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Teacher expectations of bilingual education students in mainstream classes

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TEACHER EXPECTATIONS OF BILINGUAL
EDUCATION STUDENTS IN
MAINSTREAM CLASSES

by
Diana C. Rodriguez

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Masters of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division of
Rowan College of New Jersey
1996

Approved by _____
Dr. Stan Urban

Date Approved May 6, 1996

ABSTRACT

Diana C. Rodriguez

TEACHERS EXPECTATIONS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN MAINSTREAMED CLASSES 1996

Dr. Stanley Urban

Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this study was to determine if regular education teachers have lower expectations for bilingual students who have been in bilingual programs than for bilingual students who have not. Also, will the expectations of the teachers change as the teacher becomes more familiar with the student?

The sample consisted of twenty elementary classroom teachers from five different elementary schools. A teacher rating scale was devised to identify student behaviors in the following areas: Educational, Social Skills, Behavior, and Home. During the second week of school, each teacher was asked to complete the rating sheet on two students.

ABSTRACT

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One student who was identified as a bilingual education student and one which was identified as not having been in a bilingual education program. At the end of sixty days, the teachers were asked to rate the same students again.

The study concluded that the teachers rated the bilingual education student lower, indicating lower expectations for them than for students who were not in bilingual education. However, over time, ratings improved as the teachers became more familiar with the students.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Diana C. Rodriguez

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Dr. Stanley Urban

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The purpose of this study was to determine if regular education teachers have lower expectations for bilingual students who have been in bilingual programs than for bilingual students who have not. It was determined that expectations of the teachers change as the teacher becomes more familiar with the student.

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DIANA RODRIGUEZ

CHAPTER I - THE PROBLEM

NEED

The realization in the 1960's that the number of language minority children in our schools was growing rapidly and that they were not receiving an adequate education, led to a dramatically new and experimental approach, Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE). It prescribed native-language instruction with English lessons gradually added to allow the student to learn subject matter while making the transition to English. This civil rights initiative was seen as a strong and necessary effort to correct the disgraceful situation where labeling limited-English students as mentally retarded; punishing, verbally or physically, children who used their native language in school; and neglecting students to such a degree that many simply left school. To correct these abuses and inequities, a number of federal and state laws, regulatory acts, and court decisions were passed to improve the educational opportunities for language minority children. The principal ones are Title VI of the Civil

CHAPTER 1

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Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits denial of equal education opportunity on the basis of race, language, or national origin; Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act of the 1968 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which provides funding for bilingual education and sets guidelines and the U.S. Supreme Court decision of 1974 in *Lau v. Nichols* which obligates school districts to take action to remove language barriers that have the effect of excluding linguistic minority children from full participation in public education.

While bilingualism, from a political point of view, is meant to foster the Puerto Rican/Hispanic identity, care must be exerted to avoid isolation which might result in animosity with the overall society. New Jersey's bilingual programs exit bilingual students into mainstream programs after three years.

THEORY

Teacher's expectations sometimes produce self-fulfilling prophecies and even if initial expectations are incorrect, teachers may obtain performance levels from the student consistent with those expectations (Brophy & Good, 1974; Jussim, 1968; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Also,

the teachers' expectations may lead to a perceptual biases which is the tendency to interpret, perceive, remember, or explain students' actions in ways consistent with expectations. This type of expectancy confirmation exists in the teacher's mind rather than in the student's performance (Darley & Fazio, 1980); Miller & Turnbull, 1968). Finally, teachers' expectations may accurately predict students' achievement (Brophy, 1983; Hoge, 1984).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

With the continued growth of the Hispanic population in this country and the continued support of legislators for Bilingual Education, more and more students who have been enrolled in bilingual education will be entering regular education classrooms. With this in mind, it is important to know if the attitudes of teachers toward these students will be negative or positive? And, is it possible for attitudes to change across time once teachers become familiar with these students?

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a difference between the way regular classroom teachers perceive bilingual students who had been enrolled in bilingual programs, as compared to bilingual pupils who had never been in bilingual programs. Also, the status of these perceptions will be examined across time.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) Will regular education teachers have lower expectations for bilingual students who have been in a bilingual program than for bilingual students who have not?

- 2) Will the expectations of regular classroom teachers change for the bilingual student as the teacher becomes more familiar with the student?

ASSUMPTIONS

It is assumed that the responses provided on the teacher rating scale will be the truthful opinions that participants have concerning their

students. It is also assumed that valid estimates of the participants' attitudes can be measured through the utilization of a rating scale.

In this study, we are assuming that the difference between the rating scores of the students' pre-test and post-test represent the difference between expectations and how the students really perform.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Bilingual Education

Instruction in two languages and the use of those two languages as mediums of instruction for any part of or all of the school curriculum. Study of the history and culture associated with a student's mother tongue is considered an integral part of bilingual education (Porter, 1990).

Bilingual Education Class

A classroom where bilingual students receive instruction, at their grade level, in Spanish and English.

Bilingual Education Student

Those students who are not fluent enough in English to participate in the regular education curriculum.

Bilingual Education Teacher

A teacher who holds the certification, Teacher of Bilingual/Bicultural Education, which is issued by the state.

Regular Education Class

A classroom made up of English speaking or English proficient students.

Regular Education Student

Those students who are native speakers of English or those who have become proficient in English and therefore, are not in need of bilingual education. May include Hispanic students born in the U.S. or those who have successfully completed a bilingual program and are now proficient in English.

Regular Classroom Teacher

A teacher who holds a certificate for the grade level or subjects taught and does not have Bilingual/Bicultural certification.

Mainstreaming

Placing bilingual students in regular education classes after they become proficient in English.

CHAPTER II - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

THE CONCEPT OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION

The core concept of bilingual education is that the principles underlying its success are the same principles that underlie successful language acquisition in general. These principles are as follows:

- 1) We acquire a second language by understanding messages, by obtaining comprehension input.
- 2) Background knowledge can help make second language input more comprehensible.
- 3) The development of literacy occurs in the same way as second language acquisition does, in other words, "*We learn to read by reading*", (Krashen, 1985).

To accomplish these principles, one of the most salient features of a bilingual education program is the use of the first language as the medium of instruction. The first language can help in the following ways according to Krashen (1985):

- 1) It supplies background knowledge, which can make English input more comprehensible.
- 2) It enhances the development of basic literacy. This is a two-step argument, first if we, in fact, learn to read by reading, it will be much easier to learn to read in a language one already knows, since written material in that language will be more comprehensible; second, once you can read in one language, you can more easily read. This ability transfers in other languages that may be acquired.
- 3) Reading helps in what is referred to *“advanced literacy”* - the ability to use language, oral and written, to solve problems.

“This theory is not easy to explain to the public” (Krashen, 1985), but he has had some success with the following explanation, which he calls *“The Paris Argument.”*

“Pretend that you have just received, and accepted, an attractive job offer in Paris. Your French, however, is limited (you had two years of French in high school and one semester in college, and it was quite a while ago). Before your departure, the company that is

hiring you will send you the following information, in English:

What to do when you arrive in Paris, how to get to your hotel, where and how to find a place to live, where to shop, what kinds of schools are available for your children, how French companies function (how people dress, what time work starts and ends, etc.), and specific information about the functioning of the company and your responsibilities.”

It would be very useful to get this information right away in English, rather than getting it gradually, as you acquire French. If you get it right away, the world around you will be much more comprehensible, and you will thus acquire French more quickly.

Anyone who agrees with this analogy accepts the philosophy underlying bilingual education.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION: CURRENT RESEARCH

The federal government mandates transitional bilingual education for students who are native-speakers of languages other than English.

According to Brisk (1991), this approach has generally served students

well. However, problems arise when students are mainstreamed.

Bilingual students encounter teachers and students who don't understand what it means to learn and study in a second language and in the context of a new culture. Bilingual students have great difficulty adjusting socially and academically to mainstreamed classes. Brisk (1991) further notes that transitional bilingual approaches have generally set-up barriers between "mainstreamed" bilingual students and teachers. This isolating approach sacrifices the cultural and linguistic wealth that becomes possible through integration. Regardless of English language ability, bilingual students can always benefit from having access to a bilingual teacher who understands their language and culture. At the same time, Orum (1985) states that the bilingual students are exposed to English-speaking teachers and students from the beginning of their schooling. This also permits students to receive some instruction in their native language regardless of English ability. English-speaking teachers learn to deal with newly-arrived students. English-speaking or mainstreamed bilingual students do not feel awkward or embarrassed by students who are not fluent English speakers.

Connecting the bilingual education and English-taught programs can eliminate isolation of bilingual students and teachers. It can prepare students to join society as individuals who accept each other regardless of language or cultural background.

Crawford (1989), in his recent research, shows that when bilingual programs are established correctly, they work very well. In his survey of successful programs in California, Crawford found that students in well-designed bilingual programs consistently outperformed comparison students, and did very well. Standardized testing using local and national norms, often reached average performance between grades three to six. Crawford defines a "well-designed" program as one that had the following characteristics:

- 1) Comprehensive input in English, in the form of high quality ESL classes, and sheltered subject matter teacher (comprehensible subject matter teaching in the second language; see below).
- 2) Subject matter teaching in the first language, without translation. This provides background knowledge that will make English input more comprehensible.

- 3) Literacy development in the first language, which will transfer to the second language.

RESEARCH CITING A LACK OF EFFECTIVENESS FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION

The arguments most often heard against bilingual education are that it does not work and research on bilingual programs is inconsistent and contradictory; also, there is a better option - immersion. The argument that bilingual education “just doesn’t work” is supported by Genesee (1988) who found that in Boston, several hundred bilingual education students had not learned enough English to be exited by seventh grade. Another example is her report that only 4000 out of 7000 applicants passed an “English-language aptitude test” given by New York’s Consolidated Edison company in 1988. None of those who passed, according to Genesee, was a graduate of New York City’s bilingual education program.

Another popular argument against bilingual education is the claim that there is a better way - immersion. Imhoff (1990) supports this view: *“The language teaching method that is generally the fastest, most efficient, and most effective is the Berlitz or immersion method.”* He also reports

that immersion students outperformed students in bilingual education in English language proficiency in six out of seven students.

SUMMARY

In the review of the literature, criticisms of bilingual education rest on two assertions: first, that bilingual programs don't work, and that the evidence for them is inconsistent and contradictory. The research, however, has produced results which can be interpreted as being consistent. Properly organized bilingual programs do work, and even "unanalyzed" bilingual programs appear to work at least as well as all-English programs.

Second, it has been asserted that "immersion" is superior to bilingual education. This has not been demonstrated. Immersion has been rejected by most professionals as an option for bilingual students. The research support for structured immersion is, at best, mixed. Finally, much of the research claiming to show that immersion is superior to bilingual education actually consists of comparisons of different kinds of bilingual programs. While bilingual education can be improved, there is little doubt that bilingual education works.

CHAPTER III - DESIGN OF THE STUDY

SAMPLE

The participants in this study consisted of twenty elementary classroom teachers, all female, from five different elementary schools in the Vineland Public School System. Of the twenty participants, fifteen have a Bachelors degree, two have a Bachelors plus thirty graduate credits, and three have Masters degrees. Experience in the classroom for the participants range from six to thirty teaching years. Eight of the teachers have six to ten years experience, seven teachers have eleven to fifteen years experience, three teachers have sixteen to twenty years experience, and two have twenty six to thirty years experience in teaching.

These teachers are assigned from grades one through four. Within their school day, they teach the following: Reading, Math, Language Arts, English, Science, Social Studies, and Health. The participants were selected at random because they routinely have students in their classrooms who were previously in a bilingual classroom. However, the former bilingual student is not typically identified as such. Teachers must review records to acquire this knowledge.

MEASURES

A teacher rating scale (see Appendix A) was devised to identify student behaviors in the following areas: Educational, Social Skills, Behavior, and Home. It is a simple rating sheet with twenty-five items describing classroom behaviors. Behaviors are rated on a scale of one to five, with one occurring "almost never" to five occurring "almost always." In rating the items, teachers are asked to compare the child's behavior with that of his or her classmates. Points will then be totaled giving each child a score that ranges from a low of 25 to a high of 125. Rating scale items are short phrases describing general school-related behaviors. The five point scale offers no guidance for ranking the students other than the two extremes.

The ratings in each of the four categories were totaled for the two groups. These totals were then divided by the total number of scores (20) to obtain the mean score for each area. These mean scores were then compared to determine if any differences could be noted.

DESIGN

This study is intended to determine if regular education teachers perceive the bilingual students who were enrolled in bilingual programs as being less capable when compared to bilingual students who have never been in bilingual classes. Also, the perception of the teachers towards the bilingual student was measured across time to examine possible changes once they became more familiar with the student.

In approaching this problem, it was decided to collect information from elementary school teachers about their perceptions of bilingual students mainstreamed in their classrooms.

During the second week of school, each teacher will be asked to complete the rating sheet on two students. One student will be identified as a bilingual student, and one which will be identified as not having been in bilingual education. At the end of a sixty day period, I will again ask the participants to evaluate the students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) Will regular classroom teachers have more negative expectations for the students who have been in bilingual education programs than the student who has not.

To answer the first research question, using the rating scale, the scores of the bilingual education students will be compared to the scores of the non-bilingual education students.

- 2) Will the attitude of regular education classroom teachers be less negative towards the bilingual education student who has been in a bilingual program, when the teacher becomes more familiar with them.

To answer the second research question, the results from the first and second ratings for the bilingual education students will be compared.

These comparisons will determine if any differences exist in the expectations of the teachers, after a sixty day interval has elapsed.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The data received from the pre-test ratings for the bilingual education student and the non-bilingual education student will be recorded. The ratings for each category (educational, home, social skills, behavior) will be totaled and a mean score will be found for each area. These mean scores will then be compared to determine if there is any significant differences between the two groups.

The data received from the post-test will be recorded for the two groups. The ratings for each category will again be totaled and a mean score found.

The post-test mean score for the bilingual education student will be compared to their pre-test score to determine if any significant difference has occurred over time. The post-test mean score of the non-bilingual education student will also be compared to their pre-test scores to see if any significant differences have occurred over time.

SUMMARY

This study was designed to see if regular education teachers' expectations of bilingual students who were enrolled in a bilingual program were lower than their expectations for bilingual students, who had never been in a bilingual program. Also, would their attitudes change as they become more familiar with the students.

As a pre-test, participants were asked to rate the bilingual education student and the non-bilingual education student in their classes. Sixty days later, as a post-test, the participants were again asked to rate the same students. The results will be analyzed and will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV - ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

OVERVIEW

The study is intended to determine if regular education teachers perceive the bilingual students, who were enrolled in bilingual programs, to be less socially and academically capable when compared to bilingual students who have never been in bilingual classes. Also, the perception of the teachers towards the bilingual students, was measured across time to examine possible changes once the teacher became more familiar with students.

In approaching this problem it was decided to collect information from elementary school teachers about their perceptions of bilingual students mainstreamed in their classrooms. During the second week of school, each teacher was asked to complete the rating sheet on two students. One student was identified as a bilingual student, and one which was identified as not having been in bilingual education. At the end of a sixty day period, the teachers were again asked to evaluate the students.

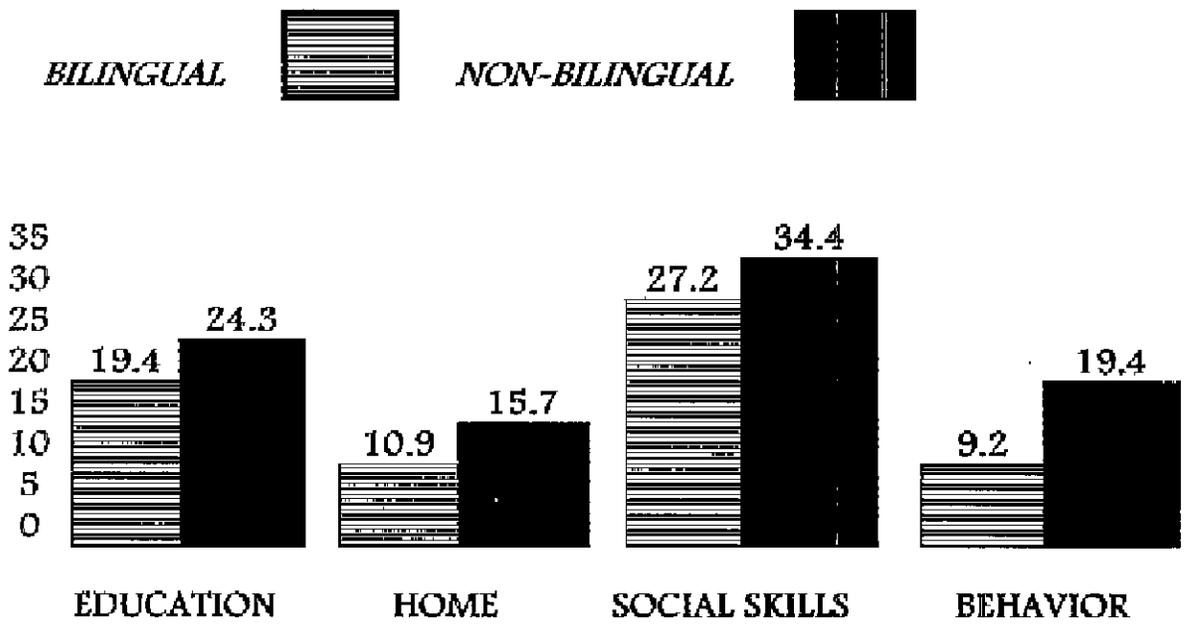
Results

Research question 1: Will regular education teachers have lower expectations for bilingual students who have been in a bilingual program than for bilingual students who have not?

In answering the first research question, a comparison was made of the teacher rating scores for both groups (See figure 1).

**FIGURE ONE:
PRE-TEST RATINGS BY TEACHERS OF BILINGUAL STUDENTS
COMPARED TO NON-BILINGUAL STUDENTS**

MEAN SCORES



When comparing the pre-test mean scores for the two groups, it was found that the bilingual education students received lower ratings than the non-bilingual education students in all four areas rated.

In the area of educational skills, bilingual students' rating average was 4.9 points below non-bilingual students. In the area of *Home*, rating averages were 4.8 points lower; *Social Skills* rating averages were 7.2 points lower; and in *Behavior*, rating averages were 10.2 points lower for bilingual students than non-bilingual education students.

Research question 2: Will the expectations of regular classroom teachers change for the bilingual student as the teacher becomes more familiar with the student?

In answering the second research question, a comparison was made of the bilingual education students' pre-test mean rating scores with their post-test mean rating scores, in the four areas rated (See figure 2).

FIGURE TWO:
BILINGUAL EDUCATION PRE-TEST SCORES COMPARED TO
BILINGUAL EDUCATION POST-TEST SCORES

MEAN SCORES



When comparing the post-test mean rating scores for the bilingual education students with their pre-test mean rating scores, an increase in the ratings was noted in three areas. In the area of *Educational Skills*, the increase was 3.6 points; in the *Home*, the increase was 1.4 points; and in the *Social Skills*, the increase was 2.8 points. In the area of *Behavior*, however, there was a decrease of 1.6 points.

CHAPTER V - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

The realization in the 1960's that the number of language minority children in our schools was growing rapidly and that they were not receiving an adequate education, led to a dramatically new and experimental approach, Transitional Bilingual Education. It prescribed native-language instruction with English lessons gradually added to allow the student to learn subject matter while making the transition to English. To correct these abuses and inequities, a number of federal and state laws were passed to improve the educational opportunities for language minority children. The principal ones are Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits denial of equal education opportunity on the basis of race, language, or national origin and Title VII, the Bilingual Educational Act of 1968, which provides funding for bilingual education. New Jersey's bilingual programs exit bilingual students into mainstream programs after three years.

This study was designed to determine if there is a difference in the expectations a regular classroom teacher has for bilingual students who had been

in a bilingual program, as compared to bilingual students who had never been in a bilingual program. And, would their expectations change as the teacher became more familiar with the student.

As a pre-test, participants were asked to rate a bilingual education student and a student who had not been in a bilingual education program. Sixty days later, as a post-test, the participants were again asked to rate the same students.

CONCLUSIONS

When comparing the pre-test rating scores of both groups, it was found that the bilingual education students were rated lower by the teachers in all four areas. We can conclude, therefore, that the teachers had lower expectations for the bilingual education student than for the student who had not received bilingual services.

While the differences in ratings were not extreme, the bilingual education students were rated on average 5 points lower than non-bilingual education students and lower by as much as 10 points in the area of behavior. These lower ratings would indicate that teachers, who had only had these students for 2 weeks, expected less from the bilingual education students.

When comparing the bilingual education students' pre-test ratings with their post-test ratings, sixty days later, an improvement in the ratings is noted. This time, the bilingual students' ratings were on average 3 points higher than the pre-test, and in the area of behavior, students' rating decreased by 1.6 points, indicating that their behavior was better than the teachers expected.

While bilingual education students are not routinely identified to classroom teachers, it is understandable that they may have lower expectations for a student they know may have a harder time understanding directions, assignments, and classroom expectations. These students might also represent added work for a teacher who already has a full load and now must find the time to give extra help to students who may be having difficulties due to a language barrier.

It is encouraging, however, that teachers did not hold the students to their original expectations. When their expectations for the students were not as they had anticipated, teachers did not hold students to them. This was evident when the bilingual education students' post-test ratings went up. As the teachers became more familiar with their students and their original expectations were not realized, the teachers were willing to change their expectations and rated the students accordingly. This will hopefully carry over to the classroom where

teachers will then expect just as much from bilingual education students as from any other student.

IMPLICATIONS

With more and more foreign students entering our country and our school systems every day, teachers will be asked to educate more and more students whose first language is not English. The federal government, state government, school boards, as well as teachers will have to examine and change the methods we are currently using, which may not be effective when working with such a diverse group of students. Teachers should receive in-service workshops to familiarize them with the language, culture, and difficulties they may encounter when trying to teach students of different ethnic backgrounds. Teachers should also be given new strategies and teaching methods to better educate foreign language students. The community should also become a part of this. Parents should be informed about what is expected from their children as well as from them. Parent workshops to help parents help their children at home are also needed. All members of the community should be encouraged to come into the

schools and volunteer their time or share their area of expertise with students and teachers.

As more foreign students enter our school systems in the coming years, we must all learn to better understand their needs and determine better ways to meet their needs if we hope to have a literate nation.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher: _____
 No. Of Years Experience: _____
 Present Grade: _____
 Date: _____

Below are descriptions of behaviors. Please read each item and compare the child's behavior with that of his or her classmates. Circle the number that most closely corresponds with your evaluation

| EDUCATIONAL | | ALMOST NEVER | | ALMOST ALWAYS | | |
|--------------------|---|--------------|---|---------------|---|---|
| 1) | Works well independently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2) | Persists with task for reasonable amount of time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3) | Completes assigned tasks satisfactorily with little additional assistance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4) | Follows simple directions accurately | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5) | Follows a sequence of instructions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6) | Functions well in the classroom | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| SOCIAL SKILLS | | ALMOST NEVER | | ALMOST ALWAYS | | |
|----------------------|--|--------------|---|---------------|---|---|
| 7) | Behaves positively with classmates | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8) | Behaves positively with authority figures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9) | Verbal communication is clear and "connected" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10) | Nonverbal communication accurate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11) | Follows classroom norms and social rules | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12) | Skillful at making new friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13) | Approaches situations confidently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14) | Socializes with children of different ethnic backgrounds | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| HOME | | ALMOST NEVER | | ALMOST ALWAYS | | |
|-------------|---|--------------|---|---------------|---|---|
| 15) | Completes homework assignments and projects | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16) | Returns school forms | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17) | Able to communicate with parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18) | Participates in after school activities (Christmas Programs, PTA) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| BEHAVIOR | | ALMOST NEVER | | ALMOST ALWAYS | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|---|---------------|---|---|
| 19) | Defies authority | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20) | Picks on others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21) | Disobeys class rules | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22) | Overactive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23) | Impulsive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24) | Restless | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25) | Overreacts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

