Making Peace, Love and Happiness Come First:
Instructing Kindergarten Students on Lifelong Habits of Success

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April 30, 2011
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Description of the Teaching Context

As a 2010/2011 Professional Development School Intern, I have been working in a Kindergarten class in the State College Area School District. This Kindergarten class consists of 19 students in total, 11 females and 8 males. 18 students are included in full instruction in this general education classroom while one male is only present in the classroom for brief periods of social interaction.

The seating of students in the classroom is based upon scoring from Aims Web and Words Their Way testing. Thus, the students have been placed in four groups in which the Blue Table reflects the highest scores, Red Table reflects the lowest, and Yellow and Green tables fall accordingly. All four members of the Red Table receive RTII instruction during the morning hours when they are not amongst their classroom peers.

Based upon birthdates, there are 3 students in the class who have just turned 5 years of age between the months of August and September 2010. In addition to these young students, one male student demonstrates impulsive hyperactive behaviors on a daily basis. Although these behaviors do not directly distract from the student’s learning achievement, specialists have been contacted to ensure this student has the tools to stay on task throughout his schooling. Finally, 1 male student has shown early oppositional behaviors. Before an action is made, this student looks for the teacher’s attention. The behavior often follows directions addressed to the class as a whole, and is an obvious counteraction to the directions provided.
Five out of the total 19 students in this class participate on a weekly basis in Penn State Psychology Department’s Friendship Groups, a research study which focuses on five and six year-olds’ interpersonal skills. 18 out of the 19 total students have, from the first week of school, participated in “Friendship Fridays” planned and implemented by the teaching staff focusing on anti-bullying initiatives and working together.

Description of Making Peace, Love, and Happiness Come First

To what degree will direct and thematic instruction associated with the 7 Habits of Happy Kids by Sean Covey, impact kindergarteners’ personal social skills? How will this instruction affect the overall classroom community and individual success of every student? Participating in a six-week unit study, entitled Making Peace, Love and Happiness Come First, students learn and practice intrapersonal skills such as displaying one’s best effort and also interpersonal skills such as participating as an active team member. This unit that I constructed and implemented with the influence of Sean Covey’s 7 Habits of Happy Kids and the State College Area School District Kindergarten Snapshot. The final unit included themes in progressive developmental order:

Week 1: Best Effort
Week 2: Telling the Truth
Week 3: Listening to Others
Week 4: Teamwork
Week 5: Leadership
Week 6: Responsibility for You
Wonderings and Questions

Main Wondering:
How will the incorporation of literature and associated activities of *7 Habits of Happy Kids* and the State College Area School District Kindergarten Snapshot impact kindergarteners’ interpersonal, intrapersonal, and academic skills?

I was lead to this main wondering because I wanted to see if the use of literature and engaging activities, outside of building basic factual knowledge within the students, would also build behaviors linked to positive character attributes.

Sub Wonderings:
In what ways will this unit affect the overall classroom community?
In what ways will students become more independent as a result of this unit of study?

These sub wonderings were constructed as I planned and implemented community-building activities outside of this unit. I wondered if this unit would in fact bring my community of learners together in a greater sense, and also if the students on an individual level would demonstrate greater independence.

Data Collection

*Pre-Inquiry Data:*

The early components of my data collection began with the creation of a pre-inquiry survey, which was orally recited to all students in the class as they wrote on paper, either yes in agreement or no in disagreement with the statements provided. (See Appendix A for Pre-Inquiry Student Survey.) This survey served as a baseline collection of the student’s prior knowledge regarding the unit’s six themes: Best Effort, Telling the
Truth, Active Listening, Teamwork, Leadership, and Responsibility. When analyzing this information I looked for unit vocabulary knowledge and real-world connections made by the students. After analyzing this information I was able to compose an overall understanding of the student’s social and interpersonal skill outlook.

Along with proctoring a whole class survey, I also conducted ten individual interviews, and an initial systematic observation. (See Appendix B for Individual Interview Questions.) The interviews successfully provided me with the opportunity to understand where the students’ knowledge of thematic vocabulary stood before the start of the unit, without providing to the students, the context of a situation as provided in the pre-inquiry survey. In addition to this, my initial systematic observation, one that noted behaviors linked to each of the six themes, established a pre-inquiry behavior baseline. (See Appendix C for Systematic Observation Chart.) Classroom adults, during morning hours of the systematic observations, noted either an X or ✓ when individual students did not or did demonstrate the listed behaviors. In addition to informing me with a baseline of prior knowledge, I was able to note particular students that, during inquiry instruction, would need additional prompting and/or scaffolded support in reaching weekly goals.

*Throughout Inquiry Data:*

Throughout the core six weeks of my inquiry, students’ social behavior and in effect academic performance was noted on the same style systematic observation chart as pre-inquiry. Specifically, I was looking at the numeric representation of behaviors either positively or negatively affecting the overall classroom atmosphere and development of student’s personal social skills. This numeric information was then transferred into a graphic representation after week three of inquiry instruction. Continual analysis of the
trends featured on these six graphs, one per theme, enabled me to change/adapt inquiry instruction as seen fit. (See Appendix D for Best Effort Graph.) In addition to this and personal anecdotal notes, the students were provided with a visual reminder goal chart. After each theme was introduced through literature on Monday, the students actively participated in goal writing every Tuesday. The *Making Peace, Love, and Happiness* Come First visual, provided for the students and myself alike, a physical reminder of goals that every child was working upon reaching or those that students had reached with success. This sticker record-keeping tool remained a routine visual throughout inquiry as a whole. (See Appendix E for Classroom Inquiry Sticker Chart.)

Another form of data collection that I established throughout inquiry is that of check-in interviews with the students, falling upon Wednesday of each week. (See Appendix F for Check-in Interview Questions.) I interviewed every student briefly, taking anecdotal notes stating if the students had retained knowledge of each thematic goal to date and how the student personally felt he/she was working towards reaching each respective goal. This information was used to identify and analyze the growing trends of knowledge and comprehension throughout the six weeks of inquiry instruction.

One final form of data collection throughout the six weeks of inquiry instruction was that of personal reflections. Upon one occasion, I compiled my up to date anecdotal notes, particularly on the behaviors and interactions among students, into one reflection. (See Appendix G for Personal Reflection.) By composing this piece, I was able to perceive particular trends of changing behaviors that were taking place upon multiple occasions in the classroom.

*Post-Inquiry Data Collection:*
A post-inquiry survey, featuring the same questions as the pre-inquiry survey, was again administered to the class in full orally while the students wrote on paper either yes in agreement with the statements or no in disagreement. In addition to this, ten individual interviews were conducted. In sum, the analysis of this collection of data served as the base for my final findings at the conclusion of this inquiry. As with reviewing the pre-inquiry surveys and interviews, I specifically looked for comprehension of unit vocabulary and real world connections made by the students upon an individual basis.

Finally, during the last week of inquiry instruction with the students, I sent a questionnaire to all classroom parents asking for input regarding the literacy and activity unit. (See Appendix H for Parent/Guardian Questionnaire.) The purpose of this questionnaire was to gauge if the parents/guardians noted any clear changes behaviorally in his/her kindergarten student. In addition to this, I was looking in the responses from parents for any home/school connection that the students may have made along the unit as a whole.

**Explanation of Findings: Claims and Evidence**

**Claim #1: Students demonstrate a development in cognitive and affective domains by evaluating and organizing thematic terms.**

In terms of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Domains (a system that breaks down learning into subdivisions from the simplest to most complex) kindergarten students have shown change in both the cognitive and affective domains, noting growth in terms of knowledge and attitude. Found in the later three weeks of inquiry instruction during weekly check-ins with the students, one trend that appeared was that of students
associating the behavior of telling the truth with the term: scary. This act of correlating the behavior of telling the truth with the emotion of being scared demonstrates the kindergarten student’s internalization of values. In these later weeks of instruction, the students explained the connection of behavior and emotion, a drastic change from the first few weeks of check-ins when 100% of the students stated that they “always tell the truth.”

In addition to weekly check-ins, this trend of growth in attitude was observable through comparing the pre and post-inquiry student interviews. For 7 out of the 10 conducted pre-inquiry student interviews, students responded to the question: “When is it okay to not tell the truth,” with the statement: “It is never okay to not tell the truth.” During post inquiry interviews 8 out of 10 students answered that, “It is never okay to not tell the truth,” followed with a statement pertaining to emotion, such as, “even though it may be embarrassing sometimes.”

Finally, this demonstration of growth within Bloom’s cognitive domain is apparent in the interactions among students noted in a personal reflection. (See Appendix G for Personal Reflection.) For kindergarten students, the idea of telling the truth is an observable behavior in the curriculum. It is a fact, that telling the truth is important. Thus, when one student was overheard telling another, “It’s okay if you tell the truth, Miss Evans will help you,” this student was clearly making an evaluation by comparing and relating factual information to this given situation. In addition to showing a growth in the academic domain, this student also demonstrated that a change in the classroom community had taken place. Students demonstrated greater involvement in fostering one another’s achievement.
Claim #2: Kindergarten students construct interpersonal and academic skills when knowledge is related to concrete behaviors.

Key terms and vocabulary that lead the theme of “best effort” in the kindergarten classroom were directly linked to observable behaviors throughout inquiry in full. When the idea of “best effort” was introduced to the students through literacy the behavior of physically double-checking one’s work was explicitly modeled to the students. Often during that first week students an teachers alike related best effort back to the *Little Engine that Could* by Watty Piper. Giving one’s best effort, to this group of kindergarteners, looked like physically coloring illustrations with three or more colors, writing five star sentences, (upper case letter at the beginning of the sentence, meatball spaces between words, lower case letter throughout the sentence, punctuation, and sound spelling) and writing one’s name at the top of every piece of work. The knowledge these students acquired in terms of “best effort” was concrete behaviors.

Every day, students were systematically observed in the morning hours of class for success in meeting goals in all six areas of the inquiry unit. The instances of students either displaying or not displaying these specific unit behaviors were then calculated and on a weekly basis transferred into a graph. This graph specifically depicts a rise in students’ double-checking work along with a simultaneous fall in students’ not double-checking his/her work. (See Appendix D for Best Effort Graph.)

When students were questioned during weekly check-ins an increase in exhibiting best effort by double-checking one’s work was noted. When asking students how they were working towards the goal: My goal is to double-check my work all of the time fourteen different students stated, “I used the signs to double check.” This once again,
demonstrates a direct correlation between the rise in academic skills, while students work towards meeting benchmarks and concrete behaviors such as double-checking work. The signs in the room were oversized graphics from a double-checking work lesson plan where students designed Name at the Top Stop Signs, Three or More Colors Rainbows, and 5 Star Sentences Stars. (See Appendix I for Best Effort Classroom Graphics.) Kindergarten students constructed increased academic skills because knowledge was related to concrete behaviors.

One student example of this correlation can be observed when reviewing Student A’s Weekly Goal Journal. (See Appendix J for Student A’s Goal Journal.) Once a week, after students constructed a goal related to each theme in whole group, the students copied goals into their personal goal journals. Student A demonstrates a drastic change in the physical makeup of his sentences from Week 1 to Week 6 of inquiry. This student, upon completion of copying his sixth goal approached each teacher in the classroom with pride, stating that the work in his hands was his best effort. Not only was Student A’s academic skill set increased benchmarking in “Takes pride in work.” by visualizing a 5 star sentence, but his interpersonal skills were also effected. Once a struggling student, at the conclusion of inquiry, this student demonstrated confidence that flourished in terms of interpersonal relationships with other students and teachers.

Claim #3: Kindergarten students demonstrate an understanding of the correlation between effort and success when explicitly instructed.

Students and adults alike relate success to luck, ability, or effort. Until explicitly instructed, children of five and six years old do not understand the strong relationship between effort and success. This is where inquiry has demonstrated that explicit
instruction linking specific behaviors with success can end with positive outcomes and independence.

Dr. Robert J. Marzano states that, “If you believe that effort is the most important factor in achievement, you have a motivational tool that can apply to any situation.” This research backed statement ties together demonstrations of best effort shown in my Kindergarten classroom with success. Concrete behaviors in my Kindergarten classroom known as one’s best effort, were constantly reinforced by the teacher. This has lead to students demonstrating a clear understanding of the correlation between effort and success. Every week, students worked towards achievement in thematic goals reinforced with a certificate and sticker. (See Appendix E for Classroom Inquiry Sticker Chart.) This constant positive reinforcement of the concrete behaviors constructing best effort explicitly lead to student’s understanding that increased effort leads to success.

For one particular student, the goal linked with Listening to Others did not come easily. At the end of this theme, Student B did not receive a certificate or sticker reinforcing his active listening skills. (See Appendix K for Student B Chart.) Instead, I felt as though this student needed more instruction on the concrete behaviors linked with active listening. Thus, the following Monday this student was given a chart to track his listening skills demonstrated throughout the day. Student B was explicitly reminded of teacher and personal expectations of best effort when listening. Best effort when actively listening looks like: Student showing upright posture, eye contact, and active listening ears.

Along with constant positive reinforcement, the student reached his goal by the end of the day, receiving at least three out of four smiley faces for displaying active
listening skills by the teacher. As evident in this chart, the student was actually harder on himself than the teacher when looking for active listening skills, demonstrating his desire to express his best effort.

Student C has struggled from the start of the year with motor skills and demonstrating pride in her work. However, as reinforced by an email from her mother following the conclusion of inquiry instruction, this student has both at home and school made the clear connection between effort and success. (See Appendix L for Student C Email.) Pre inquiry instruction, this student completed journal entries with incomplete sentences and illustrations that upon occasion had a few highlighting details. One journal entry that was written before inquiry in early February of 2011, features a detailed picture of winter in State College along with a sentence including only a few letter formation mistakes. (See Appendix M for Student C Past Work Sample.) It is clear that developmentally, this student holds the skills for writing and illustrating with success. However, as depicted in a second student sample a few weeks later in March of 2011, this student does not put forth her best effort. (See Appendix N for Student C Work Sample 2.) The sentence featured with an ambiguous picture, uses a majority of capital letters and few spaces between words.

Throughout inquiry this student was drilled with questioning whether her work was or was not her best effort. She clearly held the skills for success, but until she made the clear connection between effort and success, her work displayed wavering efforts. Until Student C demonstrated her best effort, her work was asked to be re-checked. Due to this explicit instruction, she completed these assignments by meeting the concrete best effort behaviors of coloring with at least three or more colors, staying in the lines, and
writing five star sentences. Currently, this kindergarten student, with a smile on her face after completing work, demonstrates greater independence and confidence. (See Appendix O for Current Student Work Sample.)

**Reflection and Implication for Future Practice**

The most important lesson that I am able to take from inquiry has greatly reinforced the idea that as a teacher, I must hold every student to great expectations. Children of five and six years old enter into school with a developmental span of three years and often in terms of social skills, I wonder if the span approaches four or five years. This inquiry however, demonstrates that even with a group as diverse as my own, setting clear expectations and providing students with the skills to meet these expectations can always end with success.

The reoccurring theme that these expectations must be concrete in order for students to form an academic and social understanding implies that my future practices, as a classroom teacher will construct understanding and comprehension on a concrete level. The explicit visual instruction, modeling, and reinforcement, when compiled into one lesson or unit in whole, builds comprehension in students with diverse learning styles and skills. Inquiry has taught me, that for children across the board, instruction must be linked to specific material.

**Appendix A:** Pre-Inquiry Student Survey

1. Before I raise my hand for the teacher to check my work I
2. When Kevin switches stations with his class in the morning he talks with his neighbor in line. He also wiggles all over and touches the table next to him. Is Kevin being a leader?

   Yes     No

3. I know that Diana is really good at drawing. When she colors she always stays inside the lines. The teacher always tells her how nice she draws. Should I ask Diana to help me with my picture?

   Yes     No

4. The other day Maria was in an argument with Jacob. As Jacob was trying to send Maria an I-Message, Maria stopped him and said, “It was an accident Jacob!” Was that okay for Maria to do before hearing Jacob’s whole I-Message?

   Yes     No

5. The whole class was talking when we were sitting on the carpet after the teacher asked us to find smart seats. Michael started to crawl between people. Sidney started to chase Michael. Then, 5 people were standing and running around the carpet playing a game. Is it okay if I join in the game? It looks fun.

   Yes     No

6. The other day my class was making a graph. We had to place a cube in the column of our choice. We could choose strawberry, chocolate, or vanilla as our favorite ice cream. I wanted to be funny, so I put my cube on the empty column. Even if the teacher asks who put the cube in the empty column, I’m not going to tell the class that I did, because it is funny. Is this a good choice?

   Yes     No

**Appendix B**: Individual Interview Questions

1. Do you know what it means to give your best effort?
What does it look like when you give your best effort?

2. When do you think it is okay to not tell the truth?

3. Do you think that you call out when the teacher is talking or when another student is talking?

4. Do you think that working together as a team is important?

5. Who do you think is a leader? Why do you think they are a leader?

6. Do you know what the word responsibility means? How are you responsible?

Appendix C: Systematic Observation Chart
### Appendix D: Best Effort Graph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Names</th>
<th>2X Check Work</th>
<th>Truth</th>
<th>Call Out</th>
<th>Clean Up Without Argument</th>
<th>Smart Seat Example</th>
<th>Solve before teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Yellow**: Seat Work
- **Blue**: Math Builders
- **Orange**: Morning Meeting
- **Green**: Stations

X - does not show behavior
✓ - does show behavior
Appendix E: Classroom Inquiry Sticker Chart
Appendix F: Check-In Interview Questions
1. Can you tell me what goals you have been working on since the beginning of the Making Peace, Love, and Happiness Come First unit?

2. Have you spoken at home about these goals?

3. How do you think you are doing with these goals? Do you still need to work on them?

4. Tell me one way that you have been working on each goal.

Appendix G: Personal Reflection
I cannot believe that I am already mid-way through my inquiry! With three themes of character building covered, and three to go I have to say that I am impressed with how well my students have adapted his and her behaviors thus far. Moving into the inquiry I feel as though my students would be effected by the literature studies and additional activities on a broad scale. I imaged there would be less “cat fights” breaking out in my classroom along with less interruptions to correct behavior. I did not, however, anticipate the changes that I have seen on an individual student basis.

One particular student, whom was tested for selective mutism this past summer has come leaps and bounds since the introduction of inquiry in my classroom. This female half way through the year, began to show characteristics of a quiet role model. Due in part, to the repetition of my verbal descriptions of each theme of inquiry, this student’s role model tendencies have begun to take a verbal form. When asking the students in informal discussion of instances when they have experienced key themes in their personal lives, or when questioning the class on the physicality of each behavior linked to the themes, this female is now the first to raise her hand with an answer. While three weeks ago, her response was often one to three words in length, she is now articulating her thoughts in full sentence form, and relating to other components of the discussion!

This past Thursday, as I heard from my mentor, and Friday have also shown tremendous efforts from a student who, four weeks ago, could have been labeled as the “mean girl” of the class. While working on her goal of not calling out, this student has
shown this past week, a major jump in attitude change and respect for her peers. When on Monday alone, there were over 5 instances of her calling out during Morning Meeting as noted on a systematic observation chart, the Morning Meeting on Friday depicted a student trying her hardest to wait her turn and raise her hand, with no instances of calling out noted. “Excuse me,” instead of “I need help with this paper!” now properly flow from her mouth. An attitude adjustment was needed, and I really feel as though the repetition and individualized basis of this classroom inquiry is reinforcing her positive decision-making!

Finally, I have to say that I have struggled with a few of the themes, in terms of keeping track of any systematic observations, as themes such as “telling the truth” only surface once and a while in the classroom. Two weeks ago, the class addressed this theme. On that Friday alone, there were three instances during morning seat-work, of students telling the truth or not. One female, upon asking her if she had began to talk with her parents at home about inquiry, first said with an assertive yes, that she had spoken with her parents about goal setting. However further in the conversation, this student looked me in the eyes and said, “Miss Evans, I really didn’t talk to my mom and dad, I keep forgetting.” Thank you for telling the truth!! After this I was filled with excitement.

The second instance of telling the truth arose when one student did not follow directions and attempted glue pattern blocks pieces on a template without first arranging the image on paper. When the image did not turn out correct, she asked my mentor for help, and when asked if she first arranged the blocks, she responded, “Yes.” There was no way this student could have first arranged the blocks. My mentor sent the student to me for a conversation. The student told me how she asked for help and told my mentor
that she had follow directions. She then told me that she did not tell the truth, and that she hadn’t first arranged the pieces after I had questioned why the image did not work out if she had followed the directions. Thank you for telling the truth!

Finally, this same student came into play again just yesterday as another student asked for my help when she “accidentally” cut along the wrong lines. When I walked this student back to her seat to discuss her cut and possibility of following directions, my pattern block student advised the other student to tell the truth. “It’s okay, if you tell the truth Miss Evans will help you.” pattern block student stated. Could it be that the students are also helping one another work towards gaining success in each of these themes?

As I continue with my inquiry, I will stick to my repetition and encourage the students to help one another with each and every one of our goals. I am ecstatic with the changes I have seen thus far, only half way through inquiry! May these changes be ground into the minds of each student and remain an important part of their character.

Appendix H: Parent/ Guardian Questionnaire
Hello Parents and Guardians!

We are now approaching the conclusion of our *Making Peace, Love, and Happiness Come First* unit. I hope that during this unit, your Kindergarteners have shown responsibility in bringing his and her knowledge of important life skills to the dinner table. I would now like to take a few minutes of your time, to receive some feedback on this unit from a parent/guardian perspective. Please find just a few minutes to answer the questions below. Your feedback is greatly appreciated!

Many Thanks!

Miss Evans

1. Did you find it helpful when the students brought home half-slips of paper, making the school and home connection with each theme?

   
   Yes  No  Indifferent

2. How often would you say that you spoke with your kindergarten student about each theme?

   
   a. Never  b. 1 Time a Week  c. 2-3 Times a Week  d. 4+ Times a Week

3. When your kindergarten student returned home, did they volunteer any information or knowledge that he/she learned in class about healthy habits?

   
   Yes  No

4. Are there any additional comments that you would like to make about this unit?

   

Appendix I: Best Effort Classroom Graphics
Pre-Inquiry Survey Responses:

1. Check my stuff.
2. No
3. Yes

Week 1 Goal:

My goal is to double check my work and try my best.

Week 6 Goal:

My goal is to be responsible by using i-messages before I go to the teacher for help.
Appendix K: Student B Chart

Remember to Listen!

1. Morning Meeting
2. Stations
3. Math
4. Bunny Journal

Library
Appendix L: Student C Email

Holly,

Thanks for the follow up! We have noticed a difference at home with her best effort. Now instead of just scribbling across the whole page with one color she will actually take her time and really do her best to stay in the lines. Another student in the class was actually at our house yesterday and Student C was giving her a lesson on how to color and do your best effort. It was cute. We have been consciously making an effort to notice and say something when she does her best effort and takes her time doing something. She has actually made a drastic improvement in cleaning her room. (It’s WONDERFUL!) She was going through old coloring books a week or so ago and showing me the pictures she colored before and telling me they weren't "best effort". Whatever you guys are doing it really working, thank you!

Student’s Mom

Appendix M: Student C Past Work Sample
February 2011

Appendix N: Student C Work Sample 2
March 3, 2011

**Appendix O:** Student C Current Work Example
The Bunnies visit the farm. What do farmers do on the farm?

Farmers have tractors to go from place to place.

5 sentence

This source tied in well with lessons pertaining to the theme of Listening to Others. Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns to Listen by Howard Binkow in itself is a very interactive picture book, walking readers through the life of a bunny that struggles with listening. Found online, this source took students to the next level of understanding, but providing to them, an interactive story telling of the book, where the characters and voices keep students engaged while learning a useful lesson.


This classic story of a hardworking contractor and his steam shovel guide students through the limitless possibilities life has to offer if one puts forth his and/ her best effort. This book was used as a follow up read aloud to the Best Effort theme as students had fun relating work in class and at home to that of Mike and his steam shovel.


This picture book features a pre-school boy who has too many important things to say! This source was used as an introductory read aloud for the theme, Listening to Others. *My Mouth is a Volcano* served as a great discussion starter for how students can problem solve and catch themselves calling out before anyone else in the room. The vibrant colors and pictures this book features drew the children into not only the story but also comprehension of how the story relates to his/ and her own life.


This picture book features 7 principles by which children are capable of living. Accompanied with personal notes from the author directed towards parents and teachers, the book offers 7 stories, which address each one of the 7 habits in full. This resource will be used not only directly in my literacy unit, but it has also served as a building block for the structure of each of the 6 weekly themes of inquiry.

The story of Strega Nona by Tommie dePaola features a strong lesson for how young children should think before they act along with telling the truth. Found online, this recording of Strega Nona features fun character voices along with Italian themed background music. This video was shown before a whole group activity on telling the truth was implemented. Discussion afterwards was rich with real world connections to how the students sometimes felt it is scary and embarrassing to tell the truth. However, just like Big Anthony did, the truth must be told.


This read aloud served as a strong connection not only for the theme of Teamwork, but also cross curriculum as the students were then studying under water habitats. Illustrated with eye grabbing watercolors, the students remained engaged in the read aloud from start to finish as one little fish brought together a whole school of fish to scare off the approaching shark. After this read aloud the discussion featured many students relating the idea of teamwork to their own lives, telling one another how they worked together to solve a problem.


This instructional material provides ample examples of how to go about the character building process in the classroom. Equipped with easy to follow activities, this resource will not only supplement my inquiry project, it will also lay the groundwork for how I go about teaching this concept of positive behavior towards oneself and others. Opening each character trait section with a definition and ways to recognize this trait, this material provides to me, the scaffolding towards adapting a unit for five and six year olds teaching improved personal social skills.


This excerpt retrieved from the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Standards Aligned System denotes each of the standards pertaining to students and personal social skills. This resource is used to construct the 6 weekly themes reviewed within the inquiry. In order to meet Pennsylvania state standards, this resource was referenced.

This classic story of a little train that continuously works hard and never gives up to make it over a large mountain is one literacy addition to the theme, Best Effort. This story, told with bright pictures and easy vocabulary sends to the children a strong message about giving something one’s best effort. This book will be used as a read aloud with the class and will follow with a discussion of this personal social skill.


This picture book was used as an introduction to the theme, Telling the Truth. This source was a great introduction for this theme, due to its school and playground setting. After this read aloud students participated in a great discussion, talking with one another about ways they would solve problems related to not telling the truth in and outside of school.


Broken into ten key traits, this instructional material provides many ideas for teaching and assessing character traits in the behavior of students in the classroom. In addition to these ideas, which can easily be transferred through the curriculum in writing and math, this source also provides a section of resources and an annotated bibliography in the introduction of every chapter. The resources found in these introductions have focused my search for supplemental literary sources. Finally, this material comes with a CD Rom where a copy of every PDF worksheet can be found for easy reproduction in the classroom.
As a 2010/2011 Professional Development School Intern, I have been working in a Kindergarten class at Lemont Elementary School, found in the State College Area School District. This Kindergarten class consists of 19 students in total, 11 females and 8 males. 18 students are included in full instruction in this general education classroom while one male is only present in the classroom for brief periods of social interaction.

The seating of students in the classroom is based upon scoring from Aims Web and Words Their Way testing. Thus, the students have been placed in four groups in which the Blue Table reflects the highest scores, Red Table reflects the lowest, and Yellow and Green tables fall accordingly. All four members of the Red Table receive RTII instruction during the morning hours when they are not amongst their classroom peers.

Based upon birthdates, there are 3 students in the class who have just turned 5 years of age between the months of August and September 2010. In addition to these young students, one male student demonstrates impulsive hyperactive behaviors on a daily basis. Although these behaviors do not directly distract from the student’s learning achievement, specialists have been contacted to ensure this student has the tools to stay on task throughout his schooling. Finally, 1 male student has shown early oppositional behaviors. Before an action is made, this student looks for the teacher’s attention. The behavior often follows directions addressed to the class as a whole, and is an obvious counteraction to the directions provided.

Five out of the total 19 students in this class are pulled on a weekly basis to participate in Penn State Psychology Department’s Friendship Groups, a research study which focuses on five and six year-olds’ interpersonal skills.
Rationale:

As the generations are changing, so too are the morals, values, and social skills that are instilled in our children. While reinforcement for good decisions when I was young, was a special day with a best friend, the growing trend today for positive reinforcement is a video game or extra Internet surfing time. It has been surprising, over the few months that I have been in the classroom, to see the obvious disconnect between children and proper social interaction.

The initial idea for my topic came from my mentor teacher, as we discussed the changing generations one day over lunch. I was informed that a few schools in the district had started programs, explicitly instructing children on positive and negative social interactions. However, the need to direct these ideas to five and six year olds through age appropriate instruction was apparent.

As the year has progressed, so too has the need for this inquiry within the walls of my classroom. Having a classroom of predominately females, we have begun to record dozens of instances where students are not choosing to make good decisions in regard to one another. Ideas such as, “We are not friends with her because her hair is ugly,” “She is the most stupid because she is the youngest,” and “She needs to be more nice to me before I am nice to her,” have filtered through our room on a weekly basis. I have made early attempts to catch and direct these behaviors and interactions through meeting with a group of females in the class for Friendship Friday. However, I now feel as though this issue should be addressed as a whole class, as I would like all students to reap the benefits of social behavior instruction. I wonder if providing direct instruction to the class
as a whole, in dealing with these personal social issues, would demonstrate any change in
the behaviors exhibited by the students.

As a result of this inquiry, I am wondering what impact certain literature and
activities will have on my class. I also wonder if presenting this material in a structured
schedule, with particular activities and/or read-alouds each day of the week, will foster a
greater affect on the class of students.

**Main Wondering:**

How can incorporating the use of literature and associated activities of *7 Habits of Happy
Kids* impact kindergarteners’ personal social skills?

**Sub Wonderings:**

In what ways will this unit affect the overall classroom community?

In what ways will students become more independent as a result of this unit of study?

In what ways could this unit impact my 3rd grade partner classroom?

**Timeline:**

**Week 1: February 5-11**
- research useful resources
- gather ideas for data collection
- write themes for each week/ set up of inquiry
- give pre-survey to class on 2/11/11 *
Week 2: February 12-18

(Inquiry Brief Due Friday)

- finish inquiry brief
- establish plans for timeline of each week
- write lesson plans for first theme
- differentiate one lesson plan for 3rd grade class
- finish making chart for recording of behaviors during inquiry
- make plan for bulletin board in room
- write letter to parents **
- interview 4 students ***
- take pre- inquiry anecdotal and systematic observations looking specifically at noted behaviors associated with each theme ****

Week 3: February 19-25

- review inquiry brief
- take inquiry anecdotal and systematic observations looking specifically at noted behaviors associated with each theme ***

In class: **Theme 1- Best Effort**

Monday: Read Aloud (The Little Engine that Could by Watty Piper), Goal Setting as Class (Our goal is to check and double check our work before we raise our hand for the teacher.)

Tuesday: Tues AM- Personal Goal Journal (My goal is to check and double check my work before I raise my hand for the teacher.)

Wednesday: Mid- Week Check in Meetings*****

Thursday: Read Aloud (Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel by Virginia Lee Burton)

Friday: Friday Fun Day, Goal Review

Week 4: February 26- March 4
(Final Inquiry Brief Due Wednesday)
- review inquiry brief
- take inquiry anecdotal and systematic observations looking specifically at noted behaviors associated with each theme ***

In class: **Theme 2- Telling the Truth**
- Monday: Read Aloud *(Ruthie and the (Not So) Teeny Tiny Lie* by Laura Rankin),
  Goal Setting as Class (Our goal is to tell the truth all of the time.)
- Tuesday: Tues AM- Personal Goal Journal
- Wednesday: Mid- Week Check in Meetings*****
- Thursday: Read Aloud *(Would I Ever Lie to You?* by Caralyn Buehner)
- Friday: Friday Fun Day, Goal Review

**Week 5: March 5-11**
- review data thus far
- leave activities, literature for mentor: review of themes 1 and 2

**Week 6: March 12-18**
- review inquiry brief
- take inquiry anecdotal and systematic observations looking specifically at noted behaviors associated with each theme ***

In class: **Theme 3- Listening to Others**
- Monday: Read Aloud *(Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns How to Listen* by Howard Binkow), Goal Setting as Class (Our goal is to not call out when someone else is talking and to wait our turn.)
- Tuesday: Tues AM- Personal Goal Journal (My goal is to not call out when someone else is talking and to wait my turn.)
- Wednesday: Mid- Week Check in Meetings*****
- Thursday: Read Aloud *(My Mouth is a Volcano* by Julia Cook)
- Friday: Friday Fun Day, Goal Review
Week 7: March 19-25

- review inquiry brief
- take inquiry anecdotal and systematic observations looking specifically at noted behaviors associated with each theme ***

In class: **Theme 4- Teamwork**

Monday: Read Aloud (*Swimmy* by Leo Lionni), Goal Setting as Class (Our goal is to work together with one another to clean up the classroom without arguing.)
Tuesday: Tues AM- Personal Goal Journal (My goal is to help with everyone else cleaning up the classroom without arguing.)
Wednesday: Mid- Week Check in Meetings*****
Thursday: Read Aloud (*The Big Bad Badgers* by Sean Covey)
Friday: Friday Fun Day, Goal Review

Week 8: March 26- April 1

- review inquiry brief
- take inquiry anecdotal and systematic observations looking specifically at noted behaviors associated with each theme ***

In class: **Theme 5- Leadership**

Monday: Read Aloud (*Being a Leader* by Cassie Mayer), Goal Setting as Class (Our goal is to find a smart seat on the carpet and set a good example.)
Tuesday: Tues AM- Personal Goal Journal (My goal is to find a smart seat on the carpet and set a good example.)
Wednesday: Mid- Week Check in Meetings*****
Thursday: Read Aloud (*Lily Plants a Garden* by Sean Covey)
Friday: Friday Fun Day, Goal Review

Week 9: April 2- 8

(Student off Wednesday)
- review inquiry brief
- take inquiry anecdotal and systematic observations looking specifically at noted behaviors associated with each theme ***

In class: **Theme 6- Responsibility for You**

Monday: Read Aloud (*A Bad Case of Tattle Tongue* by Julia Cook), Goal Setting as Class (Our goal is to problem solve by using I-messages before we go to the teacher.)

Tuesday: Tues AM- Personal Goal Journal (My goal is to problem solve by using I-messages before I go to the teacher.)

Wednesday: Mid- Week Check in Meetings*****

Thursday: Read Aloud (*Sleepy Sophie* by Sean Covey)

Friday: Friday Fun Day, Goal Review

**Week 10: April 9-15**

- review data collection
- post-inquiry survey (same as pre-inquiry survey)
- post- inquiry interviews
- write inquiry paper

**Week 11: April 16-22**

- practice inquiry presentation

**Week 12: April 23-29**

(Off Friday)

Inquiry Conference: Saturday 4/30/11

**Data Collection:**

The data collection for my inquiry will take the form of systematic observations,
Evans

anecdotal notes, artifacts, surveys, and interviews. Along with personal data collection between my mentor, paraprofessional, and myself, the students will also be in view of weekly data collection featured on a bulletin board. This bulletin board features each of the six themes in bold print. In addition to this, the bulletin board features a chart including each of the student’s names and a place for one sticker when they reach each week’s goal.

The early components of my data collection began with the creation of a pre-inquiry survey, which was orally recited to all students in the class as they wrote on paper, either yes in agreement or no in disagreement with the statements provided. (Pre-inquiry survey is attached below.) This data has been analyzed and along with four individual interviews, and an initial systematic observation, a pre-inquiry baseline will be constructed. In addition to this information, I will be in contact with a former PDS intern through email correspondence, who studied a similar inquiry topic a few years past. Information I learn through this contact will be used to adjust and/or change my inquiry as seen fit.

Throughout the core six weeks of my inquiry, students’ social behavior will be noted on the same style systematic observation chart as pre-inquiry. Specifically, I will be looking In addition to this and personal anecdotal notes, the students will be provided with a visual reminder goal chart. Every day each individual student will be working towards a weekly goal. If, upon that day they reach this goal, they receive a sticker to place next to their name on the chart. This type of data collection will remain in tact throughout the inquiry in whole.

A post-inquiry survey, featuring the same questions as the pre-inquiry survey, will
again be administered to the class in full orally while the students write on paper either yes in agreement with the statements or no in disagreement. In addition to this, an individual interview of the same four students will be conducted. In sum, the analysis of this collection of data will serve as the base for my final findings at the conclusion of this inquiry.

In terms of the effect this inquiry has upon my third grade partner classroom, I will be in correspondence with that teacher. A few interview questions about the class in general pre-inquiry unit will be sent to the classroom teacher. I will collect this response. Then, the same questions will be sent in an email correspondence to this teacher after the inquiry unit is complete. I will review if any changes occurred and if so, to what extent.

* K Survey:

1. Before I raise my hand for the teacher to check my work I
2. When Kevin switches stations with his class in the morning he talks with his neighbor in line. He also wiggles all over and touches the table next to him. Is Kevin being a leader?
   Yes     No

3. I know that Diana is really good at drawing. When she colors she always stays inside the lines. The teacher always tells her how nice she draws. Should I ask Diana to help me with my picture?
   Yes     No

4. The other day Maria was in an argument with Jacob. As Jacob was trying to send Maria an I-Message, Maria stopped him and said, “It was an accident Jacob!” Was that okay for Maria to do before hearing Jacob’s whole I-Message?
   Yes     No

5. The whole class was talking when we were sitting on the carpet after the teacher asked us to find smart seats. Michael started to crawl between people. Sidney started to chase Michael. Then, 5 people were standing and running around the carpet playing a game. Is it okay if I join in the game? It looks fun.
   Yes     No

6. The other day my class was making a graph. We had to place a cube in the column of our choice. We could choose strawberry, chocolate, or vanilla as our favorite ice cream. I wanted to be funny, so I put my cube on the empty column. Even if the teacher asks who put the cube in the empty column, I’m not going to tell the class that I did, because it is funny.
   Is this a good choice?
      Yes     No

3 Survey:

1. Before I turn my work into my teacher I
2. When Kevin returns from lunch with his class he talks with his neighbor in line. He also spends 5 minutes at the coat rack where the volume of his voice becomes very high. Is Kevin being a leader? 

   Yes   No

3. The other day we had indoor recess. I was playing a board game with Sally and Sam. When it was time to clean up I told Sally and Sam to leave and I would clean up the whole game. I knew that if I cleaned up the whole game my teacher would give me a sticker. Should I have asked Sally and Sam to help? 

   Yes   No

4. The other day Maria was in an argument with Jacob. As Jacob was trying to send Maria an I-Message, Maria stopped him and said, “It was an accident Jacob!” Was that okay for Maria to do before hearing Jacob’s whole I-Message? 

   Yes   No

5. The whole class was talking when we were sitting on the carpet after the teacher asked us to find smart seats. When the teacher sat down and started talking, Michael decided to lie back on the carpet. Then, Halie and Holly linked arms and crawled on the floor so that they could lean on one another. Soon, most of the class was relaxing and lying on the carpet while the teacher was still talking. Should I lean back too? It looks very comfortable. 

   Yes   No

6. The other day my class was making a graph. We had to place a cube in the column of our choice. We could choose strawberry, chocolate, or vanilla as our favorite ice cream. I wanted to be funny, so I put my cube on the empty column. Even if the teacher asks who put the cube in the empty column, I’m not going to tell the class that I did, because it is funny.

   Is this a good choice? 
   Yes   No

**

Hello Parents and Guardians!

Happy Friday! I hope that all of you enjoyed your Valentine’s Day just as much as the students of our class have this week! Dressed the part of Mail Men and Mail Women,
the students worked hard together as a team to sort and deliver each and everyone’s heart shaped telegrams. Moving through the week we counted rows and columns on our hundreds chart and learned about animals that lay eggs and those who are born alive and well. Finally, the students also played the role of detective using both prior knowledge and teamwork to solve Friday's animal track mysteries.

As we now move into next week, I wanted to share with you, an additional component that I will be working into our Kindergarten curriculum on a daily basis. In order to fulfill one large component of my final course, I have been instructed to look into questions that have arisen within the classroom. While both Mrs. Pagnotto and I are strong believers in the positive outcomes of community building and social skill education, I knew that eventually, my final inquiry would have to deal with just that: How can our teaching team foster greater personal social skills within our students?

We have put together a unit of study, which I am calling; **Take Charge: Making Peace, Love and Happiness Come First**. This is a literacy-based unit that will be highlighting one personal social skill-building theme per week for the next six weeks. These themes have been developed from a combination of our district's Kindergarten benchmarks in social skills and also Sean Covey’s book, *7 Habits of Happy Kids*.

Each week, your children will be writing goals, questioning stories, and actively participating in activities focused on each of the six themes. As a class, the students are able to earn points towards an end of the unit Peace, Love, and Happiness celebration. Individually, the students will be working towards earning certificates that will go home each Friday, upon completion of his or her goal. If this goal is not reached, however, it will carry over into the next week.

These are skills that I would like and know each and every child can achieve success in demonstrating. I also feel as though this unit, touched upon everyday, will engage the students while building their investment made in our classroom community.

Below I have shared the six themes upon which we will be focusing starting next week. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions regarding any of this information!

**Take Charge: Making Peace, Love, and Happiness Come First**

Best Effort: I Will Always Check and Double Check  
Telling the Truth: I Know that the Truth is What Counts  
Listening to Others: My Ears are Open Before I Speak  
Teamwork: It’s You and Me Together  
Leadership: I Can Lead by Example  
Responsibility for You: I Can Make a Difference

Finally, I would like to send a few friendly reminders:

1. We **DO** have school this coming Monday, February 21, 2011.  
2. As cold and flu season is still with us, by district policy, your child is to remain out of school for at least **24 hours** after having a fever. You child cannot be sent to school on fever reducing medicine.  
3. Enjoy this batch of great weather outside with your kindergartener! They are antsy to finally be able to get out!

Have a fabulous weekend!

Miss Evans  
hae13@scasd.org

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Kindergarten Pre and Post Interview Questions:
1. Do you know what it means to give your best effort?

What does it look like when you give your best effort?

2. When do you think it is okay to not tell the truth?

3. Do you think that you call out when the teacher is talking or when another student is talking?

4. Do you think that working together as a team is important?

5. Who do you think is a leader? Why do you think they are a leader?

6. Do you know what the word responsibility means? How are you responsible?

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X- does not show behavior
- does show behavior

Yellow: Seat Work
Blue: Math Builders
Orange: Morning Meeting
Green: Stations

*****
Mid Week Check in Questions:

1. What are the goals of this week?
2. How have you been working towards this goal?

3. Can you share an example of how you have been working towards this goal?

4. Have you share this goal with someone at home?