An investigation on whether creating a culture of respect can reduce disruptive behaviors by influencing the social skills development of four year old children in an urban setting

Ruth Cummings-Hypolite
AN INVESTIGATION ON WHETHER CREATING A CULTURE OF RESPECT CAN REDUCE DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS BY INFLUENCING THE SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF FOUR YEAR OLD CHILDREN IN AN URBAN SETTING

by
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Dissertation Chair: Robin Haskell McBee, Ph.D.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Clarence Cummings, and the memory of my mother, Sybil Cummings. My pursuit and achievement of this doctoral degree began with the love and spiritual foundation you surrounded me with throughout my development. In memory of Andre Hypolite, in recognition of the support and encouragement you always gave me. To the memory of Irene Nicholson, my surrogate grandmother whose unconditional love and understanding fostered my inner strength and courage. Your love and support were the wind beneath my wings.

To all of my nieces and nephews, I offer this dissertation to you with the hope that my achievement of this degree will inspire you to continue dreaming, and will ignite your courage and endurance to pursue your dreams with humility and determination.

With Love,

Ruth
Acknowledgments

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. ~Lao-Tzu

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Abstract

Ruth D. Cummings-Hypolite
AN INVESTIGATION ON WHETHER CREATING A CULTURE OF RESPECT CAN REDUCE DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS BY INFLUENCING THE SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF FOUR YEAR OLD CHILDREN IN AN URBAN SETTING 2010/2011
Robin Haskell McBee, Ph.D.
Doctorate in Educational Leadership

This investigation explored the impact of a culture of respect on disruptive behaviors of four year old children in an urban setting. A curriculum on respect was implemented, and teachers’ and students’ views on respect were measured before and after delivering the curriculum. Family involvement was part of the curriculum. The research questions identified teachers’ knowledge and attitudes regarding teaching social skills and respect, the influence of teaching respect on children’s social skills, and effective strategies for teaching respect. A pilot study and principal study were conducted in a total of 9 preschool classrooms. A mixed research methodology was used in both studies. One hundred percent of the teachers who participated in the study reported a decrease in disruptive behaviors in their classroom and attributed this change to the use of the Respect curriculum. Teachers reported an unexpected benefit of over 50% participation of families in the parent-child activity. The findings support developing a stronger emphasis on social emotional development through implementing a curriculum on culture of respect in early childhood learning environments.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Over the last 15 years in the field of education, I have worked as a special education teacher, an administrator, and as a social worker on a child study team; I currently work in the capacity of a preschool intervention specialist. During this time, I have experienced many situations that have led me to a deep interest in the development of social emotional skills and their influence on children’s behaviors and academic achievements. Most of the referrals to the preschool intervention specialists relate to disruptive behaviors in the classrooms. This experience is reflected in the observation made by Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, and Strain (2003) that disruptive behaviors have become a major challenge to teachers and leave less time for supporting the learning environment.

Many young children are spending less time with their families and more time in classroom settings. Therefore, early childhood educators have taken a more prominent role in readying students for academic and social success in their formal school experiences. With that in mind, the learning environment plays a significant role in helping to shape children’s lives. Some young children may enter these classroom settings and present challenges to early childhood educators. However, it is imperative that educators of young children understand how they influence children’s behaviors and help to set the foundation for future success. In our work with young children, early
childhood educators should accept this role as an honor. It is in this role that we can contribute to students' development of essential life skills.

The goal of education must be to address not only children's intellect, but who they are as individuals. As Greenberg et al. state, a comprehensive mission for schools is to educate students to be knowledgeable, responsible, socially skilled, healthy, caring, and contributing citizens (as cited in Schonert-Reichl & Hymel, 2007, p. 20).

Specifically, high quality early childhood education includes a positive teacher-child relationship, which impacts the learning environment and child's well-being (Goleman, 2006; Ray, Bowman, & Brownell, 2006). Pianta (2007) concurs with this belief and postulates that the teacher's implementation of a curriculum, through both social and instructional interactions with children, produces effects on student learning. Following this line of thinking, this investigation has explored the development of a culture of respect in the classroom and its impact on the social skills of 4-year-old students. This has been done through developing and implementing a curriculum designed to teach the concept of respect and practice respectful behaviors during a pilot study and principal study. Data collected before, during, and after implementing the curriculum focused on teachers' views of student behavior, observations of student behavior, and student views on the concept of respect. In addition, data were collected from a family involvement activity in which children developed a poster about respect with their families.

**Genesis of This Project**

My specific interest for investigating the concept of respect stems from two experiences I had over my 15-year career as an educator. A few years ago, while working
as a counselor in an after school program for juvenile offenders, I found myself constantly reflecting on the lack of empathy and respect about which the participants boasted. As I got to know many of them personally, I realized that the lack of guidance and low self-respect had played a major role in leading them to this destructive path. This, along with my experience working with young children and my personal experiences, ignited my interest for this topic. I wanted to find a way to influence young people’s development toward a more positive view of themselves.

The second event that prompted my interest in this area of social emotional learning was the response of a preschool teacher with whom I was working regarding a student’s behavior and classroom management. When social emotional strategies were recommended, she questioned the impact such strategies would have on the child’s behavior, which she thought warranted immediate special education services. This led me to question how other teachers might feel about the significant impact of social competence on young children’s behaviors.

I am of the belief that no child is born "bad" or arrives to school with the intention of disrupting the classrooms. Children are influenced by the environment in which they are socialized prior to entering preschool. A young child’s development is influenced by many factors which can put him or her at risk for academic failure and poor social skills. Many of the challenges children face are the result of environmental factors. The urban environment can present a plethora of multi-layered factors that become evident in the school environment. These factors include poverty, homelessness, single parenthood, divorce, parental psychiatric illness, parental substance abuse or criminal history,
exposure to violence, and high levels of familial stress (Ray et al., 2006), with poverty having the greatest number of associated hazards (p. 7).

When young children who have been exposed to these factors enter schools, educators are faced with the responsibility and challenge of teaching them new skills and providing a high-quality environment that promotes and nurtures social and emotional development. Often when young children are experiencing feelings related to environmental stressors, lack of good moral values, or low self-worth, they do not have the vocabulary to describe their feelings. Hence they may communicate their feelings by displaying inappropriate or disrespectful behaviors.

In the early stages of development, children's social and emotional well-being supports the foundation for cognitive growth (Mindess, Chen, & Brenner, 2008). Providing young children an environment in which the adults' actions and deeds support their social emotional competence is crucial to their development of positive character (Tierno, 1996).

Social emotional competence is defined by some in terms of managing daily tasks and by others with an emphasis on social interactions. Elias et al. (1997) define social emotional competence as,

> the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development. (p. 2)

McClellan and Katz state that social competence is the ability to effectively engage in social behaviors that are age appropriate and enhance interpersonal relationships (as cited in Estes, 2004, p. 79). They further indicate that social competence is a strong indicator of children's overall abilities to adapt to social situations and form stable
relationships and that it impacts their emerging identity. While these two definitions are similar, for the purposes of this study, I will refer to the Elias et al. (1997) definition.

The development of appropriate social skills is important since they are a significant component of life skills. Many of the juveniles I met in the after school program lacked these vital skills; hence, they experienced difficulties with authority in school, the community, and their homes. Elias, Arnold, and Hussey (2003, p. 4) identified social skills as “the ability to handle a range of social relationships.” They acknowledge social skills as one of the core characteristics of emotional intelligence which, according to Goleman (1995), includes “self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself” (p. xii) and can be taught to children. When children gain these skills, their social emotional competence is enhanced and may afford more opportunities for building positive relationships. Therefore, the teaching of respect is fundamental to the development of social skills and strengthens the foundation for moral development and improved achievement.

Purpose of the Study

My experience working in an urban district contributes to my understanding of the challenges presented to teachers, administrators, and parents when dealing with young children’s development and especially behaviors that are disruptive or disrespectful. When children exhibit deficits in social skills (e.g., difficulties with sharing, resolving conflicts, and peer or adult relations), this can become disruptive to the learning environment, present a safety issue for the classroom, hamper students’ academic progress, and challenge teachers, students, and administrators. The intent of this action
research has been to investigate whether creating a culture of respect would influence the social skills development of 4-year-old children in an urban setting.

The goals of this study were to:

- examine how the teaching of respect in the preschool classroom enhances social skills/social competence, and
- gather evidence that may further support the integration of social emotional learning in preschool.

**Research Questions**

The investigation utilized a mixed methodology approach to answer the following questions:

1. What is the current knowledge base of teachers about teaching social skills and respect?
2. Does the teaching of respect influence social skills/social competence in an urban preschool environment?
3. What are effective strategies for teaching respect?

**Context of Study**

During my past 15 years in education, with most of those years working with the preschool population, I have observed different levels of disruptive behaviors within the classroom. As an early childhood intervention specialist, approximately 75% of the referrals from preschool teachers relate to the social and emotional deficits of children. The findings from this study may suggest strategies to address such deficits, which in turn may be indicators for later risk of academic problems (Ray et al., 2006). How we respond to young children’s challenging behaviors may impact their school readiness skills. High quality early childhood programs are important in children’s academic,
social, and emotional development, and it is also a crucial time for partnering with parents to encourage social competence.

The district in which the study has been conducted is an urban setting with a preschool population of approximately 4,000 students, consisting of 3 and 4-year-old youngsters. This project fits into the larger scheme of the district’s early childhood curriculum based on several key components. The district’s early childhood department espouses the belief in the promotion of social emotional learning in the early childhood classrooms. The teaching of respect is supported within the district’s early childhood program implementation of the High/Scope curriculum (Hohmann & Weikart, 2002). In theory, the delivery of a social emotional component of learning is supported by the early childhood department. However, in practice, the social emotional component of the above requirements is not consistently evident in the daily routine of the classrooms. The failure to explicitly teach social emotional skills reflects a disconnect between the department’s stated curricular goals and intent and the reality of what is taught. This study has sought to better align the daily instruction with district mandates such as the early childhood department’s mission and vision statements, the district’s implemented curriculum, and state Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards.

The early childhood classroom represents many children’s first school contact, and it is important that these classrooms provide a safe, nurturing, and family friendly atmosphere. However, when the challenges presented by young children’s inappropriate behaviors begin to erode the sense of safety for children and adults, teachers and...
administrators’ sense of control may feel undermined, and they may even resort to inappropriate consequences.

To help educators with such challenges, the State Department of Education Division of Early Childhood recommended that early childhood programs implement the teaching pyramid model (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1 Teaching Pyramid Model](http://challengingbehavior.org/do/resources/documents/yc_article_11_2006.pdf)

The pyramid promotes the concept of positive behavior support (PBS), which fosters a humanistic and holistic way of addressing children with challenging behaviors. Bredekamp, Copple, Joseph, and Strain, described the teaching pyramid as a model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behaviors in young children (as
The first two levels of the teaching pyramid (Positive Relationship with Children, Families, and Colleagues and Classroom Preventive Practices) set the foundation for universal promotion practices (Fox & Lentini, 2006). At these levels, teachers are encouraged to support positive relationships with children, families, and colleagues, which help to support the other levels. Classroom preventive practices are based on classroom designs that meet the standards of high quality early childhood programs. Such programs include the implementation of a curriculum that supports all areas of children’s development (Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention, n.d.).

The integration of respect in the classroom lends itself to these two levels of the teaching pyramid, which in turn promotes positive relationship building, enhances the leaning environment, and fosters family involvement. Creating a culture of respect in the classroom helps to build positive relationships and is a proactive strategy to nurture children and teach new skills. According to Gerzon-Kessler (2006), “The road to student growth and achievement runs through the teacher-student relationships. Through humor, sincerity, warmth, respect, and firmness, teachers can forge solid personal bonds with students that fuel their motivation to excel” (p. 252). She stated further, that “When students respect their teacher and one another, discipline issues decrease dramatically. Through the partnership teachers build with students in the classroom, a new learning culture can emerge that meets the needs of even the most struggling students” (p. 253).

**Description of the Action Research Method/Procedure**

This study was conducted utilizing a curriculum designed to create a culture of respect in the classroom with an emphasis on five identified key components: empathy,
diversity training, conflict resolution, moral education, and family involvement. During the pilot study, the curriculum was implemented in three participating classrooms of 41 4-year-old children in a socio-economically and culturally diverse urban setting. In collaboration with the four teachers and three paraprofessionals, classroom activities from the curriculum were conducted over a 3-month period. Data collection was triangulated utilizing interviews with classroom teachers and students, surveys completed by teachers and paraprofessionals, and checklists completed by teachers. These instruments were used to collect pre implementation and post implementation data. During the implementation, data were collected through observations, videotaping, photographs, and artifacts.

Based on the findings from the pilot study, a principal study was conducted within the same district. The purpose of the principal study was to further investigate the efficacy of this curriculum. Six classrooms identified to implement the curriculum consisted of 87 4-year-old children, six teachers, and six paraprofessionals. An orientation was provided for the six teachers in those classes. This orientation included an introduction of the *Respect* curriculum to teachers, a timeline for the implementation, and methods that would be used for monitoring the implementation of the curriculum (teacher feedback, observations, and coaching). I met with the paraprofessionals individually, provided them with information about the study, and gave them a copy of the Respect curriculum. The data collected in both studies were analyzed by transcribing, coding, and identifying themes and trends.

**Significance of the Study**
Early childhood educators have reported an increase both in the number of young children exhibiting disruptive behaviors and in the frequency of these behaviors. Educators feel ill-equipped and frustrated in their attempts to meet the needs of these children and maintain a safe and nurturing learning environment (Fox et al., 2003; Moore, 2006). In an attempt to respond to children’s disruptive behaviors and teachers’ frustration, many administrators had turned to suspension or expulsion, a developmentally inappropriate response, which does not provide the necessary guidance for young children. Hyson states, “if we expect children to enter school ready to learn, they must have the underlying security and emotional foundations for learning” (as cited in Epstein, 2009, p. 11). Therefore, it is imperative that we address social competence in the preschool years rather than simply punish social incompetence.

If children are to survive and succeed in the 21st century and interact successfully in the global market, social competence will complement knowledge and technological skills. The teaching of respect is essential to social emotional learning, and incorporating this into the day-to-day curriculum will provide educators, families, and communities with appropriate strategies and best practices to better prepare students for “the test of life, not a life of tests” (Schonert-Reichl & Hymel, 2007, p. 20).

The early childhood community must rethink our approach to early social skills development. The need for an integration of social emotional learning and creating a classroom culture of respect is echoed in the words of Hyson (as cited in Epstein, 2009): that children need to have a sense of security and foundations strong in emotional competence. Epstein (2009) encourages us to be open to an expanded awareness of
early development and the changing contexts in which young children are called to exercise their knowledge and skills in a multidimensional domain (p. 9).

In the following chapters, the Literature Review will provide an overview of the linkages between disruptive behaviors in the classroom, social emotional learning, and academic achievements. The Methodology chapter will provide a description of the methodological approaches to train the teaching staff and collect and analyze the data. The Findings chapter will present what was found in the analyzed data. The final chapter, Conclusion, will present a description of the deductions made from the findings and implications of this study, including how this study informs my work as an educational leader.
Chapter II

Literature Review

Classroom teachers spend much of their time focusing on the disruptive behaviors of a few children, leaving less time to support the learning environment (Fox et al., 2003; Ullucci, 2009). Research has shown a link between children’s low academic achievement, disruptive behaviors, and low social emotional development (Hemmeter, Ostroskey, Fox, & Hojnoski, 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2008).

The motivation for this study was based on the fact that state and district policies espouse the importance of social emotional development in the education process; however, my observations and experiences have observed that it is not consistently evident in the daily routine of the classrooms. Over the last decade, the problem of young children’s disruptive behaviors in the preschool classroom has become a major challenge to educators in this and other states. Many school administrators responded to this challenge with the use of suspension and expulsion of preschoolers. In June 2005, the Assistant to the Commissioner for Early Childhood Education in the State Department of Education took action by writing a letter to districts denouncing suspension or expulsion of preschoolers as an inappropriate action. Expulsion is a very severe disciplinary action used by schools (Gilliam & Shabar, 2006), and it is especially severe when used in the preschool years.

Teaching young children new skills as a way to address these behaviors is shown in the literature to be more effective and developmentally appropriate than expulsion or
suspension from school. This study seeks to investigate whether creating a culture of respect would influence the social skills development of 4-year-old children in an urban setting. A review of the literature included the importance of social skills development; definitions of terminologies related to the topic; stages of social emotional, psychosocial, and moral development; environmental factors; programmatic approaches to social skills development; stakeholders in social skills development; elements of positive school environments; and respect and culture of respect as part of social skills development. These are discussed in this chapter, which also explains how they informed this study.

The Importance of Social Skills Development in Preschool

The literature on the subject of social skills development emphasizes two primary reasons why it is important in the classroom. The first reason is that social skills enhance academic learning (Elias et al., 1997; Tomlinson & Hyson, n.d.). Many educators struggle with the challenges of addressing the academic development of young children. Epstein (2009) states, that “teachers today confront special challenges preparing preschoolers to face a complex and rapidly changing world” (p. 3). Empowering educators with a heuristic framework to support children’s emotional and social well-being is vital to the children’s development.

The second reason is that social skills development is necessary to help students become productive and responsible members of society (Goleman, 1995). Social skills have been identified by Elias et al. (2003) as one of the core characteristics of emotional intelligence. They are essential to helping children deal with a variety of social situations, together with brain and cognitive development (Mindess et al., 2008). These skills help to lay the foundation for children’s academic achievement (Adams & Baronberg, 2005). A
longitudinal study cited by Cohen (2006) revealed that children’s social and emotional competencies predict their ability to learn and solve problems without violence. According to Cohen, these competencies were identified in other research to be indicators of healthy marital relations and adulthood work relationships.

Definitions

Educational literature has provided several perspectives on understanding the issue of disruptive behavior. These perspectives include the use of terminologies such as emotional intelligence, social emotional learning, and social emotional competence. According to Mayer and Salovey, the term emotional intelligence was coined while they were researching factors important to functioning well in society (as cited in Elias et al., 2003, p. 3). There are several definitions for the term emotional intelligence; however, the use of Goleman’s 1995 definition is widely accepted (Elias et al., 2003). Goleman (1995) defines emotional intelligence as “self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself” (p. xii). The core characteristics of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, management and self-regulation, self-motivation and performance, empathy, and social skills. Self-awareness relates to one’s ability to recognize his or her own feelings. As children develop and are able to cope with strong emotions, they demonstrate what is described as management and self-regulation of emotions. Being able to set real goals and work towards achieving them demonstrate self-motivation and performance. Empathy and understanding other perspectives are evident when children are aware of others’ feelings and value the views of others. As children develop social skills and become socially competent, they are better able to adapt to varying social situations and relationships (Adams & Baronberg, 2005; Elias et al., 2003).
Emotional learning is defined by Epstein (2009) as the knowledge and skills needed to recognize and self-regulate feelings. Social learning comprises the principles and strategies for interacting successfully with others (p. 4). Due to the interdependence of these two terms, Epstein advocates the use of social emotional learning (or development or competence) as the best descriptive term for this essential area of human development. Therefore, this terminology is used throughout this study.

Improving children’s social competence and social skills were the focus of this study. Social competence is demonstrated when children are able to successfully manage their lives, handle conflicts, and build positive relationships (Elias et al., 1997). McClellan and Katz identified social competence as a child’s ability to exhibit age appropriate behaviors and improve social relations. This skill, they argue, indicates children’s ability to adapt to different societal situations (as cited in Estes, 2004, p. 79). For children to be socially competent, social skills are needed and have been identified by Elias et al. (2003) as one of the core characteristics of emotional intelligence. When children do not acquire these skills in the early years, the likelihood of them being at risk for school failure increases, and their transition into kindergarten becomes more challenging (Adams & Baronberg, 2005; Bowman, 2006).

**Stages of Development**

Understanding the stages of development in children informed this project regarding the appropriateness of teaching respect and children’s ability to learn and use the concept. For the purposes of this study, the stages of social and emotional, psychosocial, and moral development are important to developing social skills (Epstein, 2009; Estes, 2004). Social and emotional growth are important segments of a child’s
development that shape his or her experiences of interacting with others into adulthood (Epstein, 2009). Research has shown that early childhood experiences play an important role in setting the foundation for children’s future success (Bagdi & Vacca, 2006; Estes, 2004; Horton-Parker, 1998). Plato and Aristotle described childhood as a time for learning; so, too, do I agree with their belief that education shapes children’s character and prepares them for their roles in society (as cited in Estes, 2004, p. 124).

**Social and emotional development.** The process of social and emotional development begins in infancy, when babies learn to regulate their behavior by crying and moving around (Epstein, 2009; Estes, 2004). During infancy, the six types of emotional experiences identified include organizing senses and motor responses, engaging with caregivers, reciprocating gestures, exploring the world, using creativity, and differentiating between fantasy and reality (Greenspan, 1999). Greenspan concurs with Epstein (2009) that social emotional development starts in infancy, and he postulates that by the preschool age (42 months), the use of ideas and creativity emerge as the child engages in more elaborate pretend play, debating, and expressing his or her opinions. The diversity training, conflict resolution, and moral education components of this study’s Respect curriculum include activities that encourage children to engage in pretend play, to share their feelings and opinions, as well as to listen to others’ opinions and feelings. The Respect curriculum teaches children a positive approach to dealing with conflicts. A specific approach is outlined in the conflict resolution component of the curriculum, which includes the adult calmly approaching the children, acknowledging the children’s feelings, asking questions about the conflict, restating the problem or conflict, and encouraging the children to brainstorm ideas for solving the conflict (Evans, 2002).
empathy, diversity training, and moral education components of the Respect curriculum provide children with the tools for positive conflict resolution.

**Psychosocial development.** According to Estes (2004), Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development identifies eight stages of development. His third stage, initiative versus guilt, which occurs during the preschool age, is characterized by children’s attempt to try out their own ideas and actions. They begin to use their own ideas to solve problems and occasionally seek guidance from others. It is therefore important that the early childhood classroom culture and curriculum support the child’s attempts at independence while providing guidance to foster the child’s initiative. It is critical to note that in Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, the crisis within each stage must be successfully resolved in order to advance through the full sequence of stages (Elias et al., 1997; Estes, 2004; Monte, 1991). It is also argued that the conflict between each stage forces the development of new skills (Elias et al., 1997).

**Moral development.** The development of moral behaviors is a building block for qualities such as consideration for others (Tomlinson & Hyson, n.d.), which is an important aspect of a culture of respect. Several theories of moral development and education informed my thinking as I developed and proceeded with this study. Moral education is how adults support children’s development and their emerging understanding of right and wrong, their ability to think about how their actions affect others, and their ability to show respect for others. Although preschoolers do not have a full understanding of social justice, their awareness of right and wrong emerges in their experiences (Koc & Buzzelli, 2004). It is during this stage that early childhood educators
can have an impact on children’s moral development by creating a culture of respect in the classroom.

Piaget’s association of children’s ability to reason as part of their cognitive development implies that children’s moral reasoning is influenced by their environment (Estes, 2004). He postulates three stages of moral development: premoral, heteronomous morality, and autonomous morality. The premoral stage occurs during the preschool age and is characterized by children making decisions based upon whether they will be punished or rewarded. This behavior is evidence of preschoolers’ egocentrism (Estes, 2004), which is important to note because these egocentric behaviors can present a challenge to educators of young children.

Kohlberg’s theory of moral reasoning includes stages of preconventional, conventional, and post conventional moral reasoning (as cited in Estes, 2004). Preschoolers’ egocentrism places them in the preconventional level. During this stage the child is unable to see others’ viewpoints and, as in Piaget’s theory, makes decisions based on being able to avoid punishment. Kohlberg suggests that cultural factors do not directly shape the child’s moral thought, but do stimulate children’s thinking. Social experiences, he argues, can challenge children’s ideas and motivate them to develop new ones (Crain, 1985). So, if respect is taught in the classroom as a part of the child’s social experience, the concept would challenge the child’s ideas from his or her previous social and emotional experiences. This can motivate the child to develop new conceptual understandings through the guidance of the educator implementing a social emotional curriculum.
Moral education as a component in the Respect curriculum encourages teachers to engage the children about good decision-making skills. This is facilitated through the use of books, discussions, and role-playing. As books are read to the children, they are encouraged to identify the emotions of the characters, the decisions made by the characters, and discuss whether the decisions were right or wrong. The scenarios from books read or real classroom situations can become part of role playing with the children to explore their opinions and expand their awareness of good decision-making skills. These activities can encourage children to think critically about their actions and the actions of others.

Whether children at age three or four are motivated primarily by adults’ approval or punishment or by their own egocentric interpretation of socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, it is clear that they are developing an inventory of what can and should be done or not done. Thus, adults, including teachers and family and community members, play a critical role in facilitating the direction of moral development (Bagdi & Vacca, 2006; Epstein, 2009).

Moral education, although sometimes ignored in the classroom, is important to the purpose of education, which should focus on the whole child. An emphasis on educating the whole child is essential to a child’s formal education because it supports their academic, social, and emotional development. John Dewey stated, “The aim of education is growth or development, both intellectual and moral” (as cited in Kohlberg, 1980, p. 19). Moral development should be interwoven into the agenda of education to prepare children to be thoughtful, intellectual, and critical thinkers (Howard, 2005; Noddings, 2008; Schonert-Reichl & Hymel, 2007).
Environmental Factors

In addition to understanding these perspectives on children’s behaviors and stages of development, it is important for educators to understand and recognize the environmental factors that impact children’s behaviors. Research has identified environmental factors such as poverty, homelessness, single parenthood, divorce, parental psychiatric illness, parental substance abuse or criminal history, exposure to poor parenting, violence, and high levels of familial stress that put children at risk for having problems in school (Bowman, 2006; Ray et al., 2006). The impact of poverty on child behavior, development, and learning is well documented in the literature (Gorski, 2008; Hemmeter et al., 2006; Tomlinson, n.d.; Tomlinson & Hysom, n.d.). Poverty dramatically affects children’s brains (Toppo, 2008). Many of these environmental factors are evident in the community in which this study was conducted. Consistent exposure to these factors predisposes many young children to exhibit disruptive behaviors (Bell & Quinn, 2004). For this reason, these problems tend to be more pronounced in the types of communities like the one where this project was developed and why this curriculum was designed to address young children’s disruptive behaviors.

Programmatic Approaches to Social Skills Development

The state’s Department of Education has recommended the Bank Street, Creative, Curiosity Corner, High/Scope, and Tools of the Mind curricula for early childhood settings. These curricula identify the importance of social skills development, and each has a component supporting the development of social skills in preschool children (State Department of Education, 1996-2010a). Therefore, the implementation of the curriculum
to teach respect could be relatively easily integrated in early childhood settings through these curricula.

**Curricular programs and approaches.** To address the concerns about young children’s disruptive behaviors and the significant impact of social and emotional development on learning, a number of programs have been marketed under various general categories, such as character education, anti-bullying, and positive behavior support and brand names, such as *Character Counts, Peace Club, and Second Step*. All are designed to promote social emotional learning in schools, and they are briefly described below.

*Character education*. Several states, including this state, have adopted some form of character education (Ankeney, 1997); many of these programs are implemented in K-12 classrooms. Character education is an umbrella term used to describe the teaching of behaviors to children that support the development of moral behavior, responsibility, civic minded behavior, compassion, and respect for self and others (Elias et al., 1997; Howard, 2005). Examples of character education programs are the *Character Counts* and *Peace Club* programs. *Character Counts* is a character education approach based on ethical values. Six principles: trust, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship are its core values (Josephson Institute, 2011). The *Peace Club* is based on the principles of peace and caring to promote the goal that each child experiences respect, acceptance, and understanding in the learning environment (Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007).

Elias et al. (1997) argue that while many character education programs promote a particular group of values and approaches presumed to foster responsible behaviors,
social emotional education promotes a broader focus. An example of this would be the New Haven® Social Development Project, which aimed to help students acquire knowledge and basic skills, such as work habits and values for a lifetime; encouraged motivation to contribute responsibly and ethically; developed a sense of self-worth; and engaged students in positive, safe, healthy behaviors.

The Committee for Children (2010), in their effort to foster social and emotional development, safety, and well-being of children, created several programs. These include: Steps to Respect, an anti-bullying program for elementary students; Second Step, designed for building preschoolers’ social and school readiness skills; and Talking about Touching, a personal safety curriculum for pre-K to grade three.

The Second Step program was designed for preschool classrooms. The Committee for Children (2010) states that the new Second Step early learning program is designed to promote readiness skills for school and life. While it is aimed at 4-year-old children, it is described as working well in other multi-age classrooms with 3-year-old children. Second Step focuses on empathy, emotion management, friendship skills, and problem-solving skills.

Anti-bullying. Due to the high incidence of reported bullying, the State Department of Education (2002) has taken a strong position on bullying behaviors in schools. The Department has mandated that public schools adopt harassment, intimidation, and bullying policies; program strategies; and the implementation of proactive responses to harassment, intimidation, and bullying; and effective reporting procedures.
According to Davis (2005), best practices for bullying prevention are respecting young people’s autonomy, maintaining a sense of belonging, teaching cause and effect thinking, and promoting conscience development. The use of a comprehensive approach that includes change within the individual and school are most successful (Frey & Dupper, 2005). Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) concur with Davis in their support of a comprehensive intervention approach. They highlighted several programs utilizing a multi-component approach which includes social skills training, conflict resolution, and parenting training. Social skills and conflict resolution are components included in the curriculum implemented in this study. Empathy training, diversity training, conflict resolution, and moral education, which are components of the curriculum, support social skills development. Parent training was embedded in the study as well.

**Positive behavior support.** Positive behavior support is a humanistic approach for understanding why children engage in disruptive behaviors and fosters the development of intervention strategies to decrease the occurrence of such behaviors (Fox & Duda, n.d.). It focuses on the influence of environmental issues on the children’s behaviors and utilizes behavior plans with several components (Sharma, Singh, & Geromette, 2008). The Teaching Pyramid (see Figure 1) consists of four levels: Nurturing positive relationships with children, families, and colleagues; classroom preventive practices; social and emotional teaching strategies; and intensive individual intervention that build on each other to promote social and emotional competence in children (Fox & Lentini, 2006; Hemmeter et al., 2006). These approaches lend themselves to the integration of the teaching of respect.
Effective social and emotional learning requires careful planning, identifying the needs of the setting, and providing diverse learning opportunities for children to observe and practice their emerging skills within the daily routine. Changing children’s social and emotional behavior requires more than skill lessons. The environment must nurture and promote these skills within its daily routine (Bonaiuto, Johnson, & Poliner, 2005; Fox et al., 2003). In addition, the environment should utilize three stages of learning: skill acquisition - when the new skill is introduced to the child; second stage fluency - when the child is able to use the new skill appropriately; and skill maintenance and generalization - when the child can use the new skill in varying situations (Fox & Lentini, 2006). Some children may require a more systematic approach. Keeping this in mind, this study’s activities considered children’s individual needs. Each component in the curriculum provided a variety of activities to engage children and teach new skills while supporting their individual needs.

**Stakeholders in Social Skills Development**

The purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that the development of a culture of respect in the preschool classroom provided a cultural norm, which enhanced the social skills development of preschoolers. The study built on students’ teachers’ and families’ concepts of respect in order to develop an indigenous culture of respect in the classroom. What follows is an examination of the literature on the particular role families and school personnel play in early childhood education and social emotional development.

**Family.** The family has an essential role in the process of educating children (Bagdi & Vacca, 2006; Bowman, 2006; Cho, Chen, & Shin, 2010; Elias, Tobias, &

Findings from the Early Head Start program provide strong evidence for the positive impact of high quality early childhood programs and family involvement. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2006), Early Head Start programs made a difference in multiple aspects of children’s social emotional development, and their parents showed increased positive parenting and decreased negative parenting.

Parents can play an important role in their children’s development by teaching them social skills (Christophersen & VanScoyoc, 2004; Elias et al., 1997). These skills can be taught through daily interactions such as sharing, taking turns, allowing others to talk without interrupting, and observing positive conflict resolution in their environment (Christophersen & VanScoyoc, 2004; Elias et al., 1997). Teachers need to understand that families are trying to balance parenting with other responsibilities and that most parents try to instill values such as respect and caring in their children (Meidl & Meidl, 2009). Sometimes the difference between teaching such values at home and in school lies merely in the strategies. However, by building partnerships with parents in teaching the concept of respect, children could gain deeper meaning within the home and community (Bowman, 2006).

According to Espinosa (2002), The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends the following elements of quality early childhood education components for families: their inclusion as strong partners in all aspects of
the educational programs, a welcome into the program and opportunities to observe and participate in the activities, opportunities to improve their educational and/or parenting skills, and respect for the home culture and its language by including them in all communications.

As part of this study, families were provided with information about the study and encouraged to participate in a family-child activity that supported home-school connection on this topic. There was a culturally diverse population in the district in which this study was conducted. Therefore, respect for the home language was crucial. The parent information letters that were sent home were translated into Spanish and on-site Arabic and Spanish translators were used to communicate with families. Since many of these families were not familiar with me, a face-to-face contact and availability to meet or speak with them were methods utilized in the study to encourage their participation.

**School personnel.** Some school personnel may feel frustrated and overwhelmed by the multi-layered environmental factors outside of the school’s control and might ignore the significance of social emotional development. However, educational leaders must take a leading advocacy role by realizing that many of the problems in the schools are the result of social and emotional debilitation that children have suffered (Elias et al., 2003). When school leaders take these steps, the tone is set for advocating for children and creating positive school climates that represent a “just community” and are more conducive to higher academic achievement (Clark, 2003; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001, p. 12).

Teachers and administrators must strive to understand contemporary families and develop authentic relationships with them in order to share information and meet the
needs of the children (Wright, Stegelin, & Hartle, 2007). If authentic relationships with parents are not established by teachers, parents will not willingly volunteer information. Teachers play a pivotal role in developing these parent relationships, but school leaders set the tone and shape the school’s culture (Deal & Peterson, 1998; Wilford, 2006). In this regard, leadership becomes significant in creating positive school climates.

As a part of creating schools that support academic achievement and high social emotional development, school leaders need to promote the integration of the emotional quotient with the intellectual quotient within their instructional practices (Elias et al., 2003). Educational leaders also need to promote schools that develop all aspects of children’s lives (Noddings, 2008).

In order to make changes that support the development of a respectful classroom environment and create a school climate that integrates emotional intelligence into the instructional practices and daily routines and activities of the school, the leader must lead by example. Making changes within the educational setting includes making changes in practice, conception, and behavior (Fullan, 2007). When leaders become involved and take accountability for initiatives, such as integrating social emotional learning, they communicate the message to the staff that they are invested in innovation, and success is more likely (Kotter, 1996; Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009; Steeves & Frein, 2010). According to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, effective school leaders are “moral agents and social advocates for the children and communities they serve” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, p. 5). As emotionally intelligent school leaders assess the factors impacting education and advocate for children, they will need to have what Fullan (2007) describes as ŕshared
vision (p. 41) and be beacons of hope, faith, and moral and ethical leadership in their daily practice.

For school personnel, it is important to note that a caring environment is significant for children who are from poor families. The nurturing environment helps the development of a positive teacher-student relationship, which is supported in the literature as important within the classroom (Chung, Marvin, & Churchill, 2005; Gallagher & Mayer, 2006; Thijs, Koomen, & van der Leij, 2008). When this type of positive relationship is formed with children, especially those from families and communities that do not provide a strong sense of self-respect or worthiness, educators support the development of a new self-image/concept in children (Clark, 2003; Rock, 2004).

Gallagher and Mayer (2006) identified respect as one of four elements critical to developing positive teacher-child relations. Therefore, a culture of respect built by school personnel and nurtured in the classroom lends itself to fostering positive teacher-child interactions and relationships. The teacher-child relationship, which is a component of the study district’s High/Scope curriculum and the Teaching Pyramid (see figure 1), has an important influence on the climate of school (Ray et al., 2006). The state Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards promote the belief that the teacher-child relationship has a positive influence on children’s development, and it recommends that children’s feelings and cultures be respected by the teachers. The standards promote teachers coaching and guiding children as they interact with each other and support the children’s social skills and problem-solving abilities throughout the day (State Department of Education, 2009a).
In a study examining teachers’ psychological experiences of burnout and efficacy and their perceptions of curriculum support associated with the implementation of a social-emotional curriculum, the findings suggest that teachers who perceived their administrators to be more supportive reported a higher implementation quality. Their positive perceptions of the training and coaching were also associated with higher levels of implementation fidelity and quality (Ransford et al., 2009).

The significance of administrators’ support was encouraged throughout the process of this study. Therefore, in addition to securing administrators’ approval to conduct the study in their buildings, they were informed about the progress of the activities being implemented. School administrators’ interest in the implementation of the Respect curriculum can be demonstrated by their visits to the classrooms. This type of interest could enhance the implementation fidelity and sustain the concept of respect in the classroom beyond this study.

According to Goleman (2006), recent findings about neural mechanisms have shown that the interactions between two people can have a positive or negative influence on each other. He argues that this finding has direct implications for the learning environment. Educators should be very mindful of such findings because positive teacher interactions with children influence their ability to develop nurturing relationships with them. As indicated in the teaching pyramid model, positive relationships with children, families, and colleagues set the foundation for supporting social competence. The Respect curriculum provided a variety of activities to encourage positive interactions between teachers and children, and teachers and families.
Elements of Positive School Environment

Research indicates that there are several elements that support the development of positive school environments (Bagdi & Vacca, 2006; Bowman, 2006; Cohen, 2006; Noddings, 1995). In this section of the chapter, for the purposes of this study, an overview of the elements of care, diversity awareness, and conflict resolution are discussed.

**Care.** Care as an essential element in creating a supportive environment, and instructional efficacy is documented in the literature (Noddings, 1995). Nias identified the following six aspects of a culture of care among primary teachers: care as affectivity, care as responsibility for learners, care as responsibility for the relationships in the school, care as self-sacrifice, care as over-conscientiousness, and the role of identity (as cited in Vogt, 2002). McBee (2007) surveyed 144 elementary teacher candidates, classroom teachers, and college faculty on how educators conceptualize and actualize caring. The findings suggest that educators identified educational care as help they offer to students, showing interest in their students, listening to them, showing compassion, caring about others, and giving them time. When teachers exhibit these behaviors in the early childhood classrooms, it helps to promote cultures that are caring and respectful, and build on children’s social emotional competence and resilience (Bowman, 2006; Cohen, 2006).

Noddings (1995) asserts that caring implies a continuous search for competence. She argues that the production of caring, competent, and loving people as an educational goal is not anti-intellectual; instead, it shows respect for the varying scope of human talents. Turner (2000) postulates that teaching and caregiving is a sacred
honor (p. 33), and we defile this honor when it is trivialized. Dalton and Watson’s research indicates that when children perceive a strong sense of community and that classrooms, schools, and teachers care about them and value their ideas, they tend to like school and trust and respect their teachers (as cited in Bagdi & Vacca, 2006). Clark (2003) concurs with this finding and states that children in these caring environments feel respected and learn how to reciprocate this behavior. When building relationships with children whose behaviors are challenging, it is important that educators care about these children and communicate that caring to them as these relationships are built (Watson, 2003). Parents and teachers can show caring by participating in children’s activities, sharing their own dreams and doubts, and providing children with attention and support. Thus the importance of care as a teacher’s attribute for creating a culture of respect and supporting children’s social competence is worthy of being emphasized in the learning environment (Noddings, 1995).

In the implementation of the Respect curriculum, as teachers interact with children in conversations, through pretend play, and by listening to and encouraging them to express their opinions and feelings, and as they guide children to be critical thinkers and problem-solvers, teachers demonstrate that they respect and care for the children. This in turn, creates trust and enhances positive adult-child relationship by children respecting the teachers. This can positively influence children’s interactions with other children. Therefore, a culture of respect can nurture the development of care within the learning environment.

**Diversity awareness.** The district in which this study was conducted is very diverse. Research supports the importance of addressing cultural responsiveness or
appreciation for diversity in schools. (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; Gonzalez-Mena, 2001). The preschool is sometimes the first place where children recognize diversity.

This study was designed to increase self-awareness of social emotional intelligence and increase diversity awareness. An overview of the issue of diversity in public schools, its impact on the preschool classroom, how it can be addressed in the classrooms, and finally how the issue of diversity relates to the study are explored below.

As diversity within public schools increases (Clark, 2003; Pope & Wilder, 2005) and teacher preparation programs continue to enroll people from Caucasian, middle class, or “monocultural backgrounds” (Pope & Wilder, 2005), the need for preparing novices to teach students of varying racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds is essential to the new teachers’ survival in their vocation and for the children’s future (Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003). These teachers arrive in urban districts often with the intention to make a difference through their chosen vocation. However, they are unprepared to meet the challenges of urban diversity. Their lack of understanding of urban diversity may “disempower” their students (Futrell et al., 2003). Practicing teachers and preservice teachers need to understand and care enough to utilize strategies that are inclusive of all students. Inclusive educators respect and honor children’s diversity (Landorf, Rocco, & Nevin, 2007).

As young children are taught to socialize in a diverse world where they will compete in a global market, it is imperative that educators also address the diverse needs (languages, cultures, learning styles, intelligence) of students and provide them the skills to navigate their immediate world and that of the future (Futrell et al., 2003; Wan, 2006). Early childhood educators will shoulder the responsibility of teaching children to respect
and appreciate diversity. To do so, educators will need to assess their own attitudes, beliefs, teaching pedagogies, curricula, and the types of resources provided to expand children’s knowledge base (Boutte, 2008; Pope & Wilder, 2005).

To create classrooms that appreciate diversity, educators need to understand children and their families’ cultures. The preschool classroom can provide many opportunities for laying the groundwork and teaching children about differences. Having diverse materials in the classroom is important to teaching respect for diversity; however, Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010) caution that this must be combined with a caring and thoughtful relationship.

Understanding and respecting diversity helps to strengthen the adult-child relationship as well as the parent-teacher relationship (Adams & Baronberg, 2005; Cho et al., 2010; Wherry, 2008). Today’s diverse classroom is an oasis of opportunities to learn about respect and empathy, resolve conflicts, and enhance moral development. According to Lee, Ramsey, and Sweeney (2008), conversations in the preschool classrooms are one important approach in anti-bias or multicultural education. Through conversations in the diverse classroom, young children are exposed to others of different cultures and begin to explore some of their assumptions about diversity. A caring teacher, who understands, values, and believes in his or her students’ ability to excel, will communicate that through such conversations and thus provide a supportive and nurturing environment conducive to children’s learning (Hyland, 2009). In the Respect curriculum, the issue of diversity is addressed within the component described as diversity training. This component includes classroom activities that provide teachers with a variety of ways to support young children’s appreciation of their own and others’
uniqueness. These activities include describing their individual physical attributes, developing a graph of their similarities and differences, developing a self doll, and the use of books which are part of the diversity training component of the curriculum. Each component of the curriculum also supports the development of respect by offering many opportunities for teachers and children to have conversations, thus increasing awareness of diversity as an asset and appreciation of each other's cultures.

**Conflict resolution.** The early childhood setting is usually one of the first places outside the home in which the children encounter conflict. When young children arrive at school, how they resolve conflicts is influenced by their prior social and emotional experiences (Bell & Quinn, 2004; Epstein, 2009). Children's ability to identify and express their emotions, show empathy, engage in cooperative play, and value diversity are essential to resolving conflicts (Epstein, 2009). Epstein argues that as children confront conflicts, they also depend on their "knowledge of moral principle and socially accepted ways of achieving them" (p. 113).

According to Lamm et al., when children master the steps to conflict resolution there is a 40 percent decrease in challenging behaviors, including, crying, tattling, and physical aggression (as cited in Epstein, 2009, p. 114). To help children develop healthy problem-solving skills and conflict resolution, Evans (2002, p. 309) suggests the use of the following conflict resolution approach:

- Approach the children calmly
- Acknowledge the children's feelings
- Gather information
- Restate the problem
• Ask for children’s ideas for solving the conflicts

This multi-step conflict resolution approach was included in the Respect curriculum for this study because it supports children’s social and emotional development and encourages respect of children’s feelings, while empowering them with new problem-solving skills. The High/Scope curriculum’s conflict resolution also follows this model. The purpose of this approach is to enable teachers to help support children’s problem-solving skills and provide opportunities for conversation so that children may learn how to resolve conflicts respectfully.

**Respect and Culture of Respect as a part of Social Skills Development**

Respect can be defined in several different ways. It can be understood as treating others the way we would like to be treated (Emerick, 2010). Respect can be described as something that is reciprocated between the giver and receiver (Elias et al., 1999).

According to Miller and Pedro (2006), “Respect is a fundamental human value that forms the basis of character and personality” (p. 293). Respect can be demonstrating tolerance of differences and consideration of others’ feelings (Clark, 2003; McCoy, 2005), sharing stories, and modeling values that can build respect by developing inner discipline (Brokenleg, 2005). The curriculum supports and encourages teachers to be role models for children. Each component of the curriculum provides several activities that support the development of respectful behaviors. As children become more fluent in being respectful in the classroom and they experience the sense of being respected by their peers and teachers, the feelings of being valued can positively shape character and personality.
The National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Ethnic Studies Curriculum Guidelines (1991) postulates that, “Bringing respect and knowledge for others’ diversity lends itself to a democratic (i.e. enhancing good citizenship) education” (as cited in Pass, 2009, p. 212). Teachers can do so by modeling social respect and encouraging children to see the perspectives of others (Gallagher & Mayer, 2006). In this study a component of the curriculum focused on building empathy skills by utilizing books, puppets, pictures, multicultural classroom materials, and other activities to enhance children’s emotional vocabulary and become more aware of doing good deeds for others. As children become more aware of their own feelings and the feelings of others, it sets the stage for building empathy skills. In addition in this study, as teachers observed children exhibit behaviors of empathy and of positive conflict resolution, they were encouraged by the primary researcher to acknowledge these emerging skills. The acknowledgement of children exhibiting new skills is supported by the Fox and Letini (2006) description of skill fluency.

Respectful classrooms are defined by Wessler as a place where all students feel physically and emotionally safe and valued for whom [sic] they are (as cited in Miller & Pedro, 2006, p. 294). When a culture of respect is created in the classroom, it provides a climate that is conducive to empathy (Clark, 2003) and positively impacts a child’s self-identity (Hoover, 2006). Additional benefits of a culture of respect in a classroom are appreciation for diversity, decreased fear of the unknown, children learning about each other, increased willingness to share, greater acceptance of each other’s ideas and values even when not shared, and a sense of community (Miller & Pedro, 2006).
A first grade teacher, in creating a culture of peace in her classroom, included an academic and a holistic approach. To do so, she included the following elements: classroom design, empathy training, diversity training, community awareness, and conflict resolution. After integrating these elements in the classroom, she observed that the overall academic achievements of the students improved (Hunter, 2008). The new culture created in the classroom developed students’ skills to live and work cohesively with others, and the students became empowered through the feelings of being valued (Hunter, 2008).

The feeling of being valued is important for young children. Erik Erikson stated, "When children’s experiences with adults lead to the development of trust, autonomy, and initiative rather than mistrust, shame, doubt, and guilt, children develop lasting feelings of hope, acceptance, willpower, and purpose" (as cited in Hohmann & Weikart, 2002, p. 43). When children’s ideas and efforts are valued by adults, they see themselves as competent (Epstein, 2009). As children experience the feelings of care, being valued, and respected through the implementation of the Respect curriculum, they are more likely to reciprocate the behaviors that produced those feelings.

Conclusion

The literature review provides evidence for and support of my investigation of the influence of a culture of respect on social skills development with preschoolers in urban settings. The importance of children becoming socially competent is evident in the literature as a necessary life skill. Cohen (2006) argues that in addition to academic learning, social, emotional, and ethical competencies should become a priority of education. Miller and Pedro (2006) concur with Cohen and state that respect should be
emphasized in all learning environments. Educators must see the value in teaching young children the skills needed to thrive in a democratic society and provide them with many opportunities to experience it within the early childhood classroom (Letts, 1994).

In conclusion, the literature review indicates that the teaching of respect is an appropriate topic to address in preschool classrooms. In the preschool years, development of social skills is emerging; however, these skills must be nurtured. When social skills are developed in the early years, research indicates that they help to set the foundation for positive relationship building, increase the potential for academic success, and possibly decrease disruptive behaviors (Clark, 2003; Cohen; 2006, Elias et al., 2003; Epstein, 2009; Letts, 1994).

As many factors influence the teaching of respect, a focus on empathy skills, cultural responsiveness, problem solving and conflict resolution, moral development, and family involvement are noted in the literature as important to the teaching of respect. Therefore, these elements were incorporated into the Respect curriculum.
Chapter III

Methodological Approach

Young children’s disruptive behaviors have become a major challenge to teachers and administrators. During my 15 years in early childhood education, I have seen various levels of disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Many teachers of young children and their administrators have reported frustration about their failed attempts to address these behaviors in urban preschool settings (Fox et al., 2003). The intent of this study was to investigate whether creating a culture of respect can reduce disruptive behaviors by influencing the social skills development of 4-year-old children in an urban setting. This setting has many of the environmental elements that put children at risk for social and emotional deficits, such as poverty, homelessness, single parenthood, divorce, parental substance abuse, exposure to violence, and high levels of familial stress (Ray et al., 2006). The goals of this study were to:

- examine how the teaching of respect in the preschool classroom enhances social skills/social competence, and
- gather evidence that the teaching of respect may promote greater appreciation of the significance of social emotional learning in preschool among teachers.

A mixed method approach was utilized to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current knowledge base of teachers about teaching social skills and respect?

2. Does the teaching of respect influence social skills/social competence in an urban preschool environment?
3. What are effective strategies for teaching respect?

The literature review showed that there have been no empirical studies of the use of the concept of respect or the culture of respect as a way to reduce disruptive behaviors in the preschool classroom. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a pilot study to determine the feasibility of an investigation on the influence of a culture of respect on social skills learning in the preschool classroom. The pilot study was conducted during spring 2010. It was then followed by a principal study, which was conducted during fall 2010. This chapter will provide a description of the research design, data collection, and data analysis for each of the two studies. The research design for each study includes the participants, setting, and data collection, which addresses the approaches and instruments used in the study. The data analysis for each study describes how the data collected were analyzed.

Both parts of this study included the mixed research method (qualitative and quantitative). The mixed method provides the advantage of collecting different types of data during the study (Hinchey, 2008). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), qualitative research is an approach to social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings, uses inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding the subject's points of view (p. 274). The qualitative component of both parts of this study included the use of interviews, observations, and review of documents and artifacts. Quantitative research methods are valued because of their emphasis on the production of precise, measurable, and generalizable statistical findings (Rubin & Babbie, 1993, p. 30). The small number of participants used in the pilot study and principal study has implications for the findings' generalizability. However, it was
important to gather and include these data, which were not taken from large samples, but added a degree of quantitative depth to the other qualitative data collected. The quantitative data in both parts of this study included descriptive statistics with the findings from the surveys and checklists (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

**Spring 2010 pilot study.** This study was conducted in March 2010 and ended in June 2010, and it was designed to determine the feasibility of this investigation. This section will describe the setting, participants, data collection approaches and instruments, and data analysis for the pilot study.

**Setting.** According to the American Community Survey: U.S. Census Bureau, in 2003, the city in which the district is located had 598,000 households. For those reporting on race 48% were white; 13% were African American; less than 0.5% were American Indian and Alaska Native; 10% were Asian; 0.5% were Pacific Islander, and 41% were Hispanic or Latino. The Census reported that of all the households in the city, 23% had children under the age of 18. The average household size was 2.66 people. Forty percent of the city’s population was foreign born; 57% spoke a language other than English at home; 67% spoke Spanish at home, and 57% were not fluent in English.

The city is composed of 10 districts, each with its distinct characteristics due to socioeconomic influences. Overall, the renaissance the city has experienced is due to the redevelopment of the waterfront area and downtown section of the city, leaving other areas underdeveloped and riddled with high crime, unemployment, and abandoned houses. Public transportation is available throughout the city with easy access to a major metropolitan center and to other surrounding smaller cities. Although this is an urban
community, it boasts several natural open spaces. The city is home to two colleges, a university, and several museums.

The district is considered a large urban district with approximately 30,000 students from preschool through grade 12 and is comprised of 26 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, 6 high schools, and 2 adult education centers. The district reported the student population and ethnicity as: 10,815 Latino-American, 9,973 African-American, 3,932 Asian-American, 2,987 Caucasian, 298 Native American, and 214 Pacific Islander.

The district’s preschool population was approximately 4,000 three and four-year-old students at the time this study was conducted. There were approximately 293 classrooms of 3 and 4-year-old students within the district. The classrooms for 4-year-old students were housed in public schools across the district. With the exception of three public school buildings, the 3-year-old students were served in 38 community child care centers with which the district sub-contracted.

At each participating site supervised childcare was provided in a before-care program between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. and in an after-care program between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. The daily routine for the district’s early childhood classrooms began at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 2:45 p.m.

The early childhood department is structured with an associate superintendent, director, three supervisors, and professional support and clerical staff. The 70 professional support staff members are divided into three cohorts. Each cohort is responsible for providing support to a designated cluster of public schools and contracted childcare centers. The professional support staff members include lead teachers, nurses,
program school social workers, preschool intervention specialists, and a community and parent involvement specialist (CPIS).

The lead teachers are certified teachers who provide support for implementing the curriculum in early childhood classrooms, conduct classroom observations, and coach teachers. The school nurses assist students, families, and staff in attaining and maintaining optimal health and healthy attitudes. Program social workers collaborate with the classroom teachers, lead teachers, the community and parent involvement specialist, and other district professionals to support the family services program. They reach out to families, determine individual needs, provide advocacy services, and help obtain available community services. The preschool intervention specialists consist of psychologists, social workers, speech pathologists, and learning disability teacher consultants (LDTC) who provide support to parents, school administrators, and school staff to increase inclusion of children in regular preschool classrooms. Their primary role is to provide support and suggest interventions to teachers so that all children can succeed within the general education class. The CPIS coordinates activities to promote parent and community involvement with the district’s early childhood program. The CPIS helps to develop partnerships with the community, assists with needs assessments, and staffs the Early Childhood Advisory Council.

Throughout the district, early childhood teachers are required to follow the High/Scope curriculum, utilize the Child Observation Record, and keep anecdotal records of children. The High/Scope curriculum is implemented district-wide in the preschool classrooms. During the last two years, the district’s early childhood administrators have invested in staff training to support the full implementation of this curriculum. Active
learning, positive adult-child interactions, a child-friendly learning environment, a consistent daily routine, and team-based daily child assessments are the five principles that form the framework of the High/Scope approach (Hohmann & Weikart, 2002). The curriculum implemented in this study, as mentioned earlier, aligned with the High/Scope key developmental indicators.

Anecdotal records are required to be maintained by the classroom staff. Throughout the day, children are observed as they interact with the adults and their peers. Narrative samples of these interactions are recorded and included in the Child Observation Record (COR) as part of the on-going assessment of children’s development, which is the assessment tool for the High/Scope curriculum. Teachers were trained in the use of this tool during the 2009-2010 school year, and full implementation became effective during the 2010-2011 school year. Results of the COR become part of the Family Report which is shared with parents during the district’s scheduled report card meetings.

Each of the participating early childhood classroom environments implemented the High/Scope curriculum and included several work centers, such as library, family center, block area, art area, sand area, and water area. The centers were part of the worktime schedule. According to Hohmann and Weikart (2002), “Worktime is the time of day during which children carry out their intentions, play, and solve problems” (p. 196).

**Participants.** The participants for this study included four certified teachers, three paraprofessionals, and 40 students from three general education preschool classes of
4-year-old students. These participants were located in three classrooms in two different public school buildings within an urban district.

Each of the classrooms had a maximum capacity of 15 students, a certified teacher, and a paraprofessional. At Site A, each class consisted of a certified teacher and a paraprofessional. A certified teacher was not on staff to cover teachers’ 45-minute preparation times (referred to in the district as prep time). This time was covered by the paraprofessionals in the classrooms. At Site B, each classroom consisted of a certified teacher and a paraprofessional. A second certified teacher was on staff to provide the classrooms with coverage during teachers’ daily 45-minute preparation times.

The sample used in the pilot study was taken from a large urban district. Two classrooms were located in Site A and one was located in Site B. In selecting the classrooms to conduct this investigation, careful consideration was given to the significant role of teacher attitudes and behaviors and a positive learning environment (Curtis, 2003; Goleman, 2006; Osher & Fleischman, 2005; Ray et al., 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2008). Teachers were also selected for their positive attitudes about teaching children the concept of respect and their classroom’s reflection of elements of a positive learning environment. These elements were evident in the relationships between the adults and in the adult-to-student interactions. The three classrooms represented a non-random sample of convenience due to their easy accessibility and positive attitudes.

Site A is one of the 26 elementary public schools in the district and is located in a developing area of the city. According to the State Department of Education (2009b), in 2008-2009, the school served 556 students in preschool to fifth grade. The school did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This
means that the school did not achieve the minimum levels of improvement determined by the state in terms of student performance and other established accountability measures.

The school’s student ethnicity for 2008 was: Black, 50%; Hispanic, 45%; White, 3%; Asian/Pacific Islander, 2%, and American Indian/Alaska Native <1% (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2011a). During that same year, 84% of the students participated in free or reduced price lunch programs. The school is surrounded by residential homes and a park, and a housing project is close to the school. Many of the surrounding residential brownstone houses are being renovated into luxury condominiums.

The preschool population in Site A consisted of approximately 130 preschool students and 20 teachers and paraprofessionals. An inclusion class and a special education class were included in this building’s preschool population. All the preschool classrooms were located on the first floor of this three-story building. Class #1 and Class #2 were two of the nine preschool classrooms located in Site A. Both of these classrooms were part of the general education population.

The teacher in Class #1 was Caucasian, and the paraprofessional was Asian-American. The student body consisted of 15 children whose demographic identities included African descent, Hispanic, and Caucasian. Of the 15 children, 14 parents consented to having their children participate in the study. The one parent who denied consent was not available for follow up. Six students in this class attended the before-care program and five attended the after-care program.

The teacher in Class #2 was Caucasian, and the paraprofessional was Hispanic. The student body consisted of 15 children whose racial backgrounds included African
descent, Hispanic, and Caucasian children. There were 15 students enrolled in the class, and all parents provided consent for their children to participate in the study. In Class #2, five students attended the before-care program and seven attended the after-care program.

Site B is also one of the 26 elementary schools in the district. The school serves approximately 392 students in grades preschool to grade five. The State Department of Education reported that in 2008, the student body was comprised of 82% Black; 16% Hispanic; 1% White; and <1% Asian/Pacific Islander. In 2009, the school did not make the Adequate Yearly Progress.

This site is located in one of the most economically depressed sections of the city. In recent years, the area has seen limited revitalization. This section of the city is known for high levels of drug trafficking, crime, unemployment, and abandoned homes and storefronts. The school building houses six preschool classrooms, one of which is a special class for children eligible for special education and related services, having met the criteria of Preschool Disabled, with a diagnosis of autism.

The student body in Class #3 consisted of 12 students, 100% of whom are of African descent. The teacher and paraprofessional were of African descent. A certified teacher who provided coverage for the teacher’s preparatory time was also of African descent. Of the 12 students in this class, 11 parents gave their consent. Two students in this class attended the before-care program and four attended the after-care program.

**Data collection.** This section will provide a description of how the data were gathered in the pilot study, which was conducted from March of 2010 to June of 2010. Before even beginning data collection, I obtained the approval from the school district,
Rowan’s Institutional Review Board, and the school principals, and I proceeded to secure informed consent from all the participants.

First, the teachers were given an orientation about the study and provided with an information packet with the consent form, checklist, surveys, and the classroom activities. Teachers’ consent (see Appendix A) was secured during this meeting. Due to the structure of the daily schedule, the paraprofessionals were not part of the orientation. However, I contacted the paraprofessionals during their break and provided them with information about the study and a folder. In order to obtain parental consent, I worked collaboratively with the teachers to contact each parent. They provided me with a class list which included each child’s name, their participation in the before or after school programs, and the parents’ dominant language.

Site A administrator’s approval was received first, and contact with those parents was initiated using the list provided to me by the teachers. I believed that it was important that the first contact with the parents about the study should be face-to-face with me. Initial contact with parents occurred at the before-care program, dismissal time in the classroom, and at the after-care program. During this contact with parents, I briefly explained the study, answered their questions, and provided them with a parent consent letter to complete. The translated parent consent letter (see Appendix B) was provided to parents identified by the teachers as Spanish speakers. During my initial contact with the Spanish speaking parents, one of the professional support staff assisted me with translation.

After completing all contacts at Site A, I secured the permission of the administrator in Site B before I provided an orientation with the teacher and
paraprofessional in the site. They were provided with the same packets as the classroom staff in Site A. Then, I initiated contact with the parents at Site B. Making contact with the parents required several strategies and collaboration with the classroom staff. Several visits to the classroom in the morning, at the end of the school day, through the after-care program, and a telephone contact facilitated by the teacher to one parent, resulted in parent consent for 11 of the 12 students in Class #3. Children whose parents did not provide consent were not included in the study.

Once consents were secured, the data were collected utilizing pre implementation and post implementation interviews with the teachers and children, pre implementation and post implementation surveys completed by the teachers and paraprofessionals, and pre implementation and post implementation checklists that were completed by the teachers. During the implementation, observations, taking photographs, and videotaping were utilized.

The qualitative method for the pilot was used to establish an initial assessment of teachers’ current opinions of social emotional learning and the importance of its integration into the preschool classroom and to gather information about their understanding of the concept of respect.

The data collection instruments were utilized in three phases of the pilot study, pre implementation, during implementation, and post implementation of the curriculum. During the pre curriculum implementation, the teachers and paraprofessionals completed the survey (see Appendix C). The survey consisted of 18 Likert-type questions that included exploring their definitions for social skills and respect, their beliefs about the significance of respect in the preschool classroom, their current frequency for teaching
social skills and respect, their perception of children’s level of understanding the concept of respect, and the use of the word respect in the classroom. The teachers completed an indicator checklist of students’ current level of social skills (see Appendix D). An interview was conducted with the classroom teachers. The use of open-ended questions helped to determine their perspectives on social emotional learning and, specifically, the teaching of respect in the preschool classroom, challenges they foresaw for this study, and their projection of the study’s benefit to them and the children (see Appendix E). These interviews with the teachers were recorded on audiotape. As a group, the children were interviewed during the pre implementation and post implementation of the curriculum to ascertain their understanding of the concept of respect (see Appendix F).

The interview with the children included the following open-ended questions without any prompting or suggesting of response: “What does it mean when someone says, you dis me?” “What does respect mean?” “How do you show respect?” and “Who do you show respect?” The children’s spontaneous responses were videotaped.

As part of the teachers’ orientation folder, a packet was provided with the classroom activities for the curriculum. The activities are based on the literature reviewed and my experiences in early childhood as a teacher and social worker. The activities in the curriculum focused on five components: empathy (Adams & Baronberg, 2005), diversity training (Pass, 2009; Rock, 2004), conflict resolution (Epstein, 2009), moral development (Koc & Buzzelli, 2004), and family involvement (Ankeney, 1997; Christophersen & VanScyoc, 2002; Elias et al., 1997; Epstein, 2009). To implement these activities, I worked with the teachers and many times took on the role of participant observer.
Classroom observations were conducted in each class at least once per week for approximately 45 minutes. These observations focused on the use of respect in the classroom, the implementation of the activities, and the behaviors and vocabulary in the classroom. During these visits, I interacted with the children and conferred with the staff. The influence of the activities was observed in how conflicts and issues related to sharing and turn-taking were resolved and in children’s interactions with peers and adults. These observations were recorded handwritten in a spiral-bound notebook immediately after each observation.

Throughout the implementation of the curriculum, I collected data by videotaping children in action and their conversations with the adults and each other, as well as photographing some of their work. Videotaping occurred approximately once or twice per month, and photographs were taken bi-weekly or during a specific planned activity. For example, in Class #1, a planned group activity was videotaped of the students decorating their respect mural. The teachers collected photographs for the children’s records and shared them with me as data for this study.

The components (empathy, diversity training, conflict resolution, moral education, and family involvement) and their activities in the curriculum built on each other. As each component was introduced, it was linked to the vocabulary and skills presented in the previous lessons or new skills. To teach the concept of respect, the varying activities for each component offered teachers different ways to teach new skills or emotional vocabulary. The teachers provided the children with opportunities to practice these throughout the day and acknowledged them as they occurred (Bonaiuto et al., 2005; Fox & Lentini, 2006).
Empathy is the ability to understand how another feels (Evans, 2002; Galinsky, 2010). As children learn about their own emotions and build emotional vocabulary to describe their feelings, they can begin to develop empathy for the emotions of others (Hunter, 2008). Children’s ability to show empathy supports their understanding of how to treat others the way they would like to be treated. The development of empathy skills underlies children’s ability to acknowledge and appreciate diversity. As children understand and respect diversity, it helps to strengthen the adult-child relationship as well as the parent-teacher relationship (Adams & Baronberg, 2005; Cho et al., 2010). The ability to express their emotions, show empathy for other’s emotions, and respect diversity helps children to better manage and resolve conflicts. Children’s emotional and social abilities play a pivotal role in how they resolve conflicts (Epstein, 2009). The new skills children acquired during their exposure to empathy, diversity awareness, and conflict resolution were reinforced within the component of moral development. Within this component, the classroom staff members encouraged children’s developing understanding of right and wrong. As children’s moral development was supported, they were encouraged to think critically about how their actions affected others and showed caring and respect (Koc & Buzzelli, 2004).

Research provides strong evidence in support of family involvement as an essential element in supporting children’s continued understanding of their emotions (Epstein, 2009). As a culminating activity, families were asked to develop a poster with their children about respect. Parents may have their own understanding of respect (Elias et al., 1999), but home and school can support children in their learning the concept.
Through this activity, I gained an understanding of parents’ perspectives on respect and encouraged parents to engage their young children in discussing the concept of respect.

A letter regarding the poster was translated in English and Spanish and given to the parents who gave consent (see Appendix G) along with a poster board. The letter asked for the poster to be returned by a specific date. When the posters were returned to the teachers, a classroom show and tell activity was conducted and videotaped. During this activity, each child’s poster was displayed to the class while he or she described it. Documents reviewed included anecdotal records collected by teachers for COR and children’s work. According to Hohmann and Weikart (2002), “Each day the teaching team members gather accurate information about children by observing and interacting with children and taking daily anecdotal notes based on what they see and hear” (p. 7).

The post implementation data collection included an interview with the children, which I videotaped (see Appendix H). This interview with the children was expected to provide data on any changes in their understanding of the concept of respect. The pre implementation interview question regarding their familiarity with the term “dis me” yielded no data. Therefore, the post implementation interview questions consisted of the other three questions which were: What does respect mean? How do you show respect? and Who do you show respect? The indicator checklist completed in the pre implementation (see Appendix D) was completed again by the teachers as part of the post implementation data collection to measure changes in the level of social skills in the classroom. Both the teachers and paraprofessionals completed the survey (see Appendix C). This survey was utilized as a pre implementation instrument. As a post data collection instrument, this helped to measure changes in the responses. A post implementation
interview was conducted with the teachers (see Appendix I). Two of these interviews were tape recorded, and one was videotaped. This interview explored their experiences with implementing the curriculum, how the study benefited them and the children, and their recommendations for improving the study.

**Data analysis approach.** This section discusses the ethics, confidentiality, biases, the use of triangulation and member checking for the pilot study. A description of the analysis of the data collected in this study is also included in this section.

Throughout the study, ethics and confidentiality were upheld. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), “Encouraging confidentiality should improve your chances for informants to speak freely” (p. 111). The letter of consent, provided to each participant, discussed the ethics and confidentiality of the study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The research methods were presented to the school district as well as Rowan University for ethics approval. All participants were notified about the ethics approval process. As the classroom staff members who participated in this study were my colleagues, it was important for me to be aware of any possible ethical and political dilemmas this could present (Glesne, 2006).

Since I am an employee in the district in which this study was conducted, my passion for this topic and the criteria used for choosing the participating classroom teachers had the potential to be possible biases. Keeping my objectivity throughout the study was essential to my gathering of trustworthy data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As I sought information on the research topic, I was vigilant about finding negative case analysis (Glesne, 2006, p. 37) that disputed my hypothesis that the development of a
culture of respect in preschool classroom provided a cultural norm, which enhanced the social skills development of preschoolers. I remained objective throughout the study by keeping a reflective journal. Being passionate about this topic, it was very important for me to remain cognizant and vigilant in maintaining my objectivity. My reflective journal and discussions with my Rowan University cohort colleagues, advisors, and friends were instrumental in helping to maintain my objectivity. Reflecting on an observation or a conversation helped me to become more aware of my feelings during the study. Recognizing and understanding my own feelings about the research topic were important to my leadership development and objectivity. When I noted strong feelings such as anxiety, feedback from my cohort colleagues and friends was helpful. Many times their reflective questions helped me to process my feelings, confront my opinions and possible prejudices, and gain deeper insights into myself.

My relationships with my colleagues participating in the pilot study may have influenced their behaviors during my observations. To avoid this potential bias in this study, I interacted with the participants in a natural, unobtrusive, and nonthreatening manner. The teachers and classrooms that participated in this study were selected based on their convenience to me, such as being one of the schools within my cohort, and based on the teachers' interest and willingness to participate. While this could have been a potential bias, the teachers selected provided a wide variation and representation of the district's early childhood teachers in terms of years of experience and cultural backgrounds.

The use of triangulation (interviews, observations, document review, and multiple sites) for the data collection should increase the validity and reliability of this study.
Observations at multiple sites in the pilot study (3 classrooms in two schools) increased the trustworthiness of its common themes and its validity. The data were collected in several methodical ways to increase the likelihood that the findings were not idiosyncratic or unreliable (Hinchey, 2008).

The data analysis of the pilot study began with me transcribing the recorded interviews. The transcribed interviews were coded and categorized into themes that emerged. The children’s interviews were analyzed to identify any changes and patterns in how the children understood and used the concept of respect at pre implementation and post implementation. Cross-references from each data collection source were made and analyzed.

The data collected in the survey were compiled and analyzed to ascertain changes in teachers and paraprofessionals’ pre implementation and post implementation understanding of respect, frequency of discussing the concept of respect, the use of the word respect, teachers’ impressions of children’s level of understanding the concept of respect, and strategies identified as effective. Analysis of teachers’ pre implementation and post implementation interviews helped to identify any shift in their attitudes regarding the teaching of respect, what they gained from the study, and the study’s influence on social skills development. As themes emerged from the analyzed data, they were coded and recorded. The pre implementation and post implementation checklists were analyzed to identify any improvement in the children’s social skills. Classroom observations, review of documents, and collection of artifacts were utilized to further substantiate and triangulate findings.
As an on-going awareness to ensure the internal validity of this study, a strong focus was placed on the integrity and accuracy. As data were analyzed and findings identified, I attempted to critique them to help identify questions the readers might have (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The parent-child activity was originally not included in the data collection of this study. However, after a very strong return rate from the families generated unexpected added data for consideration, the posters were included in the data analysis. The words recorded from the parent-child activity poster were coded and analyzed for themes.

**Fall 2010 principal study.** The findings from the pilot study were used to determine the feasibility and possible benefits of the use of the term respect and the development of a culture of respect in the urban preschool classroom that can reduce disruptive behaviors and enhance children's social skills development in their classrooms.

The Respect curriculum implemented in the principal study was developed based on the findings of the pilot study. The teachers in the pilot study gave recommendations for the Respect curriculum (see Appendix J which includes the teachers' suggestions that are marked with an asterisk). These included activities such as making a classroom book on respect and good deeds and additions to my recommended book list.

**Setting.** The revised Respect curriculum was implemented in six classrooms during fall 2010. The principal study was designed to test the efficacy of the curriculum in reducing disruptive behaviors and strengthening social skills competence. This part of the study was conducted within the same district as the pilot study and with a new group
of participants. The description of the settings described in the pilot study also applies to the principal study. The research questions and the use of a mixed research method for data collection were the same for both parts of the study. The district-wide early childhood curriculum High/Scope and the daily schedule which began at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 2:45 p.m. were followed by the six classrooms participating in this study. They also provided the before-care and after-care programs for preschoolers between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Participants. For the principal study, the participants included 87 four-year-old students, six certified teachers, and six paraprofessionals. These participants were not involved in the pilot study. The selection of these classrooms was based on recommendations from the early childhood professional staff within my cohort and the teachers' interest and willingness to participate. Given that the literature indicated the importance of the teachers' attitudes (Curtis, 2003; Goleman, 2006; Osher & Fleischman, 2005; Ray et al., 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2008), these elements were again carefully considered in the classroom selections. The teachers' willingness to participate played a pivotal role in their selection. These six classrooms were located in three different sites within the district. Three classrooms participated from Site A, two classrooms from Site B, and one classroom from Site C. None of the sites were the same as the site used in the pilot study.

At the beginning of the school year, the classroom teachers were very involved in getting to know their preschoolers and helping them to make a smooth transition from home to the school environment. It is generally understood that for some children, this is their first school experience, which creates anxiety for them as well as for their parents.
This knowledge was considered in making my initial contact with teachers regarding this study. The initial contact with administrators and classroom teachers began at the end of the third week of school.

Site A is one of the 26 elementary public schools in the district and is located in a developing area of the city. According to the Department of Education Report Card, in 2008-2009, the school served 333 students in preschool to fifth grade. The Department of Education 2009 NCLB reported that the school was in its second year of not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2010). This means that the school did not achieve the minimum levels of improvement determined by the state in terms of student performance and other established accountability measures.

The SchoolMatters.com data report of student ethnicity for 2008 was: Black, 58%; Hispanic, 31.8%; White, 2.3%; Asian/Pacific Islander, 5.3%; and American Indian/Alaska Native, 2.5%. The site reported that the home languages represented included English, 56.2%; Spanish, 25.5%; Urdu, 3.0%; Arabic, 2.4%; Tagalog, 1.5%; Tamil, 0.6%; Hindustani, 0.6%; and other, 10.2% (State of New Jersey DED, 2011b).

The school is surrounded by residential homes, a large city park, and new townhouses that were formerly part of a housing project. The other sections of the former housing project are unoccupied and will be demolished. Public transportation to this site is limited.

In reviewing the school’s posted mission statement, it asserted the school’s belief that academic growth was contingent upon the students’ cognitive, social, ethical, and psychological development. The provision of a safe, structured environment which
fosters an atmosphere where diversity is respected and celebrated was identified as an essential core belief of this school.

There are three preschool classrooms in Site A which are also part of the general education population. Forty-four of the preschoolers for this study came from Classes 1, 2, and 3. These classrooms were located on the first floor of this three story building.

The teacher and the paraprofessional in Class #1 were of African descent. The student body consisted of 14 children whose demographic identifications included African descent, Hispanic, Asian, Arabic, and Caucasian. Two students attended the before-care program, and three attended the after-care program.

Both the teacher and the paraprofessional in Class #2 were of African descent. The student body consisted of 15 children whose racial backgrounds included African descent, Hispanic, Asian, and Caucasian children. The students in this classroom did not participate in either the before-care or after care program. In Class #3, the teacher was Asian, and the paraprofessional was Arabic. The student body consisted of 15 children whose racial backgrounds included African descent, Hispanic, Arabic, Asian, and Caucasian. Two students in this class attended the before-care program, and no one attended the after-care program.

Site B is another one of the district's 26 elementary schools in which approximately 380 students are served in preschool to fourth grade. The Department of Education 2009 NCLB Report stated that the school did not make Adequate Yearly Progress. It indicated that in 2008-2009 the school's language included English, 48.4%; Spanish, 17.4%; Tagalog, 11.6%; Urdu, 2.1%; Vietnamese, 3.2%; Arabic, 3.7%; Crioulo, 1.3%; and Others, 12.4%. SchoolMatters.com reported that as of October 2009, the
student body was comprised of 28% Black; 30.4% Hispanic, 10.8% White, 29.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.0% American Indian/Alaska Native.

In Class #4, the teacher was Caucasian, and the paraprofessional was of African descent. The student body consisted of 15 children whose racial backgrounds included African descent, Hispanic, Asian, and Caucasian. Three students attended before-care and five attended the after-care programs.

The student body in Class #5 consisted of 14 students whose racial backgrounds included African descent, Hispanic, and Asian. Both the teacher and paraprofessional were Caucasian. Two students attended the before-care and eight attended the after-care programs.

Site C is another of the 26 elementary schools in the district. The State Department of Education reported that the school served approximately 565 students in preschool to grade 5 during school year 2008-2009. In the same year, the language diversity within the school was reported as English, 51.9%; Spanish, 34.2%; Tiv, 0.2%; Tagalog, 0.9%; Urdu, 2.3%; Arabic, 0.4%; Igbo, 0.4%; and others, 9.9%. SchoolMatters.com reported that the student body in 2008-2009 was comprised of 20.9% Black; 62.6% Hispanic, 8.4% White, 7.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.6% American Indian/Alaska Native. In 2009, the school made the Adequate Yearly Progress (AY P), and was not listed as a school in need of improvement.

This site is located in one of the most redeveloped sections of the city. In recent years, the area has seen major improvements in economics and real estate. There has also been a large influx of young professionals in this area of the city. The school building
houses 10 preschool classrooms. This is one of the schools that recently increased the number of 3-years-olds being served in the public school building.

The one classroom from this site involved in the study will be referred to as Class #6. This classroom was part of the general education population. The student body in this class consisted of 14 students whose racial backgrounds included African descent, Hispanic, Arabic, and Asian. The teacher was Caucasian, and the paraprofessional was of African descent. This is one of the newer buildings in the district, and its structural design allows parents to bring children directly to their first floor preschool classrooms. The students did not attend before-care, but three students attended the after-care program.

**Data collection.** The principal study commenced in October of 2010 and ended in December of 2010. Prior to the collection of data, the study was discussed with each of the building administrators, and their approval was secured. The data collection utilized several approaches and instruments which will be described in this section.

To facilitate my contact with the parents for their consent, I collaborated with the teachers and the paraprofessionals. Each teacher provided me a list with the children’s names and their home languages, and they were helpful with reminding parents to return the consent letters. Due to the cultural diversity in the three sites, the consent letters to parents were written in English and translated into Spanish (see Appendix K). A colleague from the professional support staff was available to translate the parent consent for the Arabic parents. The letters were sent home with each child, and I visited the site the following morning during arrival time. During this visit I had the opportunity to meet with several parents as they brought their preschooler to school. Overall, the responses from the parents were very positive. One parent, whom I did not meet face-to-face,
utilized the phone number on the letter to call me for clarification about the taking of photographs. He was satisfied with the explanation and returned his signed form the following day.

An orientation with the Respect curriculum was provided to the teachers within their sites. To conduct the orientation, two of the sites allotted 45 minutes, and one site had two 30-minute sessions. The orientation/training (see Appendix L) included an overview of the curriculum and other pertinent logistics for the study, such as the timeline for the study, due dates for the surveys, and checklists. A timeline was decided upon regarding the completion of the surveys, checklists, and interviews. Each participant received a folder with a copy of the curriculum (see Appendix J), and an article, “Caretaking of Children Souls: Teaching the Deep Song” written by Turner (2000). I met with the paraprofessionals individually, provided them with information about the study, and gave them a folder with a copy of the Respect curriculum and the article by Turner (2000).

After the orientation, I met briefly with each teacher to ascertain any specific needs they had for implementing the curriculum. The coaching component associated with monitoring the curriculum's implementation was based on the identified needs of the teachers. In one of the sites, the word empathy had recently been discussed. The teachers decided to introduce the Respect curriculum as a continuation of their previous discussion on empathy. The teachers in that building requested very little help with implementing the curriculum. In the other two buildings, the teachers needed my assistance with how to introduce the concept to the class. After identifying a time in the
daily schedule, the teachers utilized the information from the packet given to them at the orientation to introduce the concept to the class.

Each teacher and paraprofessional completed the participant consent form (see Appendix M) and the survey (see Appendix C). The teachers also completed a classroom checklist of indicators (see Appendix D). Prior to the pre implementation interview, the teachers were provided with a list of interview questions (see Appendix N).

During the implementation of the Respect curriculum, the teachers integrated it into the classroom by utilizing the approach (skill acquisition, fluency and maintenance, and generalization) for teaching new skills (Fox et al., 2003). As the teachers implemented the curriculum, they introduced each component to the class with an activity that supported skill acquisition. To encourage the children’s fluency with their new skill or concept, the teachers provided opportunities in the classroom for the children to practice. As the children attempted practicing these new skills, the teachers acknowledged their attempts. Children’s fluency with these skills varied at different levels. However, to support the children’s maintenance and generalization of their new concept or skill, the teachers provided support for them to use these appropriately in other settings outside the classroom such as in the cafeteria when the class is combined with other classrooms not involved in the study.

The implementation was monitored through classroom observations and coaching. I visited each classroom once every two weeks, and observed for approximately 45 minutes. The observations looked for evidence in peer-to-peer interactions as well as the adult-child interactions, how conflicts were resolved, and the use of the word “respect” as a term and concept in the classroom. At times, during these
visits, I became a participant observer. On some occasions I was a guest reader or participant in an activity. As the children became more familiar with me as a frequent visitor to the classroom, they seemed to look forward to my visits and upon my departures inquired when I would return.

During these visits, I interacted with the children, and the teachers gave me feedback on the implementation and addressed concerns. One of the concerns expressed during one of those visits by a teacher was how to integrate the Respect curriculum within the framework of the district's curriculum. With the help of a lead teacher, whose role is to support teachers with the implementation of the High/Scope curriculum, we were able to satisfactorily address the concern.

Coaching was based on the teacher's need. For example, when one of the teachers needed help with implementing an activity in the Respect curriculum, we met and discussed what she was already doing in the classroom and identified ways she could integrate the activity with the interests of the children.

In one classroom, I worked with the teacher by reading the *Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister (1992) to the classroom. After I read the story, the teacher followed up with a discussion with the children. A few weeks later, several of the children asked me to read the story again. The teacher gave me feedback on how she related the classroom's conflicts to the story as well as built on the children's empathy skills. I shared with this teacher how another teacher in the study had developed a book with her class based on this story.

Family involvement plays a crucial role in the early years. Schools cannot educate young children without consideration of families (Cho et al., 2010). With this in mind,
a workshop on this research topic was offered to parents on October 27, 2010 from 6:00-8:30 p.m. as part of the district’s early childhood Preschool Parent Training Conference. This was an annual conference for families in which workshops on several topics were offered, and community agencies were available to provide families with information about their resources.

Information about the Preschool Parent conference was distributed district-wide to early childhood parents. However, it was poorly attended. Two of the participants attending the workshop were parents from two sites in which the study was conducted. At the conference, I engaged the attendees with an interactive display and a workshop presentation. In an area identified for information display, the attendees saw a display of artifacts from the spring 2010 classroom activities and family involvement activity. The display was in three parts: What 4-year-olds say about respect; what 4-year-olds and their families say about respect; and a request for attendees to describe their perspectives of respect on an index card. The display of what 4-year-olds say about respect included anecdotes from children in the spring 2010 study. The posters made in the family-child activity were the second part of the display. Participants were encouraged to share their perspectives of respect on an index card. These index cards became part of the display board. Participants who completed an index card were given a pencil with the inscription RESPECT: Give it to Get It. The goal of this display was to encourage more dialogue about the concept of respect, starting with young children. All displayed artifacts were anonymous.

I presented a workshop titled, RESPECT: Find Out What It Means To Children along with a colleague twice to a different audience of parents as part of the conference.
agenda. This allowed the opportunity to engage more families, to promote their involvement in this initiative, and to enhance the awareness of families of preschool students about teaching young children the concept of respect. The presentation was conducted utilizing a power point slideshow, and families were provided with handouts.

To facilitate the classroom parent-child activity, I collaborated with each classroom teacher to identify a due date for the posters. The date was inserted into the letter reminding parents about the parent-child poster (see Appendix O). The reminders were sent home with a poster board asking the family to develop a poster on respect with the child. These posters were utilized in the classrooms’ show and tell activity. The professional support staff members were available to assist me with Spanish and Arabic translations with the parents.

During the show and tell classroom activity, each child had an opportunity to share his or her poster with the class. Photographs were taken of the posters, which were displayed in the classroom or school hallway for the school year. The inscription on each poster was recorded as part of my observation notes. The original design of this study did not include the posters as data. However, due to the large response from the parents, this activity prompted the inclusion of an analysis of the data from the posters.

For the post curriculum implementation data collection, the teachers and paraprofessionals completed the survey (see Appendix C); and the classroom teacher completed the checklist of indicators (see Appendix D). The teachers did not get an opportunity to review the survey and checklist completed in the pre implementation data collection. Prior to my interviews with the teachers, they were provided with a copy of the questions (see Appendix P).
Data analysis approach. This section will provide a brief discussion on the ethics, confidentiality, biases, use of triangulation and member checking for the principal study. A description of how the data gathered were analyzed is included in this section.

As in the pilot study, the ethics and confidentiality were also upheld in the principal study. My awareness of my passion for this topic kept me vigilant in maintaining my objectivity. Interactions with the participants, who were also my colleagues were conducted in a conversational and nonthreatening manner to avoid any possible bias. The use of multiple sites and data collection approaches increased the trustworthiness of the study’s common themes and of its validity. The continued use of my reflective journal and discussions with my Rowan colleagues and advisors were important for maintaining my objectivity throughout the process of the principal study.

To begin the data analysis of the principal study, I transcribed the recorded interviews. I then analyzed and coded the transcribed data for themes and trends that emerged. As the findings from the teachers’ interviews emerged about children’s social skills development, they were cross-referenced to the indicator checklists and surveys. The pre implementation and post implementation indicator checklists for each class were compared to ascertain any changes. These data were used to check the interview data. The comments made by the parents and children on the posters were coded, recorded, and analyzed for themes.

The data collected in the surveys were analyzed to ascertain changes in teachers’ and paraprofessionals’ knowledge base about respect, identify changes in their frequency of discussing the concept of respect, examine the use of the word respect in the classroom, identify teachers’ impressions of the children’s level of understanding the
concept of respect, and compare strategies identified as effective at pre implementation and post implementation.

Analysis of teachers' pre implementation and post implementation interviews helped to identify any shift in their attitudes regarding the teaching of respect, what they gained from the study, and the study's influence on social skills development. As themes emerged from the analyzed data they were coded and recorded. Cross-references from each data collection source were made and analyzed.
Chapter IV

Findings

Two studies were conducted to investigate whether creating a culture of respect can reduce disruptive behaviors (patterns of behaviors that interrupt learning) by influencing the social skills development of 4-year-old children in an urban setting. Both studies were conducted in the same large urban district. The pilot study was completed in the spring of 2010 to determine the feasibility of an investigation of the influence of a culture of respect on social skills learning in the preschool classroom. To conduct the pilot study, three classrooms with 4-year-old students were selected, and the curriculum designed with classroom activities to teach children about respect was implemented. As a result of the pilot study findings, a principal study was conducted in the fall of 2010 to further investigate the efficacy of the Respect curriculum with a larger sample.

Both studies utilized the mixed research method (qualitative and quantitative). The mixed method provided the advantage of collecting different types of data during the study (Hinchey, 2008). These methods included interviews, surveys, and checklists of indicators as pre implementation and post implementation sources for data collection, and classroom observations, review of documents, and collection of artifacts for further substantiating and triangulating findings. The goals of these studies were to:

- examine how the teaching of respect in the preschool classroom enhances social skills/social competence, and
- gather evidence that the teaching of respect may promote greater appreciation of the significance of social emotional learning in preschool among teachers.
The investigation utilized a mixed methodology approach to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current knowledge base of teachers about teaching social skills and respect?
2. Does the teaching of respect influence social skills/social competence in an urban preschool environment?
3. What are effective strategies for teaching respect?

Pilot Study, Spring 2010

The methodological analysis of the data afforded me the opportunity to ascertain the feasibility of the investigation of the influence of a culture of respect on social skills learning in the preschool classroom. The findings from the interviews, surveys, and checklist of indicators identified several patterns. The patterns that emerged from the data clustered around four areas: benefit of the study to teachers, benefit of the study to children, teachers’ attitudes about the study, and the value of family involvement. These four areas are presented based on the findings of the analyzed data. In addition, while the paraprofessionals were not included in the data provided in the benefit of the study to teachers, benefit of the study to children, teachers’ attitudes about the study, and the value of family involvement, they provided data that are important to this study. Therefore significant data from the paraprofessionals are reported as “Impact of the study on the paraprofessionals.”

Benefits of the pilot study for teachers. The analyzed data from the teachers’ interviews and surveys identified ways in which the teachers found the study beneficial to them. The findings from these analyzed data are presented below.
**Interviews.** During the pre implementation teacher interviews, the data indicated that they had anticipated the study would help to increase their assessment of children’s social skills, create positive classroom changes, and have a positive impact on the children. This was evident in comments such as:

- “This should help me to better assess children’s social skills.”
- “I will be interested to see how the climate changes in my classroom.”
- “I’m open to learn new ways for teaching respect in my classroom.”

The findings from the analyzed teachers’ interviews on the study’s benefit to teachers are presented in Table 1, which analyzes the frequency of their comments in the pre implementation and post implementation data.

Table 1

**Comparative analysis on the frequency of teachers’ interview comments reporting on the benefits of the pilot study for teachers (N=3)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Increase assessment of children’s social skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increase family involvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Learn effective strategies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Positive changes in the classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Positive impact on teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These expected benefits to teachers were affirmed in the post implementation interview data with an increase in the frequency of their comments. These comments included statements from the teachers such as:
• You could see the children’s growth in their social skills. It was amazing.
• When the children started to use the word respect in the classroom, I noticed a change in the room.
• Explaining respect had a positive influence on the children’s behavior, and that made more time for teaching.
• The parents were excited to participate in the activity.
• I did not anticipate such level of parent participation.
• Before I did not know exactly how to teach this concept to preschoolers.
• As the children understood the concept of respect, it took care of the classroom rules.
• I learned the value of teachable moments.
• I learned some new ideas for teaching the concept of respect in my classroom.
• I have grown as an educator from this experience.

In addition to the anticipated benefits identified in the pre implementation interviews, the post implementation teacher interview data indicated an increased family involvement and learning effective strategies for teaching respect as benefits of the study to them. It is important to note that during the teacher orientation and while discussing the study with the paraprofessionals, I was cautioned not to be disappointed with the possible lack of family involvement in the parent-child activity.

Survey. The findings from the survey completed by the teachers identified benefits of the study to the teachers. The survey question #9, in your current classroom setting, how often have you taught or discussed the concept of respect in the past 60
days? and question #14, “How often have you used the word respect in your classroom in the last 60 days?” were analyzed for frequency in the pre implementation and post implementation data. These data were compared for changes between the pre implementation and post implementation and presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparative analysis of teachers’ frequency of responses to survey question #9, “In your current classroom setting, how often have you taught or discussed the concept of respect in the past 60 days?” (N=3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre Implementation</th>
<th>Post Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very frequent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings from survey question #9 might suggest that the increased frequency of teaching or discussing the concept of respect in the classroom were seen as a benefit to the teachers as indicated by teachers’ interview reports of positive changes in the classroom and learning effective strategies for teaching the concept of respect.

The analysis of survey question #14, “How often have you used the word respect in your classroom in the last 60 days?” indicated an increase in the use of the word respect in the classroom (see Table 3). The findings from survey question #14 might suggest that teachers increased use of the word respect in the classroom was seen
as a benefit of the study for them. This might also have influenced the positive changes in the classroom reported by teachers in the post implementation interviews.

Table 3

*Comparison analysis of teachers’ frequency of responses to survey question #14, “How often have you used the word ‘respect’ in your classroom in the last 60 days?“ (N=3)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very frequent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teachers’ attitudes towards the study.** The analyzed teachers’ interviews and surveys identified the teachers’ attitudes towards the study at pre implementation and post implementation. The findings from these analyzed interviews and surveys are presented in this section.

**Interviews.** The benefits of the study for teachers may have enhanced their attitudes about the study. These are discussed in the following section. The teachers participating in the pilot study were selected based on their interest in the research topic and their willingness to participate. The data in the pre implementation and post implementation when compared indicated findings that are significant to teachers’ attitude towards the study.
During the pre implementation, the teachers’ interview comments expressed enthusiasm about the study. Some of these comments were:

- “This is an important issue that we have not truly addressed in early childhood.”
- “I’m excited about being part of this study because this is a very important topic and I’m sure I’ll learn from it.”
- “There is a place for respect in the classroom, but I’m not sure we do it very well.”
- “This is important, but I’m not sure if the children will get it.”

The post implementation interview comments indicated an enhancement in the teachers’ attitudes toward the study. The three teachers expressed appreciation for being part of the study. The enhancement of their attitudes towards the study was also represented in comments which included:

- “I’ve changed the way I talk about respect in my classroom. It needs to be explained first to them before using it in the room.”
- “The concept has to be part of the classroom.”
- “Teaching respect helps to create a place for learning.”
- “I learned from the children.”
- “They can learn and use this concept even in preschool.”
- “I have grown as an educator from participating in this study.”

**Surveys.** The survey question #13, “How difficult do you believe it is to teach preschoolers about respect?” completed by the three teachers indicated a positive change
in their attitudes. The change in their responses from the pre implementation survey and post implementation survey are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Comparison analysis of teachers’ reporting on how difficult it is to teach preschoolers about respect (N=3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the frequency of the pre implementation and post implementation response to question #13 were compared, the findings indicated that during pre implementation, one teacher believed it would be difficult to teach the concept to preschoolers, and two believed it would be somewhat difficult. The post implementation data indicated that the teachers’ attitudes had a positive change. Two teachers believed it was not difficult while only one felt it was somewhat difficult to teach. Both data from the teachers’ interviews and surveys supported a positive change in teachers’ attitude and suggest that the study had a positive impact on them.
Benefits of pilot study for children. The findings from the teachers’ interviews, the children’s interviews, and survey question #10 identified benefits of the study for the children. These findings are presented in this section.

Interviews. The teachers’ pre implementation interview comments indicated that their anticipated benefit of the study included an improvement in children’s social and academic skills, as well as encouraging family involvement. The interview comments included statements such as:

- “This should broaden children’s understanding of respect.”
- “Learning to respect others is a life skill.”
- “This can help academic learning.”
- “It could enhance social learning.”
- “This might encourage some family involvement, but good luck.”

A comparison of the teachers’ pre implementation and post implementation interview comments indicated an increase in the frequency of teachers’ comments about the study improving the children’s social and academic skills and family involvement. The findings for the teachers’ interviews are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Comparative analysis on the frequency of teachers’ interview comments reporting on the benefit of the pilot study for children (N=3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Improve social skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Improve academic skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Increase family Involvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the post implementation teacher interviews, these expectations were confirmed as indicated by teachers’ increased frequency of comments on these benefits. Some of these comments were:

- They understood the concept of respect.
- Children began resolving more conflicts by talking.
- The children used the word respect in the classroom.
- The word respect now seems to mean something to my class.
- They were proud of knowing how to spell the word respect.
- noticed the children would remind their peers about being respectful. It was good to see that happening in my room.
- They developed a sense of camaraderie. The children talked about and used the word respect outside the classroom e.g. in the courtyard and during school trips.

The number of teachers’ post implementation interview comments showed an increase in the frequency related to the children’s improved social skills, improved academic skills, and increased family involvement. There were 16 comments related to children’s improved social skills, 3 comments related to improved academic skills, and 4 comments regarding the increased family involvement.

These three findings were indicated in teachers’ comments such as:

- The children were using the word during conflict resolution.
- They learned how to reason with each other.
- When children understand the concept of respect, it takes care of classroom rules.
• "As children are listening more it leaves more time for teaching and learning."
• "Parents' participation gave opportunity to reinforce conversation about respect at home."
• "The parents were interested and involved in this family activity."

Interviews with the children were analyzed for frequency in children's comments in their pre implementation and post implementation interviews. The children were interviewed as a group, and without any prompting or coercing they were asked the questions. The data were then compared for themes and changes. When the children's pre implementation and post implementation interviews were analyzed the data indicated a change in their definition of respect, how they show respect, and to whom they show respect.

The analysis of children's pre implementation and post implementation interview data indicated a change in their definition of the word respect. In the children's pre implementation interviews, there were 16 responses. Seven comments were classified as "being nice," 4 were classified as not showing the middle finger. Additional responses such as no kicking, no hitting, no pushing, no fighting and listening to the other person speaking each had 1 response.

In the post implementation interviews with the children, the 32 responses to the definition of respect included no hitting (7 responses), being nice (3 responses), and no kicking (4 responses). Additional responses included listening to the person speaking, no pushing, and listening to teacher (each had 3 responses); not showing the middle finger (2 responses); and no shouting at the teacher, don't play guns in school, and don't hit the teacher (1 response each). These findings (see Table 6) indicated that the exposure to the
curriculum may have widened children’s range of thoughts and actions related to their definition of respect. In addition, the post implementation responses indicated four new categories (listening to the teachers, no shouting at the teacher, don’t play gun in school, and don’t hit the teacher) which indicate an expansion of their ideas about defining respect. The post implementation comments indicated an increase in the frequency of responses related to three behaviors (no hitting, no kicking, and no pushing), which are more physically harmful and are more pronounced types of disturbance in the classroom.

Table 6

*Comparative analysis on the frequency of children’s interview responses reporting on the definition of respect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation N=16</th>
<th>Post implementation N=32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Being nice</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Not showing middle finger</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No hitting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No kicking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No pushing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Listen to the teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Listen to other person speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. No shouting at the teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. No fighting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Don’t play gun in school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Don’t hit the teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Don’t talk back at the teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis of the children’s responses regarding how they show respect in the pre implementation interview indicated that of the 15 total responses, being nice had 4 responses, and listening to their parents had 3 responses; these were the most frequent responses from the children. Their post implementation interviews yielded 24 comments which indicated that being nice (5 responses) and listening to the teacher and their parents (3 responses each) were the most frequent on how they show respect. In addition, the post implementation interviews included three new categories (doing good deeds, walking in the classroom, not yelling and screaming) in their responses which indicated an expansion of their ideas about respect (see Table 7).

Table 7

Comparative analysis on the frequency of children’s interview responses reporting on how they show respect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation N=15</th>
<th>Post implementation N=24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Being nice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Listening to parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sharing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Listen to the teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Not showing the middle fingers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Helping your friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Not fighting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Being quiet when the teacher is talking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Doing good deeds</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Walking in the class</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Not yelling or screaming</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis of children’s pre implementation interview regarding who should be respected yielded 21 responses which indicated that 15 of the children identified family, 2 responses each identified teachers and their pets, and classmates and toys each were identified with 1 response. The post implementation interviews with the children yielded 41 responses in which family was identified with 7 responses, teachers with 14 responses, classmates with 8 responses, friends with 6 responses, pets and principal each with 2 responses, and self and adults each with 1 response (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Comparative analysis on the frequency of children’s interview comments reporting on to whom they show respect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation N=21</th>
<th>Post Implementation N=41</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Classmates</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Toys</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Principal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Self</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Adults</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pre implementation and post implementation data suggest that the Respect curriculum might have expanded the children’s understanding and awareness of others to whom they should show respect. This expansion included friends, the principal, themselves, and adults. The data also indicated an increase in the frequency of responses for teachers and classmates. This is important as teachers and classmates are new to the circle of people with whom they have daily contact outside their home environment. This might also explain the decrease in the frequency of children’s responses related to family in the post implementation interviews. In addition, this finding suggests the importance of talking about respect in school.

**Checklist of indicators.** The checklists were administered by the teachers before and after the implementation of the Respect curriculum. It included 18 social skills indicators (see Figure 2). The checklist used a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least evident and 5 being most evident. The teachers used the checklist to show the level of social skills evident within the class based on the 18 indicators.
Figure 2 Checklist of Indicators

The pre implementation and post implementation checklist of indicators data for each class were compared to identify any changes. The findings from the Checklist of Indicators showed an overall improvement in children’s social skills. In all three classes, the children showed improvement based on the 18 indicators on the checklist (see Table 9).
Table 9

*Comparison of the level of social skills for each class at pre implementation and post implementation, as measured on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being least evident and 5 being most evident*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Students are able to show empathy (e.g., comfort another child crying).</td>
<td>3 4 3</td>
<td>4 5 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students are able to take turns with each other without adult’s prompting.</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students are able to share with each other without adult’s prompting.</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students use the words “Please” and “Thank you” without adult’s prompting.</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students are able to initiate social contact and join a group activity without disrupting it.</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Students can identify his/her own feelings (e.g., “I’m mad”).</td>
<td>4 4 3</td>
<td>5 5 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Students are able to make decisions and trust their own ideas.</td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
<td>5 5 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Students are able to identify positive characteristics about themselves.</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td>Pre implementation</td>
<td>Post implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Students are able to identify positive characteristics about others.</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Students understand and follow classroom rules.</td>
<td>4 3 4</td>
<td>5 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Students are able to identify when an action is &quot;wrong&quot; or &quot;right.&quot;</td>
<td>4 4 3</td>
<td>5 5 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Students are able to explain how an action is &quot;wrong&quot; or &quot;right.&quot;</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>4 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Students understand the concept of treating others the way they would like to be treated.</td>
<td>3 3 4</td>
<td>4 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Students can identify when their actions show respect.</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>4 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Students can identify when other's actions show respect.</td>
<td>3 3 4</td>
<td>4 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Students are able to use the concept of respect to solve problems.</td>
<td>3 3 2</td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Students can explain what respect means.</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>5 5 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The word respect is used by students in their daily interactions with peers and adults.</td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When the data were compared between the pre implementation and post implementation data, Classes #1 and #2 showed improvement of one point on 16 of the 18 indicators and two points on two indicators. In Class #3, 11 of the 18 indicators showed improvement of one point and 7 showed improvement by two points between the pre implementation and post implementation data (see Table 10). The findings from the checklist suggest that as a benefit of the study, children’s social skills improved.

Table 10

*Comparison analysis of improvement of social skills in each class based on the checklist of indicators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classrooms</th>
<th>Indicators with 2 or more points of improvement</th>
<th>Indicators with 1 point of improvement</th>
<th>Indicators with no improvement</th>
<th>Indicators showing regression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Surveys*. The survey question #10 asked, “What level of understanding about the concept of respect do the children in your classroom demonstrate?” The pre implementation and post implementation responses were analyzed for frequency, and comparison was made to identify changes. Comparison of the pre implementation and post implementation responses indicate a change in the children’s understanding of the concept of respect. The comparison of the data is presented below (see Table 11).
Table 11

Comparison analysis of teachers’ response frequency to survey question #10, “What level of understanding about the concept of respect do the children in your classroom demonstrate?” (N=3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very strong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very weak</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings from survey question #10 indicate that children’s understanding of the concept of respect improved after the implementation of the Respect curriculum. In the pre implementation survey, two teachers identified children’s understanding of respect as “weak,” while one teacher identified their understanding as “strong.” In the post implementation survey, one teacher identified children’s understanding as “strong,” and two teachers identified children’s understanding of respect to be “very strong.” This improvement in the children’s understanding of the concept of respect might be connected to the positive climate changes in the classroom reported by the teachers as a benefit of the study to them and the improved social skills teachers reported as a benefit of the study to the children.

**Value in family involvement.** The parent-child poster activity was originally not considered part of the data collection. However, due to the high rate of return on the posters they were included in the data analysis.
Posters. Analysis of the parent-child posters included coding and identifying themes. Three themes emerged from the analyzed posters’ comments: what to respect (these are “things” parents and their children said should be respected), ways of showing respect (these are ways to demonstrate or “act out” respect), and respect learning (this is a mix of “what” and “ways.” It applies to respecting learning and ways to respect learning). The poster comments and their frequency are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Frequency analysis of parent-child poster comments and themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>What to respect</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What parents and their children said should be respected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family (4); Older people (2); Self (2); Teachers (2); Property (2); Classmates (1); Others (1); Friends (1); Religion (1); The world (1); Country (1); Privacy (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Ways of showing respect</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways to demonstrate or “act out” respect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing (6); Listen to learn (4); Helping others (3); Listen to teachers (2); Use nice words (2); Respect life (2); Listen to parents (1); Not nice to punch (1); Apologize (1); Not nice to snatch things (1); Work together (1); No hitting (1); Wait your turn (1); Being nice (1); Respect work (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Respect learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a mix of “what” and “ways.” It applies to respecting learning and ways to respect learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus (1); Being quiet (1); Study (1); Raising hands (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews. In the teachers’ pre-implementation interview, family involvement was not included as a benefit of the pilot study to the teachers. However, in the post-implementation interviews, the teachers identified family involvement as a benefit of the
study for them and the children. Teacher interview comments related to the value of family involvement included the following:

- It was good to see the parents get involved in the family-child activity.
- The parents were very involved and interested in the activity.
- This might be one of the best classroom activities that the parents were so involved. The children were very excited and I think they may have also reminded them.

**Impact of the study on the paraprofessionals.** The paraprofessionals were included in the pre implementation and post implementation survey. Due to personal illness, one of the three paraprofessionals had an emergency leave from school at the end of the pilot study. Her post implementation survey was not returned; therefore, her pre implementation survey was not included in the data analysis. The survey questions #9, #10, #13, and #14 indicated changes from their pre implementation to their post implementation responses.

In the pre implementation response to survey question #9, which asked, “In your current classroom setting, how often have you taught or discussed the concept of respect in the past 60 days?” one responded rarely and the other frequently. In the post implementation, both paraprofessionals responded “very frequently.” In the pre implementation response to question #10, “What level of understanding about the concept of respect do the children in your classroom demonstrate?” weak and very weak were reported by the paraprofessionals. In the post implementation, very strong and strong were reported in their responses. Their pre implementation responses to survey question 13, “How difficult do you believe it is to teach preschoolers about respect?” fell
in the “difficult” and “somewhat difficult” range. In the post implementation, the responses fell in “somewhat difficult” and “not difficult” range. Pre implementation responses to survey question #14, “How often have you used the word “respect” in your current classroom in the last 60 days?” fell in the “frequently” and “rarely” range. Their post implementation responses both fell in the “very frequent” range. The paraprofessionals made several comments regarding the benefits of the study for the children. These comments included:

- “They are using the word respect.”
- “They really enjoyed the good deed activity and they like it when we acknowledged what they did.”
- “I hear them using the word throughout the day.”
- “I hear more ‘please,’ ‘thank you,’ and ‘excuse me’ instead of pushing, hitting and kicking.”
- “During worktime there are fewer fights. They still have conflicts, but they are working it out without hurting each other.”

These findings from the analyzed data from paraprofessionals’ pre implementation and post implementation surveys suggest that they also benefited from the study. Their responses to survey question #10 indicated that the study was a benefit to the children. There were comments such as:

- “I’m hearing more please and thank you.”
- “They are playing together much better. I see less grabbing and pushing during worktime.”
- “They are using the word respect and that was very interesting to see.”
Conclusion. The findings from the pilot study conducted in the spring of 2010 suggested that creating a culture of respect in the classroom of 4-year-old preschoolers had a positive influence on the children’s social skills development and decreased disruptive behaviors in the classroom. It also indicated that the implementation of the Respect curriculum was a benefit to the teachers. It gave teachers ideas for assessing the children’s social skills, and they learned effective strategies for teaching the concept of respect in the preschool classrooms. A strong family involvement was evident and identified by the teachers as a benefit of this study.

Principal Study, Fall 2010

The principal study was conducted to investigate the efficacy of the Respect curriculum within the same large urban school district as the pilot study. The data collection utilized qualitative and quantitative research methods. The data collection instruments included the completion of a survey by the teachers and paraprofessionals (see Appendix C), the completion of a checklist of indicators (see Appendix D) by the teachers, interviews with the teachers (see Appendix E and Appendix I), and classroom observations. The interviews, surveys, and checklist were utilized for pre implementation and post implementation data collection. The study’s sample consisted of 87 4-year-old students, six preschool teachers, and six paraprofessionals. These participants were not part of the pilot study. The goals of this study, like the pilot study, were to:

- examine how the teaching of respect in the preschool classroom enhances social skills/social competence, and
• gather evidence that the teaching of respect may promote greater
  appreciation amongst teachers of the significance of social emotional learning
  in preschoolers.

The following research questions, which were the same as the pilot study,
were addressed:

1. What is the current knowledge base of teachers about teaching social skills
   and respect?
2. Does the teaching of respect influence social skills/social competence in an
   urban preschool environment?
3. What are effective strategies for teaching respect?

As the data presented below will show, the findings in the principal study
confirmed the findings of the pilot study: the use of the concept of respect developed a
culture of respect in the urban preschool setting which enhanced social emotional
learning and reduced disruptive behaviors. The teachers reported an increased ability to
teach the concept of respect in an urban preschool setting.

When the data were collected from the teachers’ interviews and surveys, the same
themes emerged as in the pilot study. As themes emerged they were recorded. The
themes identified in this study were: benefits of the study for teachers, benefits of the
study for children, teachers’ attitudes about the study, and increased family involvement.
These themes were analyzed by tabulating the frequency of interview comments and
responses to survey questions and by comparing the pre implementation and post
implementation data. In addition, the impact of the study on the paraprofessionals is
included in this section.
Benefits of the study to teachers. The teachers’ interview and survey responses provided findings that indicated that the principal study was of benefit to them. As part of the interview data that were analyzed post implementation, the teachers commented on the efficacy of the curriculum. These comments are also presented in this section as challenges and recommendations.

Interviews. In the pre implementation interviews, the teachers’ comments indicated that they anticipated benefiting from participating in this study. These benefits included learning new techniques for integrating the respect into the classroom, increases in positive teacher relations with the children, and increased teacher awareness of the value of respect in the classroom. These pre implementation findings are evident in teachers’ comments, such as:

- ‘This topic is important so I’m really interested in learning some ideas on how to present it in the classroom.’
- ‘One of my goals for this group of children is to implement more social emotional activities. I think talking about respect might improve the interactions and it would be a good step towards that direction.’
- ‘After you mentioned the research topic to me, I thought about it and realized that it is important even in the preschool years. I’m looking forward to learning about how to teach it in my classroom.’
- ‘I believe that as I learn more techniques, it might provide better interactions with the children.’

These anticipated benefits were confirmed with the increased frequency of teachers’ comments in the interviews, and in particular, teachers’ increased awareness of
the concept of respect and learning new techniques for integrating the concept in the preschool classroom. In addition, family involvement was positively commented upon by each teacher.

Some of the teachers’ comments related to learning new techniques were:

- “This was a new learning experience for me.”
- “Introducing the concept was not very difficult. Initially, it took time, but it was awesome hearing them using the word respect. It’s also very important that the adults in the room model the behavior. Thank God, my assistant and I work as a team because that makes a big difference.”
- “My aide and I have read the *Rainbow Fish* several times, but I had never thought about it as a way to teach children about respect.”
- “Normally during the holidays, we make a lot of holiday ornaments, but this year, we integrated more discussions and activities about respect. We talked about the different holidays and we used books. I have a diverse class, so that was great. The children really liked it. They asked questions about holidays some of the other children in the class celebrated.”
- “The good deed activity was a great hit in this room, even with my most challenging little person.”
- “The curriculum’s activities and ideas were helpful to me with making it a fun child-friendly concept.”

The teachers’ response to survey question #15, “What strategies do you find most effective for teaching preschoolers about respect?” mirrored the pre implementation responses indicating books and role-modeling. This is shown in Table 13.
Table 13

Comparative analysis of the teachers’ survey responses regarding effective strategies for teaching preschoolers about respect (N=6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role modeling</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puppetry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family involvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations and discussions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings for teachers identifying effective strategies indicated that in the pre implementation responses, books were identified by three teachers, role-modeling by six teachers, puppetry by two teachers, and stories by three. In the post implementation, the six teachers identified books, role-modeling, family involvement, and stories as effective strategies. Puppetry was identified by four of the teachers. In addition, conversations and discussions with the children were identified by five of the teachers. These strategies were included with the activities in the Respect curriculum.

Teachers’ comments regarding increased positive teacher relations with students included the following:

- “As we talked more about empathy, problem solving and making good decisions in the classroom, I noticed that my interactions with the children were more positive. For example, when a student says something mean to another peer, I ask, ‘Are you being respectful to your friend?’ It gives that...”
child something to think about his action instead of me always telling him about the rules, and to apologize. It works because I hear children apologizing to the peer they hurt in response to my questions.

- *This project helped me to learn more about the ideas and opinions of the children in my class. Our discussions about respecting others who are different were very interesting. We learned a lot through the eyes of the children.*

Teachers’ comments on how their awareness about respect was increased included the following:

- *This is a skill that children need and can learn in preschool.*

- *My assistant and I were talking about this project and we both agree that sometimes we make wrong assumptions about what children can or cannot learn. This project made me more aware of the importance of teaching respect at this level.*

- *This project has increased my awareness not only about its value, but how to teach it in a fun way. We have conflicts nearly every day during worktime, talking about respect and using some of these conflicts for role-play have made a difference.*

- *I believe moral development is important for education and our society, but teaching it in preschool was new. What I realized is that I was doing a little of it already in my class, through discussions about characters in stories. Now, I make the connection how those discussions were promoting moral development and it tied in with building their empathy skills.*
In Site 2, the teachers reported that part of the principal’s daily morning message reminded the students and staff to be respectful. While the morning message was not derived from the study, teachers utilized the study to enhance children’s understanding of the word respect in the classroom. One of the teachers in the site reported that the integration of the concept of respect in the classroom seemed to have helped the children to better understand the principal’s morning message.

Increased family involvement comments from teachers included:

- The parents really got involved in the parent-child posters. Some of the children talked about what their parents had told them about respect. It was good to have the parents reinforcing the concept at home. I think it made a difference when I could say to a child, "Do you remember what your mommy told you about sharing?" These reminders were usually very helpful in the class.

- The parents being involved helped to increase the concept in the classroom.

The comparison of the frequency of the teachers’ comments in the pre implementation and post implementation are presented in Table 14. It shows the increased frequency of teachers’ comments from the pre implementation to the post implementation of the curriculum.
Table 14

*Comparative analysis on the frequency of teachers’ comments reported in the interviews on the benefits of the study to them (N=6)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Learn new techniques for integrating respect into the classroom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increase positive teacher-child interactions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Increase teacher awareness of the value of respect in the classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Increase family involvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Challenges and recommendations.* The post implementation teacher interviews indicated that overall, the curriculum was found to be meaningful, with comments such as:

- “At first, I wasn’t sure how the Guide would work with our curriculum, but with a little coaching (thanks) I got it. Actually it complemented our district’s curriculum, and I was also able to collect more anecdotes for social relations in the child observation records.”
- “The Respect Guide was very helpful, and the activities were fun.”

The teachers’ comments for recommendations included the following:

- “This project should be replicated in other classrooms.”
• Every class should have some kind of project about respect because the children can learn from it. We can learn from it too!  
• This Guide is something teachers can use and this topic is important for preschool. Early childhood teachers, we need to get back talking about respect in the classroom.  
• Many of the activities in this Guide will encourage teachers to teach the concept in a child-friendly, age appropriate manner so that children can understand it.  

The teachers reported that they found the curriculum very effective and plan to continue its implementation beyond this study. The continued integration of the concept of respect in the classroom is important to sustaining its impact. According to Miller and Pedro (2006), Respect should be a critical component of all classroom environments (p. 299). The Respect curriculum was described by the teachers as self-explanatory and effective, and they indicated that the activities were very detailed.  

Survey. The findings from responses to the survey question #9, In your current classroom setting, how often have you taught or discussed the concept of respect? and question #14, How often have you used the word respect in your classroom in the last 60 days? indicated benefits of the study for teachers. When the frequencies of responses to these questions were compared between pre implementation and post implementation, question #9 (see Table 15) suggested an increase in the frequency of teachers discussions about respect with the children.
Table 15

Comparative analysis of teachers’ responses to survey question #9 on frequency of discussing the concept of respect (N=6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings from survey question #14 (see Table 16) indicated an increase of teachers’ use of the word “respect” in the classroom. The increase in the use of the word respect as a benefit to teachers might be explained by the teachers’ increased awareness about the concept of respect in the classroom and teachers’ positive interactions with the children.

Table 16

Comparative analysis of teachers’ responses to survey question #14 on their frequency of using the word “respect” (N=6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During one of my bi-weekly visits, I observed that the teacher seemed less anxious, more confident, and interested in guidance on taking the initiative to enhance the use of the word respect in her classroom. The increased frequency of the teacher’s use of the word respect and discussing the meaning of respect with her students may have influenced the children’s increased use of the concept of respect in the classrooms. She reported a decrease in disruptive behaviors, specifically pushing and fighting.

Teachers reported using the activities from the curriculum approximately 2-3 times per week and reinforcing the concept daily. Evidence of the teachers’ use of the Respect curriculum and embedding the concept was indicated in the post implementation survey, which showed an increase in the use of the word respect and teaching or discussing the concept of respect in the classroom.

**Teachers’ attitudes towards the study.** The pre implementation and post implementation teachers’ interviews and their responses to survey question #13 provided data relevant to their attitudes about the study. Sample comments and pre implementation and post implementation comparative analyses follow.

**Interviews.** A comparison of the pre implementation and post implementation teachers’ interviews indicated a change in their attitudes towards this study (see Table 17). During the pre implementation interviews, five comments were made that teachers anticipated difficulty with teaching preschoolers the concept of respect in the classroom. Four comments were made on teachers’ valuing social emotional learning in the classroom, and five comments were noted on the importance of respect in the classroom. Teachers’ comments about their anticipated difficulty with teaching preschoolers the concept of respect included:
• I'm not sure how this Guide will work with the curriculum's approach for planning around children's interests.

• I know this is important for children, for everyone. It’s part of my culture, we learned from very young about respect. But, will these children be able to get it. It’s not an easy concept to teach.

Teachers’ interview comments on their value of social emotional learning included:

• Social emotional development is neglected in schools. The whole piece about emotion and education is missing.

• Moral development, I noticed it in the Guide, we really don’t talk much about that in school and we really need to because these children need more than academics.

Teachers’ comments on the importance of respect in the classroom included:

• Children are coming to us showing more disrespectful behaviors. Teaching about respect even in pre-k is important. The earlier the better for us.

• I think when we talk about respect in the class, we’re teaching life skills. I’m not sure they will get it completely, but the exposure to talking about respect is important.
Table 17

Comparative analysis of frequency in teachers’ interview comments related to their attitudes towards the study (N=6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Difficulty with teaching respect in the classroom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Value Social Emotional Learning in the classroom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Importance of respect in the classroom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the post implementation interview, two comments were made with regard to experiencing difficulty with teaching the concept of respect. One of the teachers had expressed initially that this concept might be difficult to teach preschoolers. As she began to implement the curriculum, the teacher reported an observable change in the classroom, such as children using the word respect in their interactions and reminding each other when their behavior was not being respectful. During the implementation of the curriculum, two of the teachers expressed concerns about aligning the concept of respect with the district’s early childhood curriculum. Another early childhood professional support staff member, whose responsibility it is to support early childhood teachers with implementing the district’s curriculum, provided assistance to these teachers. Post implementation comments related to the anticipated difficulty were: “Once I understood how the Respect Guide could support the curriculum, it made sense and the Guide provides some good ideas for discussing respect.”
Evidence of teachers' comments related to their valuing of social emotional learning in the classrooms was the following:

- "We had talked about empathy in our class about two weeks before you contacted me about participating in this project. Doing the activities in the empathy component, I realized that some of the children didn't quite get it. After talking more about feelings, and using more role-playing, I know they get it. I see much more empathy skills emerging in my room."

- "Empathy, respecting other people's difference has more meaning in this class. They don't always show it, but if we keep the concept alive in this room, they will. I see the skills becoming more a part of the room, and that makes me feel good about this class."

Teachers' comments on the importance of respect in the classroom included:

- "Many of the children became more aware of how they should treat each other."

- "The word respect is being used more often in resolving conflicts."

- "The children are gaining more awareness about their behaviors."

- "One child in my room who presents with challenging behaviors, now the children are telling him that he's not being respectful to them."

- "I do want these children to feel respected and show respect, and if they are not experiencing it at home, I want them to experience it here. It has to begin somewhere."

**Surveys.** Teachers responses to survey questions #7 and #13 relate to their attitudes about this study. The teachers selected for this study were interested in the
research topic and willing to participate. The six teachers’ responses to survey question #7, “Social skills play a significant role in preschool learning process,” fell in the strongly agree range in both the pre implementation and post implementation survey, confirming the positive attitudes towards the importance of social skills in the learning process and suggesting their interest and willingness to participate in the research.

For survey question #13, “How difficult do you believe it is to teach preschoolers about respect?” the frequency of responses when compared between the pre implementation and post implementation (see Table 18) indicated a positive change.

Table 18

Comparative analysis of the teachers’ survey responses regarding their perception of how difficult it is to teach preschoolers about respect (N=6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pre implementation survey indicated that three of the teachers believed that the concept of respect would not have been difficult to teach preschoolers, two believed it would be somewhat difficult, and one teacher responded that it would be very difficult. However, at completion of the post implementation survey, five of these teachers believed it was not difficult and only one believed it was somewhat difficult. These findings would suggest that while the teachers strongly agree on the importance of social
skills in learning and utilizing the concept of respect to teach this skill, there were reservations regarding the difficulty of implementing the use of respect in the preschool classroom. The post implementation findings from this survey question might suggest that the teachers’ experience with using the Respect curriculum had a positive influence on their perception of how difficult it is to teach preschoolers about respect.

**Benefits of the study for children.** Comparison of pre implementation and post implementation data for the interviews and surveys demonstrated significant differences between the anticipated and actual benefits of the study identified by the teachers for the children. The checklist of indicators demonstrated improvement in all indicators from pre implementation to post implementation. Tables and discussions of these findings follow.

Table 19

*Comparative analysis on frequency of teachers’ interview comments on the benefits of the study for children (N=6)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Improve social skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increase awareness and use of the word respect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Decrease disruptive behavior</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Increase Academic/learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews. The teachers' interviews, when coded and analyzed, identified four benefits (improve social skills, increased awareness and use of the word respect, decreased disruptive behaviors, and increased academic learning) of the study for children (see Table 19). The teachers' pre implementation data indicated that teachers anticipated that the study possibly could improve children's social skills, increase their awareness of the concept, decrease disruptive behaviors, and increase academic learning. These possible anticipated benefits were identified in the following teachers' comments:

- “I'm not sure if they will get the concept, but exposing them to it now is good and it is a beginning. If they can get this concept, it would be great because improving social skills in this class might do wonders.”

- “I have used the word respect in here, but I don’t really teach it, and I guess, I’m assuming that they understand it.”

- “I have a tough group this year. They are all good kids just lacking some skills with listening and really being respectful. I think if they learn how to be respectful, then there might be less disruptive behaviors in here.”

- “When children learn to listen when others are talking and treat others the way they would like to be treated, we would not have to worry about bullying. These are skills that would also leave more time for teaching and learning in school.”

During the post implementation interviews, teachers confirmed these anticipated benefits of the study to the children with varying frequencies. The findings indicated that improved social skills, increased awareness, and use of the word respect were most frequent in teachers' comments. Decreased disruptive behaviors and increased academic
learning also showed an increase in the frequency of teachers’ comments. These findings are supported with the following teachers’ comments:

- The children have definitely become more aware of the word and their behaviors.
- They are using the word respect in peer interactions.
- Hearing more please and thank you without myself or the assistant teacher having to remind them.
- Great overhearing conversations between the children, and they are using the word respect to solve problems. An example of that was a situation in the block area. I heard one child say to another child, you not listening to me. You not respecting my feelings. The other child responded with, okay, okay, listen. They talked about who was building the train track and then decided on how they would do it together. The children didn’t know I was listening. Later, I shared this conversation with the class.

Teachers’ comments on the increased awareness and use of the word respect included:

- have become more aware of my use of the word respect in the class. Before I would use it without explaining what I meant or finding out what children understood. Now, the word is having real meaning to the children because I think using what they understood to explain the concept was a big difference.
- My assistant and I work very closely, and it’s really important that we the adults model respectful behaviors and in how we speak to the children.
Before the study, I heard a lot of you're not my friend among the children. In our discussions, we talked about how that can hurt another person's feelings. This was talked about in many of our empathy discussions and role-playing. I still hear it in the classroom, but not as much as before. We (my assistant and I) have tried to work on encouraging more use of kind words.

When I'm doing a lesson and I have less disruption, we can accomplish more. Even the children are starting to understand this because when there is less distraction I tell them about the things we were able to do.

The principal's daily message ends with a statement that love and respect are two very important things in life. This project definitely helped the children to understand his statement.

Some of the teachers made comments related to increased academic learning as a benefit of the study for children. Examples of these comments are:

- I found it helpful to teaching. With less disruption there is more time for teaching and learning. One of the things that is important with that is creating a safer classroom.

- Now, the children use the word and understand its meaning.

Their comments on increased positive teacher-child interactions included:

- This helped me to become more attuned to children's behaviors that are respectful. My assistant and I acknowledge these behaviors because it needs to be encouraged, but I also notice that as we are acknowledging these behaviors, it is helping to increase the positive teacher-child interactions.
Explaining the concept and my constant awareness of using it and modeling the behavior, I believe enhanced my interactions with the children.

The enhancement of the children’s social skills was noted in how they were resolving conflict. In a bi-weekly feedback meeting with me, a teacher reported, “They are working together. There is more sharing and turn taking. This is important and they are doing more of that now” (C.R. teacher feedback, December 2010). While conducting one of the bi-weekly classroom observations during worktime, four boys were playing in the block area. Two were using blocks to construct a bridge. One of the boys was playing with the farm animals and the other boy with the trucks. Approximately 10 minutes after they began playing, the boys who had built the bridge moved from the block area. The other two boys began taking the blocks and incorporated them into their play. Not very long after that, one of the boys who had been constructing the bridge with the blocks came back to the block area. Seeing the boys had dismantled the bridge, he began crying “You took my bridge.” One of the boys, who was now playing with the blocks taken from the bridge, asked the crying boy what happened. He responded, “You took my blocks.” In my earlier visits to this classroom, the student playing with the blocks might have been aggressive and possibly would have hit the crying student. Instead he said to him, “Do you want to play with the blocks?” The other boy had stopped crying and responded, “Yes.” As he bent down to join them on the rug, the boys who had begun to play with the blocks said, “Let’s build another bridge. You wanna build it again?” The children were able to resolve this problem without an adult prompting.

**Surveys.** The findings of teachers’ post implementation responses to survey question #10 “What level of understanding about the concept of respect do the children in
your classroom demonstrate? indicated a positive shift in the children’s level of understanding the concept of respect (see Table 20). The children’s increased level of understanding the concept of respect might be connected to teachers’ increasingly frequent discussions about the concept of respect (see Table 9) and use of the word respect (see Table 16) in the classrooms. The increased use of the word respect and discussion of the concept of respect by classroom staff members appeared to occur at the same time as with the children’s increased use of the word and their increased level of understanding of the concept of respect.

Table 20

*Comparative analysis of teachers’ response frequency to survey question #10, “What level of understanding about the concept of respect the children in your classroom demonstrate?” (N=6)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very frequent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Checklists of indicators.* The checklist of indicators provided data on children’s level of social skills (see Figure 2). It was completed for each class by the teachers before the implementation of the Respect curriculum and after the curriculum was implemented. It included 18 indicators and used a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least evident and 5
being most evident, for the teachers to show the level of social skills evident within the class based on the 18 indicators.

To analyze the data, each class' pre implementation and post implementation checklists were compared to identify changes in the teachers' rating of the level of social skills in the classroom (see Table 21). Analysis of the comparison for each class' pre implementation and post implementation data indicated that the children's social skills had shown improvement (see Table 22).
Table 21

Comparison of the level of social skills for each class at pre implementation and post implementation, as measured on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being least evident and 5 being most evident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Pre implementation</th>
<th>Post implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Students are able to show empathy (e.g., comfort another child crying).</td>
<td>3 3 3 4 3 4</td>
<td>4 4 4 5 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students are able to take turns with each other without adult’s prompting.</td>
<td>3 3 3 2 1 3</td>
<td>4 4 4 3 2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students are able to share with each other without adult’s prompting.</td>
<td>3 3 3 2 1 3</td>
<td>4 4 4 3 2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students use the words “Please” and “Thank you” without adult’s prompting.</td>
<td>3 4 3 3 2 3</td>
<td>4 4 4 3 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students are able to initiate social contact and join a group activity without disrupting it.</td>
<td>2 3 3 3 2 3</td>
<td>4 4 5 4 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Students can identify his/her own feelings (e.g., “I’m mad.”).</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 2 4</td>
<td>4 4 5 4 4 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Students are able to make decisions and trust their own ideas.</td>
<td>3 3 2 3 3 4</td>
<td>4 4 4 4 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Students are able to identify positive characteristics about themselves.</td>
<td>3 3 2 3 3 4</td>
<td>4 4 4 4 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td>Pre implementation</td>
<td>Post implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Students are able to identify positive characteristics about others.</td>
<td>2 3 2 3 3 3 4 4 4 4 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Students understand and follow classroom rules.</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 2 2 4 4 5 4 3 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Students are able to identify when an action is “right” or “wrong”.</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 3 3 4 4 5 4 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Students are able to explain how an action is “right” or “wrong”.</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 3 2 4 4 5 4 4 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Students understand the concept of treating others the way they would like to be treated.</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 2 2 4 4 5 4 4 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Students can identify when their actions show respect.</td>
<td>3 3 2 3 2 2 5 4 5 4 3 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Students can identify when other’s actions show respect.</td>
<td>3 3 2 3 2 2 5 4 4 4 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Students are able to use the concept of respect to solve problems.</td>
<td>3 3 2 3 3 2 4 4 4 4 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Students can explain what respect means.</td>
<td>2 3 2 3 2 2 5 4 4 4 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The word respect is used by students in their daily interactions with peers and adults.</td>
<td>2 2 2 2 1 2 4 3 4 3 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 22

Comparative analysis of social skills improvement based on the checklist of indicators completed by the teachers in each class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classrooms</th>
<th>Indicators with 2 or more points of improvement</th>
<th>Indicators with 1 point of improvement</th>
<th>Indicators with no improvement</th>
<th>Indicators showing regression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The growth in the children’s level of understanding of the concept of respect might be influenced by the improvement in their social skills development and decreased disruptive behaviors reported in the teachers’ interviews. The findings from the interviews, surveys, and checklist of indicators support the benefits of the principal study for the children.

**Increase family involvement.** After the concept was introduced to the children in the classroom, a culminating parent-child poster activity was conducted. This activity encouraged parents and their children to develop a poster about respect. Paper for the poster and a letter explaining the activity was given to the parents. The completed posters were returned to the teacher for a classroom show and tell activity with the children. During the show and tell activity, children were encouraged to show their posters and discuss it by describing the pictures and/or drawings on the posters, who helped them to
make the poster, and things their families shared with them about respect. The posters were decorated with statements, pictures, and drawings by the children and/or family about respect. Some of the statements on the posters were:

- Respect the elders; listen to your teachers.
- We should respect our parents and our family members because that way we will be better people.
- Always respect your teachers.
- Respect is to be nice and love everyone, mommy and daddy, friends at school, and your teachers.
- Always respect your teachers. Always respect your parents. Sharing is a way to show respect.
- Greeting is part of respect even in sports.

The analysis of the comments on the posters yielded three themes; what to respect, ways of showing respect, and benefits of respect (see Table 23).
Table 23

Analysis of the frequency of comments in each theme from the parent-child respect
posters (N=63 analyzed posters)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency of the comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What to respect</strong></td>
<td>Family (62); Teachers (51); Parent (49); Friends (43); School (32); Classmates and Other's property (21); Religion (20); Cultures (20); People (19); Yourself (15); Neighbors (10); Work (10); Community (10); Environment (10); The flag (7); Animals (7); Earth (7); The President (7); Parks (5); Firefighters (3); and Police (3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These are &quot;things&quot; parents and children said should be respected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ways of showing respect</strong></td>
<td>Listen to teachers (57); Listen to parents (51); Listening to others (49); Being nice (49); Show love and taking turns (47); Helping at home (42); No name calling (42); sharing (42); Playing nice (41); Good manners (34); Being considerate of others (33); Caring (33); Helping others (31); Politeness (30); Friendship (29); Doing best job at school (26); Greeting others (26); Respect life (21); No hate (20); No discrimination (20); Raise hands for permission (13); Apologize when wrong (13); Honor people's rights (12); Praying (12); Taking care of the environment (11); and not smoking (11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These are ways to demonstrate or &quot;act out&quot; respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits of respect</strong></td>
<td>When you give respect you get respect (21); Respect is key to success (14); Respect will save the world (13); Respect is equal to love and peace (11); Respect helps to create and foster happy, healthy, and successful families (9); and Respect fosters unity (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It applies to things that occur as a result of respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The family responses to this activity indicated a high interest in the topic. This parent-child activity was well received by parents. This was evident in their participation in making the poster with their children. Each class had at least 50% of the posters returned. Three classrooms had almost 100% of the posters returned. There were 63 parent-child Respect posters.
In Table 23, family, teachers, parents, friends, school, classmates and others’ property were the six most common items in the parent-child views of what/who to respect. While all items are important, these six items identified many of the people with whom children interact daily. Parent and child comments (see Figure 3 for examples of posters) indicated a strong opinion that to show respect, one should listen to teachers, parents and others, and one should be nice, show love, and take turns. Partnering with parents to support these behaviors can enhance the culture of respect and decrease disruptive behaviors in the classroom. A parent from Class #6, with whom I had a conversation as she brought her daughter to the classroom, said in reference to the parent-child poster activity, “It was fun making the poster with her. It’s something we really don’t talk enough of with the kids” (L.R. parent interview, December 2010).

Figure 3 Examples of Parent-Child Posters

*Interviews.* During the post implementation interviews with the teachers, they reported that after the letter was sent home, children returned to class talking about respect and what parents had said to them. These comments were shared during the morning message and other times in the class prior to the show and tell activity. These comments were captured in the teacher’s anecdotal records and shared with me. Some of these comments recorded by the teachers are:
• "My mommy say, you must respect your teachers and listen to her."
• "I respect my mommy and daddy."
• "My daddy said, you have to listen, that is having respect. You have to take turn and that is respect."
• "My mommy says you have to listen and be quiet so you can learn and that’s respect."
• "My Titi say when you use your words, don’t hit nobody or use bad words, or call anybody no name, that’s respect."

These comments from the children came as a result of the parent-child activity, the parents were talking with the children about respect at home.

The teachers’ comments indicated that the parent-child activity had a positive impact on increased family involvement. These comments included:

• "When some of the children were talking about respect and what their families said, I recorded them not only for COR. Reminding children with their parents’ message to them was good."
• "The families’ involvement had a positive influence on the classroom."
• "The posters will be hanging in the classroom as a reminder for the children, and they really like seeing their work displayed and telling the stories about how they made the posters with their family."
• "As many of the children talked about the posters they made with their family, they were able to describe and discuss the posters and made references to things their family had said to them about respect."
This activity was great, and I’m thinking about ways I can build on it with the parents.

**Training.** I developed a workshop for parents and presented it at the district’s annual early childhood parent conference with a work colleague as a co-facilitator on October 27, 2010. The workshop, *RESPECT: Find Out What It Means to Children,* was conducted during two sessions at the event. The workshop was identified as one of the most attended at the event, which might suggest a high level of parent interest in this topic.

**Impacts of the study on the paraprofessionals.** The six paraprofessionals completed pre implementation and post implementation surveys. Survey questions #9, #10, #13, and #14 were analyzed for frequency in their responses. When the frequencies of their responses were compared between the pre implementation and post implementation it indicated that the study had some impacts on them and the children.

In the pre implementation responses to survey question #9, which asked, “In your current classroom setting, how often have you taught or discussed the concept of respect in the past 60 days?” the six paraprofessionals’ responses fell in the category of “rarely.” However, in the post implementation, two responses fell in the category of “very frequently” and four responses fell in the “frequent” category. This indicates a positive change in their reinforcing the concept in the classroom. The pre implementation responses to survey question #10 “What level of understanding about the concept of respect do the children in your classroom demonstrate?” showed that two fell in the “strong” category and four fell in the “weak” category. The post implementation survey data showed that five responses fell in the “very strong” category and one response fell in
the "strong" category. The paraprofessionals' responses indicate that they concur with the teachers that the children gained from the study.

Their pre implementation responses to survey question #13 "How difficult do you believe it is to teach preschoolers about respect?" showed one response falling in the "very difficult" category, two responses falling in the "difficult" category, and three responses falling in the "somewhat difficult" category. In the post implementation data, two responses fell in the "somewhat difficult" and four responses fell in the "not difficult" categories. This suggests a positive change in their attitudes towards the teaching of respect to preschoolers. In the pre implementation responses to survey question #14, "How often have you used the word "respect" in your current classroom in the last 60 days?" four responses fell in the "rarely" category and two responses fell in the "never" category. In the post implementation, three responses fell in the "very frequent" and three responses fell in the "frequent" categories. This positive change in their use of the word respect could also be explained by the change in their attitudes towards the teaching of respect to preschoolers. Overall, these findings indicate that the study had a positive impact on the paraprofessionals.

During my visits to the classrooms the paraprofessionals made several comments related to how the study impacted them and the children. The following are some of the comments made by the paraprofessionals:

- "They are actually using the word respect with each other."
- "Two of the children are in the after school program with me and I have heard them use the word respect there, too. They are resolving conflicts much better..."
and showing fewer aggressive behaviors. It’s nice to see such a positive change.

- At the beginning, I really wasn’t sure if this was actually going to work, but they are learning the concept and it’s very important. I am more aware of my use of the word respect and even my interactions with the children. Being respectful is something I strongly believe in; it is very important in life no matter where you go. Being respectful is important! I think sometimes we assume that these children either wouldn’t understand it or that they should come to us already learned about respect from their family. Families are different today, nothing like when I was growing up. This project is helping these children learn about life. It has helped to make this room feel much calmer.

- I hear more please, thank you, and excuse me.

- Other teachers should be doing this project in their classrooms.

- Introducing this concept to this class made a big difference. As I participated in the activities I also got to know the children better. It was interesting, and I picked up a few tips to use. Many of these kids really learned from this project. I see it in their behaviors.

- We still have a few pushing and grabbing, but not as it were before this project.

The findings from the paraprofessionals’ survey and comments support the value they saw from the study. As they experience these benefits of the study, it could be a motivator for their active role in the continued implementation of the curriculum.
Limitations

As this study was conducted in classrooms within my cohort, I may have inadvertently influenced the results while conducting the research. The results of this study may be different in each early childhood classroom or site due to the teachers' attitudes about teaching the concept of respect and the level of consistency implementing the curriculum within the classroom. With this in mind, the findings of this study may be limited to the settings included in this study. However, this study itself can be conducted across a variety of preschool settings, as the components in the Respect curriculum would align with the five state recommended curricula for early childhood settings.

Although the teachers who participated are within my cohort, I had very limited contact with some of them prior to the study. The teachers who were not familiar with me were somewhat guarded in their initial responses to me. However, their initial responses to the study were positive. During the process of the study, I developed positive relationships with the teachers and paraprofessionals with whom I did not have contact with prior to the study. Some teachers are very guarded about other people coming into their classrooms to observe; therefore, it was very important that the purpose of the observations was discussed during the orientation/training with the participants.

For teachers who are not in my cohort, I believe the initial responses for many of them might mirror the participants in the pilot study and principal study. Therefore, a potential critical limitation to introducing this curriculum into other classrooms not within my cohort is the comfort level of the teachers with me. To address this potential limitation, my comparable colleagues could be trained to train and support teachers within their cohort. As my colleagues may not be willing or be available to conduct bi-
weekly observations, a compromise might be fewer classroom visits and providing the coaching based on the teachers' individual needs. With the necessary administrative permission, I could be released from my cohort to provide support to the other cohorts. However, it might be advantageous to include my comparable colleagues to train and support the teachers in their cohort to sustain long-term implementation of this curriculum.

**Bias.** The possibility of the results being significantly biased was a concern of mine. This study was conducted in the district in which I am employed and was executed with my colleagues as participants throughout the study. Due to these factors, I was vigilant throughout the process in monitoring my subjectivity, which increased my awareness of my beliefs, interests, and passion for the research topic and how these could distort my data (Glesne, 2006). The teachers were chosen based on their convenience to me and their interest in the research topic. The teachers' interest in the research topic is an important element to successfully teaching respect (Miller & Pedro, 2006; Ullicci, 2009; Wilford, 2006). My rapport with the participants was established during the early stages of this study, which led to professional and respectful interactions. My integrity and professionalism guided my actions throughout the process. For example, while I led this study, I was very respectful of the teachers' time with scheduling the interviews and timeline for the survey. Therefore, I worked collaboratively with them to identify the timeline. Before doing classroom observations, the teachers were aware of my focus. During our feedback after my observations, I shared what I saw, asked questions for clarification, and listened to the teachers' questions and comments. Several times we had conversations regarding implications for further study related to this study. One such
topic was exploring how different cultures defined respect. I believe that while I led this project, always being collegial and professional helped the teachers to feel comfortable talking with me. This was important to me because I believe their comfort level with me would encourage authentic comments about the study. When challenges were presented, such as a few of the teachers feeling unclear about integrating the Respect curriculum with the district’s curriculum, we brainstormed some ideas for integration, and I shared how other teachers were implementing the Respect curriculum. As I am not an expert with the district’s curriculum, I sought assistance from another professional support staff trained in the curriculum.

To increase the trustworthiness of the data, multiple sites and various data collection methods were utilized in the study. In analyzing the data, cross-references were utilized to verify findings and offset the threat to validity in each (Glesne, 2006). The three sites participating in the study represented the demographics of the district’s preschool population. As the findings from the data emerged, I made cross-references with other sources to validate the findings. An example of this occurred with the teachers’ interviews. As the findings from the interviews indicated children’s improved social skills, this idea was cross-referenced and validated by the checklist of indicators and observations.

**Insights.** Review of the literature and the findings from this study indicate the importance and need for a stronger emphasis on social emotional learning in the classroom. As teachers’ feedback indicated that they found the study meaningful and valuable and the Respect curriculum effective, it helped them to understand the need for a
stronger emphasis on social emotional learning in the early childhood classrooms. Some of the teachers’ comments supporting this point were:

- “For many children, saying the word alone means nothing to them. We have to help them understand it. We can’t assume that they know what it means.”
- “We need to teach this concept in a child-friendly manner, breaking it down so children can understand it and grow.”
- “Teaching about respect needs to be part of the curriculum in education. This can’t be only in the text it has to be in action.”
- “This study reinforced my belief that this is important for children to learn about how to show empathy and make good decisions. We have to educate the whole child, and with that I mean not only focusing on the math and science.”
- “The concept of respect is becoming part of my classroom environment, and it’s a welcome positive change.”
- “Before the study, I was doing some things in my class that supported the concept of respect, but I didn’t make the connection. Now I’m more aware of the connections, and so we actually use the word respect in the classroom. I encourage children to show empathy, make good decisions about problem-solving or being nice to another child.”

According to the state Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, adult-child relationships exert a powerful influence on the developing child. In addition, positive adult-child relationships can encourage and facilitate the teachers’ showing respect for children’s feelings and cultures (State Department of Education, 2009a). Showing respect for children’s feelings and culture was encouraged in the empathy and diversity training.
components of the curriculum. Teachers’ comments on integrating discussions about respect related to holidays might have helped to increase children’s awareness about cultural diversity. In addition, teachers’ increased awareness about the value of respect in the classroom and increased positive teacher-child interactions were findings that support their showing of respect for children’s feelings.

The Respect curriculum has the potential to be of value to other preschool teachers within the district. In the post implementation teacher interviews, they reported that they found the curriculum meaningful; it helped to enhance their classroom environment and the teacher-child relationship, and it provided an opportunity for a stronger home-school connection. The teachers participating in this study recommended that the curriculum be utilized in other early childhood classrooms.

**Research Questions**

The findings of the pilot and principal studies informed the research questions. The answers to the questions are as follows:

1. What is the current knowledge base of teachers about teaching social skills and respect?

   The teachers’ pre implementation interviews suggested that they believed in the importance of respect in the classroom. While this belief existed, their perceptions that it was difficult to teach preschoolers about respect may have influenced the lack of consistently integrating the concept of respect in the classroom. The post implementation teacher interviews (see Table 18) indicated that more teachers reported that teaching preschoolers the concept was "not difficult."
In the pre implementation interviews, teachers’ comments did not include family involvement as an anticipated benefit of the study for them (see Table 14). However, their post implementation interview comments identified family involvement as a benefit to them. This was also supported in their comments related to the value of family involvement in the parent-child poster activity and in helping to reinforce the concept in the classroom. Family involvement as a benefit to the study can help to support more teacher-parent partnerships and help parents to play a role in teaching their children social skills (Bowman, 2006; Christophersen & VanScoyoc, 2004).

The teachers’ pre implementation surveys and interviews indicated that the use of the word and discussing the concept of respect was rare. Their post implementation surveys showed an increase in their frequency of discussing or talking about the concept and using the word respect in their classrooms. The teachers reported benefiting from the study through gaining an increased awareness about teaching respect in the preschool classroom. This increased awareness identified by teachers can be a motivator for expanding or maintaining the use of the Respect curriculum in classrooms beyond this study. Teachers’ increased awareness can lead them to promote the idea among their colleagues.

2. Does the teaching of respect influence social skills/social competence in an urban preschool environment?

The findings in the teachers’ and children’s interviews, behavior checklists, classroom observations, and surveys indicated that the teaching of respect had a positive influence on social skills development in an urban preschool setting. Improved social skills were identified in the teachers’ interviews as benefits of the study. This was
corroborated in the findings from the classroom observations, indicator checklists, and children’s interviews. This suggested that the findings support my assumption that teaching of respect could positively influence children’s social skills/competence and decreased disruptive behaviors in an urban preschool setting.

The teachers’ report and classroom observations indicated that the children’s increased understanding of the concept of respect may have influenced their increased social skills and decreased disruptive behaviors. These were evident in the children’s increased positive social interactions such as friendship, cooperative play, positive conflict resolutions, listening, turn taking, and expressions of empathy observed in the classroom and as indicated in the checklist findings and teachers’ interview comments. These were also evident in the children’s use of the word respect with peers in the classroom. Teachers’ use of the word respect and discussions with the children about the concept in the classrooms might be an outgrowth of the children’s increased understanding of the concept and use of the word respect in the classroom. These new behaviors may have influenced the improved social skills indicated in the findings.

3. What are effective strategies for teaching respect?

Teachers identified the use of books, role-modeling respectful behaviors, conversation with the children, and family involvement as effective strategies (see Table 13). The data suggested a direct connection between teachers’ actions and use of the word respect and the children’s increased use of the word in the classroom. As the concept became embedded in the classroom through the teachers’ use of activities to reinforce the concept, teachers reported that children’s understanding of the concept increased and fewer disruptive behaviors were exhibited in the classroom. The findings
from the parent-child activity suggested that partnering with parents to teach the concept of respect is an effective strategy for reinforcing the concept of respect beyond the classroom environment, which, in turn, can have a positive impact on the school environment.

**Conclusion**

The findings from the pilot and principal studies combined indicate that the study was beneficial to the teachers and the students. In both studies the teachers reported that they learned new strategies for integrating the teaching of respect into their classrooms. The development of a culture of respect in the classroom increased the children’s social skills and helped to reduce the incidents of disruptive behaviors. An unexpected benefit in both parts of this study was family involvement. The parent-child poster activity had a large family response with the return rate of posters. In addition, based on children’s comments reported by the teachers, the concept was being reinforced at home.

The importance of family involvement to support the teaching of this concept to preschoolers is also indicated in the findings. In addition, family involvement in the preschool classroom can help to build a foundation for stronger parent-teacher connections and parents’ continued involvement in their children’s education.

Creating a culture of respect in the preschool classroom requires the involvement of teachers, parents, students, and administrators. Creating this culture requires that the concept be embedded in the classroom environment and that teachers be a role model for the children (Miller & Pedro, 2006). Tierno (1996) concurs with Miller and Pedro and cautions teachers that their words and actions must be consistent, as was indicated in this study. Teachers set the tone in the classroom and are critical to the success of children developing the skills to work cooperatively with each other (Miller & Pedro, 2006).
Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether creating a culture of respect could reduce disruptive behaviors by influencing the social skills development of 4-year-old children in an urban setting. This study was conducted as two parts: a pilot study to determine the feasibility of the investigation and a principal study to investigate the efficacy of the Respect curriculum designed to teach the concept of respect. The Respect curriculum was reported by the participating teachers in both parts of the study to increase children's social skills and decrease disruptive behaviors in the classrooms.

Discussion of the Themes

Four themes emerged from both studies: benefit to teachers, teachers' attitudes towards the study, benefit to children, and family involvement. For the purpose of this discussion, the focus will only be on the themes as they were reflected in the principal study, which generally mirror findings from the earlier and smaller pilot study.

Benefit to teachers. The teachers reported increased positive teacher-child interactions, learning new strategies for integrating the concept of respect, increased awareness of the value of respect in the classroom, and increased family involvement in classroom activities. The findings from this investigation suggested that creating a culture of respect in the classrooms enhanced social skills/competence. It provided teachers with a deeper insight regarding how to teach this concept to 4-year-old children, challenged their previously held perspectives about children's inability to understand the concept of
respect, and enhanced their awareness of how their own actions are pivotal to the process of learning. This set of findings is essential to strengthening the positive relationship teachers should develop with young children to support their learning.

**Teachers’ attitudes toward the study.** Teachers play an important role in the process of integrating the concept of respect into the classroom’s daily schedule and instructions (Miller & Pedro, 2006). In this role, teachers facilitate the children’s development of social emotional and cognitive skills, which also helps to foster positive adult–child interactions (Epstein, 2010; Gallagher & Mayer, 2006; Swick, 2005). The pre-implementation findings of the study indicated that the teachers agreed with the significance of social skills in preschool and the importance of respect. However, the teaching of respect was not evident in the classrooms. Further findings suggested that the teachers’ perception that it is difficult to teach the concept of respect to preschoolers could have influenced this concept not being part of the classroom culture.

To create a culture of respect in the classroom, the teachers’ attitude must be one of care and respect (Boschee & Jacobs, 1998). After implementing the Respect curriculum, which included strategies such as children’s literature, talking about or discussing the concept with the children, role-playing, and the teachers acting as role models, teachers reported a positive change in their perception of how difficult it is to teach respect in preschool. As indicated in the findings, the teachers’ increased use of the word “respect” and discussions about respect could have influenced the children’s enhanced understanding of the concept and their social skills, which would have resulted in fewer disruptive behaviors.
This study confirmed the critical importance of the classroom environment, including adult-child interaction in early childhood (Fox et al., 2003). Teachers’ attitudes are important, as their role is essential to the development of healthy adult-child relationships and creating a positive classroom culture (Miller & Pedro, 2006). The teachers’ positive relationships with children can help to foster authentic parent-child relationships, which can encourage parents’ involvement in the educational process (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006).

**Benefits to the children.** Children benefited from the teachers learning new strategies for integrating the concept of respect into the classroom. Several strategies for teaching respect, such as the use of children’s literature, role-playing, adult modeling, and family involvement were identified in teachers’ interviews and surveys as effective. The use of children’s literature helps to empower children by providing them with exposure to and understanding of a wide range of behaviors and emotions (Zeece, 2004). This exposure supports children’s development of prosocial behaviors and increases their understanding of empathy, appreciation of diversity, non-violent conflict resolution, and moral development. In addition, the use of books as an effective strategy for helping children to learn about acceptance and diversity (Murawski, Lockwood, Khalili, & Johnston, 2009) was supported in the Respect curriculum.

Children’s increased awareness of the concept of respect was evident in the classrooms during my observations and interactions with them and from the teachers’ feedback. For example, after several weeks of discussing the concept of respect, a teacher reported that the children were utilizing the word in the classroom. To encourage the children’s fluency with the concept (Fox & Lentini, 2006), the teacher tried something
new at recall (part of the daily schedule in which children are encouraged to share what they did during their work time). Each child had a partner with whom he or she was to share what was done during work time. The teacher reminded the students of what they said in previous discussions: listening was a way of showing respect to their friends. As I conducted my observation, most of the children were able to complete the activity by listening to their partner without any additional adult prompting. Later the teacher told me that this was her first time attempting this activity. She wanted them to practice listening to each other and get more practice with this skill. This study confirmed that listening, when associated with the concept of respect that is being studied, can be readily embraced by the young children (Clark, 2003).

Teachers reported that the Respect curriculum supported children’s development of positive conflict resolution. As the children understood the concept of respect and the importance of listening to each other, they were better able to resolve conflicts. The teachers reported using the conflict resolution approach described in the Respect curriculum. Over time the children were observed utilizing the approach as they asked questions, listened to each other, and tried to come up with solutions. As they utilized these skills, fewer hitting, pushing, or other disruptive behaviors were reported by the teachers. This study confirmed the observation that in classrooms in which respect is embedded, “students are nice to each other” (Miller & Pedro, 2006, p. 294). Since social skills deficits in young children have implications for many facets of their future development and life, when they are developed in early childhood, these skills can have a life-time impact on the children (Fox et al., 2003; Goleman, 1995).
The findings from this study suggest that the integration of the activities designed to teach respect could provide children with the skills necessary to prevent a child from become a victim of bullying or of becoming a bully. The children benefited from the promotion of skills in the areas of moral development, empathy, and social emotional skills, thus helping them to form positive, rewarding relationships with others (Zeece, 2004). Lack of empathy is a fertile ground for cruelty and violence (Swick, 2005), and positive, proactive relationships can help to buffer children from the effects of such cruelty. Further, children exposed to early violence may create a barrier to the development of empathy (Swick, 2005). Therefore, the integration of the Respect curriculum can be a way to combat such barriers.

This study confirmed that helping children to understand the concept of respect and learn new ways to support positive relations with others is important in young children’s development (Brumbaugh, 2008). As the children in this study gained new skills, such as empathy and moral decision-making, their interactions with each other showed improvement. As a culture of respect was developed in the classrooms in this study, positive changes became evident in the climate of the classrooms, peer to peer, and adult-child interactions. The positive changes in the climate of the classrooms were manifested in children’s display of more collaborative play and positive conflict resolution between the children with less adult involvement. When these changes occurred, they created a physically and emotionally safer classroom. As children played and interacted with each other, friendships and empathy skills became more evident in the classrooms. The children’s interactions with each other exhibited the use of their developing emotional vocabulary, which lends itself to enhancing the climate in the
classrooms. Teachers became more cognizant of the strong influence of their actions and words on children’s behavior. Their reported increase in the use of the word respect and discussing the concept in the classroom might explain the positive change in the children’s behavior, which created the new classroom culture.

**Increased family involvement.** This study confirmed that when parents become part of the children’s social and emotional experiences, they influence their behaviors and values. Vopat postulates that parents can be helpful to their children’s success in school when they understand how to foster and make a connection between what children learn in school and the home (as cited in Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). The Respect curriculum provided a clear, simple connection between school and home.

Teachers partnering with families to teach young children about respect could also enhance community partnerships to combat bullying. Research supports the use of multi-component approaches to prevent bullying (Frey & Dupper, 2005). Frey and Dupper recommend the inclusion of a family and community involvement component.

Increased family involvement was indicated by the teachers to be a benefit of the study for themselves and the children. This benefit was substantiated by the large response to the parent-child poster activity and children’s comments about respect. As teachers work with families, understanding and encouraging their involvement in their children’s education must include a broader view of parents’ strengths (Brumbaugh, 2008). These strengths should be incorporated into building authentic partnerships. The findings of this study confirm that encouraging family involvement to support children’s learning plays a significant role in teaching respect. As families were encouraged to participate in a parent-child poster activity, it provided an opportunity for empowering
them by gaining deeper insights on the importance of discussing the concept of respect with their young children. This study shows that family involvement reinforces concepts, such as respect, at home, and in turn benefits the classroom and the process of learning by reinforcing the importance of the concept being taught to children in school and by reducing disruptive behaviors as well (Christophersen & VanScoyoc, 2004 Meidl & Meidl, 2009).

**Conclusion Summary**

The importance of social emotional learning has been confirmed in the findings of the study. Valuing family involvement in the educational process can benefit all stakeholders. Teaching the concept of respect in the early childhood environment enhances social skills development and the learning environment. In the process, children also gain life skills that are essential to their emotional and intellectual development. This study indicates that teaching the concept of respect in the urban preschool classroom can be beneficial to all stakeholders: children, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents.

If we are to have a positive impact on our next generation, the change must begin today. We must plan with the end in mind (Covey, 1989). If we want to see our children becoming caring and respectful productive citizens, then we should be very mindful about what we teach them today. To make real change requires a re-culturing of our educational system. It is my hope that as more early childhood teachers and administrators are exposed to this Respect curriculum and others like it and to the significance of social emotional learning, they will find it meaningful and worth the investment.
How this Study Informs My Work as an Educational Leader

As an educational leader, this study has provided me with opportunities for growth, as well as having a positive impact on an issue that is a concern to educators. This section includes a description of my leadership profile and my role as the leader in this study.

**My leadership profile.** John Quincy Adams stated, “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) state, “Great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us” (p. 3). These quotations express my core beliefs about leadership. They have also become some of the sources that have expanded my definition of leadership to a broader context. I believe that by my actions, others can be inspired. As I conversed with my colleagues, family members, and friends, being hopeful and positive are two endearing qualities others have commented about me. In my work with children, I want them to feel valued, respected, and be motivated to dream beyond their present circumstances. To inspire others, my language of commitment for the things I truly care about and value must be evident in my daily actions (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). This has transcended into inspiration for others. As participants identified how the study gave them deeper awareness about the research topic, they can do more for the children and in doing so, learn more. In the process, I hope that they are inspired. My perspective on leadership has extended beyond a position. Kelley (1988) stated, “What distinguishes followers from leaders is not intelligence or character but the role they play.” A leader is more than a position of authority. The increased awareness reported by the participants can be the vehicle for developing their own leadership roles within their school building as well as in the districts’ early childhood community. More important is the influence of our words and...
actions. As I share what I have learned from this study, many of my colleagues have commented on my passion for the topic. This is becoming infectious among my colleagues through my involvement in other departmental activities, which has encouraged them to become more aware of the need for a stronger emphasis on this topic.

One’s core values as a person should cascade seamlessly into his or her leadership style. My own core personal values are honesty, benevolence, tolerance, and openness to learning and development. I find that these values are the foundation of my role as a leader. In the daily cultivation of my core values, I am discovering my purpose and ideal self (Goleman et al., 2002). The process of discovering and defining one’s core values can also be applied to my work in early childhood education. One of my core professional values is the belief that every child has the capacity to learn, some at different levels than others. Every child, regardless of his or her socio-economic status, ethnicity, or race, is of value to society. This value is not defined by economic status or its equivalent, but by the human spirit. The development of the child’s core self-worth and self-respect are building blocks in the foundation of his or her future success. When these are not embedded in the child’s core belief and only an academic focus is emphasized, we can limit the child’s potential for doing good in the world. Building children’s sense of self-worth and self-respect helps to educate the heart by developing their respect for others and the ability to think critically about their action and its effect on others. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated, “Educating the mind without educating the heart has produced brilliant scientists who used their intelligence for evil” (as cited in Schonert-Reichl & Hymel, 2007, p. 20).
Napoleon stated, “A leader is a dealer in hope” (as cited in Goleman et al., 2002, p. 126). My sense of hopefulness as a leader is supported by the servant-leader theory’s optimistic view about challenges. When dealing with the challenges of the learning environment, the leader must set the tone of hopefulness. Every experience provides me with an opportunity for growth. Lifelong learning is essential in my pursuit to be an educational leader and change agent. According to Kotter (1996), lifelong learners humbly and honestly reflect on their experiences to educate themselves (p. 182). Regardless of my role as a follower or leader, I know that my core values influence the way I fulfill these roles.

**My leadership in this study.** Through this study, I have gained insights into the positive impact that teaching children about respect in the early childhood environment can have on teaching and learning. The children in my study gained some basic social skills that they can use during their education and beyond. Many of my colleagues have described me as a “creative problem solver.” Over the years, I have come to agree with that description of myself and concur with Burns (2003) that the “the ultimate test of creative leadership lies not only in having a new idea but bringing it to life, accomplishing the real-world change it promises” (p. 168). The development of this curriculum was borne from that creative problem-solving element of my leadership style.

My leadership skills were enhanced as I conducted this study, which provided me with many “teachable moments” and opportunities to recognize my leadership style. Whittaker (2003) encourages leaders to help “teachers take responsibility for their performance in the classroom” (p. 19). Providing teachers of young children with a curriculum which they found effective, also challenged their thinking about teaching the
concept of respect and was an empowering instructional tool. Helping the teachers through coaching, feedback, and conversations to gain deeper insights into the importance of respect in the classroom and the role they play was an empowering experience for me as I witnessed the increased level of teacher effectiveness in children’s social skills development. In the process, I also learned more about the effectiveness of situational leadership and became a better leader.

At the beginning of the doctoral program, the results of my Self Assessment Synthesis indicated that my leadership style tended to be most influenced by emotional intelligence. Leading this study required my interactions with many people within the three participating sites. Being attuned to my own emotions helped me to be cognizant of those around me. The influence of emotional intelligence as described by Goleman et al. (2002) was an essential part of my leadership style in the process of this investigation. While leadership is not built entirely on emotions, as the leader, I became more aware of emotions as a powerful factor in creating change.

In one of the participating classrooms, there was a disagreement between the teacher and the paraprofessional; the teacher noted that during the week, while there was a strain in the adults’ relationship, it had a negative impact on the children. During my visit, I observed a slight change in the interactions between the children and the adults. Both the adults confided in me separately, and each educator did not wish the children to be caught in the middle of the adults’ disagreement. Recognizing the potential negative effect of this disagreement between the adults on the children and the classroom, I became very concerned about how it would impact the study. As the matter required the administrator’s involvement, I advised them to address it with the principal. The matter
was resolved by the principal’s involvement to the satisfaction of both of the adults.
Realizing that the possible emotional residue from the disagreement could negatively
impact on the new culture developing in the room, I spoke with both adults. They also
recognized the potential negative effect their emotionally charged disagreement had on
the emerging new classroom culture. Recognizing the possible negative effect, both
women agreed that working on building the emerging new culture was important. As I
reflected on this situation, it became a teachable moment for me, as well as the teacher
and the paraprofessional. In the end, I believe it also helped them to appreciate the
change they had made and the pivotal role they both played in sustaining the emerging
positive culture in the classroom.

In leading this study, I wanted to encourage teachers to become more reflective.
is a deeper understanding of their own teaching style and ultimately, greater effectiveness
as a teacher” (para.13). I believe that when we become reflective practitioners, it also
helps to facilitate our development as emotionally intelligent classroom leaders, provides
opportunities for deeper insight and awareness, and could encourage the teachers’
promotion of social emotional competence within their instructional practice and
interactions with children. During feedback with the teachers, many reflective practices
occurred which helped to enlighten, to bring deeper understanding, and to create for me a
collegial bond with the teachers. Many of them shared that my approach was always
professional, encouraging, supportive, and created an atmosphere for learning.

In the process of this investigation, I also became a more reflective leader and
aware that my own development was becoming more influenced by transformational and
authentic leadership styles. Finding meaning and purpose in one’s life has been an essential part of my journey. In the process of this investigation, as the meaning of this curriculum transcended my own passion, my transformational leadership style became more evident to me. It was during these insights that I recognized how I was being positively influenced by those around me (children, teachers, parents, and administrators). While I was challenged at times in the process of this investigation, I grew as a more courageous and confident leader.

Burns described transformational leadership as a “relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (as cited in Couto, 1993, p. 103). It raises the level of human conduct and the ethical aspirations of both the leader and the follower. Being open to being transformed by others, as much as transforming others, is a lesson in humility for the leader. The leader and followers play significant roles in the process of partnership. Openness to others is a function of the leader’s emotional intelligence. The leader’s emotional intelligence must be developed or matured to welcome influence from the followers. This maturity speaks to the cultivation of my core values, which ignited and drove my interest and passion for this research topic on social emotional learning. My sense of openness played an important role in leading this study. It was essential to relationship building and encouraging the participants to become comfortable with me. It also sent the message that I valued their feedback.

There were several moments while conducting this investigation when things felt overwhelming or were not going as planned. These were the times that I reflected in my
journal, conferred with close friends, and at times, sat quietly and reflected on the matter at hand. Wheatley (1999) wrote,

I know that chaos is a necessary place for me to dwell occasionally. So I have learned to sit with these dark moments - confused, overwhelmed, only faintly trusting that new insight will appear. I know that this is my only route to new ways of being. (p. 173)

It was during these reflective moments, that I gained deeper insights about myself as a person and a leader and about the study.

Leaders must view challenges as vehicles for growth; the sense of hopefulness is experienced as part of practice, not as a fantasy that practice contradicts. Hopefulness is crucial in the process of change, improving the learning environment, and sustaining authentic partnerships.

My dissertation is a function of my role as a leader in education, infused with hopefulness in my goal of expanding my own and my colleagues’ understanding and appreciation of social emotional learning. The use of the core concept of respect points to a way to enhance the value of the classroom experience for the teachers and students alike. This emphasis integrates my personal and professional core values with the highest and best purposes of the institution and process of public education. My leadership, as expressed in my doctoral studies, will help young urban students and their teachers, dream more, learn more, do more, and become more.

This study indicates that the integration of the concept of respect can enhance children’s social emotional skills development and improve teachers’ ability to address disruptive behaviors in the classroom. My role as an educational leader will focus on the further development of the Respect curriculum and advocacy for a stronger emphasis on social emotional learning in the district.
The knowledge I have gained will be instrumental in providing continued professional development in the district on this topic as well as seeking other opportunities such as conferences where this topic might be of interest to the audience. Writing for publication is another way I intend to share this knowledge.

Based on the findings from the study, several trainings were presented in the district for parents, early childhood teachers, paraprofessionals, and preschool intervention specialists. The purpose of training the parents was to encourage their involvement in discussing this concept with their young children. One parent said, “This is a topic we don’t talk enough about with our young children.” As this study was conducted in selected classrooms within my cohort, not all teachers within my cohort or in other cohorts benefited from such training. Offering similar training to teachers within my cohort as well as to teachers in other cohorts is one way in which I plan to lead the promotion of more social emotional learning in the district’s early childhood classrooms.

Overall, the evaluative responses on the workshops have been very positive. The evaluation comments fell in the following themes:

- Learned new strategies for teaching respect and dealing with disruptive behaviors.
- Gained ideas to encourage family involvement, and
- Learned the value of respect in the classroom.

If the early childhood classroom staff members recognize the value of teaching about respect and learning new ways to integrate it into the class, these workshops could ignite teachers’ interest in utilizing the Respect curriculum and other materials promoting social emotional competence.
Sharing what I have learned from this study to enhance the learning environment and capacity-building is an important part of my role as an educational leader. I envision early childhood classrooms in which a stronger emphasis on social emotional learning is promoted. This will require some changes in teachers’ and administrators’ mindsets and attitudes about the long-term significance of social emotional competence and the role early childhood education can play. Fullan (2001) asserts, “leadership in a culture of change requires a new mind-set that serves as a guide to day-to-day organization development and performance” (p. 119). Some of the findings in the study suggest that a new mind-set was ignited with a shared vision among the participants as a result of the study. Shared vision is described by Fullan (2007) to be “more of an outcome of a quality change process than it is a precondition for success” (p. 41). Presenting training to classroom staff and professional support staff could provide an opportunity for re-culturing, changing mind-sets and attitudes, and igniting more interest and commitment towards the promotion of social competence in early childhood classrooms.

**Implications**

The findings of this study have several implications for the involvement of families in their children’s education and for promoting more focus on the integration of social emotional learning in the early childhood environment. These implications are discussed in this section.

**Family involvement.** During the study and as indicated in the teachers’ interviews, valuing family involvement was identified as a benefit of the study for the children and teachers. As part of teachers’ understanding of the importance of family involvement, they must become aware of their own attitudes as a factor influencing
families’ willingness to be involved in their children’s academic experience (Carlisle, Stanley, & Kemple, 2005; Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang, 2005; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009). This study provided teachers an opportunity to strengthen the home-school connection in their classrooms. The home-school connection may have been strengthened by the children’s enthusiasm to make the poster with their family, which, in turn, ignited parents’ interest in talking about the concept of respect with their children while providing them a concrete opportunity to do so. The children’s enthusiasm about creating the poster with their family also may have encouraged more families to participate.

The parent-child poster comments indicated a strong opinion that to show respect one should listen to teachers, parents, and others; be nice; show love; and take turns. Partnering with parents to support these behaviors can enhance the culture of respect and decrease disruptive behaviors in the classroom. The study strongly suggested the mutually beneficial impact of promoting family involvement in the early childhood classroom.

**Catalyst for change.** The teachers’ interviews indicated that they benefited from the study by gaining an increased awareness of the value of the respect in the preschool classroom. This increased teacher awareness can be a motivator for expanding or maintaining the use of the Respect curriculum in the classroom beyond the study. Teachers’ increased awareness can be the catalyst for change and for the promotion of more emphasis on social emotional learning in the early childhood classrooms.

Bullying behaviors are exhibited in the early childhood settings. Glew, Rivara, and Feudtner defined bullying as a form of aggression in which one or more children
intend to harm or disturb another child who is perceived as being unable to defend himself or herself (as cited in Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). This issue could create what Kotter (1996) describes as a sense of urgency. Recently, the district's superintendent where the study was conducted initiated an anti-bullying initiative. The implementation of the Respect curriculum in the classroom lends itself to many aspects of anti-bullying. The curriculum for creating a culture of respect could contribute to this effort within the early childhood environment. As a member of the district's early childhood Anti-Bullying Task Force, the knowledge I gained from this study will be shared with the committee for consideration in addressing this issue in the preschool classrooms.

As young children take their first steps outside of the family, the social status they have experienced within their family structure may become threatened in the new environment of the classroom. It is important for early childhood teachers to address the social and emotional needs of children by providing them with positive social experiences and new tools for engaging in social situations.

A concerted effort for a stronger emphasis on social emotional learning in the early childhood learning environment can create an environment in which children feel physically and emotionally safe. Such environments are conducive to learning with fewer disruptive behaviors and to promoting a strong home-school connection (Amatea, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). Addressing social emotional learning and increasing children's social skills in the preschool are significant for children's academic careers. When disruptive behaviors persist, research shows that it decreases children's chances for success (Hemmeter et al., 2006). Research has shown a strong connection between
academic learning and social emotional development (Anderson, 2009; Elias et al., 2003; Galinsky, 2010) and that learning and emotion are essential to academic achievement (Elias et al., 2003; Galinsky, 2010; McKinsey & Company, 2009, Stern, 1999). Social emotional learning is critical in the early childhood setting as this would help to facilitate the groundwork for skills identified as vital to children’s well-being. High quality early childhood programs play an important role in setting the foundation for children’s future success, especially when they effectively integrate social emotional learning into the daily classroom routine (Rice, 2010). The Respect curriculum developed in this study can clearly be a powerful tool to enhance social emotional learning and social skills among urban preschool children.

To sustain the results of this study, school leaders must understand and appreciate the importance of social emotional learning in the learning environment, starting in the preschool years. Continued development and implementation of the Respect curriculum requires long-term commitment from leaders and teachers. School leaders must be committed in words and actions. The teachers’ new attitudes and knowledge about the value of integrating the concept of respect in preschool can be maintained and supported beyond the study with ongoing training. This can help to drive the integration of the concept into the norms of the learning environment (Kotter, 1996). The catalyst for change is echoed in the words of Fullan (2007), “Meaning is motivation; motivation is energy; energy is engagement; engagement is life” (p. 303).

The educators who participated in this study found the Respect curriculum to be meaningful and effective. They saw the potential benefits of integrating a culture of respect in the preschool classroom. The curriculum generates energy, which can spiral
into engagement with all stakeholders, producing positive changes that will be evident in classrooms.
References


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Appendix A

Participants Consent Letter (Pilot Study)

My name is Ruth Cummings-Hypolite and I am currently seeking a doctoral degree through Rowan University. As part of my dissertation thesis, I will conduct an action research study under the supervision of Dr. Robert Campbell, my advisor at Rowan University. My study will explore social emotional learning in the preschool classroom. This will be achieved by investigating how a culture of respect influences social skills learning in the preschool classroom for students who are four years old.

The research study will include interviews, surveys, classroom activities, observations and document review. Your voluntary participation in this research study is greatly appreciated. There are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. All data collected will be kept confidential. At the end of the study, all data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for the three years required of a research study, then disposed of by shredding.

The information from this study will provide valuable insight about the promotion of a culture of respect in the preschool environment. The data information gained will be used in any way thought best for publication or education. All data will be reported in terms of group results; individual results will not be reported. If you would like to receive a copy of the results, please contact me at the email address below.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 201-723-8144 or hyprc2001@yahoo.com. Dr. Campbell can be reached at 856-256-4500 ext. 3817.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Ruth Cummings-Hypolite

Your signature below represents your consent to serve as a participant in this research.

_____ Yes, I give permission to be videotaped or photographed and used for professional development.

_____ Yes, I agree that any information I provide in this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

_____ No, I do not give permission to be videotaped or photographed and used for professional development.

___________________________________                 __________________________
Participant’s signature                  Primary Researcher
Appendix B

Parental Consent in English and Spanish (Pilot Study)

February 10, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Ruth Cummings-Hypolite. I work for the Early Childhood Department of the Jersey City Public Schools and am a student at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Robert Campbell as part of my doctoral studies. My project will explore social emotional learning in the preschool classrooms. This will be achieved by investigating how a culture of respect influences social skills learning in the classroom for students who are four years old. The goal of the study is to determine the relationship between teaching respect and social skills learning. My project will span from March to June 2010 and will be conducted during the regular school day.

I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this project. As a group, the children will be asked three questions about respect. This will take place during a classroom activity with the teachers. The children’s responses will be videotaped. During the study, the teachers will be conducting classroom activities that will continue to teach the children empathy skills, cultural awareness, conflict resolution and moral education. Photographs will be taken of children’s work. Parents will be asked to participate in one activity. All the activities are aligned with the High/Scope curriculum, the State Preschool Standards and the mission of the district’s early childhood program. At the completion of these activities, as a group, the children will be asked the three questions about respect. Their responses will be videotaped.

When the study is completed, I will keep the videotapes for the three years required of a research study. To protect each child’s confidentiality, only fictitious names will be used to identify individuals. The videotape may be viewed by other researchers when the data are presented to teachers for professional development. All data will be reported in terms of group results; individual results will not be reported.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to be involved in this study will have no effect on what your child does in class, as participation is voluntary. At the end of the study, a summary of the group results will be made available to all interested parents. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please contact me at 201-723-8144 or hyprc2001@yahoo.com. Dr. Campbell can be reached at 856-256-4500 ext. 3817.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Ruth Cummings-Hypolite

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this Action Research Study Project by checking the appropriate statements below and returning this signed letter to your child’s teacher by March 5, 2010. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ruth Cummings-Hypolite at 201-723-8144 or hyprc2001@yahoo.com.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

___ Yes, I give permission for my child __________________________________ to participate in this Action Research Study Project March - June 2010.

___ I give permission for my child to be videotaped and used for professional development.

___ I also give permission for my child's work to be photographed and used for professional development.

___ No, I do not give permission for my child ________________________________ to participate in this Action Research Study Project March - June 2010.

________________________________________             _____________________
Parent/Guardian signature                                                   Date

________________________________________
Principal Investigator

Date
Consentimiento del Padres

Padres/Guardas:

Mi nombre es Ruth Cummings-Hypolite. Trabajo para el departamento de la niñez temprana en la ciudad de Jersey City. Soy también un estudiante en la Universidad de Rowan. Conduciré un proyecto de investigación bajo supervisión del Dr. Roberto Campbell como parte de mis estudios doctorales. Mi proyecto investigará cómo enseñanza del respecto influye las habilidades sociales que aprenden en la sala de clase. Mi proyecto comenzará en Marzo hasta Junio de 2010 durante el día en la escuela. Estoy pidiendo el permiso para que su niño participe en este proyecto.

El Proyecto

- En un grupo, voy a pedir los niños tres preguntas acerca de respecto. Esto ocurrirá durante una actividad de la sala de clase con los maestros.
- Las respuestas del los niños serán grabadas. Durante el estudio los maestros conducirán las actividades en la sala de clase que enseñarán a niños sobre empatía, conocimiento cultural, la resolución de conflicto y la educación moral.
- Las fotografías serán tomadas de trabajo de los niños
- Pedirán los padres participar en una actividad.
- Todas las actividades se alinean con el plan de estudios de High/Scope, los estándares para los niños preescolares, y la misión del programa de la niñez temprana.
- En la terminación de estas actividades harán los niños, como grupo, tres preguntas acerca de respecto. Sus respuestas serán grabadas

Cuando se termina el estudio guardaré las videocintas por los tres años requeridos de un estudio de esta investigación. Nombres ficticios serán utilizados para proteger la identidad de los niños. Las videocintas se pueden ver por otros investigadores cuando los datos se presentan a los maestros para el desarrollo profesional. Todos los datos serán divulgados en términos de resultados del grupo no por los estudiantes individuales.

Su decisión a permitir que su niño participe en este estudio no afectará sobre lo que hace su niño en clase. La participación es voluntaria.

En el final del estudio, un resumen de los resultados del grupo será puesto a disposición a todos los padres interesados. Si usted tiene cualesquiera preguntas, comenta o trata puede entrarme en contacto a (201) 723-8144 o un mensaje a hyprc2001@yahoo.com

Gracias.

Sinceramente,

Ruth Cummings-Hypolite
Indique si usted desea tener su niño participar en este proyecto del estudio compruebe la declaración apropiada abajo y volviendo esta letra firmada a la maestra del su niño antes del 5 de Marzo. Si usted tiene cualesquiera preguntas, comenta o trata puede entrarme en contacto a (201) 723-8144 o un mensaje a hyprc2001@yahoo.com

Gracias por su cooperación

________ Sí, doy el permiso para que mi niño____________________________ (el nombre de su hijo/a) participe en este estudio entre Marzo hasta Junio 2010.

________ Doy el permiso para que mi niño sea grabado y utilice para el desarrollo profesional

________ Tambièn doy el permiso para que el trabajo del mi niño/a sea fotografiado y utilice para el desarrollo profesional

________ No, no doy el permiso para que mi niño __________________________ (el nombre de su hijo/a) participe en este estudio entre Marzo hasta Junio 2010.

__________________________________________
Firma del padre/guarda

__________________________________________
Fecha

__________________________________________
investigador principal

__________________________________________
Fecha
Appendix C

Survey

How a Culture of Respect Influences Social Skills Learning in the Preschool Classroom

Instructions: Please answer the following questions on how teaching respect influences social skills learning in the preschool classroom. Your honest responses will provide valuable information. As directed by each question, please respond appropriately. Your survey number is located below. Do not put your name on the form. The completed survey should be collected in the envelope provided on March 15, 2010. Thank you for taking the time to

(Please check only one)

1. Survey Number: _______

2. I am currently a
   a. Teacher ____
   b. Teacher Assistant ____
   c. Prep Teacher ___

(Please check only one)

3. I have the following years of preschool teaching experience
   a. Less than 5 years __
   b. 6-10 years ____
   c. 11-15 years___
   d. Over 15 years ___

(Please check all that apply)

4. How would you define social skills?
   a. The ability to communicate with others
   b. The ability to develop meaningful relationships
   c. The ability to problem-solve
   d. Other (explain) ______________________

(Please check one)

5. How would you define respect?
   a. Developing positive relationships ____
   b. Equality ______
   c. Recognizing self-worth_____
   d. Understanding social rules ______
   e. Treating others as you would want to be treated ____
   f. Other ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________
6. How do you think the concept of respect relates to social skills?
   a. Understanding respect leads to social skills development _____
   b. Self respect leads to social skills ______
   c. Communication develops respect and respect leads to social skills development _
   d. Social skills development leads to respect ______
   e. They are related but not a cause and effect ______
   g. Other ____________________________________

(Please indicate your level of agreement by checking only one)
7. Social skills play a significant role in the preschool learning process.
   a. Strongly agree ___
   b. Agree _____
   c. Disagree _____
   d. Strongly disagree ______

(Please check only one)
8. In your current classroom setting, how often do you implement social skills activities?
   a. Very frequently (2 or more times daily) ______
   b. Frequently (3 to 5 times per week) _____
   c. Rarely (1 to 2 times per week) ______
   d. Never ______

(Please check only one)
9. In your current classroom setting, how often have you taught or discussed the concept of respect in the past 60 days?
   a. Very frequently (2 or more times daily) ______
   b. Frequently (3 to 5 times per week) _____
   c. Rarely (1 to 2 times per week) ______
   d. Never ______

(Please check only one)
10. What level of understanding about the concept of respect do the children in your classroom demonstrate?
   a. Very strong _____
   b. Strong _____
   c. Weak _____
   d. Very weak _____
11. What guides your implementation of social skills instructions in the preschool classroom?

a. District curriculum ___
b. Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards ____
c. NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) ______
d. Support from Early Childhood Support staff (Lead teacher, PIRT, Program Social worker)
e. Support from guidance counselor or school support staff ______
e. No guidance _____
f. Personal/professional judgment _____
g. Other (please explain)________________________________________________________________________

12. How would you best describe your comfort level with implementing social skills activities in your classroom?

a. Very comfortable _____
b. Somewhat comfortable _____
c. Somewhat uncomfortable _____
d. Very uncomfortable _____

13. How difficult do you believe it is to teach preschoolers about respect?

a. Very difficult____
b. Difficult ____
c. Somewhat difficult ____
d. Not difficult ______

14. How often have you used the word “respect” in your current classroom in the last 60 days?

a. Very frequently (2 or more times daily) ______
b. Frequently (3 to 5 times per week) ______
c. Rarely (1 to 2 times per week) ______
d. Never ______

15. What strategies do you find most effective for teaching preschoolers about respect?

a. Books ____
b. Role modeling ____
c. Puppetry ____
d. Stories ____
e. Other (please explain)
16. What do you think are possible barrier(s) to successfully teaching social skills in the preschool classroom?

a. Home environment/culture _______  
b. Lack of parental involvement _______  
c. Poor role model _______  
d. Emotional problems______  
e. Teachers' lack understanding about child development ____  
f. Egocentricity of preschoolers _______  
g. Other ____________________________

17. What do you think are possible barrier(s) to successfully teaching respect in the preschool classroom?

a. Home environment/culture _______  
b. Lack of parental involvement _______  
c. Poor role model _______  
d. Emotional problems______  
e. Teachers' lack understanding about child development ____  
f. Egocentricity of preschoolers _______  
g. Other ____________________________

18. What preparation or training have you received on teaching the concept of respect to preschoolers?

a. Undergraduate course___  
b. Master level course ___  
c. District’s professional development ___  
d. Training outside the district ____  
e. Professional readings ___  
f. Peer(s) _____  
g. None _____  
h. Other (please explain) ________________________________

19. Please check all terms that apply to how you think of your personal identity:

a. African-American ___  
b. Latino-American ___  
c. Asian ___  
d. Pacific Islander ___  
e. Middle-eastern ____  
f. Caucasian ____  
g. Other ____________________________

The completed survey must be returned, sealed, in the envelope provided. Your sealed envelope will be collected on 3/15/10.

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Appendix D

Checklist of Indicators

The following are indicators for assessing the level of social skills development in your classroom. Please score each question by marking an X to indicate a level of 1 to 5 with 1 being the least evident and 5 being most evident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students are able to show empathy (e.g., comfort another child crying).</td>
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<td>2. Students are able to take turns with each other without adult's prompting.</td>
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<td>3. Students are able to share with each other without adult's prompting.</td>
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<td>4. Students use the words <em>Please</em> and <em>Thank you</em> without adult's prompting.</td>
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<td>5. Students are able to initiate social contact and join a group activity without disrupting it.</td>
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<td>6. Students can identify his/her own feelings (e.g., <em>I'm mad</em>).</td>
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<td>7. Students are able to make decisions and trust their own ideas.</td>
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<td>8. Students are able to identify positive characteristics about themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Students are able to identify positive characteristics about others.</td>
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<td>10. Students understand and follow classroom rules.</td>
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<td>11. Students are able to identify when an action is <em>wrong</em> or <em>right</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Students are able to explain how an action is <em>wrong</em> or <em>right</em>.</td>
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<td>13. Students understand the concept of treating others the way they would like to be treated.</td>
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<td>14. Students can identify when their actions show respect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Students can identify when others' actions show respect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Students are able to use the concept of respect to solve problems.</td>
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<td>17. Students can explain what respect means.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. The word respect is used by students in their daily interactions with peers and adults.</td>
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Appendix E

Pre implementation Teachers’ Interview (Pilot Study)

As part of the data collection for this Action Research Project, I, as the primary researcher, will conduct an interview with the teachers. This interview will be utilized as a pre data collection tool.

Prior to the interview, the subject’s consent to videotape or tape the conversation will be requested. If their permission to videotape or tape record the interview session is not granted, a transcriber may be hired. The primary researcher will finalize the logistics for the interviews (meeting time and place) with the interviewees. The interviewee will receive a copy of the interview questions to review.

At the beginning of the interview, the primary researcher will introduce herself and explain the purpose of the assignment and confidentiality. If a transcriber is hired, the primary researcher will explain how the interviewee’s confidentiality will be protected. The following warm-up questions will be utilized to engage the interviewee and help to make the interview process a more relaxed and comfortable process.

Warm-Up Questions
1. What led you to a career in education?
2. What do you enjoy most about your job?
3. What is one of the biggest challenges you find in education?

Interview Questions (Pre)
1. This study will be focusing on respect. Can you foresee any difficulties connected with the study?

2. Do you think that making the concept of respect part of the classroom culture can help students learn and teachers teach?

3. What do you believe you might learn from participating in this study?

(The primary researcher will extend appreciation to participant)
Appendix  F

Children Pre implementation Interview Protocol (Pilot Study)

To ascertain the children’s understanding about the concept of respect, the following three questions will be asked of children during a pre and post-interview. The interviews should be conducted as a group during an activity in the daily routine (e.g., mealtim, morning message or small group). The teacher, along with the primary researcher, will decide the date and approximate time for the interviews. The primary researcher will facilitate the logistics for recording.

NOTE: While this activity is being conducted as part of a study, it is relevant to preschoolers’ learning experience. It is aligned with the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, the High/Scope curriculum, and the district’s early childhood Mission and Vision statements. While conducting the interviews, please adhere to the High/Scope preschool planning format.

Pre-Interview Protocol

Suggestion: To ensure spontaneous responses, the pre-interview may take place during mealtim. Mealtim is part of the preschool instructional program. It might be a good time to engage children in this conversation.

The children will be asked the following three questions:

1. What does it mean when someone says, "You dis me?" (The term "dis" is a common urban slang referring to disrespect).

2. What does respect mean?

3. How do you show respect?

Introduction sample:

Teacher: Boys and girls, I would like you to tell me… or Boys and girls have you ever heard someone say, "You dis me?" (If children indicate familiarity with this slang, ask What does it mean? If the children indicate no familiarity with the slang, move to the next question about respect.

Teacher: What does respect mean?

Teacher: How do you show respect?
Appendix G

Letter for Poster in English and Spanish (Pilot Study)

Dear Parents/Guardians

Over the past few months, your child’s teachers and I have been talking about the concept of respect in the classroom. Please use the attached paper to design a poster with your child about RESPECT for Show and Tell in the classroom.

   All posters are due by Friday, June 11, 2010.
   Posters can be made with pictures from magazines, digital photos, and/or your own drawing.

If you have any questions, please contact me (Ruth Cummings-Hypolite) at 201-723-8144 or hyprc2001@yahoo.com.

Thank You

RESPECT Project researcher:
Classroom teacher:
Padres/Guardas:

Durante los últimos meses, las maestras de su hijo(a) y yo hemos estado hablando del concepto de respecto en la sala de clase. Por favor utilice el papel atado para diseñar un cartel con su hijo(a) sobre el RESPECTO por la demostración de la actividad demuestre y diga en la sala de clase.

**Todos los carteles debe ser terminado antes del Viernes, 11 de Junio 2010.**

Los carteles se pueden hacer con los cuadros de los compartimientos, de las fotos digitales, y/o de su propio dibujo.

Si usted tiene cualesquiera preguntas, por favor llamame, Ruth Cummings-Hypolite, 201-723-8144 o puedes mandar un mensaje a hyprc2001@yahoo.com.

Gracias,

Investigador del proyecto del RESPECTO:

Maestra de la sala de clase:
Appendix H

Children Post implementation Interview Protocol (Pilot Study)

By the end of May 2010, the classroom activities and parent activity should be completed. The interviews should be conducted as a group during an activity in the daily routine (e.g., morning message or small group). The teacher, along with the primary researcher, will decide the date and approximate time for the interview. The primary researcher will facilitate the logistics for recording.

Suggestion: The morning message or small group activity might be a good part of the daily routine to engage the children for the post-interview.

Introduction sample:
Teacher: *Boys and girls, we have been talking about respect.* (Teacher can provide or solicit reminders from the children of activities done to promote respect in the classroom.) *Can you tell me...*

Teacher: *What does respect mean?*

Teacher: *How do you show respect?* or *How do we show respect in our class?*
Appendix I

Post Implementation Teachers’ Interview Protocol (Pilot Study)

This is the post-interview with classroom teachers participating in the Action Research Project. I, as the primary researcher, will conduct this interview.

Prior to the interview, the subject’s consent to videotape or tape the conversation will be requested. If their permission to videotape or tape record the interview session is not granted, a transcriber may be hired. The primary researcher will finalize the logistics for the interviews (meeting time and place) with the interviewees. The interviewee will receive a copy of the interview questions to review.

At the beginning of the interview, the primary researcher will introduce herself and explain the purpose of the assignment and confidentiality. If a transcriber is hired, the primary researcher will explain how the interviewee’s confidentiality will be protected.

Post-Interview Questions

1. What concerns surfaced during the study?

2. Were these concerns addressed to your satisfaction?

3. What did you get or learn from this experience?

4. What would you have liked to change about this study?

5. Do you think that teaching the concept of respect can help students learn and teachers teach?

6. Has your own concept of respect changed as a result of your participation in this study?

(The primary researcher will extend appreciation to the participant)
Appendix J

Respect Curriculum

Introduction

This Teacher's Guide for creating a classroom culture of respect is designed for the preschool classroom of four year old students. The concepts covered in the Guide are aligned with the New Jersey Preschool Learning Standards and High/Scope key developmental indicators and are identified in the last column (alignment). These activities were based on five components to support children's understanding of respect and creating a classroom culture in which respect is evident: empathy, (Adams & Baronberg, 2005); diversity training (Pass, 2009 & Rock, 2004); conflict resolution (Epstein, 2009); moral development (Koc & Buzzelli, 2004); and family involvement (Epstein, 2009; Elias et al., 1997; Ankeney, 1997; Christopersen & VanScoyoc, 2002).

Implementing the Guide

During the implementation of the activities in this Guide, the three stages of learning a new skill: acquisition, fluency, and maintenance and generalization (Fox & Lentini, 2006) should be utilized. After the children are introduced to each concept, the words or skills used to teach that concept should be embedded in the classroom's daily routine. As additional concepts are introduced, they must build on the skills taught in the teaching
of the previous concepts. Providing opportunities in the daily routine for children to use these skills support their development of skill fluency (Fox & Lentini, 2006; Bonaiuto, Johnson, & Poliner, 2005).

It is very important that the adults model respectful behaviors in their interactions with children, colleagues, and parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acquisition Stage: Show and Tell</th>
<th>Fluency: Practice Makes Perfect</th>
<th>Maintenance and Generalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Explain concretely</td>
<td>- Offer multiple opportunities to practice</td>
<td>- Provide opportunities to use the skill or concept in new situations or with new people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Demonstrate</td>
<td>- Help child link concept or skill to others</td>
<td>- Provide opportunities within a variety of activities and in new applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Link to other ideas or concepts</td>
<td>- Prompt the child to use the skill or concept in new situations</td>
<td>- Comment on the child’s ability to maintain the skill and generalize its use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Examples and non-examples</td>
<td>- Elaborate on the skill or Concept</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourage child when learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Acknowledge the behavior you want to see</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Fox & Lentini, (2006)
Introducing the Project and Assessing the Learning Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Introducing the project to the class | Assessing children’s understanding of respect:  
As a group, the teachers should ask the children the following two questions about respect  
1. What does respect mean?  
2. How do you show respect?  

**Note:** Take note of the children’s response. Do not provide any prompts at this time. |
| Explaining Respect | Teachers can utilize the attached handout to explain in developmentally appropriate language the concept of respect.  
The teacher should explain to the children that the class will be:  
- Building a *community of respect*  
- Talking about respect  
- Treating each other the way we want to be treated e.g. sharing, taking turns, saying please, thank you and being kind  

**Note:** Teacher may need to explain the word community to the children. |
| KDI: Language, Literacy and Communication |
| Social and Emotional Development |
## Classroom Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Classroom Design Develop a classroom structure conducive to creating a culture of respect.</td>
<td>Teachers will assess the classroom environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A culture of respect occurs when the setting promotes respect which is evident in the adult to adult, adult to children, and children to children relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout the project adults in the classroom will be encouraged to utilize the word RESPECT in daily conversations with the children and each other. The goal is to have the concept of respect part of the natural setting in the classroom and children’s vocabulary.</td>
<td>Checklist: 1. Do you greet the children and parents each morning?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Do you have a positive relationship with your classroom team? Other visiting adults to your room?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Are there books and/or other materials that promote cultural diversity, people with disabilities, social skills, and positive self-image?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Do you engage children in positive adult-child and peer to peer interactions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Do you promote home-school connection?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Do your classroom rules tell children what is expected of them?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Part 1: Empathy Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Empathy:**  
→ Because emotions are expressed through verbal and nonverbal cues, children need to learn how to identify their own emotions so they can develop empathy for the emotions of others (Hunter, T. 2008. Creating a Culture of Peace in the Elementary Classroom).  
According to Greenspan, "The ability to empathize (understand how another feels) begins to appear at the end of the second year of life and develops over the early childhood years (as cited by Evans 2002, p.23) You Can’t Come To My Birthday Party!" | **Empathy**  
1. **Emotional Vocabulary**  
2. **Emotional Literacy with books**  
Goals: To enhance children’s:  
1. awareness of their feelings and the feelings of others.  
2. feelings vocabulary  
3. understanding of the concept of respecting others' feelings  
3. **Collage**  
Picture collage of different emotions which can then be labeled.  
4. **Pro-social Puppetry**  
7. **Good Deed Poster** (see attached)  
8. Develop a book with the children about the Good Deeds* they have done or what someone else has done for them.  
9. Good Deed Links- on strips of construction paper have children share about a good deed they have done or someone has done for them. Write it on the paper. As other deeds are shared connect them as a link to display in the room. Watch it grow. Parents can become part of sharing good deeds about their child. | **KDI:**  
Social and Emotional Development  
Language, Literacy and Communication  
Core Curriculum Standards: Social Studies  
**COR**  
Social Relations |
Emotional literacy is one of the most important skills for a child to acquire in early childhood (Webster-Stratton as cited in Adams & Baronberg, 2005 p.53).

Part 2- Diversity Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Diversity Training</td>
<td>Everybody is Unique</td>
<td>KDI: Language, Literacy and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal: To teach respect for others' unique attributes</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Physical attributes: Teachers will encourage children to identify their similarities and differences. Examples: hair color, hair length, pigmentation, eyes color and shape, numbers of siblings, etc.</td>
<td>Core Curriculum Standards:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Develop a graph with the children based on their physical attributes. Teacher should talk about how we can respect those who are different. Encourage the children to share their ideas. Teacher will show the children pictures of people with a disability. Encourage children to talk about the picture. Teacher will talk about how we can respect those who are different. Teachers can discuss the abilities of people with a disability e.g. Stevie Wonder. If possible, have a guest speaker with a disability talk about their ability, or use books and/or video.</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Utilize books to teach children about diversity (see attached list).</td>
<td>COR: Mathematics and Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Utilize different types of music and movement to acknowledge and teach respect for diversity. Children can be encouraged to make up a song about RESPECT (see attached)</td>
<td>Movement and Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Simon Says “Who Are You?” (see attached)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Manners =Respect (see attached)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Part 3: Conflict Resolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conflict Resolution Training</td>
<td>1. <strong>Feeling Vocabulary</strong> I use pictures of people showing different emotions. Discuss the feelings expressed in the picture, encourage the children to role-play when they have experienced similar emotions. Talk about conflicts that occur in the classroom. Encourage the children to talk about the feelings they experienced in those situations. Role-play with children some positive solutions to these conflicts. Encourage the children to brainstorm ideas for solving the problem. Connect these discussions to previous activities on empathy skills and the concept of respect.</td>
<td>KDI: Language, Literacy and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social and Emotional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Preschool Standards:</strong> Social/Emotional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>COR:</strong> Social Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tucker Turtle Story</td>
<td>Utilize &quot;Tucker Turtle&quot; story to discuss and teach the concept of respect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tucker Turtle calming techniques</td>
<td>(see attached). Introduce and post the three steps to calming down from the &quot;Tucker Turtle&quot; story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teach children relaxation activities (e.g. yoga activities, breathing techniques) to use when they are angry.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Share books with themes of conflict and encourage the children to talk about the problem. Teacher should use the concepts introduced about respect (e.g. treating others the way we would like to be treated) to facilitate children brainstorming solutions for problems occurring in the class. These solutions can be recorded and used in future discussions or as a prompt/guide for respectful solutions.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Part 4: Moral Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Moral education | Moral education is the process whereby teachers and other adults support children’s growing understanding of right and wrong, their ability to think critically about how their actions affect the well-being of others, and their expression of values such as caring, respect for others, and responsibility | KDI: Language, Literacy and Communication
Social and Emotional Development |
| 1. Literacy | a. Read a story (see attached list) to the children<br>b. Discuss the moral issues in the story. | Core Curriculum Standards: Social Studies |
| 2. My Story* | a. Encourage children (individual or group) to make up their own story book about respect.<br>b. Display the books in the classroom and make them part of the library. | COR: Creative Representation |
| 3. Role play | Teach decision-making skills by role playing | Preschool Standards: Social/Emotional Development |
| 4. Pro-social Puppets | Encourage the children to role play or share their story using puppets to act out a decision-making process | |
## Part 5 Family Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Family Involvement Activity</strong>&lt;br&gt;Parents can also provide indirect (noncoercive) instruction to young children on how to take the perspective of their playmates and understand their emotions (as cited by Epstein, 2009 p.107).</td>
<td><strong>1. Home–school connection activity</strong>&lt;br&gt;a. Send home poster material with flyer (see attachment) providing instruction for the parent/child RESPECT poster&lt;br&gt;c. Encourage parents to return the RESPECT poster to the class by _______________&lt;br&gt;c. Display the posters in the classroom.&lt;br&gt;d. Show and Tell: Each child should be given an opportunity in the classroom show and tell activity to describe his/her poster.</td>
<td><strong>Preschool Standards:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Social Studies, Family, and Life Skills&lt;br&gt;Note:&lt;br&gt;Teachers should take note of children’s vocabulary for describing the poster and who worked with them on the poster.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activities to Promote Emotional Literacy and develop Empathy skills

Feeling Beanbag Toss

**Purpose:** To promote children’s ability to identify and name emotions based on facial expressions and to speculate on situations that produce each emotional state.

**Materials:** Beanbags, floor poster with pictures of four basic emotions: happy, sad, angry, and afraid.
Pictures on the poster can be photographs of faces cut from magazines or line drawings, each showing children or adults experiencing one of the emotions listed above.
Glue one picture to each quadrant of the poster board.
Laminate

**Procedure:**
Show the poster board to a small group of children who are sitting in a semicircle.
Place the poster in front of the children.
Identify each photograph emotion.
The teacher begins the game by tossing the beanbag on one of the faces. She names the emotion, and then states a reason or event that might make her feel that way.
Example: I get sad when my child is sick.
Children take turn tossing the beanbag onto an emotion picture, naming it and saying what makes them feel that way.

**Extension:**
As children become adept at identifying these four basic emotions, add other emotion pictures (surprised, disgusted, excited, and jealous) and play the beanbag toss again.

**Mood Wheel**

**Purpose:** To promote children's ability to identify and take ownership of their feelings.

**Materials:**
Mood wheels for each child in a small (five to six). Create a mood wheel by cutting a piece of tagboard into a circle. Draw lines to divide the circle into fourths. On each section of the circle, draw a face that reflects one emotion (happy, sad, angry, and afraid). Write the emotion word next to the picture. Laminate or cover with clear contact paper. Affix an arrow to the center of the wheel with a fastener, so that the arrow can be moved to point to any emotion on the wheel.

**Procedure:**
Show one mood wheel to a small group of children who are sitting in a semicircle on the floor. Identify each emotion drawing. The teacher begins the activity by moving her arrow to point to a feeling face. She names the emotion, and then states a reason or event that might make her feel that way. "I feel angry when I can't find my car keys." Describe situations familiar to young children. Pass out a mood wheel to each child. One at a time, give the children a chance to indicate how they feel by turning their arrow to a certain feeling face. Ask the children to explain why they are feeling that way.

**Extension:**
Allow the children to keep their mood wheel in their classroom cubbie. Children may use the mood wheel at any time during the day to indicate how they are feeling. Children can bring their mood wheel to circle time and have a chance to show their friends how they feel. The wheel can be used during a classroom incident to help children communicate their feeling at the moment. This might be especially helpful for children who have a hard time using words.

Name the Emotion Chart

**Purpose:**
To identify emotions and use feeling words.

**Materials:** Chart with each child’s name and a piece of Velcro next to their name.
Laminated feeling face pictures with Velcro on the back

**Procedure:**
As children arrive each morning they select a feeling face picture that best depicts their emotional state and put it next to their name. Adults greeting children can discuss each child’s choice. “I see that you chose a happy face. What made you happy today?”

**Extensions**
Encourage children to change their feeling face picture throughout the day as their feelings change.


(This activity helps children to take ownership of their feelings, the adults to acknowledge and support children’s feelings throughout the day).

**Feelings Song**

After you have introduced many feeling words to children, add new verses to “If you’re happy and you know it” song. Teach the children the words and some exaggerated gestures to make for each verse.

- If you’re happy and you know it, give a smile.
- If you’re sad and you know it, give a frown
- If you’re mad and you know it, use the word “I’m mad” a smile.
- If you’re scared and you know it, say “Yikes!”
- If you’re silly and you know it, make a face
- If you’re tired and you know it, go to sleep
- If you’re proud and you know it, pat you back.


(This activity helps to enhance children’s emotional vocabulary, listening to sounds and rhythm, literacy and encourage their creativity. Have fun!).
Recommended books to Support the Teaching of Respect

1. You’ve Got Respectful Manners! What to say when you don’t know how by Louise Elerding
2. The Thank You Book by Carole Stuart
3. Manners in the library by Carrie Finn
4. Manners at a friend’s house by Amanda Doering Tourville
5. Oh Behave! by Kelly Douda
6. Thoughts and Feelings: Thanks by The Child’s World Inc.*
7. Thoughts and Feelings: I’m sorry by The Child’s World Inc*.
8. The land of Many Colors by The Klamath County YMCA Family Preschool *
9. Just Be Nice... to your little friends! by Caroline Kenneth
10. What Would Barney Say? - Sheryl Leach
11. Clifford’s Good Deeds - Norman Bridwell
12. Mine! - Linda Hayward
13. Barney says, “Please and Thank You” - Stephen White
14. We Are All Alike... We Are All Different - Cheltenham Elementary School Kindergartens*
15. Big Al- Andrew Clemens Yoshi *
16. Why Am I Different- Norma Simon
17. Say the Magic Word, Please- Anna Ross
18. The Doorbell Rang- Pat Hutchins
19. All About You- Catherine and Laurence Anbolt
20. Families are different- Nina Pellegrini *
21. I Like Me - Nancy Carlson
22. Me Too! - Mercer Mayer
23. FACES - Shelly Rotna and Ken Kreister *
24. Just Like Max by K. Ackerman
25. The Emperor’s New Clothes by H. Anderson
26. The Rainbow Fish by J. Alison
27. Tar beach by F. Ringgold
28. This is our House by M. Rosen
29. The Little Red Hen by M. Zemach
30. Animals should definitely not by J. Barrett
Supplement to Guide Creating a Culture of Respect

Empathy training

1. Pro-social puppetry
   Materials: brown paper or construction paper
   Glue, sticks

   1. Encourage each child to make a puppet
   2. Have the child name the puppet

   Suggestions for using the puppet
   1. Have the children introduce their puppet to the class. Adults should help to create enthusiasm with each introduction
   2. Create a special place in the classroom to display the puppets
   3. Utilize the puppets to role-play real prosocial classroom situations

2. Social and Emotional skills Activities
   Utilize the following
   - Feeling Faces
   - Feeling Beanbag Toss
   - Mood Wheel
   - Name the emotion chart
   - Feeling Song
   - My Own Feelings

   Teacher will encourage each child to choose a feeling face and share with the group.

   As each child show feeling face they choose, the teacher will ask:
   1. Do you ever feel (name the emotion)?
   2. Who is feeling _____ (name the emotion) now? Teacher should ask if the children want to share what happened
   3. For the other children not feeling this emotion, ask do you ever feel _____ (name the emotion)?
   4. Have children ideas about things they can do in the classroom to create happy/good feelings, or help their friends who might be feeling sad.

   Highlight with the children that they show empathy when helping others.
Good Deeds

Read The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister (see attached Book Nook for additional suggestions) to the class.

After reading the book:
1. Have the children identify the emotions that occurred in the story
2. Share with the children that at the end the rainbow fish did a good deed.
   Brainstorm with the children the good deed that occurred in the story.
3. After the children become familiar with the concept of a good deed ask:
   What good deed did you do in class? Teacher might have to give example; held the door for classmate, help your friend open his bag or zipper
4. Encourage the children to identify good deeds (Good deed can also occur at home)

Sharing Good Deeds -
Identify a time in the weekly routine to encourage children to share a good deed they did. A good deed can be an act at home or school. Share this activity with the parents. They can help children identify and encourage good deeds at home.

Activity Extension
1. Child can be encouraged to draw a picture of their good deed and share it with the class.
2. Develop a chain link of good deeds. Good deed can be written on a chain link of paper to be hung around the classroom. See what you have at the end of the school year!
Diversity Training
Learning to Respect Others’ Unique Attributes

1. Activity: Simon Says, Who We You?
Explain to children how to play the game of Simon Says (one person gives the command and others listen and respond).
Tip: Adult may need to model the game first with the children
Remind the children to listen and watch carefully as they play because at the end each child must tell one new thing they learned about classmate.

2. Simon says, “Everyone with brown eyes, stand up.”
“Everyone with curly hair put your left hand up.”
“Everyone who has a dog as pet, jump up and down.”
“Everyone who has a cat as a pet put your hand on your head up.”
“Everyone who has a bird as a pet, hop on your left leg.”
“Everyone who like baseball, touch your nose.”
“Everyone who speaks another language, hop on your right leg.”
“Everyone who likes basketball put two hands up in the air.”
“Everyone who has a new brother, snap your fingers.”
“Everyone who has a new sister, give clap your hands.”

After the game:
Ask children: “What did you learn about someone in the class?”

Extension: Children with similarities should be grouped and ask to share their similarity (example, having a dog as a pet).

A graph to represent the children’s similarities can be completed with the group.

3. Self-Doll
Using construction paper or other materials
Encourage each child to draw or make a doll of them.
As each child describes his/her doll, the teacher should write record the child’s description.
4. Activity: Manners = Respect

Recommended Books

The Chocolate-Covered Cookie Tantrum by Deborah Blumenthal
Excuse Me! A Little book of Manners by Karen Katz
Sometimes I'm Bombaloo by Rachel Vail

After reading the book, ask the children what it means to have good manners. Give examples to help children understand. Help the children to identify examples of good manners portrayed in the book. Identify some good manners they use at school and home. How do they think it makes others feel when they use good manners? Discuss with the children how good manners help to make the class a respectful community?

Tip: Integrate the term good manners into the daily routine and especially at meal times. Remember to acknowledge good manners.

Conflict Resolution

1. Utilize the Tucker Turtle Story by Rochele Lentini (2005)

http://challengignbehavior.org/do/resources/teaching_tools/toc/folder4/4c_tucker_turtle.ppt

After reading the story encourage the children to talk about how Tucker showed respect to his friends. Identify the skills he used e.g. using his words, breathing for relaxation. Encourage the children to practice the breathing techniques.

Include the Tucker Turtle book in the library area. Post pictures of the Tucker Turtle breathing technique where children can easy visible access to it.

When conflicts arise in the classroom help children to build on the skills they learned in the empathy training. Use words to describe their feelings, taking turn to talk, and listening.

Observe and acknowledge when children are able to resolve their conflict peacefully using these concepts.
Moral Education

After reading the book The Chocolate-Covered-Cookie Tantrum or others from the lists provided or from your classroom library, discuss with the children a wrong decision made in the story. Ask, why was it a bad decision? What right decision was made? What made it a right decision?

Utilize class situations to help the children think critically about how their actions affect others. As children become more critically include this skills with conflict resolution.

Observe and acknowledge how the children are able to think critically. Support these skills and build on them by utilizing the concepts in the daily routine.

Family Involvement

Decide on a day for show and tell and send home the flyer for the poster. When the parent/child poster is returned have each child show their poster. Show and tell should include the following:

1. Have each child tell the family member that helped them with the poster
2. Encourage them to describe the poster

Posters should be displayed in the classroom. **Suggestion:** Parent Night would be a good time for parents to see the display.
Appendix K

Principal Study Consent Letters (English and Spanish)

October 1, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Ruth Cummings-Hypolite. I work for the Early Childhood Department of the Jersey City Public Schools and am a student at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Robin Haskell McBee as part of my doctoral studies. My project will explore social emotional learning in the preschool classrooms. This will be achieved by investigating how a culture of respect influences social skills learning in the classroom for students who are four years old. The goal of the study is to gain teachers’ perspective on the implementation of activities designed to create a culture of respect in the preschool classroom. My project will span from October to December 2010 and will be conducted during the regular school day.

I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this project. During the study, the teachers will be implementing classroom activities that will teach children empathy skills, cultural awareness, conflict resolution and moral education. Photographs will be taken of children’s work. Parents will be asked to participate in one activity. All the activities are aligned with the High/Scope curriculum, the State Preschool Standards and the mission of the district’s early childhood program.

When the study is completed, I will keep the photographs for the three years required of a research study. To protect each child’s confidentiality, only fictitious names will be used to identify individuals. The photographs may be viewed by other researchers when the data are presented to teachers for professional development. All data will be reported in terms of group results; individual results will not be reported.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to be involved in this study will have no effect on what your child does in class, as participation is voluntary. At the end of the study, a summary of the group results will be made available to all interested parents. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please contact me at 201-723-8144 or hyprc2001@yahoo.com. Dr. Robin Haskell McBee can be reached at 856-256-4500 ext. 3093.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ruth Cummings-Hypolite

Please initial _____
Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this Action Research Study Project by checking the appropriate statements below and returning this signed letter to your child's teacher by October 1, 2010. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ruth Cummings-Hypolite at 201-723-8144 or hyprc2001@yahoo.com.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

___ Yes, I give permission for my child ________________________________ to participate in this Action Research Study Project October-December 2010.

___ I give permission for my child's work to be photographed and used for professional development.

___ No, I do not give permission for my child ________________________________ to participate in this Action Research Study Project October-December 2010.

________________________________________             _____________________
Parent/Guardian signature                  Date

_________________________________________        ______________________
Principal Investigator                                                    Date
Consentimiento del Padres

Padres/Guardias:

Mi nombre es Ruth Cummings-Hypolite. Trabajo para el departamento de la niñez temprana en la ciudad de Jersey City. Soy también un estudiante en la Universidad de Rowan. Conduciré un proyecto de investigación bajo supervisión del Dr. Robin Haskell McBee como parte de mis estudios doctorales. Mi proyecto investigará cómo enseñanza del respeto influye en las habilidades sociales que aprenden en la sala de clase con niños de cuartos años. El objetivo del estudio es obtener una perspectiva del maestros en actividades destinadas a crear un cutura de respeto en el salon. Mi proyecto comenzará en Octubre hasta diciembre durante el día en la escuela. Estoy pidiendo el permiso para que su niño participe en este proyecto.

El Proyecto

- Durante el estudio los maestros conducirán las actividades en la sala de clase que enseñarán a niños sobre empatía, conocimiento cultural, la resolución de conflicto y la educación moral.
- Las fotografías serán tomadas de trabajo de los niños.
- Pedirán los padres participar en una actividad.
- Todas las actividades se alinean con el plan de estudios de High/Scope, los estándares para los niños preescolares, y la misión del programa de la niñez temprana.

Cuando se termina el estudio guardaré las fotos por los tres años requeridos de un estudio de esta investigación. Nombres ficticios serán utilizados para proteger la identidad de los niños. Las videocintas se pueden ver por otros investigadores cuando los datos se presentan a los maestros para el desarrollo profesional. Todos los datos serán divulgados en términos de resultados del grupo no por los estudiantes individuales.

Su decisión a permitir que su niño participe en este estudio no efectuará sobre lo que hace su niño en clase. La participación es voluntaria.

En el final del estudio, un resumen de los resultados del grupo será puesto a disposición a todos los padres interesados. Si usted tiene cualesquier preguntas, comenta o trata puede entrarme en contacto a (201) 723-8144 o un mensaje a hyprc2001@yahoo.com. O puedes llamar el supervisor de mis estudios doctorales Dr. Robin Haskell McBee (856) 256-4500 ext. 3093.

Gracias.

Sinceramente,

Ruth Cummings-Hypolite

Por favor, inicial ____
Indique si usted desea tener su niño participar en este proyecto del estudio compruebe la declaración apropiada abajo y volviendo esta letra firmada a la maestra del su niño antes del 1 de Octubre. Si usted tiene cualesquiera preguntas, comenta o trata puede entrarme en contacto a (201) 723-8144 o un mensaje a hyprc2001@yahoo.com

Gracias por su cooperación

________ Sí, doy el permiso para que mi niño____________________________________ (el nombre de su hijo/a) participe en este estudio entre Octubre hasta Diciembre.

________ También doy el permiso para que el trabajo del mi niño/a sea fotografiado y utilice para el desarrollo profesional

________ No, no doy el permiso para que mi niño __________________________ (el nombre de su hijo/a) participe en este estudio entre Octubre hasta Diciembre 2010.

__________________________________________              ________________
Firma del padre/guarda                                      Fecha

__________________________________________              ________________
Investigador Principal                                      Fecha
Appendix L

Orientation/Training Agenda

RESPECT Project
Orientation Agenda
September 2010
Site #1, Site 2, & Site 3

1. Introduction

2. Warm up
   Think of a time as early as you can recall when you felt respected.
   How did it make you feel?
   Now, think of a time as early as you can recall when you felt disrespected.
   How did it make you feel?

3. Overview of the project:
   Purpose of the project: Teacher's perspective on the guidebook
   Timeline: October to December
   Role of teachers: Implement the guide book, notice challenges, changes
   What support will be provided: Primary research will provide coaching as needed
   What kind of data will be collected: observations, interviews, pictures, feedback
   Monitoring the project
   Informing parents: Distribution of a parental consent letter

4. Implementing the teacher's guide for creating a culture of respect

5. Confidentiality, ethics, authenticity

6. Question/Answer

Thanks for your participation!
Appendix M

Principal Study Participant’s Consent

My name is Ruth Cummings-Hypolite and I am currently seeking a doctoral degree through Rowan University. As part of my dissertation thesis, I will conduct an action research study under the supervision of Dr. Robin Haskell McBee, my dissertation chair at Rowan University. My study will explore social emotional learning in the preschool classroom. This will be achieved by investigating how a culture of respect influences social skills learning in the preschool classroom for students who are four years old.

The research study will include interviews, surveys, your implementation of activities designed to teach the concept of respect, observations and document review. Your voluntary participation in this research study is greatly appreciated. There are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. All data collected will be kept confidential. At the end of the study, all data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for the three years required of a research study, then disposed of by shredding.

The information from this study will provide valuable insight about the implementation of these activities and promotion of a culture of respect in the preschool environment. The data information gained will be used in any way thought best for publication or education. All data will be reported in terms of group results; individual results will not be reported. If you would like to receive a copy of the results, please contact me at the email address below.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 201-723-8144 or hyprc2001@yahoo.com. Dr. Robin Haskell McBee can be reached at 856-256-4500 ext. 3093.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Ruth Cummings-Hypolite

Your signature below represents your consent to serve as a participant in this research.

_____ Yes, I agree to implement the activities described in the guide to the best of my ability and provide honest feedback regarding its implementation and effectiveness.

_____ Yes, I give permission to be videotaped or photographed and used for professional development.

_____ Yes, I agree that any information I provide in this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

_____ No, I do not give permission to be videotaped or photographed and used for professional development.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant's signature</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>Primary Researcher</th>
<th>date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Appendix N
Pre Implementation Teachers’ Interview Protocol

Teacher Interview Questions

Prior to the interview, the teachers’ consent to videotape or audiotape the conversation will be secured. The primary researcher will finalize the logistics for the interviews (meeting time and place) with the teachers. The teachers will receive a copy of the questions prior to the interview.

At the beginning of the interview, the primary researcher will introduce herself and explain the purpose of the assignment, and confidentiality. If a transcriber is hired, the primary researcher will explain how the interviewee’s confidentiality will be protected. The following warm-up questions will be utilized to engage the interviewee and help to make the interview process a more relaxed and comfortable process.

- What led you to a career in education?
- What do you enjoy most about your job?
- What is one of the biggest challenges you find in the field of early childhood education?

1. This study will be focusing on respect. Can you foresee any difficulties connected with the study?

2. Do you think that making the concept of respect part of the classroom culture can help students learn and teachers teach?

3. What do you believe you might learn from participating in this study?

Appendix O
December 1, 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Over the past few months, your child’s teachers and have been talking about the concept of respect in the classroom. Please use the attached paper to design a poster with your child about RESPECT for Show and Tell in the classroom.

All posters are due by: ____________________________

Posters can be made with pictures from magazines, digital photos, and/or your own drawing.

If you have any questions, please contact me (Ruth Cummings-Hypolite) at 201-723-8144 or hyprc2001@yahoo.com.

Thank You,

RESPECT Project researcher:
Classroom teacher:

Poster letter in Spanish
Padres/Guardas:

Durante los últimos meses, las maestras de su hijo(a) y yo hemos estado hablando del concepto de respeto en la sala de clase. Por favor utilice el papel atado para diseñar un cartel con su hijo(a) sobre el RESPECTO por la demostración de la actividad demuestre y diga en la sala de clase.

**Todos los carteles debes ser terminado antes del 3 de Diciembre 2010.**

Los carteles se pueden hacer con los cuadros de los compartimientos, de las fotos digitales, y/o de su propio dibujo.

Si usted tiene cualesquier preguntas, por favor llamame, Ruth Cummings-Hypolite, 201-723-8144 o puedes mandar un mensaje a hyprc2001@yahoo.com.

Gracias,

Investigador del proyecto del RESPECTO: Ruth Cummings-Hypolite

Maestra de la sala de clase:
Appendix P

Post Implementation Teachers’ Interview Protocol (Principal Study)

Post-Implementation Teacher Interview Questions

1. How often did you use the Guide?

2. How effective did you find the Guide?

3. Describe any difficulties you faced with implementing the Guide.

4. How has your own concept of respect influenced as a result of your participation in this study?

5. What changes, if any did you observe in your students' attitudes, use of words, or behavior in the classroom?

6. How did you and/or the students benefit from participation in this study? Short term? Long term?

7. What recommendations do you have regarding this Guide? Would you recommend it to other early childhood teachers?

8. Would you continue to implement the activities beyond this study?