Researcher mentioned that after their interviews were

transcribed, they would be asked to look the transcripts over for inaccuracies so that those could be corrected.
October 23, 2012 – Researcher sent separate emails to each participant teacher with interview transcripts attached as Word documents with instructions to check the transcripts for inaccuracies. If there were any inaccuracies, participant teachers were asked to point these out to the researcher who would then correct them and send the transcripts back for a second review.
October 24, 2012 – Teachers TE1, TE2, and TC1 email communication stating that there were no inaccuracies in their transcripts. Teacher TE1 indicated she was on Lesson #2. Teacher TE2 indicated that she was on Lesson #3. Email stated that it looked like Lesson #5 would take place on Nov. 14. “I will start about 2:30. If anything changes, I will let you know. Following my day 3 schedule I will finish the last week in January. Will that work?”
October 26, 2012 - Hurricane Sandy - Schools were closed all week. Lessons required a one week adjustment.
November 11, 2012 – Researcher communicated with all participant teachers with a general check in. Researcher reminded participant teachers to stay on task with their journals and to adjust their journals and in the case of the experimental group teachers, their <i>Strong Start</i> lessons, by a week. Researcher mentioned that they should pick up where they left off and if they were a bit behind, that it was ok. Researcher asked Teachers TE1 and TE2 for a time/date when she could observe for the first fidelity check.
November 11, 2012 – Teacher TC1 emailed verifying she was on journal prompt # 4. She stated she has set aside every Thursday to write in her journal.
November 12, 2012 – Teacher TE1 and TE2 emailed to schedule a time for fidelity check #1.
November 13, 2012 – Researcher emailed Teacher TE1 and TE2 to verify date/time for fidelity check #1.
November 15, 2012 – Researcher conducted fidelity check #1. Verified Teacher TC2 teacher interview transcripts in person since researcher did not receive email verification of same.
Thanksgiving Break
December 11, 2012 – Researcher communicated with all participant teachers a general check in and a reminder that they should be continuing to journal. Researcher reminded all teachers that they should be done journaling by the time the Winter <i>DIBELS</i> probes are given at the school in January. Researcher reminded all teachers that I will be soon scheduling the posttests with the RtI Coordinator and to watch for that information. Researcher scheduled fidelity check #2 with Teacher TE1 and TE2.
Winter Break

January 3, 2013 – Researcher conducted fidelity check #2.
January 7, 2013 – Researcher communicated with RtI Coordinator regarding the logistics for the posttest administration of the social skills assessment and second session of teacher interviews.
January 8, 2013 – Researcher sent RtI Coordinator the data collection template for the <i>DIBELS</i> data via email attachment.
January 28, 2013 – Researcher was originally supposed to go into the site on this date but this was a snow day. Researcher contacted the teachers/RtI Coordinator to reschedule the posttest/interview sessions.
January 29-30, 2013 - Researcher administered the social skills (ACES) posttests (to only students with permissions). Second/Final session of teacher interviews were conducted and teacher reflective journals were collected.
February 4 and 9 - Researcher received communications from the RtI Coordinator regarding the Winter <i>DIBELS</i> data (of only students with permissions). Researcher received the data from the RtI Coordinator in the template via an email attachment.
February 11, 2013 – Researcher sent all participant teachers, RtI Coordinator, and site school principal a thank you letter and gift (\$50 Visa Gift Card) as a thank you for their time and effort in helping with the project.
February 11, 2013 – Researcher sent superintendent of the district a thank you letter for allowing the study to be conducted in the district/site.

## Appendix N

### Permissions to Use/Modify Measures

#### Permission to Use Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills

Susan,

I always have research assistants interview children, even with older children.

Dave

On Apr 25, 2011, at 5:13 PM, Susan Werkheiser wrote:

Hi Dr. Schultz,

First, let me say thank you for sharing ACES. Second, I may have more scoring questions for you when I get to that point. I want to review the articles you sent and look at those studies first. There was one question I did have currently though. My study will be conducted with kindergarten students. I was wondering if ACES could be modified to use pictures w/ the words (ie. a smiley face with the word happy) or if responses could be recorded by an interviewer since most beginning K students wouldn't be able to read yet and would these be satisfactory adaptations?

Again, I appreciate your help!  
Susan

>>> David Schultz 04/25/11 11:13 AM >>>  
Susan,

I'm happy to share ACES with you. I'll send you the materials in a series of e-mails that follow this one. After you have a chance to look them through, let me know what questions you have.

Dave

David A. Schultz, Ph.D., M.Div.  
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology  
1000 Hilltop Circle  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County  
Baltimore, MD 21250  
410-455-2414 (office)  
410-455-1055 (fax)

Spring 2011 Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 11:15-12:00

Director, Social Development Lab  
Sondheim 402  
410-455-8183 (lab)  
[http://userpages.umbc.edu/~kod1/Psychology\\_Lab/Home.html](http://userpages.umbc.edu/~kod1/Psychology_Lab/Home.html)

On Apr 23, 2011, at 3:59 PM, Susan Werkheiser wrote:

Dear Dr. Schultz,

I am a doctoral candidate at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I am working on my dissertation and am looking for more information on the Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills ACES). I noticed the assessment was used in two of the studies I have reviewed that are similar to mine and in researching the assessment, it looks like it is public domain (according to CASEL). I would like to obtain a copy of it and I was hoping you could direct me. Any help you could offer would be wonderful.

Thanks in advance,  
Susan Werkheiser

Susan Werkheiser  
Principal  
Clearview and Ramsey  
Have You Filled a Bucket Today?

Permission to Use Modified ACES Response Forms

Hi Susan,

I would be happy to share. I have to send through gmail as the response form is a really large file. Good luck and let me know how it goes! I would be happy to help in any other way...

Sara

On Sun, Jul 10, 2011 at 11:48 AM, <[swhitcomb@educ.umass.edu](mailto:swhitcomb@educ.umass.edu)> wrote:

Sara Whitcomb, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
[swhitcomb@educ.umass.edu](mailto:swhitcomb@educ.umass.edu)  
[413-545-6904](tel:413-545-6904)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: "Susan Werkheiser" <[swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org)>

To: <[swhitcomb@educ.umass.edu](mailto:swhitcomb@educ.umass.edu)>

Date: Sat, 09 Jul 2011 12:05:26 -0400

Subject: Fwd: Re: Information Request

Dear Dr. Whitcomb,

I have been (as you can see by prior emails) in touch with Dr. Schultz in regard to using the Assessment of Children's Emotion Skills in my dissertation study. I am also using Strong Start as my intervention program. I am doing a mixed methods study looking at not only social-emotional skills before and after Strong Start, similar to your dissertation study, but I have chosen to look at the kindergarten population in two small town fringe elementary schools w/ about 50% low SES kids. I am also looking at the literature component of Strong Start (using the trade book read-alouds) to see if there is an additional benefit of increased reading achievement as measured by a curriculum based measure (Easy CBM). I'm doing a pre/post test non-equivalent control group quasi-experimental design in addition to teacher interviews.

The purpose of my email is to ask if I would be able to utilize the pictorial modifications that you made to the ACES assessment for your study - I love that it mirrors the pictures used in Strong Start for continuity. Of course I would properly cite your work.

Thanks for any assistance you can provide.

Susan Werkheiser  
Doctoral Candidate - Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Susan Werkheiser  
Principal  
Clearview and Ramsey  
Have You Filled a Bucket Today?

Permission to Use Strong Start Fidelity Checklists

<switcomb@educ.umass.edu>

Tuesday - October 11, 2011 9:24 AM

**To:** Susan Werkheiser <swerkhei@sburg.org>

**Subject:** Re: Fwd: Re: Information Request

**Attachments:** Fidelity\_Checklist\_Lessons\_1-10.doc (143360 bytes) [\[View\]](#) [\[Open\]](#) [\[Save As\]](#)

Mime.822 (207536 bytes)

[\[View\]](#) [\[Save As\]](#)

Hi Susan,

Here are the fidelity checks in Word. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to help!

Sara

sara Whitcomb  
<ssjcwitcomb@gmail.com>

Friday - October 7, 2011 9:13 PM

**To:** Susan Werkheiser <swerkhei@sburg.org>

**Subject:** Re: Information Request

**Attachments:** Mime.822

Sure! Do you already have copies of them?

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 7, 2011, at 7:39 PM, "Susan Werkheiser" <[swerkhei@sburg.org](mailto:swerkhei@sburg.org)> wrote:

**Hi Dr. Whitcomb - I am emailing to ask for your assistance again. I would like to ask your permission to use your Strong Start Fidelity Checklists you utilized in your dissertation as they would serve as fidelity checks for delivery of instruction for my study. Again, I would properly cite your work. Thanks in advance for any assistance you can provide!**

**Susan**

Appendix O

IRB Approval

East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board  
Human Research Review  
Protocol # **ESU-IRB-098-1112**

Date: **July 2, 2012**

To: **Susan Werkheiser and Margot Vagliardo**

From: **Shala E. Davis, Ph.D., IRB Chair**

Proposal Title: **“An Exploration of the Effects of A Literature-Based Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum on the Kindergarten Classes in a Small Town Elementary School”**

Review Requested: Exempted Expedited Full Review **X**

Review Approved: Exempted Expedited Full Review **X**

**FULL RESEARCH**

Your full review research proposal has been approved by the University IRB (12 months). Please provide the University IRB a copy of your Final Report at the completion of your research.

Your full review research proposal has been approved with recommendations by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and **submit necessary documentation for full approval.**

Your full review research proposal has not been approved by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and resubmit.

**EXEMPTED RESEARCH**

Your exempted review research proposal has been approved by the University IRB (12 months). Please provide the University IRB a copy of your Final Report at the completion of your research.

Your exempted review research proposal has been approved with recommendations by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and **submit necessary documentation for full approval.**

Your exempted review research proposal has not been approved by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and resubmit, if appropriate.

**EXPEDITED RESEARCH**

Your expedited review research proposal has been approved by the University IRB (12 months). Please provide the University IRB a copy of your Final Report at the completion of your research.

Your expedited review research proposal has been approved with recommendations by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and **submit necessary documentation for full approval.**

Your expedited review research proposal has not been approved by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and resubmit, if appropriate.

---

Please revise or submit the following:

## Revision to IRB Approval – Via Email

Hey, good news!!

See below.

---

From: Shala Davis  
Sent: Wed 7/18/2012 2:27 PM  
To: Margot Vagliardo  
Subject: Re: Research question

Margot,

I would agree that this makes sense. If this would truly happen anyway without the study being present I would not remove students. I will print out this email as documentation of my approval to proceed.

Shala

Sent from my iPad

On Jul 17, 2012, at 8:26 PM, "Margot Vagliardo" <mvagliardo@po-box.esu.edu> wrote:

Shala,

I thought I should contact you about a minor change in Sue Werkheiser's research study (see below Sue's communication to me after she met with the principal of East Stroudsburg Elementary school, the research setting). I agree that allowing "non-participant" students to be included in the read aloud is a good idea, but the change, of course, precipitates a revision of the parent consent letter (see attached--revision is highlighted). Please advise how this affects the IRB approval and what, if anything, Sue needs to do now.

Thanks for your prompt response.

I hope the summer is going well for you!

MWV

Email from Sue:

I met with Irene Livingston to iron out logistics for the data collection phase of my study. She asked (it was a really good question) if the students in the experimental groups, even if the parents did not give consent, could remain in the class during the Strong Start Read Aloud stories (since the class would be doing read aloud any way) and just NOT DO THE ASSESSMENT PIECE. She felt that since the teachers would be doing read aloud as a matter of course and that doing the Strong Start Read Aloud would not change the workings of the classroom in any substantial way there was no reason for the students to be removed from the classroom during that portion of the activity even if the parent did not give consent.

Are you OK with that and is there anything we need to do to the consent letter or with IRB?

Susan Werkheiser  
Principal  
Clearview and Ramsey  
Have You Filled a Bucket Today