Morning Meetings Used as a Strategy for Maintaining a Positive Learning Environment in an Urban Fifth Grade Classroom

Deanne M. Sittler

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Morning Meetings Used as a Strategy for Maintaining a Positive Learning Environment in an Urban Fifth Grade Classroom

by

Deanne M. Sittler

August 2006

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education
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by

Deanne M. Sittler

APPROVED BY:

[Signatures and dates]

Advisor

2nd Reader

Director, Graduate Studies
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated, with honor and appreciation, to those who have inspired, guided, and supported my efforts to turn my dream of becoming an effective educator into a reality. My family, children, friends, and mentors will always have my heart and my gratitude for all they have contributed during my journey to achieve academic and professional excellence.

The passion and perseverance required to continue my journey has been greatly inspired by the spirit and professional leadership examples set by Mr. Lee Dam, administrator of Dr. Louis Cerulli Elementary School #34 in the Rochester City School District. Conquering, perhaps, the biggest challenge known to human life, survival, Lee has inspired me to view life with optimism and appreciation for the many miracles life has to offer. For the gift of his survival and for the miracles he has bestowed upon human kind, I thank him for reminding me that our life’s journey and challenging experiences are best viewed from a vision that is clear, positive, and unhindered by life’s roadblocks and challenges. Thank you, Lee, for these valuable gifts!
Acknowledgements

A heart felt thanks to the Department of Education and Human Development at SUNY Brockport, for your tireless passion, professionalism, and dedication to excellence in the field of education. You have opened many doors and inspired many dreams. A special acknowledgement is extended to Drs. Betsy Balzano and Linda Schlosser for paving the way for my continued success in my life long journey towards excellence in the field of education. Also, because you supported my goal to always remain dedicated to the learning achievements of all children I know I will always make a difference in their lives.
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Abstract

This study was conducted in an attempt to answer the question: Are Morning Meetings an effective strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in an urban fifth grade classroom? The researcher collected baseline data from 20 students in an urban fifth grade classroom in Rochester, New York to find out whether the implementation of Morning Meetings decreased negative actions and behaviors and improved the overall learning environment for fifth grade students. Research was conducted to monitor the influence of Morning Meetings on the actions and behaviors of ten students with the highest frequency of targeted negative actions and behaviors. The researcher used student questionnaires and interviews, students’ perceptions about the effectiveness of Morning Meetings on the classroom climate, and observations of student interactions in social and academic settings in this study. These data were studied to find generalizations on the effectiveness of Morning Meetings on the actions and behaviors of students and the influence of these Meetings on the overall learning environment in this urban fifth grade classroom.
Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

Introduction

An ideal learning environment is conducive both for optimal learning and social development. Behavior management is appropriately structured so that academic achievement is the primary focus of the teacher and the students, and undesirable interactions among students are limited. Appropriate social, emotional, and academic skills are vital components in establishing a positive classroom community.

Achieving this ideal learning environment takes teacher modeling and explanation. Students are entitled to know the purpose of what they are learning and the benefits they will receive from learning and practicing skills modeled by the teacher. Teachers are not only responsible for modeling what they want their students to do. They are also responsible for explaining the purpose so students will know and understand the objectives and goals for what they are learning. For example, teachers must model respect if they expect students to demonstrate respect in the classroom. Explaining how being respectful of others benefits everyone socially and academically, invites students to contribute to the positive learning environment of their classroom.

While most students know how to treat people respectfully, it becomes crucial to identify why they sometimes fail to do so (Kohn, 1998). Perhaps it is the simple fact that students do not feel respected themselves. People learn by example. Alfie Kohn (1998) states that "adults who are respectful of children are not just modeling a skill
or behavior; they are meeting the emotional needs of those children, thereby helping to create the psychological conditions for children to treat others respectfully” (p. 3).

If we want students to act respectfully and responsibly, we have to give them opportunities to exercise respect and responsibility in the classroom. We must provide them with a classroom where they are encouraged and helped to make appropriate decisions (Kohn, 1998). They must be given opportunities to make meaningful choices that will have a positive impact on their academic and social interactions with others.

Morning Meetings is a specific strategy designed to build respectful classroom interactions. These meetings are a structured time when students can develop their social skills among classmates. Specifically, Morning Meetings teach students skills so that they can learn, interact, and develop as human beings. The purpose and objective of a Morning Meeting is to develop a community full of learning, respect for self and others, and a set of social skills that children need to become academically and socially successful. By merging social, emotional, and intellectual learning, Morning Meetings can set the tone for a climate of trust and respect among a heterogeneous group of students (Kriete, 1999). In doing so, it is the goal of this researcher that the contributions of the students towards this appropriate climate will maintain a positive learning environment in a fifth grade urban classroom.

**Research Question**

Are Morning Meetings an effective strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in an urban fifth grade classroom? What factors lead to appropriate
socialization and productive learning? What behaviors commonly impede positive and social interactions among urban fifth graders?

This study was designed to determine if Morning Meetings are an effective strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in one specific urban classroom. The researcher will implement the components of Morning Meeting, as defined by author Roxanne Kriete (1999), and will observe the impact of these meetings on students' physical and verbal behaviors toward other students and adults in the classroom.

**Methods**

This study was conducted in an urban elementary school in Rochester, New York. Participants were 21 fifth grade students in a self-contained classroom. The primary means of data collection were classroom observations during and after Morning Meetings, interviews, and written questionnaires.

Prior to conducting this study, the classroom was observed for three weeks to identify the type and frequency of the most common verbal and physical behaviors that interfered with positive peer interaction and learning.

A checklist of behaviors was developed to guide classroom observations after the implementation of Morning Meetings. Ten students with the most incidence of negative behaviors prior to the implementation of Morning Meetings were selected for observations of specific verbal and physical behaviors. Data were then analyzed to answer the question: Are Morning Meetings an effective strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in an urban fifth grade classroom?
Limitations

This study is limited to one fifth grade classroom in an urban school. The social and learning environment that exists in one school or classroom may not exist in another school or classroom. In addition, classroom management plans vary from classroom to classroom and can influence the overall social and academic environment within the classroom. Thus, data cannot be generalized to other urban schools or fifth grade classrooms. The second limitation is that a small numbers of students were included in the study. The independent and collaborative views held by students on the benefits of Morning Meetings reflected their personal opinions and to some extent, were impacted by their levels of cognitive and social development prior to the onset of data collection.

Definition of Terms

Character education: involves teaching children about basic human values including honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect (McBrien & Brandt, 1997).

Content management: "Content management occurs when teachers manage space, materials, equipment, the movement of people, and lessons that are part of a curriculum or program of studies" (Froyen & Iverson, 1999, p. 128).

Covenant management: describes covenant management as the focus on the classroom group as a social system with its own features that teachers have to consider when managing interpersonal relationships in their classroom (Froyen & Iverson, 1999, p. 221).
Morning Meeting: A forum where skills essential to academic achievement are modeled, experienced, practiced, extended, and refined in the context of social interactions. Morning Meeting sets the tone for respectful learning and establishes a climate of trust among participants (Kriete, 1999, pp. 8-9).

The Responsive Classroom: The Responsive Classroom is an instructional approach to teaching that integrates the teaching of academic skills and the teaching of social skills as part of everyday school life. The Responsive Classroom fosters safe, challenging and joyful classroom and school environments. (As stated in Responsive Classroom Level I Workbook & Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc.).
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

*Intelligence plus character, that is the goal of true education.*

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

Classroom management is a challenge for educators teaching in urban schools. According to noted author Lois Weiner (2003), a researcher on urban education and urban school reform, we need to understand how factors outside the school walls influence teachers’ and students’ perceptions of actions in schools. Sociologists and cultural anthropologists theorize that human behavior is shaped by our social and cultural environment. Children are influenced by their culture, and their patterns of thought and behaviors both inside and outside the classroom are shaped by that culture (Bodley, 2005). Thus, it is important to recognize the social and economic conditions, or risk factors, that influence the social and academic development of students in urban schools (Winfield, 1994). Examples of risk factors outside school walls may include poverty, economic status, unstable or single-parent households, and neighborhood gangs.

**Hidden Rules in Urban Society**

Urban schools are noted for their size, structure, cultural diversity, and the fact that they are underfunded. Another distinguishing factor of urban schools may be that city children often live in neighborhoods that are “relatively small in size but densely populated, self-contained, and strongly bounded, resulting in high degrees of
territorial behavior” (Howey, 1999, p. 37). The attitudes associated with territorial behavior are often embedded in children’s characters and carried with them throughout school. For example, many students from urban communities come to school with hostility and anger that contribute to classroom behavior problems. Often, seemingly innocent looks or comments can ignite verbal and physical altercations between students such as: profanity, arguing with adults and peers, name calling, pushing of objects/peers, violation of others’ personal space, and threat of physical harm.

According to Ruby Payne, students need to be taught the hidden rules of middle class, not in denigration of their own (class) but rather as another set of rules that can be used if they so choose (Payne, 1998). Payne defines “hidden rules” as the unspoken cues and habits of a group. She notes that the distinct cueing systems exist between and among some cultural groups, and economic classes may come in conflict with those used in academic settings where predominately middle class values dictate the use of words as tools to negotiate conflict. In academic settings words are crucial and encouraged as a method for communicating effectively and for resolving conflicts peaceably. The distinct use of words to mediate conflict are not a part of territorial behavior but a regard for the middle class environment in which children learn to interact with others in a cohesive and peaceful manner.

These hidden rules govern much of the way students interact in social situations (Payne, 1998). They become their guideline for survival. Children want desperately to belong. The desire for excessive attention is the first mistaken goal used by
children as a means for feeling that they belong. Influenced by this assumption that he has significance only when he is the center of attention, the child develops great skill at attention-getting mechanisms (Dreikurs, 1990). The hidden rules of the urban society described earlier and the attitudes and territorial behaviors of students living in that urban society, often become evident in the school setting, resulting in spoken words or actions which can disrupt the social norm of that learning society. Teacher awareness for factors outside the school environment that influence student behaviors and effective classroom strategies can be developed to emphasize positive peer and adult interactions in the classroom. Fine, Weis, and Powell (1997) stated:

The process of sustaining a community must include a critical interrogation of difference as the rich substance of community life and an invitation for engagement that is relentlessly democratic, diverse, participatory, and always attentive to equity (fairness) and parity (equality) (p.250).

This exploration of difference needs to occur at the classroom level, acknowledging the different standards of behaviors that urban, multicultural students bring with them to the classroom.

**Classroom Management**

Many theorists define classroom management as effective instruction within a classroom environment purposefully designed to promote a positive social milieu. Dreikurs states (Dreikurs as cited by Wolfgang, 1999), that social theorists have a common bond: “This bond is that all behavior, including misbehavior is orderly, purposeful, and directed toward achieving social recognition” (Wolfgang, 1999, p. 56). Wolfgang adds that when a student unsuccessfully tries to achieve social
acceptance, a pattern of misbehavior begins. If teachers can focus on supporting these students in understanding that their goal to obtain social acceptance through faulty behavior is misguided, and can provide them with the skills necessary for socially appropriate behavior and interactions, then these same students will logically change their own behaviors.

According to social theorists, classroom management aims at encouraging and establishing student self-control through a process of promoting positive student achievement and behavior. Research shows that when there is a high incidence of classroom disciplinary problems there is a significant impact on the effectiveness of teaching and learning (Froyen & Iverson, 1999). Misbehaving students engage in delinquent behaviors more than their peers (Gottfredson et al., 1993) and the education of both the misbehaving students and their behaving peers is disrupted (Clegg, 1984).

Children ages eight and over are more likely than younger children to have emotional or behavioral difficulties, and children from poor families are more likely to have emotional or behavioral difficulties than children from families in other socioeconomic classes (National Institute of Mental Health, 2005). A student’s social problems will negatively affect self-esteem and positive attitudes towards others and even towards learning (Morris, 2002). Maladaptive (poor or inadequate) behaviors may include poor self-control, inattention, and disruptive behaviors (Allsopp, Santos, & Lynn, 2000; Stone & La Greca, 1990). Lacking in social competence can lead to social consequences such as conflicts with peers and fewer friends. According to a
study by Strain and Odom (1986), lacking in social skills is a predictor of significant and lasting consequences in adulthood.

Thus, conduct management is essential to the creation of a foundation for “an orderly, task-oriented approach to teaching and learning” (Froyen & Iverson, 1999, p. 1) thus leading to granting students greater independence and autonomy through socialization. Froyen and Iverson state that conduct management is centered on one’s belief about the nature of people. They also state that by integrating knowledge about human diversity and individuality into a particular instructional philosophy, teachers can manage their classrooms in a better, more effective way.

Finally, “covenant management focuses on the classroom group as a social system that has its own features that teachers have to take into account when managing interpersonal relationships in the classroom” (Froyen & Iverson, 1999, p. 221). It stresses the classroom group as a social system, where a group of students work and learn together, in the same setting, toward a common goal. That goal can be social cohesiveness and/or successful cooperative learning among the students.

Teacher and student roles and expectations shape the classroom into an environment conducive to learning (Froyen & Iverson, 1999). According to Morris (2002), teachers should take an active role in helping students acquire, develop, and refine the social skills necessary for meaningful social relationships and interactions. The classroom climate is not the exclusive responsibility of the teacher alone. It involves the collaborative efforts of teacher and students in both an academic and social context. This means that the teacher guides and facilitates students toward
making informed decisions about their actions and behaviors that can influence the safety and learning of others. The teacher, in collaboration with students, takes an active role in managing, developing, and maintaining positive relationships in the classroom. Respect for and recognition of the classroom as a social system and taking responsibility for the climate in the classroom, students will become more prepared to self-monitor and self-regulate the behaviors which contribute to the positive, interpersonal relationships and interactions with peers.

A positive learning environment is inclusive, respectful, and caring of all of its members. The effort to maintain a positive learning environment should be integrated into all aspects of the school. The Nebraska Department of Education and the Iowa Department of Education (1994) describe an appropriate learning environment as:

The primary learning environment that provides time and opportunities for children to experience and respond creatively to their world. The learning environment is social in nature, providing a secure and stimulating climate for all children. It provides time and opportunities for children to take appropriate risks and to explore and investigate their world. Children have experiences which encourage them to interact with others, to develop interpersonal skills, and to work and learn cooperatively (p. 3).

According to Brandt and McBrien (1997), school climate and culture refer to:

the sum of the values, cultures, safety practices, and organizational structures within a school that cause it to function and react in particular ways. Teaching practices, diversity, and the relationships among administrators, teachers, parents, and students contribute to school climate. School climate refers mostly to the school's effects on students (p. 89).
Character Education

Sugai and Horner state, as cited by Draper, Kozleski, Utley, and Smith (2002), “In schools across the United States, educators and families are engaged in valiant efforts to maximize academic achievement and to create and sustain safe and orderly environments for all students” (p. 196). These efforts are associated with a variety of strategies, for example, character education. Character education is defined as a particular style of moral training that reflects the particular values that educators use to support children’s social and moral development (Kohn, 1998). McBrien and Brandt (1997) support the initiative and goals of character education in our schools: “Character education involves teaching children about basic human values including honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect” (pp. 17-18).

The goal of character education is to raise children to become morally responsible, self-disciplined citizens. Problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution are important parts of developing moral character. Through role playing and discussions, students can see that their decisions affect other people and things (McBrien & Brandt, 1997).

To manage students’ behavior, to make them do what we say, doesn’t promote community or compassion, responsibility, or reflection. Teachers have to help them figure out for themselves how one should act, for themselves and with each other. It is crucial to give students the chance to participate in making decisions about their learning and how they want their classroom to be (Kohn, 1998).
Alfie Kohn states that the process of learning requires that various facets of meaning, ethical and moral, "be actively invented and reinvented" (Kohn, 1998, p. 31). By this he means that children should be given the opportunity to make sense of and reflect upon, issues and concepts in their lives based on their own experiences. Children need to be able to consider values and character traits from a more meaningful and personal perspective. The reinvention of values and traditions in society, especially in schools is necessary if we want to help children become moral people, as opposed to people who just do what they are told, or unconsciously rebel against what they are told.

Constructivists Rheta DeVries and Betty Zan (1994) state, "If we want children to resist [peer pressure] and not be victims of others' ideas, we have to educate children to think for themselves about all ideas, including those of adults" (p. 253). They must be educated to distinguish between perspective taking (imagining what others see, think, or feel) and empathy (feeling what others feel). Character education invites students to participate in opportunities that allow them to develop the social skills and to consider the values and character traits that contribute to their positive interactions with others.

**The Responsive Classroom Approach**

The Morning Meeting format described in *The Morning Meeting Book*, by Roxann Kriete (1999), was developed by the Northeast Foundation for Children (NEFC) staff as part of the Responsive Classroom approach to teaching and learning. The Responsive Classroom is an approach to classroom management and behavior
education that may be particularly useful in urban settings. It is informed by belief in
seven basic tenets (Kriete, 1999):

- The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
- HOW children learn is as important as WHAT they learn.
- The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
- There is a set of social skills that children need to learn and practice in order to be successful. They form the acronym CARES: Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-control.
- We must know our children individually, culturally, and developmentally.
- Knowing the families of the children we teach is as important as knowing the children.
- Teachers and administrators must model the social and academic skills that they wish to teach their students (p. 4).

The theory behind the Responsive Classroom approach is that external discipline ideally leads to internal self-discipline, which becomes the foundation for self-approval and acceptance. The best way to help children develop responsibility is to give the responsibility in a structured format with modeling and practicing (Origins, 2005).

The goal of the Responsive Classroom approach was to give teachers a set of practices that would foster a caring classroom climate and to apply student and teacher relationships and interactions in ways that contribute to both the positive social and learning environment of the classroom (Rimm-Kaufmann, 2004).
According to the preliminary findings on the study of social and academic learning conducted by Dr. Sara Rimm-Kaufman, results show that teachers who reported using Responsive Classroom approaches in their classroom are much more likely to report feelings of accomplishment in their approach to discipline, ability to influence decision-making at their school, and ability to create a positive school climate (Rimm-Kaufmann, 2004).

Morning Meeting—Overview

Morning Meeting, a component of the Responsive Classroom approach to teaching and learning, is a daily routine that builds community, creates a positive climate for learning, and reinforces academic and social skills. It sets the tone for respectful learning and establishes a climate of trust. Morning Meeting motivates children by addressing two human needs: the need to feel a sense of significance and belonging and the need to have fun (Kriete, 2004).

As cited by Kriete (2004), teacher Melissa Correa-Connelly states from her observations and experiences with Morning Meeting:

I think of Morning Meeting as having such immense power because it meets the emotional needs of the children. It acknowledges everyone and makes them feel significant. It does away with the feeling many children have of being a piece of furniture in the classroom. Morning Meeting is the first thing in the morning and allows children to be seen, to have a voice (p.12).

According to Elias and Adler (Adler, 1930; Elias et al, 1997), a sense of belonging motivates children to develop their skills and contribute to the welfare of all. Research indicates that teachers who establish firm boundaries, foster warm,
personal relationships in the classroom, and enable students to have an impact on
their environment strengthens students’ attachment to their school, their interest in
learning, and their ability to prevent self-destructive behaviors and demonstrate their
positive behaviors (Elias, 1997).

Greeting

Greeting is the first component of Morning Meeting. According to Merriam-Webster, to greet is to “salute or welcome in a friendly and respectful way” (Merriam-Webster, 1997). It sets a positive tone for the day and provides a sense of recognition and belonging for every student. Children learn to address classmates by name and it gives them practice in offering respect and hospitality to others (Kriete, 1999).

Highlights of Greeting include the encouragement of appropriate tone, clear and audible speech, and it provides practice in elements of greeting others such as making eye contact and shaking hands, and respect and recognition of culture and diversity in the classroom (Kriete, 1997). As educators, we must model and practice the positive ways of greeting. We must give students opportunities to choose and lead greetings. By facilitating student discussions we can encourage them to attend to details such as specific behaviors (actions and body language) and feelings (respect, belonging, and trust) that result from greeting each other in a respectful and gentle manner. Variations in Greeting may include multicultural greetings and activities which encourage student participation and engagement.
Sharing

Sharing follows the Greeting in Morning Meeting. It is a time in which students can present news they wish to share and can respond to each other by asking questions and offering positive and constructive comments to their peers. Sharing helps develop the skills of caring communication and involvement with each other. It extends the understanding that is essential for the development of community and for individuals’ sense of belonging and significance in the classroom. Sharing strengthens academic development by encouraging habits of inquiry and thought important for cognitive growth and strengthens vocabulary development and reading success. Students are provided with opportunities to practice speaking to a group in a strong and individual voice (Kriete, 1999).

In *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, author Nel Noddings describes the concept of caring as being dependent on the relationship between two people (Noddings, 1992). She defines a caring relationship as a connection or encounter between two human beings, a ‘carer’ and a “cared-for” who must both contribute in certain ways. If either party fails to do their part, then there may still be a relationship, but it is not a caring one. Sharing guides the development between the carer, as a receptive and caring being, feeling the desire to help others, and the cared-for who must receive the act of caring and recognize it with a warm, genuine, and appropriate response. Through modeling, discussion, and practice of their respective responsibilities, students develop their comprehension of each role and their ability to accept them (Kriete, 1999).
Group Activity

Group Activities, another important component of Morning Meeting, are short and fast-paced, and involve everyone in the class. Some of the activities have clear academic skill-building components and may tie in to current topics in curriculum. Other activities may appear to be "just for fun" and offer practice in more generalized skills like listening, following directions, exercising self-control, or acting appropriately in certain settings or situations (Kriete, 1999).

Group Activity has four major purposes. It contributes to the sense of community culture by building a class collection of common material such as songs, games, chants, and poems. Group Activity fosters active and engaged participation and heightens the entire class’s sense of group identity by encouraging inclusion and cooperation (Kriete, 1999). While some students will excel in certain activities and not in others, the group activity must be accessible to all students so that all members feel invited to participate and contribute equally. Activities may challenge or stretch students. Part of the teacher’s responsibility is to have a clear understanding of the class and what they can successfully accomplish individually and collectively (Kriete, 1999).

A major theme of Group Activity is that the activities should be cooperative and not competitive. Students are developing their experiences to include opportunities to have fun together, learn together, become aware and respectful of the strengths and differences of others, and to work collectively and cooperatively to produce an outcome that is impossible to produce or accomplish alone. Group Activity provides
students with opportunities to reinforce and extend social and academic skills in a cooperative environment, hence, contributing to the positive learning environment of the classroom community.

Throughout this component of Morning Meeting, as with each component, it is vital that social and physical behaviors are modeled by the teacher and practiced by the students. Introducing curriculum into Group Activity actively engages students in what they are learning and provides them with opportunities to reflect upon the benefits of working as a group as they problem-solve together. This is a good time for teachers to consider shifting some of the responsibility for making activities work from them to their students. Ownership of how students learn increases their investment in what they are learning (Kriete, 1999).

**News and Announcements**

News and Announcements builds community and provides information and group academic work through a message posted by the teacher on a chart each day. Students will read the message prior to Morning Meeting, following any directions on it, in preparation for further discussion and activities that will follow during News and Announcements. While the primary goal of Group Activity is to build a sense of whole-group spirit, the purpose of News and Announcements is to stimulate children's academic motivation and give them a chance to practice academic skills in a meaningful and interactive way (Kriete, 1999).

News and Announcements nearly always center upon written communication. The learning interaction often involves one student or a small group of students
actively engaged in the activity before Morning Meeting begins (Kriete, 1999). Math, language, and reading skills, for example, are often guided and supported during this time. Teacher responsibilities include incorporating ongoing curriculum into the message and the activity, model the skills students will need to use to successfully complete the desired task or goal, and end with announcements to help students transition to the rest of the day (Kriete, 1999).

News and Announcements encourages the development of individual skills and responsibility toward self and whole group learning. For example, students must read the message and follow any directions in the message, they must actively communicate (listen and speak), and participate in activities in a respectful and appropriate manner.

Overall, Morning Meeting components foster individual development of social and academic skills necessary for establishing a positive learning environment in the classroom. Collectively, students will demonstrate these skills so that they are better able to accomplish group goals or tasks. A positive learning environment is dependent upon the cooperative efforts of all members as they maintain respect for self and others. Kriete (1994, p.137) cites Goldsmith (1998): “Communities are not built of friends, or of groups of people with similar styles and tastes, or even of people who like and understand each other.” They are built of people who feel they are a part of something that is bigger than themselves (Goldsmith, 1998).

**Conclusion**

For many students, schools provide the strongest, most enduring, and most
systematic part of their educational world (Peterson, 1994). When their schools are effective, urban children can develop the skills, knowledge, and capacities needed to be successful in work and in adulthood (Levine & Lezotte, 1990).

Morning Meetings help develop the climate of trust, respect, responsibility, and social interaction required to maintain a positive learning environment. The skills learned during the Morning Meeting Program help students to develop and practice the appropriate social skills necessary to contribute to the positive climate of the classroom community. Students can be empowered to use these skills to develop and maintain meaningful interactions in both social and academic settings. As quoted by Martin Luther King, Jr., *Intelligence plus character, that is the goal of true education.*
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

This study was conducted in an urban elementary school (Grades K-6) located in Western New York. As a participant observer, the researcher sought to determine if the use of Morning Meetings (Kriete, 1999) would be an effective strategy in maintaining a positive learning environment in an urban fifth grade classroom. As discussed in Chapter 2, the purpose of Morning Meetings is to set the tone for respectful learning and to establish a climate of trust within the classroom community by increasing positive peer and adult interaction. The researcher investigated the influence of Morning Meetings on the frequency of students’ negative and positive verbal and physical behaviors in the classroom. The study was also designed to look at students’ self-perceptions of the benefits of Morning Meetings for maintaining positive relationships with their peers.

Implementation of the Morning Meeting Program

Morning Meetings are comprised of four components: Greeting, Sharing, Group Activities, and News and Announcements. These components build the interpersonal skills students need to have positive social relationships that impact the overall learning environment. The Morning Meeting Program was implemented as part of the classroom routine and introduced during a discussion of classroom community. The discussion generated students’ perceptions of what a positive classroom looks like and what skills are needed to maintain a positive learning environment for all...
members of the classroom community. The researcher introduced the Morning Meeting Program as a strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in the fifth grade classroom. The purposes, objectives, students’ and teacher’s responsibilities, and a general introduction of the four components were identified and shared with the students. A more detailed discussion of each component was emphasized as each component was introduced, modeled by the researcher, and practiced by the students. Students actively participated in the Morning Meeting. Student anticipation for future participation was observed by the researcher as students continued to ask when the next Morning Meeting would take place, and what skill would be practiced during the Meeting. Students’ discussions throughout the day emphasized the excitement of participation in Morning Meetings.

During this study, the researcher collected data for fourteen weeks during the second half of the school year. This data was collected in an attempt to examine the question: Are Morning Meetings an effective strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in an urban fifth grade classroom?

**Subjects**

Participants in the study included 21 fifth graders in a large urban elementary school. The classroom was academically heterogeneous with students ranging in age from 10-11 years. The ethnic makeup of the subject group was as follows: 61 percent African American, 29 percent Hispanic, and 10 percent Caucasian. The gender distribution was as follows: 43 percent male and 57 percent female. According to the New York State Education Department, 95% of all students (467)
educated in this urban elementary school receive free or reduced lunches. This number surpasses the state average of 28%. In this particular fifth grade classroom, according to cafeteria personnel (personal communication, Dec. 16, 2005), 85% of the students receive free lunches, 10% receive reduced lunches, and 5% pay full price. All students remained in a self-contained classroom throughout the school day with the exception of a one hour time period each for science and specials (gym, art, music) which were conducted in another classroom.

**Research Design**

To investigate the effectiveness of Morning Meetings as a strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment and students’ self-perceptions of the social skills necessary for positive interactions with others, baseline data was collected on students’ behaviors and compared with the data collected following the implementation of the Morning Meeting Program. In order to collect accurate, reliable, and valid data, information was gathered and analyzed using various sources throughout this study.

**Data Collection Instruments**

**Baseline Data**

Before the study began, a baseline of the frequency of the verbal and physical behaviors which have a negative influence on the climate of the classroom environment was established. The researcher selected the following observable behaviors based on the relatively high frequency of occurrence in the classroom: profanity, arguing with an adult or peers, name-calling, violating others’ personal
space, throwing/pushing/shoving of peers or objects, and threat of physical harm to others. These behaviors were observed and the frequency of occurrence was documented during the morning hours. A checkmark was used to tally the frequency of each behavior by each student as it occurred throughout the morning. At the conclusion of the baseline collection period, the frequencies of the targeted behaviors were tabulated for each student. From this data, the researcher then selected ten students with the highest frequency of the observable behaviors for targeted observation during the implementation of the Morning Meeting Program. The observation sheets used for the collection of the baseline data were developed and formatted by the researcher (See Appendix A).

Classroom Observation

During and after the implementation of Morning Meeting, data was collected on the classroom behavior of targeted students through observation (Hubbard & Power, 2003). Written observations and protocols of targeted students' use of appropriate and inappropriate social skills were described in detail and tallied on the data chart. Observations focused on students' active participation in Morning Meetings, outcomes of skills learned during the meetings, and development of student self-monitoring and self-regulatory behaviors, and cooperative interactions among all students in the classroom setting. Data of student observations were conducted and collected over a three month period.
Questionnaires and Interviews

Following each Morning Meeting, each student participant completed a written response questionnaire composed of two questions: What is one skill you learned in today’s Morning Meeting that will help you with your interactions with others? and, What will you do to help you practice this skill? In addition, data on students’ attitudes about Morning Meetings were collected through interviews with target students (See Appendix B).

Finally, students had opportunities to participate in group discussions where they were invited to reflect upon their attitudes, opinions, and self-perceptions about the effectiveness of Morning Meetings as a strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in their fifth grade classroom. The researcher observed the interactions and responses shared among the groups and included student responses in the field notes.

Triangulation of Data

The researcher used multiple data collection instruments in order to collect valid information (Hubbard & Power, 2003). The use of multiple data collection instruments were used to ensure that the data collected during the study were reliable. The various instruments used to collect the data allowed the researcher to triangulate the data. Baseline data, researcher’s notes, student questionnaires, and student interviews were analyzed to obtain an accurate view of the effectiveness of Morning
Meetings. The chart below depicts how the five data collection instruments were used to view different parts of the research question.

Table 3.1 Triangulation of Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline Data</th>
<th>Participant Observer Notes</th>
<th>Student Interview</th>
<th>Student Questionnaire</th>
<th>Collaborative/Group interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors that impede learning environment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills and relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness in classroom</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed carefully multiple times to identify recurring themes and build generalizations. Talled behaviors were analyzed to document the effect of Morning Meetings on the frequency of behaviors of the selected students in the classroom. The researcher also reviewed qualitative data to understand the effectiveness of Morning Meetings on the positive learning environment in the classroom. This data was also analyzed in order for the researcher to identify students’ perceptions about the influence of morning meetings on setting the tone for respectful learning and for establishing a climate of trust within their classroom community.

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As reflected in the above triangulation matrix, data were also triangulated to guarantee the reliability and validity of the study (Hubbard & Power, 2003). The study was conducted in a regular classroom setting. In addition, the classroom environment remained unchanged throughout the study, thus, the study has a high validity and reliability.
Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

Are Morning Meetings an effective strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in an urban fifth grade classroom? The researcher examined three main areas: factors that negatively impact a positive learning environment, social skills and relationships, and teacher influence in the classroom. Baseline data, observation notes, student questionnaires, student interviews, and group interactions were carefully analyzed to find generalizations.

Factors that Negatively Impact a Positive Learning Environment

The first research question was designed to determine what student behaviors negatively impact the development of a positive learning environment in an urban fifth grade classroom. The researcher analyzed data from three sources to determine the student behaviors that minimize the cohesiveness of the classroom environment. The researcher analyzed observation notes and student interactions and behaviors to establish baseline data on the frequency of those verbal and physical behaviors that negatively impact a positive learning environment. The baseline data were collected over a three week period and were used to identify students with the highest frequency of overall targeted verbal and physical behaviors. Of the 342 verbal behaviors demonstrated by the class, 306 or 89% of these behaviors were demonstrated by ten students. Physical behaviors demonstrated by the class totaled 140. Of the total class behaviors, 120 or 86% of these behaviors were demonstrated
by the same ten students with the highest frequency of overall behaviors. Overall, these ten students demonstrated approximately 88% of the combined verbal and physical behaviors of the class as a whole.

**Findings:**

**Generalization 1:** There were a significant number of student behaviors and actions that negatively affected the development of a positive learning environment.

- When the study began, the class total for verbal behaviors numbered 342 in frequency, or an average of 114 verbal behaviors per week. In comparison, the ten students with the highest frequency of combined verbal and physical behaviors demonstrated 306 of the class total with an average of 102 verbal behaviors per week. These behaviors included arguing with an adult, arguing with peers, profanity, and name-calling. Arguing with adults and arguing with peers were categorically the most frequently observed behaviors overall. As a result of these behaviors, a significant amount of time was spent on resolving conflicts or instituting appropriate consequences.

- The physical behaviors of the class, including invading others' personal space, shoving of peers, and threat of harm through the use of body language, had a lower frequency of occurrence (140) overall or an average of 47 behaviors per week. In comparison, the ten students with the highest frequency of combined verbal and physical behaviors demonstrated 120 of the total class behaviors, or an average of 40 physical behaviors per week. The total number of verbal and physical behaviors demonstrated by the class
per week, along with the total verbal and physical behaviors of the ten students per week are illustrated in the following graph:

Table 4.1

Baseline Data for Incidence of Verbal and Physical Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Class Verbal Behaviors</th>
<th>Student Sample Verbal Behaviors</th>
<th>Class Physical Behaviors</th>
<th>Student Sample Physical Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>113 (86%)</td>
<td>40 (83%)</td>
<td>111 (84%)</td>
<td>33 (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>125 (89%)</td>
<td>45 (84%)</td>
<td>104 (94%)</td>
<td>55 (98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>97 (86%)</td>
<td>38 (84%)</td>
<td>98 (94%)</td>
<td>49 (98%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Target behaviors: (V) Arguing with adults, (V) Arguing with peers, (V) Profanity, (V) Name-calling, (P) Invading others' space, (P) shoving, (P) threat of harm/body language
Generalization 2: There are numerous outside environmental factors which can influence student behaviors in the classroom. Generally, students use actions and behaviors to communicate reaction to stressors in their lives. The following outside factors were found to influence student behaviors in the classroom.

- Students who have prescribed medication and do/do not take their medication on a regular basis, exhibit inconsistent behaviors in the classroom.

- Students living in foster care, single-parent households, with family members other than their primary care-giver, or in households that are dysfunctional or chaotic, demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with the particular environment they are living in. They may reflect the physical and emotional stress of that environment through their actions and behaviors.

- Parents who are incarcerated, in treatment facilities, or have relinquished custody of their child or children, may have children who demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with a lack of trust and stability as well as a diminished sense of love and belonging in their lives.

- Students may live in an environment where their behavior is acceptable and/or tolerated by others. Words and actions may be expressed as a form of communication and, in a sense, a mode of survival in an environment where poverty, crime, drugs, and gang related activities may dominate their neighborhood. The “hidden rules” of their home environment may be brought with them into the school environment and resistance may be encountered when such behaviors and actions are not accepted or tolerated.
Generalization 3: The implementation of or lack of consistent routines, expectations, and consequences and rewards can influence student behaviors. Adult and peer role models have a significant influence on overall student behaviors and actions in the classroom. The following chart demonstrates students’ perceptions of what they felt shaped their classroom environment.

Table 4.2  Students' Perceptions about Their Classroom Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher’s Questions:</th>
<th>Student Responses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| “What do you feel are examples of actions or behaviors that do contribute to a positive learning environment?” | • “When we can all get along and help each other instead of arguing or fighting with each other. We can work better in groups to get our work done.”  
• “If kids just say nice things to each other...give compliments instead of calling each other names. They could get to know each other better instead of fighting.”  
• “When we listen to the teacher and each other instead of paying attention to people who distract us, we are being respectful. Other kids will learn from us and do the same thing.”  
• “Teachers need to be tougher and give consequences that are fair and will work so we will stop doing things that will get us into trouble. Only the kids who are causing trouble should get the consequences. That’s fair!”  
• “When people talk during a lesson or are rude and disrespectful to the teacher, we cannot learn what we are supposed to learn.”  
• “Sometimes, kids say mean things or argue with each other. Feelings get hurt and everybody else either gets into it too or tries to ignore it and learn instead.”  
• “When the teacher pays more attention to the kids who cause trouble, the rest of us just sit there. We want to learn and we try to be good but the other kids take up so much of our learning time. It’s frustrating.” |
Overall, students correlate individual behaviors with group behaviors, in that what each one says or does can influence the actions, behaviors, and learning experiences of others. Thus, implied through student responses and perceptions, everyone, including teachers, is responsible for the cohesiveness of the classroom environment and the learning experiences of all students. Everyone must work together to contribute to the positive learning environment of the classroom.

**Social Skills and Relationships**

The second part of the research was to determine whether the implementation of Morning Meetings can contribute to a positive learning environment by developing the social skills necessary for positive relationships and interactions with others. The researcher used observation notes to record individual and cooperative behaviors and attitudes during Morning Meetings and throughout various social and academic settings. Student questionnaires and student interviews were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of Morning Meetings on the social development and positive interactions among fifth grade students.

In addition, the researcher analyzed students' perceptions about the influence of Morning Meetings on their own actions and behaviors and how these behaviors contributed to the overall positive learning environment of their classroom. The ten students with the highest incidence of targeted verbal and physical behaviors, collected from the baseline data, were interviewed to determine their attitudes and perceptions about the effects of Morning Meetings on their actions and behaviors and how they contributed to the positive learning environment of the classroom. The
following generalization was made based upon researcher observations, student questionnaires, and student interviews.

**Findings:**

Generalization 4: Students were excited to participate in Morning Meetings. They often asked when the next Meeting would take place and what would they be learning. An increased sense of belonging and ability to work together to successfully accomplish individual and mutual goals increased self-esteem and their willingness to work together with peers they do not know or like very well. Students felt more confident that they could positively and collaboratively contribute to the classroom environment that is conducive to their learning and the learning of others. They demonstrated, through academic and social activities, many of the social skills necessary to build and support enduring positive relationships with adults and peers.

Table 4.3  
**Researcher Observations and Analyses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Journal:</th>
<th>Analysis:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The students are quicker to gather on the rug for Morning Meeting.</td>
<td>• The students are engaged with the activities and they continue to be excited with the Meetings. When they are happy and appropriately and productively engaged, peer interactions are more positive! Keep activities engaging enough to maximize Morning Meeting outcomes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They appropriately and effectively redirect peers so that Morning Meetings can begin on time and continue in the established format of each component.</td>
<td>• Many students are demonstrating leadership skills. Have students lead the Meetings! Move from teacher-directed to student-centered learning!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some students are gaining greater respect from their peers.</td>
<td>• Multilingual greetings and “Did you know...” student sharing activity are the students’ favorites! It helps them to get to know each other better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Several students are becoming quite the leaders and role models for others during Morning Meeting. Many of the students who have behavioral challenges are doing a great job participating throughout the Meetings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The skills learned, modeled, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35
practiced during the Meeting are continuing to be demonstrated throughout the day, in both social and academic interactions. Repetition and acknowledgement of students’ demonstrations of appropriate behaviors continue to serve as a source for continued success.

- Some students are still feeling challenged when required to work with partners or in groups. Cooperative tasks are often impeded by students’ requests to work alone or with another group or partner. “I cannot work with that person, can I change groups?” Socialization with friends during instruction or activities is becoming an issue.
- Students still act out prior to and during Meetings. Some “catch” themselves before I need to redirect.
- Several students are not affected by rewards or consequences. They deny or do not accept responsibility for their actions or behavior. Other students are getting irritated with them. Sometimes, a domino effect takes place we had to address behaviors rather than continue with the Meeting. Kids who were doing the right thing were not happy!

Keep plugging these into the Meetings!

- The idea is to encourage everyone to participate. Some are resilient but are not penalized and are encouraged to join by their peers. Positive reinforcement and the use of “encouragers” by peers often adjusts willingness to participate! Use this for cooperative activities! Behaviors often adapt according the use of some encouragers- usually very effective and more appreciated when given by peers.
- Use the strong leaders in the class as peer intervention to help mediate and modify behaviors and relationships.
- Select a more random method of creating cooperative groups. Offer the choice of selecting members when they demonstrate that they can work well with others.
- Students are beginning to self-monitor and self-regulate behaviors. Allow more of this to act as an intervention for behavior modification. Setting personal goals, complimenting and supporting others, is working. Peer approval is an effective tool for appropriate behaviors.

Use the strong leaders in the class as peer intervention to help mediate and modify behaviors and relationships. Select a more random method of creating cooperative groups. Offer the choice of selecting members when they demonstrate that they can work well with others.

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Table 4.4  
Student Questionnaire and Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions:</th>
<th>Student Responses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Name one skill you learned in today’s Morning Meeting that will help you with your interactions with others.</td>
<td>• “I learned how to greet people by making eye contact and speaking in a clear and audible voice. This shows respect. When you give respect you will get it back and you will have a good day. I will practice this skill with my friends, teachers, and family everyday. It will get easier to do.” • “I learned how to greet people in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
other languages like Sawa Bona. It means *good day* in South African. It helps me to learn about different people and their cultures. We can all learn about people who are different than us, even in our own class.”

- “We can get along when we speak respectfully to others. It starts our day out nice. People catch on and do the same thing! I will keep trying to speak with respect. It feels good inside and when it makes other people happy. I will keep trying!”

- “One thing I learned was sharing. It helped me get to know other people, even my friends better. When I know people better, I can work with them to get things done. I will give myself and others a chance to get along better instead of ignoring them because I did not know them.”

- “I learned about cooperation and tolerance and how they help us get things done together and to be patient with each other. We can get things done better and faster than if we had to do it alone!”

- “I learned how to work with a partner I did not know well but we did good and got the task done together! I will try to work and get along better with others in school during learning and fun things!”

- “I learned that even if I do not know or even like someone, I need to be able to work with them, in school and in life. I can work with others and have made some new friends doing it.”

- “Sharing helps me know what makes people happy and sad, what they like and don’t like so I will know how to treat them better. Sometimes we have things in common and it helps us want to get along, even like each other.”
Student interviews were conducted with the ten students who had the highest frequency of targeted behaviors obtained from collected baseline data. Questions were based on those taken from interview sheets as well as additional questions, as a method of determining the students' perceptions about the progress and benefits of Morning Meeting on the contributory behaviors of these students on the positive learning environment of the fifth grade classroom. The following generalization was made from student responses and perceptions on the effectiveness of Morning Meetings on their overall behaviors.

Generalization 5: Students are reflective learners. When they are given opportunities to process and reflect upon the development of their own learning experiences, they feel a sense of value and active participation in their accomplishments and efforts to succeed in school.

Table 4.5  
Student Interview Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Questions:</th>
<th>Student Responses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. How have Morning Meetings helped you contribute to the positive learning environment in your classroom? | • “I feel Morning Meetings have helped me to be a better person. I feel better about myself and I am more careful how I treat others. Because there is less conflict, we can spend more time learning and getting along.”  
• “I know it is hard to cooperate with other kids, especially if I do not know them well or like them, or even if they do not like me. I am learning to give it a chance because we have to get the work done. I use respect, cooperation, and tolerance to treat people fair. If they are fair to me, I am fair to them.”  
• “My teacher is proud of me and I do not get bad phone calls home. So, I make a goal to cooperate, respect others, tolerate them, |
2. How do you feel when you are able to successfully practice what you learn in Morning Meetings?

3. Think about when you or others you know do not practice what they learned in Morning Meetings. What do you notice about the learning environment, relationships between/among peers, and how people respond (verbally and physically)?

- "Sometimes, I do not want to try because others do not try with me. My teacher makes me work with them and sometimes I can't so I get into trouble. I say I do not care but I do. It isn't easy so I give up and act bad. My friends try to get me to do what I am supposed to do when I work with others so it helps. It feels good when other people care about me."

- "Because we all try...some do not.. We seem to get along better. I am a good role model my teacher says, but sometimes I am not. When I am a good role model, I have more friends! We learn a lot more when we all work together instead of fighting with each other."

- "I feel good. I am making more friends. People say I am their best friend now. I do not get into much trouble."

- "It is sometimes easy to do but sometimes hard. It depends on the other people around me. If I am with good kids, I do okay. If I am around people who get into trouble or do not want to work with me, I get into trouble too."

- "I need to practice cooperation, sharing, tolerance, and communication. Sometimes we are not allowed to talk or work with others, so it is hard to practice these skills."

- "People say I am their best friend. I did not know this before sharing during Morning Meetings. It makes me feel good about myself. I think it is because I am nice to them instead of fighting with them, plus, I do not get into trouble. Nobody wants to be friends with someone who is always in trouble!"

- "We have to stop learning and put our heads down or do a writing assignment. It is not fair to the kids who are doing what they are supposed to do. Everyone gets mad at each
other, yelling, fighting, and saying bad things.”
• “People who were friends do not try to work things out and have to act tough in front of the class. Everyone wants a piece of it. It makes me mad that people who always do the right thing have to suffer.”
• “The teacher has to deal with the kids who yell at them and fight, instead of teaching. Some kids just sit there with nothing to do but watch. It’s not fair.”
• “Our classroom is more positive and less stressful when we all get along, talk nice and do not fight. We do not get mad or frustrated and everyone wants to help each other. We have nice and smart people in our class. The teacher is happier and we can learn. Some kids just don’t get it—the good feeling instead of the bad feeling in our classroom.”

**Effectiveness in the Classroom**

The researcher used the above generalizations, made with references to various data including student responses to questionnaires and interviews along with data from observations of student behaviors, actions, and interactions with others in social and academic settings to determine whether Morning Meetings were an effective strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in an urban fifth grade classroom.

**Findings:**

Generalization 6: According to this study, Morning Meetings are an effective strategy for maintaining a positive learning environment in an urban fifth grade classroom. There was a noted increase in self-monitoring and self-regulating student behaviors, thus, demonstrating the effective transition from teacher-regulated
behaviors to student-regulated behaviors as a result of the implementation of Morning Meetings.

- Students, who were able to successfully monitor and regulate their own actions and behaviors on a regular basis, were also successful in supporting the efforts and positive behaviors of their peers. These students were able to create personal goals for the appropriate behaviors that positively contribute to their academic and social accomplishments and the overall positive learning environment of the classroom. The skills learned during Morning Meetings resulted in positive attitudes about self and others and continued to build upon the foundation that supports positive relationships among students in a more cohesive learning environment. A sense of trust and belonging has been a supportive element in peer guidance and social skill achievement in this urban fifth grade classroom.

- Students, who have parents or guardians who communicate with and support the classroom teacher’s efforts to maintain appropriate student behavior, generally take responsibility for their actions and behaviors and respond more positively to rules, expectations, rewards, and consequences. Students’ awareness of the collaborative efforts and effective, consistent communication between school and home may influence the incidence of certain types of actions and behaviors; therefore, maximizing self-monitoring and self-regulatory behaviors and minimizing the undesirable actions and behaviors in the classroom.
Generalization 7: According to the quantitative data obtained and analyzed from the researcher's observations of student behaviors, there was not a significant change, or decrease in the frequency of incidence of the targeted verbal and physical behaviors of the ten student participants.

- Although the frequency of student behaviors did not change significantly, based upon this study, the interval between the incidences of these behaviors did significantly increase. A stratified random sample was taken, from the ten students, to reflect an unbiased representation of the change in behaviors over time. The total behaviors of each of the participants, obtained from the baseline data, were placed in three categories based on frequency or incidence of occurrence, ranging from low, medium, and high. An independent third party selected two students, identified numerically, from each category. The six samples fairly represent the ten student participants and their behaviors. Line graphs were constructed to represent the progression of or pattern of change in the incidence of the specific verbal and physical behaviors of the random sample during weeks two, six, and ten of the study as a result of implementing Morning Meetings in the classroom (Appendix C).
Chapter 5
Implications

Research on Current Findings

According to statistical data, Morning Meetings implemented in this study did not significantly change the frequency of the undesirable words and actions of fifth grade students in this urban school. However, many implications can be drawn from the qualitative data collected:

- Morning Meetings can help students to demonstrate self-monitoring and self-regulation techniques, therefore, affecting the frequency and interval between negative behavioral episodes. In this study, the interval between incidences of misbehaviors increased significantly.

- Morning Meetings build and support the positive learning environment in a classroom. In this study, fifth grade students enjoyed participating in Morning Meeting. Individual and group processing resulted in an increase in self-esteem and sense of belonging, as well as a shared and respected sense of classroom community.

- Morning Meetings give students opportunities to experience a sense of responsibility, ownership for their learning, and a sense of respect from peers as they take turns conducting the Morning Meeting. In this study, transitioning from a teacher-directed learning environment to a student-centered learning environment during Morning Meetings was an effective structure for demonstrating, practicing, and implementing the social and
academic skills necessary for a cohesive classroom environment for all students.

- Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, in conjunction with an established and consistent routine for behavior expectations, result in motivation to do the right thing because it’s the right thing to do. In this study, students who felt good about what they did and how it affected others, continued to demonstrate the desired appropriate behaviors.

- Teachers who respect their students, and who model and practice skills and behaviors that support students’ efforts at self-regulation, receive student respect in return. Mutual respect is earned, achieved, and maintained through the collaborative efforts of teachers and students to achieve the desired academic and social outcomes. The development of character traits, social skills, and mutual goal achievement is not just a strategy for academic success, it is a life skill that prepares students to persevere and succeed as valuable citizens in their community.

**Recommendations for Further Studies**

- To further study how Morning Meetings affect the positive learning environment of a classroom, the researcher might extend the research over a longer period of time. With additional time, a researcher might take a more in-depth look into the environmental factors outside the school setting that can influence in-school behaviors. Research might include urban influences on student behaviors as well as a look into how students in this environment use
language as a tool to communicate with others. Why might students feel the need to apply the “hidden rules” of their society to their academic environment?

- Research might include the effectiveness of the skills learned in Morning Meeting to other areas of school, such as other classrooms, specials areas, cafeteria, and transition time. How can the implementation of Morning Meeting include the collaborative efforts of an entire school staff and how would this collaboration influence student behaviors?

- Another study might be conducted to see if, after ceasing the Morning Meeting, how would behaviors change and what would the implications be that would result. Would students be able to continue to demonstrate the skills necessary for cohesiveness in a positive classroom environment?

- Research to determine the influence of positive peer interactions on individual student behaviors as a result of Morning Meetings might be a focus of extended research. How can “model” students impact overall behavior and climate in a classroom?
References


APPENDICES
Appendix A
# BASELINE FOR TARGET BEHAVIORS

Frequency of negative behaviors in a fifth-grade urban classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student #</th>
<th>8:45-9:30</th>
<th>9:30-10:45</th>
<th>11:25-12:00</th>
<th>8:45-9:30</th>
<th>9:30-10:45</th>
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Verbal Behaviors (AA-Arguing with an Adult, AP-Arguing with Peers, P-Profanity, NC-Name-Calling)

Physical Behaviors (SP-Shoving of Peers, PS-Invading Others’ Personal Space, T-Threat of Harm/body language)
EFFECT OF MORNING MEETINGS ON OBSERVABLE TARGET BEHAVIORS

According to baseline data, the frequency of anti-social behaviors among 10 students with the most incidence of negative behaviors.

**Verbal Behaviors:** (P), (AA), (AP), (NC).

**Physical Behaviors:** (PS), (SP), (T).

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**TOTAL**

**Notes:**
Appendix B
Morning Meetings
Student Interview Response

What skill from our Morning Meetings do you feel you benefit the most from? Why?

How has your relationship with others changed since you have practiced this skill?
Morning Meetings
Student Response

Name **one skill** you learned in today's Morning Meeting that will help you with your interactions with others and will contribute to the positive learning environment of your classroom.

What will you do to help you practice this skill?
Morning Meetings
Student Response

Name one skill that you learned in today's morning meeting that will help you with your interactions with others.

The skill we learned was cooperation.

Morning meeting helped me cooperate with others. I can learn to work with others. It will help me now and in the future.

What will you do to help you practice this skill?

To help me practice this skill is that I am going practice with other people in the class. I will even practice with teachers.
Morning Meetings
Student Response

Name one skill that you learned in today's morning meeting that will help you with your interactions with others.

I learned respect, cooperation, tolerance, communication, and participation.

What will you do to help you practice this skill?

I will practice it every day at school and home. Also, I will work with people that I never worked with before and use those skills.
Morning Meetings
Student Response

Name one skill that you learned in today's morning meeting that will help you with your interactions with others. The skill I learned will help me get along with other people.

What will you do to help you practice this skill?
If I don't know or like someone, I will still work with them.
Morning Meetings
Student Response

Name one skill that you learned in today’s morning meeting that will help you with your interactions with others: The skill I learned tod was cooperation, sharing, and respect. The skill will help me by communicate and participate with them by helping them and sharing things that we didn’t know.

What will you do to help you practice this skill? By practicing all the skills to help me communicate with others and show respect other more.
Morning Meetings
Student Response

Name one skill that you learned in today's morning meeting that will help you with your interactions with others.

One skill that I learned in today's morning meeting that will help me with my interaction with others is cooperation that helped me by working with people that I don't get along with.

What will you do to help you practice this skill?

I will practice this skill by getting the assignment done.
Morning Meetings
Student Response

Name one skill that you learned in today’s morning meeting that will help you with your interactions with others.

I need to work with people that do not talk and my group was fun with James because he was talking and with the skill.

What will you do to help you practice this skill?

by working with the people that I am not use to but I work good with James.
Morning Meetings
Student Response

Name one skill that you learned in today’s morning meeting that will help you with your interactions with others.

One skill I learned is to share, listen, and learn.

What will you do to help you practice this skill?

I will work on these by sharing my ideas more often and listen to other ideas and learn them.
Appendix C
Student # 1

Graph 6.1  Baseline Behaviors

Graph 6.2  Implementation of Morning Meetings
-Target Behaviors-

Graph 6.3  Implementation of Morning Meetings
-Target Behaviors-

Graph 6.4  Implementation of Morning Meetings
-Target Behaviors-
Student # 2

Graph 7.1  
Baseline Behaviors

Graph 7.2  
Implementation of Morning Meetings
- Target Behaviors -

Graph 7.3  
Implementation of Morning Meetings
- Target Behaviors -

Graph 7.4  
Implementation of Morning Meetings
- Target Behaviors -
Student # 3

Graph 8.1  
Baseline Behaviors

Graph 8.2  
Implementation of Morning Meetings
-Target Behaviors-

Graph 8.3  
Implementation of Morning Meetings
-Target Behaviors-

Graph 8.4  
Implementation of Morning Meetings
-Target Behaviors-
Student # 5

Graph 9.1
Baseline Behaviors

Graph 9.2
Implementation of Morning Meetings
-Target Behaviors-
- (V) Arguing with adults
- (V) Arguing with peers
- (V) Profanity
- (V) Name-calling
- (P) Invading others' space
- (P) Shoving
- (P) Threat of harm

Graph 9.3
Implementation of Morning Meetings
-Target Behaviors-

Graph 9.4
Implementation of Morning Meetings
-Target Behaviors-

Weeks:
- Week 2
- Week 6
- Week 10
Student # 6

Graph 10.1  
Baseline Behaviors

Graph 10.2  
Implementation of Morning Meetings
- Target Behaviors -

Graph 10.3  
Implementation of Morning Meetings
Target Behaviors -

Graph 10.4  
Implementation of Morning Meetings
- Target Behaviors -
Student # 8

Graph 11.1  
Baseline Behaviors

Graph 11.2  
Implementation of Morning Meetings  
-Target Behaviors-

Graph 11.3  
Implementation of Morning Meetings  
-Target Behaviors-

Graph 11.4  
Implementation of Morning Meetings  
-Target Behaviors-
Dear Parents & Guardians:

As part of our morning routine, we will be having class meetings 1-2 times each week. All children will participate in morning meetings. Our Morning Meetings will focus on communication skills that students will benefit from in our classroom and other classrooms on a daily basis. These communication skills help children develop a more positive interaction with their peers in social and academic settings. You may even see results at home in the interactions your child has with his/her brothers and/or sisters.

Although the morning meetings are part of our routine, as part of my Master’s thesis through The Department of Education and Human Development in affiliation with SUNY College at Brockport, I would like to observe how the students use the skills they learn in order to get a better understanding of the benefits of these morning meetings on the interactions they have with each other in our classroom. No children’s names will be used and what students learn from the morning meetings will not impact negatively on their grades or their academic program in any way. There are no anticipated risks for your child.

I would like your permission to document your student’s interactions during the day. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at ______, room _____. We will be happy to address any concerns you may have. Please return the consent form as soon as possible.

Thank You.
Your student’s fifth grade teachers,
Mrs. Sittler & Mr. Kliewer

Betsy Ann Balzano
Distinguished Service Professor
Education and Human Development
SUNY College at Brockport
(585) 395-5549

Deanne Sittler- Graduate Student
Education and Human Development
SUNY College at Brockport
(585) ________-

☐ Yes, I give my consent for Mrs. Sittler to document the classroom interactions of my child __________________________ after the Morning Meetings through 1-2 short questions after each meeting, interviews, and observations.

Parent/Guardian Signature __________________________ Date: __________

☐ No, I do not give my consent for Mrs. Sittler to document the classroom interactions of my child __________________________ after the Morning Meetings through 1-2 short questions after each meeting, interviews, and observations.

Parent/Guardian Signature __________________________ Date: __________
To whom it may concern:

On 8/2/2005, Deanne Sittler (username=teacher01) completed all CITI Program requirements for the Basic CITI Course in The Protection of Human Research Subjects.

**Learner Institution:** College at Brockport

**Learner Group:** Group .2

**Learner Group Description:** This Group is appropriate for faculty, staff, graduate students and undergraduate students completing thesis or independent study projects. In addition to the required modules, complete any of the following modules applicable to your research:

- research with prisoners,
- Research with children,
- Research in public and elementary schools,
- International research,
- Internet research).

**Questions? Send an email to the institutional coordinator at cdonalds@brockport.edu**

**Contact Information:**
- Gender: Female
- Department: education
- Which course do you plan to take?: Social & Behavioral Investigator Course Only
- Role in human subjects research: Student Researcher
- Mailing Address:
  - Rochester
  - New York
The Required Modules for Group .2 are:

- Introduction
- History and Ethical Principles - SBR
- Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR
- The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR
- Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR
- Informed Consent - SBR
- Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR
- SUNY College at Brockport

Additional optional modules completed:

- Research with Children - SBR
- Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBR
- Internet Research - SBR

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator