Values education in the American school system

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VALUES EDUCATION IN THE AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

by
Angela Korch

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Science in Teaching Degree of The Graduate School at Rowan University
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Approved by
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Abstract

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VALUES EDUCATION IN THE AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM
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Professor David Hespe
Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this study was to examine students and their values and the integration of teaching values in the school setting to determine whether or not it is beneficial to focus on teaching values within the classroom; and especially the value of respect. The instruments which were used to gather data in this study were a researcher journal, student artifacts, focus group meetings, and two charts. Students demonstrated a general understanding of what respect was and who they should be respectful to as well as how they should be respectful to them. In addition, the students completed a variety of assignments and participated in lessons centered around the idea of respect. Students were able to actively reflect on past experiences involving respect. It was established through these lessons that students would need a year round values program implemented to be most effective. Further implications for teaching these students were discussed including using more frequent lessons and implement a rewards system in regards to respect into the classroom management plan at the beginning of the year.
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Chapter One
Scope of the Study
Introduction

“Move out of my way!” Caleb said as he came plowing up the stairs. Ms. Jacobs sees Caleb running up the stairs and yells to him “You need to slow down and watch where you are going because you are going to knock someone over!” Caleb is an energetic eight year old with bright red hair. In Mrs. Shapiro’s third grade class he is always getting told to slow down and watch out for the little kids in the hallway and on the stairs. “Give me!”, “Move”, and “It is mine!” are phrases which are constantly coming out of Caleb’s mouth. Caleb never says “Please”, “Thank you”, or “Excuse me” and shows little regard for other children’s feelings.

Later that same day Jared told Mrs. Shapiro “I had football cards in my desk before lunch and now they are gone.” Mrs. Shapiro then had all the students turn their pockets inside out; Caleb then took cards out of his pockets as he turned them out. Mrs. Shapiro asked Caleb “Where did you get these cards?” Caleb could not answer. Jared then came over and looked at the cards and said that they were his. Mrs. Shapiro then took Caleb into the hallway and told him that lying and stealing were not right. She then made Caleb call his mother and tell her what he did; however, his mother did not seem to care much and seemed more bothered by the fact that Mrs. Shapiro was interrupting her at work. The next day Caleb came in and tried to forge his mother’s signature in his
assignment pad. This time Mrs. Shapiro wrote a note home to his mother; she received no response back from Caleb’s mother.

Purpose Statement

Teachers have seen plenty of scenarios such as Caleb’s, that child who just does not seem to care and shows a lack of regard for others. Sometimes it is a child who just really seems to have no common values and other times it is what appears to be the lack of parental involvement that Mrs. Shapiro witnessed. Either way it is clear that there are many Calebs in the school systems and these children are not demonstrating positive values. Children’s values can be seen in the way that they behave and seen as respect, honesty, loyalty, and courage to name a few. Values education has been a controversial topic for quite some time and many debate over not whether values should even be taught in school, but what and whose values should be taught. Over time values education programs and values themselves have changed. The values have been adjusted to accommodate current issues, such as in the 1990’s when values concerning drug prevention became more of a focus within schools (Kirschenbaum, 1995). The trouble now is that children are receiving a lack of values elsewhere, which results in scenarios such as the aforementioned one.

Children spend approximately six hours a day in school five days a week for about ten months out of the year during which time teachers help mold these children. The responsibility of instilling values into children should not be solely left to parents, it is educators’ responsibility too (Suh & Trigger, 1999). Some children are not being instilled with positive values at home; furthermore, some parents may even be having a negative effect on their children’s character and morals (Larkins, 1997). By supplying
children with values education within the school context we as teachers can hopefully make-up for what they are not learning at home. In some households it is not so much that parents serve as negative role models, but rather a lack of their presence at home. Many families are dual income households and, if both parents are working, it is difficult for them to find time to be teaching morals and values. Without a parent around to monitor external influences on their children, they are more vulnerable to the negative effects of the mass media (Larkins, 1997). The violence found in video games and television, the crude language found in songs and movies, and the celebrities who are negative role models which children aspire to be like, all begin to have a major influence on children (Larkins, 1997). Hopefully, if children learn values in school they can more readily block out these negative influences.

This study will focus on the impact of the implementation of a values education program on student behavior. The children will participate in interviews and will perform skits applying what they have learned. Educators have children’s best interest at heart and teaching values to these children will benefit them. It will not only improve their character, but will make them better individuals in the future.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

In today’s society teachers have a lot to teach and not enough time to accomplish everything that they need to complete. Teachers are not only educators, but mentors and role-models to children. When it comes down to it, teachers are by default essentially required to provide children with everything that they are not receiving elsewhere; whether that be academics, guidance, someone to talk to or in this case values. Children today are not receiving the basic traditional values which many older generations were
brought up with. There is a myriad of reasons why children are not receiving these values. However, the problem is not why do children today have less traditional values, but rather what can we as educators do to improve this situation.

Due to this problem my research question essentially is, when implemented in an elementary school setting does a values education program have an effect on children’s behavior and if so what effect does it have? Some of the sub questions which come from the research question are: What age group would benefit most from values education? What is the most effective method of teaching values education? Should values education be done school wide?

Story of the Question

In order to better understand why I chose this topic and why it is important to me, one must understand how I was brought up. I grew up with a heavy emphasis on basic traditional values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, and compassion. My parents were very strict with me especially when it came to respecting others. I was taught to always use my manners and say “please” and “thank you.” My parents were also very big on respecting elders; I always addressed adults that were not family members by Mr. and Mrs. I can recall one time when I was about eleven and I called my friend’s mom by her first name in front of my mother. Needless to say my mother was not happy with me, even after I explained that she had told me to call her by her first name. My mother explained to me that regardless I should always address adults by their proper name because it shows respect; this is something I have never forgotten. To this day I always address adults who are older than me by Mr. or Mrs. Recently I had my cooperating teacher tell me to call her by her first name because I am so used to showing that respect.
It has become a value which is deeply ingrained in me.

In September of 2008 I began my clinical internship at Evergreen Elementary School in Southern New Jersey. All names and locations mentioned have been fictionalized in order to protect the privacy and maintain the confidentiality of those who were involved in the research. As I walked up the steps of the old brick building the first day of school I was unsure of what to expect. I had been told by my cooperating teacher that the children were from a lower socioeconomic area and that some of them had behavior issues in the past. As I entered the building and walked up the stairs to the classroom located on the third floor I asked myself: What would the kids be like? Were they already going to have developing attitudes? Were they going to listen? Were they going to respect me? These are the questions that flooded my mind. As I met the children my fears began to fade; all the children seemed nice in general, but it was also only the first day of school. As the day continued I learned of the class reward system, I found it particularly interesting when “Mrs. P” explained to the students that when they were respectful, honest, and used mannerisms they would get a coupon. She told the children that if they said “please”, “thank you”, “excuse me”, or used any basic manners they would be rewarded for it. I asked myself “Do these children need to be rewarded just to exhibit basic traditional values?” This boggled my mind. I had never been rewarded in school for this and I never behaved that way because of rewards, I did it because that is how I was brought up to act. As the first few weeks continued on I began to realize that many of the children did lack traditional values. There was one student who would steal and others who were rather disrespectful. Mrs. P informed me that many of the children were brought up with the belief of “finders keepers losers weepers.”
It astonished me that eight year olds thought this way and that it was encouraged at home. This got me to think “How as a teacher can I help to change this behavior?”

As September turned into October I began to see a change in the students and the way they acted. The positive reinforcement which Mrs. P was using was working. I had one student, Omar, tell another boy that he couldn’t talk to him while they were in the hall, but he would listen to the story once he got back to class. I was shocked by this he not only followed the directions of not talking in the hall but tried to correct the other students’ behavior and did it in a polite way. Then another day Mrs. P and I were talking and Brian came up to ask a question, but instead of interrupting us he waited till we were finished talking. Once we finished our conversation he said “Excuse me” and asked his question. It was these changes that I saw in the students that made me realize that maybe if students are not receiving traditional values, I can help. After all, in a matter of six weeks I had seen a huge a change in these children. Values education is important to children because they will carry these values with them into adulthood and throughout their lives. A child who has positive values instilled in them will be more successful later in life because the essential values are ones which any human being needs. A child needs to learn to be honest, loyal, and more importantly respectful if he or she wants to be a success.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter two is an in depth and comprehensive look at the previous research which has been done in regards to values education and its implementation in schools. Chapter three which follows will explain the context in which the study will take place, research content, and the research design model. Chapter four will provide the reader with a
thorough description of the research findings. Finally, Chapter five will discuss the findings, implications for educator and take a look at and discuss further research which should be done in this area and the researcher’s suggestions for teacher.
Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Introduction

"Human beings are not so easily programmed. We should do a much better job of inculcating certain traditional values in our young people" (Kirschenbaum, 1992, p. 775)

In today’s society school has become a place where children are not only receiving an education academically, but also socially and morally. In this chapter a review of the literature regarding values education will be presented. The first section focuses on what values education is and what it entails. The second section explores why values should be taught in school and which types of values should be focused on. The third section takes a look at how values are already being taught to children in school. The final section examines the ways in which one should teach values and different values education programs which have been previously implemented. Chapter two concludes with a discussion in regards to how this study can be important in today’s education system.

What is Values Education?

Kirschenbaum (1995), who is an international consultant in values education and morals education, defines values education as “The conscious attempt to help others acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that contribute to more personally satisfying and socially constructive lives”(Kirschenbaum, 1995, p. 14). A more
simplistic definition for values education according to Superka, Ahrens, Hedstrom, Ford, & Johnson (1976) is “The explicit attempt to teach about values and/or valuing.” (Superka, Ahrens, Hedstrom, Ford, & Johnson, 1976, p. xiv). Furthermore, values themselves can be seen as anything from eternal ideas to behavioral actions to how children view situations (Superka, Ahrens, Hedstrom, Ford, & Johnson, 1976). It is important to note that there is a difference between values and valuing. Valuing is the act of making value decisions, it is the expression of emotion towards certain values, and ones attainment of and obedience to a group of principles (Superka, Ahrens, Hedstrom, Ford, & Johnson, 1976).

Today, the comprehensive values education approach is the one that is most commonly used and prevalent to societies current values and views. Comprehensive values education revolves around the notion that there is a great deal of value in a variety of approaches towards values education (Kirschenbaum, 1995). It has been found that we need to combine the traditional approaches with newer ones for the most effective form of values education (Kirschenbaum, 1995).

The most common problem with values education that has been found is that it relates to many concepts and due to this there are a great deal of ways to approach it (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Different members of the community such as educators, parents and public officials identify the following fields as ways to approach values education: character education, life skills, ethics, values clarification, citizenship education, cooperation skills, moral reasoning, and decision-making skills to name a few (Kirschenbaum, 1995). The comprehensive values education is broken down into four major movements which are values realization, character education, citizenship
education, and moral education. These four movements encompass all of the different approaches which have been suggested in values education (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Furthermore, it is important to know that a comprehensive values education approach not only takes place in school but throughout the community (Kirschenbaum, 1992). Overall, one must realize that values education is not simple, it is multidimensional and has a complex job (Kirschenbaum, 1995).

How Values are Learned

Children learn values through a multitude of ways and environments. Since children are extremely impressionable any given person or scenario could have an impact on the child and the values that he or she takes away from that individual or situation. One way in which values are learned is through observance and modeling (Larkins, 1997). When adults lead and set good examples children will follow; unfortunately, when an adult exhibits immature or immoral behavior children will also model these actions due to the fact that they learn from what they observe (Kirschenbaum, 1997). It is for this reason that the mass media can have a heavy influence on children and their values, especially in a negative manner (Larkins, 1997). In addition, it is difficult for parents to control what their children observe when it comes to the mass media especially with many families being dual-income (Larkins, 1997).

Secondly, values are learned through society and the current culture of the time period. Furthermore, the values learned by society usually have to deal with the current problems our country is facing. Over the decades values education has paralleled those values which are important to society at that time. During the 1960’s and 1970’s the traditional values that had been previously practiced were brought into question much
like the questions society itself was having at the time (Kirschenbaum, 1995). During the
1980's and 1990's society returned to the traditional values, but also addressed the
contemporary drug abuse problem that was sweeping the nation by adding the "Just say
no!" approach to values education (Kirschenbaum, 1995). As our society has changed
and evolved so has values education.

Finally, children learn values through moral development. As suggested by
Lawrence Kohlberg there are six stages of moral development which are broken into
three levels (Swanson, 1995). The three levels which children learn at are
preconventional/ premoral, conventional/role conformity, and post conventional/ self
accepted moral principles; it is important to note that some theorists believe that a child's
moral thoughts may not always remain at one level constantly (Swanson, 1995). In the
first level, preconventional/premoral, moral values exist in external and negative acts; in
addition, the child views rules in terms of consequences and the pleasantness of those
consequences. In the second level, conventional/role conformity, values exist in children
"doing the right thing" and what others expect of them. In the third level, post
conventional/ self accepted moral principles, values reside within one's self and decisions
are based on an internal thought process. Educators do believe in Kohlberg's approach
because its ideas are supported by a cognitive development model (Swanson, 1995).

Why Values Should be Taught in School?

Values are an essential part of who we are. They help to mold the person that we
are and for children they help to shape the people they will become. Since values are
such a crucial part of a child's character and school is a vital portion of their life, it is not
surprising that there are many different reasons why researchers support values
Researchers agree that teaching values is not just the parents responsibility but also society's which includes educators (Suh & Traiger, 1999). Teachers play a key role in forming students values, children spend a majority of their waking hours with teachers in school. Not all of the responsibility to educate children on values should rest on the parents (Larkins, 1997). Larkins goes on to further state,

...despite the fact that families should have a very strong voice in selecting values for their children, the family is not the only social group that has a legitimate interest in character development for young children American society as a whole has a stake in the moral character of its individual members (Larkins, 1997, p.1).

Most individuals if they really thought about this would agree. These children are our future and some of them could be future political leaders, therefore we should want them to possess values that we feel are important to one's character.

Schools need to focus on teaching values because whether they realize it or not society's values are reflected in schools (Kirschenbaum, 1995). There is obviously a strong connection between school and society and values play an important part in our society. Values do spill over from society into the education system, "When the society has values conflict, the schools experience that conflict also" (Kirchenbaum, 1995, p.4). One can easily see how values and school intertwine with each other. Finally, values education is necessary in order to teach children not only about ethical decision making, but personal responsibility (Brooks & Kann, 1993).

Types of Values

If we are to teach values within the school, who decides on the values that will be
taught? This is one of the main questions that many have in regards to values education. Many researchers seem to agree that the community has an integral part in deciding which values should be implemented in school (Huitt 2004). The community itself not only plays a vital role in the deciding of what values to teach, but in the implementation of these values (Kirchenbaum, 1992). In addition to the community; administrators, teachers, and parents should have a say in which values should be focused on and taught (Brooks & Kahn, 1993). Once it has been decided who will choose the values which will be focused on comes the next question, what values will be taught?

Many researchers do seem to agree on what basic values should be encompassed in values education. The following values are ones which would be suggested to be part of a values education program: honesty (Huitt, 2004)(Larkins, 1997), respect/manners (Kirschbaum, 1995)(Huitt, 2004), equality (Huitt, 2004)(Etizoni, 2008), courage (Kirschbaum, 1995) (Huitt, 2004), compassion (Kirschbaum, 1995) (Huitt, 2004), responsibility (Kirschbaum, 1995) (Huitt, 2004), tolerance (Kirschbaum, 1995), perseverance/self-discipline (Kirschbaum, 1995) (Larkins, 1997), and loyalty (Kirschbaum, 1995)(Larkins, 1997). These values are basic everyday qualities that society looks up to and admires and these are traits that not only our communities recognize, but also our nation (Brooks & Kann, 1993). Some of these values are ones which the SCANS (Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) report has cited as important skills for workers and future workers (Whetzel, 1992). Several of the aforementioned values have been suggested to be key values by not only the SCANS report, but by behavioral scientists as well (Huitt, 1997).

The previous values that were suggested by researchers have been chosen for a
myriad of reasons. These reasons pertain to why these traits are important and how they are viewed. Honesty was chosen because it is an ethical asset and it is identified as a good quality in our society (Brooks & Kann, 1993). Respect was selected because it is an essential characteristic; respect not only in regards to one’s self but also towards others and the environment. In addition, a child who is respectful will be more likely to act courteously and considerately towards not only other children, but adults as well (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Equality is a trait which has become a major focus in today’s society, it is considered to be a “fundamental value” which is essential to the American political system (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Courage is a characteristic which is necessary because children need to learn to not only exhibit forms of courage and bravery, but to have the courage to be true to themselves (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Compassion is an important trait for children because it involves truly caring for others. If a child learns compassion then they will know how to be helpful, empathetic, humane, and kind to others (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Responsibility is a key value due to the fact that as a society we view responsible individuals as trustworthy, reliable, and honest (Kirschenbaum, 1995). It is also essential for children to learn that they need to take responsibility for their own actions (Brooks & Kann, 1993). The value of tolerance is necessary for children to learn so that they can be understanding of one another’s differences and it is also an important life skill. They have to learn a respect for diversity and realize that everyone is different and to be accepting of those differences. In addition, tolerance allows children to treat one another with respect (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Perseverance/Self-Discipline is an essential part of an individual, it is “the ‘true-gift’ of character” (Kirschenbaum, 1995, p.22). This is a value which we as a society
admire when one has the self-discipline and perseverance to work hard and excel (Kirschenbaum, 1995). This is a value which is important because it is valuable all throughout life. As adults, children will need to know how to persevere through the hard times and have the self-discipline to do what they need to do. The last value which is listed is loyalty, which is important because children need to learn that it is key to stay true to not only themselves but also to their friends, family, and other key people in their lives. They need to learn that it is essential to stick through hard times (Kirschenbaum, 1995). As one can see these values all play a major role in not only children’s character, but also help to shape the people these children will become as adults.

How Values are Already Being Taught

Whether society realizes it or not all schools are inevitably teaching children values and they cannot avoid doing so (Larkins, 1997). From the first day of school as a Kindergartener children are taught small components of basic values. They are taught to obey their teachers and follow directions which can fall under the value of respect. By following directions children are showing respect to an authority figure. Children are also taught to share with others and that it is important to take turns; these are all aspects of respect, more specifically respect for others. These are behaviors which when compiled together help to create specific values. Furthermore, these are values that all teachers emphasize (Larkins, 1997). As children get older teachers build upon these values. In terms of respect, children are expected to raise their hand before speaking and to not talk while someone else is talking. Students are disciplined for lying and stealing both of which can fall under the value of honesty. When children are taught these concepts they are not necessarily told that they are values, but rather told that this is what
they are supposed to do.

Ways to Teach Values

There are many different ways for educators to teach children. In terms of values education though there are a few overall ways in which educators should go about teaching the topic. The following methods are ones which are suggested for values education and are most effective:

- Literature (Chrismer, 1998) (Suh & Traiger, 1999)
- Reinforcement (Swanson, 1995) (Larkins, 1997)
- Action Learning (Larkins, 1997)

It is important to note that when teaching values education the methods of teaching are not limited to these.

“Teachers are role models for children.” (Larkins, 1997, p. 3). Teacher modeling can be an extremely helpful method since all individuals instinctively learn by emulating models (Haston, 2007). Modeling is essential in teaching values education because children look up to their teachers and view them as role models (Larkins, 1997). By observing their teachers children can learn some of the basic values such as compassion, respect, honesty, and equality. When children view these behaviors they can then model the same behaviors which they have seen (Kirschenbaum, 1995). It is necessary for teachers to set a good example for values education to be effective. The last thing an educator wants to do is set a poor example for very impressionable children when it comes to values education (Kirschenbaum, 1995). There are at least six specific reasons or developments which play a part in modeling and contribute to its effectiveness in
values education, they are: patterning, to gain love and approval, to avoid fear or punishment, to gain other rewards, positive associations/identification, and consciously choosing an alternative (Kirschenbaum, 1995). If one understands why and how modeling works then it can be used as a more successful tool in the implementation of values education (Kirschenbaum, 1995).

Children’s literature which is used in the classroom can provide the teacher with vast opportunities for teaching the students about values and moral behavior (Suh & Traiger, 1999). Many stories provide children with good examples which they can learn from and can use in their lives (Suh & Traiger, 1999). Reading to children is not only beneficial educationally, but also in helping children develop skills. In many children’s books the main characters will exhibit values and character traits which we as a society wish children would possess. Furthermore, these characters and their traits can not only influence children’s values, but also improve their character and have an effect on their moral development (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Literature can be used in any classroom and at any age to help teach values; there are books for children of all ages such as *The Little Engine That Could* for young children or *To Kill a Mockingbird* for older students (Kirschenbaum, 1995). In addition, there are values curriculums which are literature-based programs distributed by school publishers such as The Heartwood Project and Critical Thinking Press. Finally, William Kilpatrick, notes the importance of literature in education and identifies the role it can play in teaching students values and what an important tool it can be in doing so. He goes on to support using literature in values programs since these stories can help teach children values and morals which they may not be receiving elsewhere (Kilpatrick, 1992). In addition, Kilpatrick lists a variety of
books for children of all ages which focus on teaching values and gives a brief
description of what the books are about. It is this list which demonstrates how ever
present values are in today’s literature and how there are numerous examples of it.

Reinforcement can be essential in the learning process especially if one wants
those behaviors to become habitual. Reinforcement can be defined as “any stimulus that
maintains or increases the behavior established immediately prior to the presentation of
the stimulus” (Zirpoli, 2008,p. 304). According to basic behavior modification theory, if
an individual is rewarded for his or her behavior or the behavior is reinforced then the
behavior is more likely to occur again (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Positive reinforcement is
used so that “the right thing becomes the familiar and comfortable thing” for one to do
(Larkins, 1997, p.3). Once this occurs that behavior becomes a habit which we carry
with us throughout life and continue to perform because it is what we have become used
to. If this can be implemented with values then good values will be ingrained in children
at a young age and will be a habit which stays with them through life. In addition, not
only teachers find reinforcement to be a beneficial technique, but psychologists also
recognize it as an effective method which helps in the formation and change of attitude in
children (Larkins, 1997). Another reason why positive reinforcement can be so helpful
in the classroom is because it draws attention to students who model good behavior and
in this case values (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Positive reinforcement does not only need to
be a tangible object it can also be verbal. Examples of verbal reinforcement include
praise and appreciation. “Another benefit of praise and appreciation is its effectiveness
as a direct method of inculcating values and morality.” (Kirschenbaum, 1995, p.79).
Praising a student for his or her behavior and showing a student appreciation for the
behavior that he or she exhibited can be two powerful forms of reward (Kirschenbaum, 1995).

Action learning is a very beneficial learning method for children, it gets students involved as opposed to lecturing at them. The action learning method in regards to teaching values is taken from the standpoint that when learning values there needs to be a process of implementation as well as growth (Huit, 2004). It is important to not only teach children values, but to have them implement these values (Huit, 2004) Those who are advocates of this approach believe that it is important to provide students with opportunities where they can act on their values and practice what they have learned (Huit, 2004) One way to do so would be to have the children participate in role playing, this is done when children demonstrate modeled behavior in a given situation (Larkins, 1997). To further support the idea of role playing as a valuable method of action learning, Larkins states “Theory and research concerning role playing bears out what teachers have long known, that attitude change for the better occurs when children engage in active role playing of positive behaviors” (Larkins, 1997, p.3). It appears the effect role playing has on positive behaviors is stronger when the role playing involves improvisation (Larkins, 1997). Action learning involves the process of self-actualization and it is this process which the founders of the values clarification approach find to be an essential part of values and learning values (Huit, 2004).

Values Education Programs

There are different ways for values education programs to be implemented in schools. One type of values education program is a values/ethics curriculum which is literature-based. In these types of programs children’s literature is the heart of the
program and they use some of the most notable books to teach values (Kirschenbaum, 1995). The Critical Thinking Press and The Heartwood Project have each distributed this type of curriculum (Kirschenbaum, 1995). The Heartwood Project focuses on ethics and provides teachers with full curriculums to work on different ethical qualities which children should have. This is one program which has been recommended by those who write about and focus on values education, such as Howard Kirschenbaum.

The values education curriculum, is one which was pilot-tested within the Los Angeles Unified School District in the early 1990’s. Twenty-five elementary and middle schools participated in the pilot program during the 1990-1991 school year; by 1993 the number of schools which were voluntarily using the program increased to forty (Brooks & Kann, 1993). Furthermore, the schools saw a drop in discipline and behavior problems and faculty members identified improvements within the school environment (Brooks & Kann, 1993). This curriculum is based on the belief that “A far more powerful approach to values education is direct, systematic, positive instruction through a stand-alone curriculum supported by school-wide application of values language, concepts, and themes.” (Brooks & Kann, 1993, p.3). Through this curriculum the teacher would begin by teaching the “basic language” of values which includes words such as honesty and respect (Brooks & Kann, 1993). Once students have learned the words they will then be introduced to the concepts and finally the appropriate behavior (Brooks & Kann, 1993). Once students have a firm grasp on the values and what they entail, the teacher will then have students practice the value behavior and will reinforce it (Brooks & Kann, 1993). This program also focuses on teacher observation in terms of looking for students who are performing the correct behavior in regards to values; children are then rewarded for
exemplifying these actions (Brooks & Kann, 1993).

Conclusion

It is quite obvious that values play an important part in children’s lives and in shaping the adults that they will one day become. The main argument in regards to values education is not whether it should be taught it is what values should be taught and who should make that decision. However, researchers seem to agree that the values which will be implemented should be decided upon by members of the community, such as parents and educators. In addition, it is apparent that values should be taught in school due to the multitude of time students spend in school and to ensure that they are being exposed to values. There are also a great number of ways in which values can be taught in school and have already been implemented in schools. An individual’s values help define their character.

“Properly done, values education improves student behavior and discipline, ethical decision making, learning, and citizenship.” (Brooks & Kahn, 1993, p.4)
Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The goal of my research is to provide a better understanding of whether children are aware of values, in particular the value of respect. I will also try to determine if they understand what exactly respect is and who they should be respectful to. Furthermore, I will try to identify in which ways and to whom students are more disrespectful to. I will try to make students aware of how it feels to be disrespected by having them make personal connections. Finally, I will attempt to make students more aware of what disrespectful and respectful behavior is.

The research design that will be used in this study is qualitative teacher research. Qualitative research is designed to assist in understanding the meaning of certain phenomenon that is occurring within an organization. I have decided to use this type of research design because I feel that it is more appropriate than the quantitative research design, which is an inquiry approach useful for describing trends and explaining the relations among variables. I am not trying to identify why this decline in values is occurring but rather whether values education implementations in schools can help students. I am using qualitative data to try and understand whether a focus on values in school will help address the perceived current decline in values amongst children. I choose to answer this research question because I feel if teachers are aware of the
difference which they could make by trying to instill values which students may not be receiving elsewhere, then they may be more likely to focus on values in their classroom.

The following strategies are ones which will be part of the research: focus groups, student artifacts, and my teacher research journal. The focus group interview will be an essential part of the research because it will not only help in assessing student’s prior knowledge, but in seeing whether the values education program was effective. They will also be crucial in noting drastic changes in any individuals. The student artifacts are an important part of the research, since it is the student’s creation. This work can help the teacher researcher in assessing whether or not the students comprehended the topic. Finally, the teacher research journal is a crucial part of the research. The observations that are written in the journal will help in assessing if the program was effective.

Sources of Data

Prior to the collection of any data a letter will be sent home to the parents and/or guardians of the students in the class. This letter will inform them of who I am, the nature of the project, and what I will be doing within the class. It will be requested that the parents and/or guardians give written permission for their child to be a participant. Parents will also be given contact information if they have any questions or concerns.

There will be three main sources of data collection for this study: two focus group meetings, student artifacts, and my teacher research journal. The first instrument used will be a focus group, which will be conducted by myself. Focus groups allow for the development of insights regarding the meaning behind the facts. They allow for a direct interaction among participants. A focus group consisting of six children will be conducted prior to the values education program implementation. The six children will
be picked for a variety of reasons. First I will pick three boys and three girls to make sure that the focus group does not lean towards one specific type of individual. In addition, student selection will be based on teacher feedback; I will try to pick about three students whom myself and my cooperating teachers feel could benefit greatly from this program. The other three students will be ones whom we feel could serve as role-models to the other students. I will ask the focus group some basic questions about the children and their behavior. These questions will provide a better understanding of the children’s prior knowledge on values. These questions will be used to help assess what type of basic values the children already possess. The following are the questions which will be asked of the focus group at the initial meeting.

1. What do you think values are?
2. What do you think are different types of values?
3. What do you think examples of respect are?
4. What do you think examples of being disrespectful are?
5. Why do you think people are disrespectful?
6. Have you ever been disrespectful? How were you disrespectful?
7. When in school who do you feel you should be respectful to?
8. Do you think you should be respectful to all adults?
9. Do you act differently when it comes to respect depending on who you are around? (i.e. friends; family)
10. What do you think being honest is?
11. Do you ever think it is ok to be dishonest? Why?
12. What do you consider being dishonest?
13. Why do you think people are dishonest?
14. Who do you think you should be honest with?
15. Have you ever been dishonest?
16. Do you act differently when it comes to honesty depending on who you are around? (i.e. friends; family)

A second interview will be given during another focus group with the same students after the implementation of the values education program; this interview will be open ended based on the following questions.

1. What have you learned about respect?
2. What have you learned about being disrespectful?
3. What have you learned about yourself?

The purpose of this interview will be to see if the children’s values and view have changed throughout the program. The teacher researcher will review the focus groups’ responses and note any changes that have occurred. The information gathered from the two focus group meetings will help in assessing the effectiveness of the values education program. It is important to note that for the purpose of student confidentiality personally identifiable information will not be collected or reported.

The second type of data collection which will be used is student artifacts. These items will be collected throughout the implementation of the values education program. These artifacts will be work products that are part of lessons that will be taught in the values education program. One of the first artifacts will be a list the class makes up which identifies what respect is and examples of it along with a list of people whom they should be respectful to. Another artifact which will be collected will be done more so
through my own observation and recording. This will be a time when the students role play and put on a skit where they are being disrespectful and then they must correct the disrespectful behavior. I will make notes of what each group did and how they corrected their behavior. The next artifact will be writings the students do which will be collected. The writing will be on a time which they were disrespectful, in order to make them aware of their own actions. Another discussion will be held which will be about a time when the students were disrespected and I will take notes on the incidences that they share. This information will be one of the artifacts presented and analyzed. Finally there will be a chart in which the students will identify different people whom they have been disrespectful to and we will take a class vote to fill out the chart. All of these artifacts will be examined at the end of the program and the teacher researcher will take an in depth look at each student’s work product to see how it has progressed throughout the course of the program.

The third type of data collection will be the teacher research journal. The journal can be utilized as a way of documenting critical events and questioning them with various stakeholders to consider possible solutions. This journal will be a compilation of the teacher researcher’s thoughts, questions, and observations. The observations are one of the most crucial parts of the journal and the data collection. These will be notes based on what the teacher researcher has seen in regards to the children’s behavior involving values. I will specifically be looking for instances when the students are respectful and disrespectful. I will be looking for times when the students are either respectful or disrespectful to either teachers, classmates, or other school personnel. This is important because this is where information will be kept when the teacher researcher notices a
student exhibiting a particular value. This information will be essential when evaluating
the program and for supporting the outcome of the research. Finally, this will be a place
where the teacher researcher can write down suggestions for making the program more
effective. The journal is also a place where the teacher will reflect; these reflections will
be beneficial when reviewing the data.

These three forms of data collection will be used to help examine the impact of
the values education program. The qualitative data will be analyzed through student
behavior, student work, and the teacher researchers observations. I will look at the work
which the students have completed and determine what type of grasp the students have on
values and what they are. I will then go into further analysis to get an idea of what type
of actions they find to be respectful and disrespectful. I will look at the writing to note
any similarities between student’s writings in terms of who they are disrespectful to. I
will also use the information from the chart on who they were disrespectful to and try to
compare these two pieces of information and see if there are any similarities. Further
examination will be done by examining student responses during the first focus group
meeting and looking at what the students had to say. Then I will look at the responses
from the second focus group meeting and see what the students think they have learned.
I will also try to determine through this analysis if students have become more aware of
their own actions.

Context

The name of the district and school as well as all subjects has been fictionalized
to protect confidentiality.

My research will take place at Sunnyside Elementary School which is a
kindergarten through fifth grade suburban school located in Sunnydale. This small town is part of Camden County located in Southern New Jersey. The town is approximately 1.6 square miles in area, and borders seven other towns. Sunnydale has a population of approximately 7,000 people with about 91% of the residents being Caucasian. African-Americans make up approximately 4% of the population and the other 5% is a combination of various races. There are approximately 2,000 families whom live in Sunnydale and approximately another 3,000 households within the town. About one-fourth of the households had children who were under the age of 18 and about another 10% were single parent households. Approximately 47% of the households were married couples and another 40% were made-up of people who were not families. The average income of families in Sunnydale was about $60,000 per family and approximately $45,000 per household (http://www.wikipedia.com).

Sunnydale has two schools located within it, one being Sunnydale Elementary School which as I stated before is a kindergarten through fifth grade school and Maple Shade Middle School which is a sixth through eighth grade school. This small suburban town does not have its own high school, the students attend Sunny Heights High School. The high school is located in Sunny Heights which is a neighboring town of Sunnydale. The high school also pulls students from another local town which boarders Sunnydale.

Sunnyside Elementary School is located right within the neighborhood of Sunnydale, it is surrounded by residential neighborhoods. This elementary school has approximately 380 students who are between the age of 4 years old and twelve years old. There is a preschool disabled class within the school which has a morning program and afternoon program. There is no general preschool within the school just the one class.
There are two half-day kindergartens within the school. There is no full day kindergarten within the school. There are three first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grade classes; in addition, one of the classes at each grade level is an inclusion class. It is important to know that the principle at the school is currently serving as the interim superintendent of the school district, which causes him to be out of the building a majority of the time. Due to the fact that the principal is out a majority of the time a lot of the discipline falls on the teachers and in some cases they have become responsible for disciplining their students when something occurs outside of the class.

The classroom in which my research took place was a fourth grade inclusion classroom; out of the three fourth grade classrooms it is the only inclusion one. There were two teachers within the classroom Mrs. Thomas, the general education teacher, and Mrs. Sandler, the special education teacher. The class has twenty one students, nine females and twelve males, two of the male students stay in the resource room for the entire day. These two students only join the class for lunch and any specials the class has. There are four students within the class who have IEPs and have varying disabilities from dyslexia to Asperger’s Syndrome. At the time of my research I was student teaching within this classroom and I was the third teacher within the room. Of the students in the classroom eighteen of them are Caucasian, two are Hispanic, and one is part Native-American. All of the teachers in the classroom, including myself, are Caucasian, Mrs. Sandler and myself are in our twenties and Mrs. Thomas is in her sixties and has been a teacher at the school for almost twenty years. The students within this classroom are between the ages of nine and eleven.

In Chapter Four, I will present the findings from my data collection.
Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

In this chapter I will report my findings and give examples of student artifacts. I will discuss what I observed not only during lessons, but what I saw within the class during the implementation of this program. The data which is reported in this chapter was collected in a variety of ways.

Focus Group- First Meeting

Prior to implementing my lessons on respect I arranged the focus group and met with them. The groups consisted of six students in the class, three boys and three girls. The students in the group are selected for different reasons. Since there is not much diversity in this classroom, there are only a few students who are not Caucasian within the class. To provide diversity, five out of the six students in the focus group are Caucasian and the other student is Hispanic. The students whom I picked to be in the focus group associate with different groups of students and some of them have had trouble with behavior in regards to respect. I also picked students who could be seen as role-models for the other children in the class.

The questions which I asked the focus group regarding values were mainly in regards to respect and honesty. Essentially honesty could be seen as a component of respect and I wanted to get the students opinion of honesty and how they viewed it. I had the students sit down at the back table and the group met when the other students went to
library. I explained to the students that I was going to ask them some questions and that it was to help me understand what they knew and their opinions. Then I told the children that they were free to say what they wanted and that no one was to judge anyone else for their opinions and that they did not need to worry about me telling their parents what they had to say and they should feel free to be honest. I really encouraged them to be honest and tried to make them feel comfortable enough to be honest and speak their minds. In addition, the students were told that they needed to be respectful of others and that only one student was to speak at a time. Furthermore, they were told that they were not to yell over each other and that they were to listen to each other.

The students seemed to feel comfortable and when asked questions at least one person had some sort of response if not everyone. The students were asked sixteen questions and the focus group meeting lasted about an hour. The questions centered around values, respect, and honesty. Most of the questions elicited more than a yes or no response from the students. The discussion went really well and the students gave a great variety of responses. In addition, the students responded to all the questions and they listened to each other respectfully. The students acted appropriately and they did not criticize or make fun of each other for any responses which they gave. The following are the questions which were asked of the students and their responses.

1. What do you think values are?

Student 1: “Something that either raises the price of something or something special.”

Student 2: “A baby blanket is a value.”

Student 3: “Value of someone else that means a lot to you.”

2. What do you think are different types of values?
Student 1: “Money”
Student 2: “Something special/someone special”
Student 3: “Something old”
Student 4: “Memories”

3. What do you think examples of respect are?
Student 1: “Listening to people when you are told to do something.”
Student 2: “The loyalist were respectful to the king.”
Student 3: “Not murdering, doing the right thing”
Student 4: “Treating people how you want to be treated.”
Student 5: “Following rules and listening to parents”
Student 6: “Table manners”

Student 1: “Listening to others and not talking when they are talking.”
Student 2: “Respecting nature”
Student 3: “Respect yourself, not doing drugs”

4. What do you think examples of being disrespectful are?
Student 1: “Not doing chores”
Student 2: “Eavesdropping”
Student 3: “Making someone take drugs”
Student 4: “Talking about someone”

5. Why do you think people are disrespectful?
Student 1: “Attention seeking”
Student 2: “Because sometimes their parents might treat him bad so he wants other people to feel that way.”
Student 3: “Mad at someone”

Student 4: “Bad childhood”

Student 5: “For revenge”

6. Have you ever been disrespectful? How were you disrespectful?

Student 1: “Kicking sister, blowing whistle in sister’s ear”

Student 2: “Not listening to mom”

Student 3: “Choking nephews”

Student 4: “Not listening to parents” (All of the students listed this as a way in which they were disrespectful.)

Student 5: “Drew on my brother’s face”

7. When in school who do you feel you should be respectful to?

Student 1: “Teacher”

Student 2: “Principal”

Student 3: “All teachers”

Student 4: “Other kids”

Student 5: “Janitor”

8. Do you think you should be respectful to all adults?

Student 1: “Yes.”

Student 2: “No, not if they are trying to kidnap you.”

9. Do you act differently when it comes to respect depending on who you are around? (i.e. friends; family)

Student 1: “Yes.” (they said they acted differently around their older cousins, siblings, friends, and strangers)
10. What do you think being honest is?
Student 1: “When you tell the truth.”
Student 2: “Don’t lie”
Student 3: “Don’t be disrespectful”

11. Do you ever think it is ok to be dishonest? Why?
Student 1: “If there was a stranger and they asked your name.”
Student 2: “To protect yourself”

12. What do you consider being dishonest?
Student 1: “Lying, not telling the truth”
Student 2: “Identity theft”
Student 3: “Honesty is when your telling the truth and dishonest is the opposite.”

13. Why do you think people are dishonest?
Student 1: “Because they don’t want anyone to get in trouble.”
Student 2: “So you don’t get in trouble.”
Student 3: “To get out of trouble”
Student 4: “To protect”
Student 5: “Because its someone else stuff”

14. Who do you think you should be honest with?
Student 1: “Teachers”
Student 2: “Everyone”
Student 3: “Yourself”
Student 4: “This group”
Student 5: “Priest”
Student 6: “Other people”

Student 1: “The President”

15. Have you ever been dishonest?

Student 1: “Lied to mom about studying or doing homework.”

Student 2: “Lied to brother”

Student 3: “About studying”

Student 4: “Blamed cat for something”

Student 5: “Taking things from my sisters room and lied about it.”

16. Do you act differently when it comes to honesty depending on who you are around? (i.e. friends; family)

Student 1: “Honest with brother tell him things”

Student 2: “Honest with bear, tell secrets to the bear”

Student 3: “More honest with mom then brother”

Student 4: “More honest with myself”

Student 5: “More honest with my dad”

Student 6: “More honest with friends”

Student 1: “Tell stuffed animals”

Student 2: “Doesn’t matter who is around”

Student 3: “Around friends may be more dishonest because I don’t want to get in trouble for things in front of my friends.”

Student Artifact: What is Respect Discussion

The first activity I did with the students was a discussion on what respect is and who students should be respectful to. The students sat in a circle on the floor in the front
of the classroom for this activity to help encourage the students to participate. Once the
students were seated in the circle I explained to them that I was going to be teaching them
about values and in particular respect. Since this was the first lesson I was teaching them
on respect I laid down some guidelines and rules for them. I explained to them that
everyone was entitled to their own opinion and that no one was to laugh at someone or
make fun of them for his or her opinion. I also informed them that everyone was entitled
to share and should feel comfortable sharing. Furthermore, I told them that I was very
interested in hearing what they had to say and what their opinions, feelings, and
experiences were in regards to this topic.

Next, I told the students we were going to talk about what they think respect is
and examples of it. I had students come up to the board and write down the other
students ideas and suggestions on large piece of paper on the board. The following is the
list which the students made in regards to what they feel respect is and examples of it.

What Is Respect List

• Not being mean/being nice
• If someone drops something pick it up
• Listening
• Not stealing
• Being honest
• Treating people the way you want to be treated
• Not making fun of people
• Sharing
• Not saying bad words
• Helping others
• Manners
• Respecting personal space
• Not spreading rumors
• Not harming anyone
• Being patient
• Not telling secrets

Once students finished the list I explained to them that they were going to make
another list. I asked them to think of people who they should be respectful to and that we were going to make a list of who the students should respect. I picked another volunteer to write down the list on a separate piece of paper which was placed on the board. I then took turns calling on students and they volunteered their ideas on who they should be respectful to. The following list is the final product of this part of the discussion.

Who We Should Respect

- Teachers
- Parents
- Friends
- Principal
- Bus drivers
- Yourself
- The President
- The Government
- Animals
- The Earth
- Family members
- Elders
- Coaches
- Nature
- Teammates
- Classmates
- Properties
- Lunch aids
- Police
- Environment

Once we finished the lists I explained to the students that I wanted them to keep these ideas in mind. I also explained that we were going to talk more about respect and do some fun activities with it.

Student Artifact: A Time I Was Disrespectful Assignment

I thought it would interesting to try to incorporate another subject with my values education program and one area that the children can never get enough practice with is
writing. I decided to have the students write about a time in which they were disrespectful in order to make them more aware of their own actions. I asked the children to think of a time when they were disrespectful in some way and to write about it. I explained to them that I wanted them to write about what happened, why they were disrespectful, who they were disrespectful to, and did they receive any type of punishment for being disrespectful. I also told them that they should feel free to write what they want and that it would not be shared with their parents and that they shouldn’t worry about getting in trouble now for what they did in the past.

The students were given a blank lined piece of paper and given about thirty minutes to write about the incident; students were given more time if they needed it. I also created a modified version of the blank paper for those students in the class who had IEPs. The modified writing assignment had specific spaces to fill in such as; who were you disrespectful to, how were you disrespectful, why were you disrespectful, and how would you have changed how you acted. The students who received the modified assignment could just fill in the spaces and did not have to write in complete sentences. This was done mainly because a few of the students who had IEPs within this particular class had trouble with writing for a variety of reasons.

The students wrote about a variety of times they were disrespectful; some of the incidents being a little more extreme than others. Quite a few of the students wrote about being disrespectful to their parents by ignoring them or simply not obeying them. There were also several students who wrote about being disrespectful to their siblings by not doing something for them, fighting with them, or invading their privacy. A number of students focused on being disrespectful to their friends by either yelling at them, calling
them cheaters, or by being mean in some way. There was one student who explained how he was disrespectful to his cats by banging on the door because they were meowing right outside of it. Finally, one student wrote about being disrespectful to her cousin by stealing something from her because they did not get along. Examples of the students' writings are set forth in appendix A. The following table categorizes who the students were disrespectful to. (16 students participated in this activity).

Table 1: Who Were Students Disrespectful To

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who Students Were Disrespectful To</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Artifact: Who I Was Disrespectful to Assignment

For this lesson I had the students sit in a circle in the front of the classroom and I explained to them that through our past activities we have learned that everyone has been disrespectful and disrespected at one time or another. I then explained to them that today we were going to discuss the different people that they have been disrespectful to. I told them that to get a better idea of all the different people they have been disrespectful to that they we were going to conduct a vote and fill in a chart. I explained to them that I wanted them to be honest and that no one was going to judge them for raising their hand if they were disrespectful to someone. I also explained again that this was just
information for myself and that I was not going to tell their parents and they were not going to get in trouble for being honest.

I put up a huge piece of paper on the board and called on a few different students who were doing what he or she was supposed to do and had them write the tally marks on the chart. I tried to call children up to write as much as possible because they enjoy doing it and it gets them involved. There were nineteen students in the class at the time, they all participated in the survey; however, information was collected from only eighteen of the students. This was due to the fact that one parent requested that I did not collect information from their child. In order to do this without excluding the child I wrote down the votes on another sheet of paper that deducted that child’s vote. The following chart shows the results of the vote amongst the class.

Table 2: Who Have I Disrespected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals Who Were Disrespected</th>
<th>How Many Children Were Disrespectful to These Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers/Sisters</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Officers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teammates</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers/Sisters Friends</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Family Members (I.e. cousins, aunts, uncles)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 gives one a good idea of who this group of children tend to be most disrespectful to and the least disrespectful to. In addition, this table can be used to look at any similarities which may occur between the people they are the most and least disrespectful to. Furthermore, this table covers not only individuals that the children interact with on a daily basis, but those that they may have limited interaction with (i.e. police officers).

Focus Group- Second Meeting

The final focus group meeting was centered around what the students have learned and taken away from the respect lessons. I had the same six students who participated in the first focus group join me for this group discussion. This meeting took place in the classroom when the rest of the students had left the class for library. I had the students sit around a table in the back of the classroom and we sat in a circle for this discussion. There were three boys and three girls who were part of this focus group. Of the group the three girls are Caucasian, two boys are Caucasian, and one boy is Hispanic.

For this conversation I did not guide it as much as I had the initial one, but rather I asked the students to talk to me and tell me what they learned. The students really drove the conversation and did not need me to pull responses from them. First the students mainly identified people who they should respect, although they were not prompted to identify who they should respect, but rather what they learned.

One of the first things a student said was that they learned to respect others. Another student said that children should respect elders while another identified parents as people to be respected. After fellow students identified these people as ones to be
respected another student said “Respect your teachers.” I felt one of the more interesting comments was when a student said “You should respect all adults, like bus drivers because they drive you to school so your not late.” It was interesting to hear the student justify why you should respect that particular individual.

After the students identified adults who should be respected they began to give some more detailed responses about respect. These responses not only identified reasons to be respectfully, but also how being respectful is a two way road and connects back to them. The following are some of the responses that the students gave me.

Student 1: “Treat people how you want to be treated so they will do the same to you.”
Student 2: “Don’t say mean stuff because people may do it back.”
Student 3: “Because someone does something to you you shouldn’t do it back.”
Student 4: “Two wrongs don’t make a right.”
Student 5: “Not to say anything bad to anyone else.”
Student 6: “Fighting doesn’t fix anything.”

After I received these responses from the students they began to get quiet and did not have much else to say. At this point I decided I needed to prompt them with a question.

I asked the students what they have learned about being disrespectful and about themselves. I told them to think about how they may behave and if they feel they are disrespectful. I wanted them to think about what they had learned and be able to identify incidents of disrespect on their part. The students gave a variety of responses to these questions and some of the responses were very interesting. The following are the responses which I received from the students.

Student 1: “I can be very disrespectful to my brother.”
Student 2: “I can be disrespectful.”

Student 3: “I am disrespectful by a long shot. It’s fun to be disrespectful.”

Student 4: “I think I am disrespectful and I am going to try to change it.”

Student 5: “I think I am mostly disrespectful, but for a reason.”

Student 6: “I am a little disrespectful, but mostly to my sister.”

Journal

In my journal I took notes on a variety of things I observed in the classroom and things which happened outside of the classroom, but for one reason or another became something which required teacher attention. One of the most notable incidents which I witnessed was when about half of the boys in the classroom got in trouble with the lunch aides. The lunch aide came and told my cooperating teachers and myself that the boys were extremely disrespectful to the lunch aides and were yelling at the tables and not listening. As a result the boys received lunch detention for the next day at which time they ate their lunch and had to sit quietly at their desks while thinking about what they had done. There was also another instance of disrespect towards a lunch aide several weeks later. The lunch aide was trying to talk and the children were being disrespectful, when she told them they needed to settle down one of the students in my class whispered “frig you” to another student in regards to the lunch aide. The student received a week of lunch detention in the classroom where he had to sit at his desk quietly and could not work on any school work.

There was one student in the class who would constantly call out and as much as the behavior was addressed the child did not stop calling out. There were times when he would catch himself calling out and put his hand over his mouth; however, there were
also many occasions when he tried to make excuses for his incessant calling out. There was also another student in the class who was extremely pessimistic and would have a negative attitude about many things we would do in class and he would complain about it. Furthermore, his negative attitude was directed onto others as he would roll his eyes at the child who sat next to him who had a section 504 plan and took a little more time than others to complete assignments. He would complain about working with certain people and be just plain mean by saying he didn’t want to work with the person right in front of that child. In addition, there was one child in the class who was emotionally disturbed and the child had a breakdown and was hitting his head against the wall and the other student decided he needed to comment by saying “He needs therapy.” What makes it worse is the child understood what the boy said and got more upset and responded “I do not need therapy.” This child’s negative behavior and attitude continued throughout the values program and even once it was done.

There was also another student in the class who would not only call out but would behave in a disruptive manner. He would make inappropriate comments such as when crack was a spelling and he decided it was necessary to say “Crack is a bad word, it’s a drug.”

However, there were some exemplary behaviors which I did see in the classroom. There was one time that a few students were trying to blame something on one of the boys and another boy came up and said it was not true and that the child had not done anything. There was also a boy in the class who would share these stuffed dolls he brought in with the other children during Class Physical Education. Furthermore, there were two autistic boys who would join our class for Class Physical Education.
the class was playing kickball at this time they decided to join in the game. The children were so supportive of these two boys and clapped for them when they kicked the ball and if they got out the children would cheer “good job.”

**Role Play Activity**

The next activity the students participated in was a role play in regards to respect. The students were asked to work in groups of three to four students and to create a skit. In the skit they had to show a situation where someone was being disrespectful then they had to redo the skit and correct the disrespectful behavior and show how the situation could have been handled differently. Once it was explained what the students had to do they broke up into five groups and were given about fifteen minutes to think of a skit and practice what they were going to do. While the students were practicing and figuring out what they were going to do, myself and the other two teachers walked around to the groups to see what they were doing. We all took turns helping the various groups and watched them practice their skits.

Next, I had the students go back to their seats and the groups got up and presented their skits while everyone else sat quietly and watched. The first group that went was a group of boys and their skit centered around a group of boys trying to sell candy bars to an elderly man. In the first part the elderly man was very grumpy and yelling at the boys and then chased them off with his cane. In the second part of the skit the elderly man was very polite and simply said “No thank you;” in addition, he suggested trying a man down the street who he knew liked candy bars. The second group’s skit centered around telling secrets in front of other people and how it can hurt someone’s feeling. In the next part of the skit the girls shared the secret and they were getting along with each other.
The third group’s skit was in regards to a young girl losing her dog. The first time the girl asks two boys for help and they said they wouldn’t help her and if they found the dog they would throw it in front of a car or in the river. In the second part of the skit they said they would help the girl find her dog and they found it together. The fourth skit was in regards to poor sportsmanship during a softball game. In the first part of the skit the one team lost and called the other team a bunch of cheaters and the two teams got into a big argument about it. In the second part of the skit they corrected their behavior by saying good game after the game and showing good sportsmanship. The final skit was about sharing and in the first part the boy argued over the candy and got into a fight over who got the candy. In the second part of the skit the boys decided to share the candy instead of fighting over it.

Once the students were all finished presenting their skits they applauded for each other and we briefly went over all the skits. I reiterated what was disrespectful about each skit and how the behavior was corrected in order to reinforce the concept. The students then eagerly asked if they could do the skits again; however, there was not time to do it again.

Discussion on Being Disrespected

This was another lesson which took place in a circle located in the front of the classroom. I had the students assemble in a circle and I explained to them that we were going to go around the circle and everyone was going to share a time in which they felt that someone was disrespectful to them. I told the students that everyone needed to be respectful of the other students and that they were to sit quietly and listen as the other students shared. I did this so that students would be aware of how it feels to be
disrespected. If children are aware of how they feel when they are disrespected, then maybe they will be less inclined to be disrespectful because they do not want to make others feel that way. There was one student who quickly proved he could not handle sitting in the circle because he kept talking and making faces at the other students and he was asked to sit at his desk and write about a time instead.

The students talked about a variety of ways in which they were disrespected. They spoke about being verbally disrespected and some students even talked about being disrespected physically. Quite a few students talked about how upset they were when someone made fun of them or teased them, all of these kids agreed that it really hurt their feelings to have someone say something disrespectful to them. However, the incidences of being made fun of were for a variety of things. Some of the students talked about being called fat, ugly, or that he or she looked weird. One child explained how she was really upset when someone told her that she sucked at softball while other children vaguely stated that someone had made fun of them and it hurt their feelings. Some children decided to talk about a time in which a sibling was disrespectful to them. One student spoke about his brother blaming him for something he did not do while another explained how his sister dumped a bucket of water on him. Another student told the class how someone spit on him and it really upset him. One girl discussed the time that she got pinched by a crab and her cousins just laughed at her and how it really bothered her and hurt her feelings. Finally, one student told the class how he was playing soccer and another kid “crushed” his ankle and never bothered to say he was sorry or ask if he was okay. The boy said it wasn’t what happened that bothered him most but rather the fact that the other child did not say anything and he wished that he had at least seen if he was
The children discussed a variety of different ways in which they were disrespected. Furthermore, all of the children were able to share instances in which he or she was disrespected and could agree that when they were disrespected it really upset them and hurt their feelings.

As one can see there was a lot of information which was gathered in this short time. The children did a lot of activities which made them think and become aware of not only their own actions, but how those actions could make others feel. This program encouraged children to make connections between how people have treated them and it made them feel and how they act towards others. In addition, children learned how to have discussion without judging each other or worrying about being criticized.

Chapter 5, contains an analysis of data which was collected and presented in this chapter. Furthermore, it will give some insight into what the researcher found to be effective and what additions should be made if the program was to continue.
Chapter 5

Analysis of Findings

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss what I found through my research and data collection. An answer to the research question will be provided within this chapter. There will also be an analysis of the data collected and a report of the findings which would be important to teachers. I will report what seemed to work and what parts of the program I would have changed if I were to do it again. In addition, I will look at how I would ideally implement this program. Finally, I will look at the limitations of my research and the setting in which it was conducted.

Answer to My Research Question

My research question essentially is, when implemented in an elementary school setting does a values education program have an effect on children’s behavior and if so what effect does it have? There is no clear cut yes or no answer to this question as I have discovered through my research. Throughout this study I came to realize that several weeks of values education program is not enough to change children’s behavior. However, it is enough time to make them more aware of their own actions and how they may treat others. Furthermore, they were able to make connections from how they felt when they were disrespected to how they may make others feel when they are disrespectful to them. Had this program been implemented for a full year I may have had a more clear cut answer to the question and possibly been able to see more of a change in children’s behavior.
One of the sub questions which came from the research question was “What age group would benefit most from values education?” It is my determination from what I have seen that a younger age group would be more likely to benefit from a values education program. I feel this way because at fourth grade it appears that while children know what respect and disrespect is, they have exhibited so many examples of it that it may be hard to change their behavior. Therefore, a younger group would probably benefit more from this program because it could hopefully prevent some of the disrespectful tendencies which the fourth graders already exhibited. Another sub question was what is the most effective method of teaching values education? There is not just one way to teach the students about values, but the most effective way appears to be making it interactive. This can be accomplished by encouraging group discussions and having every student participate in addition to having them share their own stories and personal experiences. Furthermore, getting the students involved by having them do role playing and trying to combine other subjects with the values program such as writing is desirable.

My final sub questions was “Should values education be done school wide?” To this I answer “YES” because this is the type of program which needs to be practiced school wide and at all age levels for children to get the most out of it. In addition, if all the grade levels do it the students will receive constant reinforcement in regards to values year after year.

Findings Important to Teachers

Through my research there were a few discoveries which I made that could be important to teachers. The first was that at fourth grade children are aware of what
respect is and who they should be respectful to. Children understand what examples of respect are and can clearly identify these examples and who they should show respect to. Furthermore, all of the children can identify a time in which they were disrespected and how it made them feel. In addition, they also recognize times in which they were disrespectful and can explain how they were disrespectful. They can also explain what happened to them because of their behavior in those instances. These student were then able to connect how they felt when they were disrespected to how they may have made others feel when they were disrespectful to them. It is important for teachers to realize that students can make these types of connections because they could then use it in other areas.

Another important finding which was surprising to me was how honest the students could be especially when involved in a group discussion. The students shared life experiences and were able to openly show how they felt in front of the other students. They were also able to get involved in the discussions and enjoyed working in a large circle in the front of the class. They also loved doing the role play and wanted to do more skits. This could be important information to teachers for more than just values, it also shows another way in which children enjoy learning. Finally, it was interesting to see how eager some children were to share their experiences even if it was time when they did something disrespectful.

Relationship to Literature

The relationship between the literature and the findings is affected by the way this program was implemented. The programs which were looked at in the literature were ones which were implemented school wide and for the entire school year. The program
which I implemented was only put into effect for several weeks and in one classroom.
The literature also recommended positive reinforcement not just by the classroom teachers but by any teacher throughout the school, which was one thing I was unable to do. I did try to reinforce the children with verbal reinforcement and by using the current classroom management strategies which were already in place. The literature suggested praising positive examples of values or in this case respect which occurred not only inside the classroom but outside as well. I was sure to look for students demonstrating respect when outside the classroom and praised them either verbally or with the classroom reward system.

There were similarities between the literature and research. It was suggested by the literature to use role playing to help in teaching values which did prove to be an effective method which the students enjoyed. My cooperating teachers and myself also exhibited respect and positive values for the students since this was another recommended form of teaching the students about the topic. Action learning was another recommendation which can be seen in the role playing and active class discussion which involved the students.

Future Research

If this program was to be implemented ideally I would implement it in not one but two schools, one being an urban school and the other being a suburban school. I feel that by implementing it in two different schools I would be able to compare information and see in what type of environment this program would be most effective. I feel it would be interesting to see if values differ in an urban setting from a suburban one. In addition, I would implement the program in all classes at every grade level.
I feel that if this program is implemented at the Kindergarten level children will be more likely to benefit from it. I would also like to exam at which level children seem to benefit from the program the most. The program would ideally be implemented in grades K thru eight. Essentially, the program would need to take place the entire school year and be put into effect on the first day of school, especially the rewards program which would hopefully go along with it. Furthermore I would want to have the teachers meet once a month and pick a few students throughout the school to be recognized for their values. This would help with the positive reinforcement of values.

It is my belief that further research should be done on this topic to see how effective a full year values program can be. Furthermore, if we can determine at what age children benefit the most from the values program we will have a better idea of when it should begin to be implemented or at what age we should put more of an emphasis on it. This research should be done because from what I saw within the fourth grade classroom children are lacking in values particularly in the area of respect. What makes this more shocking is that some of the students are aware that they are disrespectful and do not care. If we as educators can focus on values particularly respect it can hopefully change how some students act, especially since they may not be receiving an education in values elsewhere.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were that it was done only in one fourth grade classroom for a time period of a couple of weeks. It was done in one school setting which happened to be a suburban school. The research could have benefited more if the program was implemented in both suburban and urban schools. In addition, the fact that
it was only done with a fourth grade class does not show the effects that this type
program could have on younger or older students.

One further limitation of the study was that it was not my own class so I could not
really establish a reward system for respect. I also was not in the class from the
beginning of the year. Since I came in halfway through the year it was hard to establish a
behavior management plan which would help with this values program focusing on
respect. In addition, it may have beneficial to have this program implemented in all of
the fourth grade classes to get other teachers input and hear what they observed.
References

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Appendix A

A Time I Was Disrespectful Writing Assignments
When I was 5 or 6 years old I did something really bad. One day I was watching TV and eating chips. I went in my brother’s room to use something. He saw me in his room. He told me to get out. So I went out of his room. He didn’t know that I got the thing I needed. Then he went in my room. He told me to give it back. I said, “No!” I called him a sucker, a sissy, and by accident I called him the “F” word. He choked me and threw me on the bed he told on my mom and I got in trouble.
A Bad Day!!

When I was with my friends a long time ago, we were playing a game on their trampoline. The game was soccer. When they scored I started yelling "cheaters!" My friends got really mad at me. We were all yelling at each other like cats and dogs fighting. Then I hit her! She started crying. I had to go home. My friends mom called my mom to tell her what I did. I got in big trouble. I started crying like a waterfall. My mom made me go back to her house and say sorry. The embarassing part was when I was saying it no one understood me. When I went back home I ran upstairs and went to room.
What I did wrong

I was watching TV and my mom told me to clean my room. And I just ignored her, and she walked away. Then after a few minutes she came back and started yelling at me so I went up and started cleaning my room.
Who I was disrespected one time were my aunt and my girl cousin. How I disrespected them was when I was asked by my aunt how if I like my girl cousin as a family member and what I've done was I lied and I said yes. And another time was behind my cousin's back and when she wasn't here I stole something that was hers. I only stole it because she was almost always mean to me. She acted like she hated me.
One time I wanted to ride my bike around the block because I am only allowed to ride up and down the street. So I went inside to ask my mom but she said "No." I was so mad so when she wasn't watching me I did it anyway. When I came around the corner she saw me. She was so mad that I was grounded for a week. After I was grounded she said she was sorry and so did I. That way to have done it would just say "Okay mom" and I wouldn't have been grounded. I wish I hadn't done what I did.