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# Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Book in a Bag as a Social Skills Instruction Program

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ABSTRACT

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While schools are focused on academic success, many lack the resources and instruction needed to help students grow in their social emotional learning. However, research has shown that social emotional learning not only helps students build character but also helps them achieve academic goals. Furthermore, studies have shown that bibliotherapy helps children learn social skills and how to apply them into their own lives. The goal of this study was to determine if *Book in a Bag*, a social skills bibliotherapy program, implemented over the course of an entire school year was perceived by teachers as an acceptable method to help students learn social emotional skills. The study used a single case study design in an elementary school with grades 1-6. The sample consisted of 19 teachers from grades 1-6. This study was completed using existing data from an elementary school that implemented *Book in a Bag*. The *Book in a Bag* lessons were taught by the teachers, volunteers, or substitutes in every class. Surveys and focus groups were conducted to assess the social validity and perceptions of the program amongst the teachers regarding whether or not it was an acceptable strategy to teach students social skills. As part of this mixed methods design, an analysis of the means and standard deviations was performed on the survey data as well a one-way ANOVA to assess any differences across grade levels. Furthermore, a thematic analysis was performed on the focus group data to interpret the teachers' responses.

Results suggested that teachers found *Book in a Bag* an acceptable way to teach social skills and they found the social skills important for their students' social emotional learning. There was no significant difference across grade levels. In the focus group data, teachers reported that the lessons were easy to implement and helped their students gain a greater sense of awareness of the social skill steps. However, teachers in every grade level reported that some of the books did not connect very well to the social skill it was intended to teach and oftentimes there were not enough books for each of the classes. Moreover, this study suggests that bibliotherapy may be an effective and easy way to promote social emotional learning in the classroom.

Future implementation of this program should aim to make sure the books match with the social skill and that there are enough materials to implement the program on a school-wide level. Future studies of this program should look at how *Book in Bag* affects changes in student behavior across the school year by performing observational studies, particularly on playgrounds and during free time to see if students are implementing the social skill steps taught in the lessons.

Keywords: social emotional learning, social skills, elementary school, bibliotherapy, children's literature

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Academic learning has been a constant focus in schools as teachers and administrators focus on preparing students for standardized tests (Zins & Elias, 2006). However, this focus on academic success has taken away from social emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007). SEL involves helping children develop social and emotional skills that will enable them to recognize and manage emotions, develop problem-solving skills, and establish positive relationships with others (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2007; Zins & Elias, 2006). Since so much focus has been on preparing students to take standardized tests, they may lack the social and emotional skills needed to build character and create healthy relationships.

Research has shown that there are many benefits to implementing SEL programs in schools (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). SEL helps reduce problem behaviors that teachers and communities often see in adolescents, such as drug use, violence, and delinquency (Rak, 1996; Search Institute, 2009). Research indicates that when students participate in SEL programs, school attitudes, behavior, and performance also increase (Zins et al., 2007). The school environment also improves as students exhibit more prosocial behaviors that result in fewer suspensions involving aggressive acts, increased engagement in school activities, and fewer absences. Zins et al. (2007) found that when students are engaged in SEL, they begin to develop a greater sense of empathy and feel more connected to the community as a whole.

Furthermore, there are also academic benefits to promoting SEL in the classroom. CASEL (2007) explains that students who are involved in SEL interventions academically outperform, get better grades, and graduate at higher rates than those who do not participate in

such interventions.  Moreover, Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis which involved over 270,000 students who participated in 213 universally delivered SEL programs.  The study reported that K–12 students significantly improved social and emotional skills, behavior, attitudes, and academic achievement.  Furthermore, the students' academic achievement had an 11-point percentile gain when they were involved in SEL programs (Durlak et al., 2011).

**Bibliotherapy**

Bibliotherapy is one strategy to foster SEL in the classroom.  Bibliotherapy has theoretical roots dating all the way back to Ancient Greece (Riordan & Wilson, 1989).  Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young, and Money (2005) explained that bibliotherapy is the appropriate sharing of books and stories in order to provide opportunities for emotional healing and growth. Research supports the use of books to assist individuals in gaining insight into personal problems (Forgan, 2002; Marrs, 1995).

Based on traditionally accepted practice, Heath et al. (2005) described five stages in bibliotherapy.  These stages are listed and briefly described below:

1. Involvement—story draws in students and catches their interest

2. Identification—students identify with the story's characters

3. Catharsis—students share characters' feelings and express an emotional response associated with those feelings

4. Insight—students use story's lesson to help resolve personal problems

5. Universalization – students realize others have similar struggles

Each stage serves a specific purpose in helping an individual to truly connect with the story. This strong connection helps the individual to ultimately take strategies they learn from the story and apply these strategies to his or her own life.

The five stages of bibliotherapy are used as part of the *Book in a Bag* (BIB) program, a program that is the focus of this research study. BIB is a social skills instruction program that is implemented on a school-wide level. The books and lessons were created according to grade level and each lesson included the following:

1. Information about the book and a short synopsis

2. A description of the lesson's objective and its connection to an identified social skill

3. A description of required materials and any advance preparation needed for the lesson's activities

4. Information and questions to facilitate both pre- and post-reading discussions

5. Activities to encourage students to apply the social skill

6. A poster with the social skill steps to help the students remember how to implement the skill throughout the month (Refer to Table 1 for a description of each of the four social skill's specific steps outlined in the social skills instruction.)

**Social Validity**

Social validity is an important aspect to consider when implementing any intervention, especially in schools that implement school-wide programs (Marchant, Heath, & Miramontes, 2012). Teachers are significant frontline stakeholders who implement and carry out intervention programs. Additionally, in this study's school that implemented BIB, teachers were expected to reinforce students who used the program's identified social skills.

Research indicates that social validity is an integral part of sustaining the continual implementation of an intervention (Biggs, Vernberg, Twemlow, Fonagy, & Dill, 2008; Stauffer, Heath, Coyne, & Ferrin, 2012). Gelisli (2007) explained, "Teachers have an important role in classroom communication, classroom behavior management, and the achievement of teaching

aims" (p. 96). A teacher generally holds an authoritative role in the classroom, thus being in a position which students respect. Biggs et al. (2008) showed how the influence of teacher buy-in increases the likelihood of successful implementation of interventions, particularly at the school-wide level.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the perceptions of teachers participating in the BIB program. Since the literature indicates that teacher social validity is important to assess in better understanding the viability of the program, understanding these perceptions is critical to helping improve the program. Furthermore, this study helps better understand SEL and social skills instruction in the classroom and whether or not bibliotherapy is an effective intervention for this type of learning. It may also show correlations between students' perceptions of the program and teachers' perceptions of the program.

**Research Questions**

The study was conducted at an elementary school during the 2011–2012 school year. This school also implemented a positive reinforcement system for teachers and administers to acknowledge and reinforce students who were observed implementing the social skill steps. The participating school identified four social skills: (a) understanding that choices have consequences; (b) resolving differences; (c) showing appreciation; and (d) accepting responsibility when something goes wrong. The following four research questions are linked to these basic social skills:

1. Considering teachers' perceptions of the four identified social skills, how important were each of these social skills to the students in their classroom?

2. Based on teachers' perceptions, what worked well with the bibliotherapy lessons and what difficulties were encountered?

3. Based on teachers' perceptions, how did their students' social skills change across the 2011–2012 school year?

4. Based on quantitative survey data and information gathered in focus groups, were there differences in teachers' perceptions across grade levels? If there were differences, what were those differences?

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

SEL involves helping children develop social and emotional skills that will enable them to recognize and manage emotions, develop problem solving skills, and establish positive relationships with others (CASEL, 2007; Zins et al., 2007; Zins & Elias, 2006). When striving for academic excellence, teachers face the challenge of also attending to students' social emotional wellbeing (Zins et al., 2007). However, research shows that schools are most successful in their educational mission when they integrate efforts to promote children's academic, social, and emotional learning (Elias et al., 1997).

CASEL (2007) explains that students who are involved in SEL interventions academically outperform, get better grades, and graduate at higher rates than those who do not participate in such interventions. This research also shows that students who participate in SEL instruction are significantly more likely to successfully transition from school to jobs and ultimately to adulthood. Thus, the effects of SEL not only show immediate benefits for students, but clearly include long-term benefits as students become contributing members in society (CASEL, 2007).

Furthermore, SEL helps reduce problem behaviors that teachers and communities often see in adolescents. Studies show that SEL instruction has helped to reduce activities such as drug use, violence, and delinquency (Rak, 1996; Search Institute, 2009). The school environment is also improved as students exhibit more prosocial behaviors which result in fewer suspensions involving aggressive acts, increased engagement in school activities, and fewer absences. Zins et al. (2007) found that when students are engaged in SEL, they begin to develop a greater sense of empathy and feel more connected to the community as a whole. Therefore,

involvement in SEL programs not only benefits students, but schools and communities as a whole (CASEL, 2007).

Research indicates that when students participate in SEL programs, school attitudes, behavior, and performance also increase (Zins et al., 2007). An example of students performing better because of SEL strategies comes from a meta-analysis conducted by Durlak et al. (2011). The analysis included over 270,000 students who participated in 213 universally delivered programs. The study reported that K–12 students significantly improved social and emotional skills, behaviors, attitudes, and academic achievement. Furthermore, the students' academic achievement had an 11-point percentile gain when they were involved in SEL programs (Durlak et al., 2011). This improvement in student achievement is important because it shows that SEL is helping students meet the academic goals the school has set according to common core standards. This study shows there is a potential correlation between developing SEL skills and performing better academically.

**Essential Social Emotional Learning Competencies**

CASEL has identified five key competencies that help students develop in their SEL. CASEL (2007) has determined that these five skills are necessary for helping a child effectively become a good student, citizen, and worker. These competencies include (a) self-awareness, (b) social awareness, (c) self-management, (d) responsible decision-making, and (e) relationship skills.

CASEL (2007) explains that self-awareness means the individual is conscious of his or her own thoughts and emotions and how these effect behaviors. Being self-aware also means the individual strives to be confident and optimistic; however, they are also aware of their

weaknesses. "Children who have an accurate self-awareness will embrace their strengths and will see them as tools to help themselves and to help others" (Hippe, 2004, p. 240).

Self-management is the ability to control and manage one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (CASEL, 2007). Those who are successful at self-management are able to control their impulses and manage their stress. Thoughtful planning is also an important aspect of self-management. This competency aids individuals as they work towards personal and academic goals as it helps them stay on-task and focused on their work (Peterson, Young, Salzberg, West, & Hill, 2006).

Social awareness is in large part the ability to have empathy. This means being able to understand the perspectives of other people and being thoughtful of their feelings. While a person may disagree with another, they respect one another and their opinions. Gaining a greater sense of social awareness also increases an individual's desire to serve those around them. They have greater awareness for other individuals in need and respect different cultural and moral standards (CASEL, 2007). Research has shown that literature can be particularly helpful in aiding students as they develop a greater sense of social awareness. Lobron and Selman (2007) explain that "children can interpret the social messages of the books we read to them and develop more sophisticated social awareness" (p. 536).

Relationship skills are an important competency for creating healthy relationships in a person's life. Sims, Hutchins and Taylor (1997) explained that good relationship skills in childhood lay the foundation for healthy adult relationships. In order to build friendships and strong relationships, a person needs to learn how to listen and clearly communicate with others. Learning how to deal with conflict with others and being able to work together are foundational

skills for creating healthy relations. Stable relationships also require cooperation, negotiation, and the ability to resist negative peer pressure (CASEL, 2007).

In summary, CASEL (2007) explains that responsible decision-making is the ability to make choices while considering potential outcomes and how choices may affect others. Developing this skill helps individuals better understand their personal agency and accountability. A person will make sure each decision is safe, ethical, and respectful of cultural norms. Peer pressure is an especially important issue when helping children make responsible decisions. In fact, in a survey conducted by Lewis and Lewis (1984) almost 50% of children reported being pressured into problem behaviors that placed the children (or others) at risk for personal injury or the potential development of habits hazardous to their health. Being able to make responsible decisions is an important skill that will help an individual combat peer pressure and make good decisions throughout their life (CASEL, 2007).

**Social Skills Instruction**

SEL coincides and helps in social skills instruction. Social skills are a key component to SEL as they are the manifestation of the social emotional qualities a child has internalized. McFall (1982) explained that social skills can be defined as the specific abilities that enable a person to perform competently at particular social tasks. While each individual is born with innate abilities, the vast majority of our social abilities are learned from our environment, with some individuals experiencing deficits in critical social skills (Lane, Givner, & Pierson, 2004; Lane, Gresham, & O'Shaughnessy, 2002). These deficits can be overcome through learning interventions and strategies (McFall, 1982). With a wide-range of social skill instruction available for teachers, researchers agree that the integration of social skills instruction into a classroom at a universal level has the potential to provide all students with a consistent and

supportive framework for behavioral expectations, an important part of positive behavioral support (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004).

Social skills are also important for academic achievement. In fact, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, and Zimbardo (2000) reported that students' social skills in third grade were better predictors of academic achievement in eighth grade than were third grade achievement test scores. Caprara et al. (2000) firmly emphasized the importance of creating and improving social skills programs rather than solely focusing on children's academic achievement.

There are a variety of social skills that are important for both classroom learning and success in life. Understanding social skills from a teacher's perspective is also important for knowing which interventions will be most helpful in the classroom. A study conducted by Lane et al. (2004) asked 126 teachers from four schools in southern California to rate the importance of 30 social skills. They were asked to rate the social skills according to the *Social Skills Rating System* created by Gresham and Elliot (1990). The study discovered seven social skills as being considered the most important among this group of teachers. The seven social skills included: "follows directions, attends to instructions, controls temper with peers, controls temper with adults, gets along with people who are different, responds appropriately when hit, and uses time in an acceptable way" (Lane et al., 2004, p. 108).

Furthermore, Weed (2015) conducted a study associated with the BIB program to determine which social skills were considered the most important to Utah elementary school teachers. In this study, 265 teachers completed the study's survey. The survey asked teachers to rank the importance of specific social skills on a Likert scale. The findings showed that the teachers identified five skills as being "extremely important" (the highest rating) with the endorsing responses ranging from 66% to 73% of teachers. They were identified in ranking

order as the following: "following rules and instructions" (73%), "shows respect to adults" (73%), "shows respect to other students" (70%), "conflict management and resolution" (70%), and "effective communication" (66%). Furthermore, the social skills teachers identified as being the most important for academic and social success included: "anger management," "following rules and instructions," "conflict management/resolution," "effective communication," and "self-management: good use of free time, seatwork, and assigned tasks" (Weed, 2015). Consequently, focusing on these social skills in the classroom is important for addressing the needs of the teachers and the students. Since there are many social skills that interventions can focus on, choosing the social skills that will best help the students' SEL is key to creating effective change in the classroom.

**Background of Bibliotherapy**

Bibliotherapy is a method which can be used to teach social skills in the classroom. Bibliotherapy has theoretical roots dating all the way back to Ancient Greece (Riordan & Wilson, 1989). Heath et al. (2005) explained that bibliotherapy is the appropriate sharing of books and stories in order to provide opportunities for emotional healing and growth. Books are often helpful as way for individuals to gain insight into personal problems (Forgan, 2002).

Pardeck and Pardeck (1993) are mental health professionals with extensive experience using bibliotherapy. They perceive bibliotherapy as an effective way to help both adults and children who are facing a variety of problems, no matter the severity. They recommend that when a mental health professional identifies an individual's challenging issue, the professional should carefully consider and choose a book that will support the individual in addressing and coping with the identified problem. When presenting the book to the individual, the practitioner should explain that the individual can either read the book on their own time or the therapist can

read the book with the individual during sessions.  In particular, when working with children and with those who struggle with reading, the therapist may read the story to the individual. Additionally, Pardeck and Pardeck (1993) recommended a post-reading time for processing feelings and discussing connections between one's personal life and the situations described in the book.  The follow-up also consists of identifying specific strategies to apply new insights and skills.  To further strengthen connections between the story and life, therapists can offer experiential learning activities such as creative writing, art activities, extended discussions, and role playing (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993).

Heath et al. (2005) described five stages in bibliotherapy.  These stages are listed and briefly described:

1. Involvement—story draws in students and catches their interest
2. Identification—students identify with the story's characters
3. Catharsis—students share characters' feelings and express an emotional response associated with those feelings
4. Insight—students use story's lesson to help resolve personal problems
5. Universalization – students realize others have similar struggles

Each stage serves a specific purpose in helping individuals truly connect with the story and helps them apply strategies they learn during the process, personalizing the story in their own life (Heath et al., 2005).

**Research on Bibliotherapy**

The research on the effectiveness of bibliotherapy shows mixed results.  Much of the research focuses on efforts to help adults struggling with problems in a clinical setting.  For example, Cuijpers (1997) conducted a meta-analysis to determine how effective bibliotherapy

was in helping adults struggling with unipolar depression.  He found that while his meta-analysis was limited in scope, that bibliotherapy methods can help in the treatment of unipolar depression and can be just as effective as group or individual therapy sessions.  Furthermore, other research has shown that bibliotherapy can be effective for adults who struggle with certain disorders, such as depression, panic disorder, and certain sexual dysfunctions (Fanner & Urquhart, 2008; Marrs, 1995).  Additionally, when compared to a no-treatment group, bibliotherapy was shown to be more effective in decreasing individuals' anxiety (Mayo-Wilson & Montgomery, 2013).

The underlying premise of bibliotherapy is tied to cognitive behavior therapy (Heath, Moulton, Dyches, Prater, & Brown, 2011).  Bibliotherapy helps individuals become more aware of how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interrelated.  Oatley (1995, 1999) explained that cognitive processes (e.g., including recognition and reframing) and emotional processes (e.g., empathy, emotional memories and identification) occur while reading.  "These cognitive processes are key to the recognition of unhelpful cognitions and eliciting more realistic thoughts and assumptions" (Montgomery & Mauders, 2015, p. 38).  Furthermore, emotional processes associated with bibliotherapy allow an individual to experience certain situations through another person's perspective.  Ultimately, the individual is able to interpret his or her own hardships in a different way (Oatley, 1995, 1999).

Although clinical practice has primarily focused on bibliotherapy with adults, Montgomery et al. (2015) identified research that endorses bibliotherapy's positive effects on children's behavior.  Montgomery et al.'s study was a meta-analysis which analyzed articles focused on children ages 5–16.  Their study concluded that creative bibliotherapy has a small to moderate effect on increasing prosocial behavior and decreasing internalizing and externalizing behaviors.  Thus, for schools that are experiencing students' problematic behaviors,

bibliotherapy is one intervention that can help teachers decrease students' undesirable behaviors and increase prosocial behaviors.

Also, in support of bibliotherapy, Bettelheim (1976) explained that children's literature helps youth find meaning and appropriately master social, emotional, and cognitive skills. He stated that stories help children become "less and less engulfed by unmanageable chaos" (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 66).

Another study demonstrated the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in kindergarten and first grade classrooms (Chai, 2011). Chai (2011) studied 96 participants in three kindergarten classrooms and three first grade classrooms. Half of the classrooms were assigned to be the treatment group which received bibliotherapy interventions with reinforced activities. The wait-list control group received no treatment. After the intervention period, the treatment group showed significantly higher social problem-solving skills than the control group. Furthermore, the treatment group participants were able to maintain these social problem-solving skills and generalize the skills to other settings. Therefore, not only can bibliotherapy methods help in teaching social skills, but the positive effects of bibliotherapy are noted across time and are generalized across multiple settings. Furthermore, integrating the bibliotherapy intervention into the classroom was also able to be streamlined because the intervention coincided with the classroom's current curriculum (Chai, 2011). However, since this study was only conducted in six classrooms, additional studies should determine if Chai's research can be replicated in other schools.

**Social Validity**

In order to ensure that bibliotherapy is an acceptable method for teaching social skills, social validity is a key component in analyzing its effectiveness. Social validity has shown to be

an integral part in determining the continual implementation of an intervention (Biggs et al., 2008; Stauffer et al., 2012).  Social validity is a measure of how well a social program is accepted by those who implement the intervention or by those who are targeted to benefit from the intervention.  Wolf (1978) first presented the concept of social validity as a measure of three different areas including the social significance of identified treatment goals, the social appropriateness of procedures utilized in achieving treatment goals, and the social importance of research effects and outcomes.  In determining the significance of each of these areas, analyzing whether or not the program is successfully impacting the intervention goals and achieving significant research outcomes is crucial for determining the overall effectiveness of the intervention.

Similarly, social validity also analyzes the viability of the intervention or program. Viability is a measurement for determining if a program has a reasonable chance of succeeding based on participants' perceptions (Schwartz & Baer, 1991).  While a program may be successful initially, social validity data helps researchers determine whether the interventions can be implemented on a long-term basis.  By understanding and analyzing the social validity of new school programs, improvements and changes can be made to increase the effectiveness of the intervention and best help the teachers and students who are a part of the program.

Schwartz and Baer (1991) explained that in previous research methods, "stakeholders" are often identified as those who are most affected by the program.  They specifically identified four categories of stakeholders including direct stakeholders, indirect stakeholders, members of the immediate community, and members of the extended community.  According to Carr et al. (2002), stakeholders may include "teachers, employers, parents, friends, and the target person" (p. 5).

While analyzing the effectiveness of bibliotherapy lessons in elementary schools, teachers, parents, students, and administrators are all considered stakeholders in the success of the intervention. When creating interventions and programs within schools, analyzing social validity from those implementing the interventions and targeted by the interventions is imperative. These strategic programs must consider the needs and perceptions of those who are responsible for change—principals and administrators; for those who implement interventions— teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents; and for those who are impacted by interventions— students, teachers, and parents (Marchant et al., 2012).

Bibliotherapy spans across perceptions from each of these groups. Administrators have an overarching view of how the lessons are affecting the school culture as a whole. Teachers and parents see firsthand how students understand and react to the social skill lesson being taught. Last, students are the ones being taught the lessons so analyzing how much they liked and learned from the lessons is important in deciding whether or not they are perceived as effective.

There are many different programs and interventions being introduced to schools each year; therefore, it can be increasingly difficult for teachers to know which programs will be both the easiest and most effective to implement in their classes. Gaining teachers' approval and support for these programs is imperative for successful and positive execution of school programs and interventions (Marchant et al., 2012). Schwartz (1991) noted that stakeholders who make educated choices are often the most satisfied, and satisfied stakeholders strengthen program viability. Ultimately, research-based interventions that are both teacher/school friendly and align with student needs are successful because these interventions target the needs of key stakeholders (Marchant et al., 2012).

Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, and Fischer (2011) explained that assessment of social validity involves using feedback from the stakeholders of an intervention program to guide current and future program planning and growth.  This enables effective implementation and continuation of an intervention.  Involving stakeholders in the selection, development, and evaluation of interventions also permits them to exercise their right to knowledgably take a decision-making role in their treatment by determining whether an intervention meets their specific needs and situation (Miramontes et al., 2011).  Furthermore, parent and community involvement in planning, implementing, and evaluating SEL interventions is important for successful implementation (Bond & Hauf, 2004).  Making sure students, teachers, parents and the community understand and support SEL programs is imperative to successful implementation and results (Miramontes et al., 2011).

**BIB Intervention**

BIB is a school-wide bibliotherapy program that expanded to include the current Internet resource known as *Building Social Skills with Books* [https://education.byu.edu/buildingsocialskills].  The program is generally implemented on a universal level in schools in which school administrators choose specific social skills for classrooms to focus on by sharing a selected children's book and associated lesson plan and activity.  However, the BIB lesson plans can also be used with individual students or small groups.  The lesson plans each focus on one social skill and are linked with one children's book. There are four main sequential parts to each lesson plan including:

1. Pre-reading discussion, questions and vocabulary overview

2. Reading of the book

3.  Post-reading discussion and questions

4.  Activities for specified age groups

**Students' Perceptions of and Attitudes Toward BIB**

In assessing the effectiveness of any intervention, understanding how the students perceive and buy into the intervention is important (Marchant et al., 2012). Gaul (2015) researched the perceptions of the students participating in BIB to determine their attitude towards the social skill lessons and to also evaluate the methods used to teach these social skills. The study was qualitative in nature and assessed surveys from 579 elementary school students during the 2011-2012 school year (Gaul, 2015). In the study, Gaul (2015) found that most students regarded specific social skills as "often important." Consequently, the students also perceived the lessons and instruction as being worthwhile. Furthermore, in regards to the methods used to teach the social skills, the students most often rated the methods as being "sometimes fun." The students' ratings of specific teaching methods varied with playing interactive games being the most popular method and doing worksheets being the least popular method (Gaul, 2015).

Moreover, students in grades 1–3 enjoyed the various methods of instruction a great deal more than the students in grades 4–6. In evaluating the findings of this study, it is clear that it is important to assess students' perceptions of social skills and the type of methods used to teach social skills they see as important. In this study, some activities were found to be more agreeable and helpful than others, which may have affected the effectiveness of the intervention for the students who found certain activities less enjoyable (Gaul, 2015). The students' perception of the intervention methods may have also been influenced by the teacher's perception and attitudes toward the intervention.

**Current Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes**

However, the perceptions of the teachers participating in the BIB program has not yet been assessed. Determining a teacher's perception of an intervention is important because that teacher's attitude will affect how well the intervention is implemented and how well it is received by the students (Marchant et al., 2012). Gelisli (2007) explained that "teachers have an important role in classroom communication, classroom behavior management, and the achievement of teaching aims" (p. 96). A teacher generally holds more of an authoritative role in the classroom, thus being in a position which students respect and pay attention to. Biggs et al. (2008) showed how the influence of teacher buy-in increases the likelihood of successful implementation of interventions, particularly at the school-wide level. Being able to achieve the goals of the intervention requires the teacher to appreciate and aim for those goals as well.

Other research shows that students learn to read teachers' responses in different circumstances in a short period of time (Jepsen, 2005). Therefore, even if the teacher is putting the intervention into practice, if they do not like or support the intervention, research indicates that their students are perceptive of the teacher's attitude. Furthermore, in a qualitative study conducted by Gelisli (2007) students reported that they were less motivated in lessons taught by teachers who were indifferent to and unprepared for the lesson. The students also reported that they were unsuccessful in those courses and were negatively influenced by those teachers' behaviors. Thus, showing that support for interventions is important for both the motivation and the overall success of students' learning.

Despite the fact that research has shown how important SEL is for students' academic and lifelong learning, some teachers question and even reject their role in this type of intervention. In a qualitative study conducted by Alisic, Bus, Dulack, Pennings, and Splinter

(2012), teachers were given hypothetical situations in which their students were exposed to major emotional trauma. After reading the scenarios, teachers were asked to define their roles in responding to such situations. Unfortunately, some teachers said that while they would like to help struggling students, they did not think they had the time nor the resources to help these individual students while also attending to the rest of the class. Furthermore, one teacher even said that teachers should *only* be responsible for teaching academics and that other school-based mental health professionals should be responsible for the students' social and emotional needs (Alisic et al., 2012).

However, showing how SEL programs are primarily prevention-focused may soften teachers' attitudes. Problematic student behaviors have been reported as the top reason teachers decide to leave the profession (Ingersoll, 2012). Thus, implementing SEL in the classroom may help decrease teacher burnout rates. In fact, because SEL programs are preventative in nature, these programs are actually preferred in some cases over reactive interventions to problematic behaviors (Forness, Kavale, MacMillan, Asarnow, & Duncan, 1996; Hawkins, Von Cleve, & Catalano, 1991). SEL interventions tend to help reduce risk factors while also helping build protective factors. Over time, prevention efforts aimed at strengthening students' social and emotional needs have proven to be more effective than remediation strategies (Durlak et al., 2011; Lane et al., 2002; Nelson, Benner, Reid, Epstein, & Currin, 2002). Those who support SEL interventions argue that the most effective implementation involves proactive interventions, which increase protective factors for all students while addressing prominent behavioral challenges (Scott et al., 2002; Walker & Sprague, 1999). Teachers can also be shown that the success of previous SEL programs may also be attributed to proactively providing interventions that teach clear and responsible expectations for student behavior. Additionally, when these

programs are implemented in positive teaching and learning environments, it increases the

effectiveness of the intervention (Forness et al., 1996; Hawkins et al., 1991; Nelson et al., 2002).

Furthermore, the BIB program also implements praise notes as part of a positive behavior

intervention support system (PBIS). A research study of teachers' perceptions of positive

behavior support models showed that most teachers perceived a PBIS program as being helpful

(Miramontes et al., 2011). In fact, of the "161 teacher responders, 98.1% agreed or strongly

agreed that the program made a positive impact in their schools," (Miramontes et al., 2011, p.

456). Furthermore, 94.3 % of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the program was worth

their time and effort. On the other hand, only 32.6 % agreed that the paperwork involved in

implementing the program was practical (Miramontes et al., 2011). Therefore, although the

teachers saw the positive impacts of a PBIS program, they also felt as though the amount of

paperwork to implement the program was not realistic.

CHAPTER 3: Methods

During the 2011–2012 school year, elementary school teachers were surveyed on their perceptions of social skills and the school-wide BIB social skills instruction program. The following sections describe the research design, participants and setting, measures, procedure, and data analysis.

**Research Design**

This was a mixed-methods research design in which both survey methodology and focus groups were used to collect data in order to describe and compare teachers' perceptions across grade levels. In order to find ways to improve the elementary school's social skills instruction program, this research study used teacher surveys and teacher focus groups. The teachers' information offered insight into their general perceptions of social skills and their perceptions of the BIB social skills instruction. In the survey, all teachers self-reported the degree to which they perceived social skills were important and their perceptions of how effective the prescribed lesson plans were in their classroom. Furthermore, the focus groups expounded on this information to provide more depth to the data and to gain greater insight into the effectiveness of the program. Research explains that qualitative data can be especially important as it aims to understand the program as it is in its natural setting and to interpret the value of the program in respect to the meanings that the participating teachers portray in their answers (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Furthermore, since only one school was analyzed for this research it is a case study design. Morrow (2010) explains, "Case study design is utilized when detailed data are collected from a particular participant, setting, or small group" (p. 47). This means that the data collected are specifically geared towards this one school and may not generalize to other school settings.

**Participants and Setting**

The BIB social skills instruction was universally implemented on a school-wide level in an elementary school setting across grades K–6 in an urban elementary school in the United States Inter-Mountain West. This elementary school participated in BIB instruction across the past eight years, including the 2011–2012 school year, which was the focus of this study. The survey sample consisted of 19 participating teachers. Furthermore, the focus group sample consisted of five teachers in grades 1–2, five teachers in grades 3–4, and eight teachers in grades 5–6. One third-grade teacher who completed the survey was not able to participate in the focus groups.

The participating school had an enrollment of 742 students in 31 classrooms with students attending grades K–6. Twenty-nine teachers worked at the elementary school during the 2011–2012 school year in which two kindergarten teachers taught two half-day classes. Furthermore, two of these classes were self-contained special education classes. The kindergarten teachers preferred not to participate in the data collection because they each had two classes and already had a lot of work to do. Also, the data from the two special education self-contained classes were not included as these classrooms served multi-age and multi grade-level students and our data were associated with specific grade-level groups of teachers and students.

Participation in the study was optional, not manadatory. Of the 25 classroom teachers teaching grades 1–6, 19 teachers volunteered to participate in the study and completed questionnaires (76% participation rate). Teachers of specialized instruction (Physical Education, Music, Computers, etc.) were not included in the data collection.

From the survey data, the teachers reported having worked between three to five years as educators.  A majority of teachers' professional time was served at this specific elementary school, with a very low turn-over each year.

In Gaul's (2015) previous analysis of this school's students' perceptions, the student-participants were approximately 10% ethnic minority students, 2% were English Language Learners, 25% were from low income homes, and 14% were students with disabilities.  The two kindergarten classes that did not participate in data collection included 105 students.  Additionally, the data from the two self-contained special education classrooms included 18 students.

Furthermore, incomplete or incorrectly marked questionnaires (e.g., missing responses, circling or underlining the full line of response options) were considered as incomplete.  These teachers' surveys were eliminated list-wise from teacher data analyses for the survey ($n$=6 eliminated questionnaires; 24% of 25 teachers in 1st through 6th grades).  Therefore, 19 teachers' questionnaires were included in the questionnaire data (76% participation rate).

The focus groups were held on in the library of the elementary school and consisted of three different focus groups directed by Dr. Melissa Allen Heath, a faculty member from Brigham Young University.  Every teacher was invited to participate in the focus group.  The first focus group included five teachers in grades 1–2 on April 24, 2012.  The second focus group included five teachers (however, two were late in arriving to the group due to before-school duties) in grades 3–4 on April 23, 2012.  Last, the third focus group included eight teachers in grades 5–6.  Each focus group was audio recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed for coding purposes.

**Measures**

Prior to the 2011–2012 school year, questionnaires and focus group questions were developed by Drs. Michelle Marchant and Melissa Heath, two faculty members from Brigham Young University. For the teachers, there was one set of survey forms which consisted of Likert scales and open-ended questions to gauge their perceptions of students' social skills and the BIB program. When completing the survey, participants rated each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale. For items intending to measure the importance of specific social skills that were taught and how well the BIB program taught the social skill, the response options ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The survey is included in Appendix A.

The focus group data were audio recorded, then later transcribed by an undergraduate student from Brigham Young University. The focus group was facilitated by Heath who followed a set list of guiding questions which can be found in Appendix B. The audio recording ran the entire length of each focus group and field notes were also documented by the facilitator.

The Institutional Review Board approved the methods of the study including the survey and the focus groups. None of the teachers were paid or compensated for their participation in the study. Each participant signed consent to participate in the focus group recordings. A copy of the consent form is included in Appendix C.

**Description of the Social Skills Program**

The BIB program was implemented on a monthly basis during the school year by the teacher of each class. Each of the four social skills was focused on twice across 8 months of the 2011–2012 school year. In September and January, the lessons focused on showing appreciation; in October and February, the lessons focused on resolving differences; in November and March, the lessons focused on making good choices; and in December and April,

the lessons focused on accepting responsibility.  The books and lessons were created according to grade level and each lesson included the following:

1. Information about the book and a short synopsis

2. A description of the objective of the lesson and its connection to the social skill

3. A description of required materials and any advanced preparation needed for the activities

4. Information and questions to facilitate both pre- and post-reading discussions

5. Activities to encourage students to apply the social skill

6. A poster with the social skill steps to help the students remember how to implement skill throughout the month

Refer to Table 1 for a description of each of the four social skill's specific steps outlined in the BIB instruction.

The lessons were intended to be taught in each of the classrooms every month by either the teacher.  The program also included a positive behavior support model in order to encourage students to apply the social skill.  If teachers saw the students display the social skill steps, the student was given a "Positive Paw" (a complimentary paper note [Praise Note] indicating the social skill that was observed).  These praise notes were entered into a raffle drawing.  The principal drew a note from the container of praise notes during weekly school-wide assemblies. Awards were given to the student whose name was on the selected praise note.

**Procedure**

Brigham Young University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB) approved the study's surveys and permitted researchers to conduct focus groups. The IRB

approved teachers' consent form is included in Appendix C, and the IRB's letter granting

approval to conduct the study in included in Appendix D.

Table 1

*Four Social Skills and the Identified Steps of Each Social Skill*

| Showing appreciation | Resolving differences | Making good choices | Accepting responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|
| I think about what others do for me. | I decide if I disagree with other person. | I think about the problem. | I think about what I did. |
| I look at the other person. | I tell how I feel about the problem. | I decide on my choices. | I think about what I should have been doing. |
| I say "Thank you." | I ask the other person how they feel about the problem. | I think about what happens after I make choices. | I think: How can I make it right? |
| I tell others what I am thankful for. | I listen to their answer. | I make the best choice of all. | I think: What will I do next time? |
| | I ask others to help us make a compromise. | | |
| | What I say shows I care about others. | | |

*Note*. This table was also used in Gaul's thesis (2015).

Near the end of the year, teachers were asked to respond to items in self-reported

perception surveys and focus groups.  The teachers were not compensated for their participation

in the data collection but did so completely voluntarily.  The surveys were distributed to each

teacher via the school principal and each teacher was encouraged to fill out the survey and return

it to the school office for data collection.  Teachers were asked to circle the degree to which they

disagreed or agreed to listed statements about social skills and how well the BIB instruction

addressed the four specific social skills.  Ratings were based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging

from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).  The teachers' responses indicated their

perceptions regarding the importance of social skills in general and how well teachers thought the BIB program helped improve students' social skills in their classroom.

Focus groups were held during three different time periods to accommodate three levels of classrooms. The teachers completed consent forms (a copy of the consent form is included in Appendix C). The first focus group consisted of first and second grade teachers. The second focus group consisted of third and fourth grade teachers. The last focus group consisted of fifth and sixth grade teachers. The three focus groups were facilitated by Heath and were audiotaped for the entire duration of the sessions. Heath followed a list of six guiding questions for each of the focus groups which are listed in Appendix B. The focus groups were led in an open-ended interview style format in which teachers expressed their opinions and insights on social skills and the BIB social skills instruction. Heath also took handwritten notes during the focus groups, identifying important themes and comments. Following the focus groups, the audiotapes were transcribed by an undergraduate student for coding analysis. The full transcripts for these focus groups were used only by the primary researchers and information was de-identified to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

**Data Analysis**

The survey data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The program identified descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations within the different groups of teachers. Furthermore, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance was also conducted using this software to determine if there were any significant differences among the three groups as well.

Focus group data were collected and analyzed based on a theoretical approach of grounded theory. The sources of data were created and implemented as a way to allow for

multiple themes to emerge.  Morrow (2010) stated that use of grounded theory offers a more "flexible framework" so the theory could be developed as themes emerged, specifically in the focus group data.

The focus group data were analyzed using a thematic analysis which helped identify, analyze, and report themes and patterns within the data.  Prior to analysis, the focus groups were transcribed.  Considering there are so many different ways to analyze data, a constant comparison analysis was used as a way to effectively analyze the data across the three different focus groups.  Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, and Zoran (2009) explained that this type of analysis is often used when there are multiple different focus groups being compared.  They share that there are three stages in performing a constant comparison analysis.  The first stage is when the data are grouped into small units.  The data were grouped according to each of the focus groups (i.e., the first and second grade teachers, the third and fourth grade teachers, and the fifth and sixth grade teachers).  Then, specific data were pulled from each of these focus groups according to the focus group questions and a code was applied to relevant statements or phrases said by the teachers.  The principal researcher and Heath, who conducted the focus groups, performed this.  Then, according to the second stage, these codes were grouped into specific categories.  These categories are listed and defined below:

- *Strengths* – perceived benefits of implementing the program; specific facets of the program the teachers liked
- *Difficulties* – perceived hardships in implementing the program; indications of possible improvements

- *Student Response* - how engaged students appeared to be during and following the lessons; student expression of like/dislike; what students thought about the program/lessons/books

- *Changes in Student Behavior* - how students behaved differently or in line with the social skills being taught; demonstrating increased awareness of social skills

These categories were summarized using a coding table (included in Appendix E) and the data were grouped according to these categories.

Furthermore, in order to ensure validity, another individual, Michael Richardson, acted as a reviewer of the coding and categories as a way to triangulate the data. The importance of triangulation is to improve "the rigor of the analysis by assessing the integrity of the inferences that one draws from more than one vantage point" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 579). As part of the reviewer's feedback, more specific definitions were created for each of the categories and some codes were reassigned in the "Changes in Student Behavior" category in order to fit more appropriately with the identified definition. Last, the third stage involved "selective coding" in which the two researchers developed and identified themes according to the content in each of these categories in the three focus groups (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009, p. 6).

CHAPTER 4: Results

The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The survey data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine the teachers' rated perceptions of the social skills and of using children's literature to teach those social skills. Furthermore, the focus groups' transcripts were analyzed for themes (thematic analysis), to determine the teachers' perceptions of the Book in a Bag program and their perceptions of the students' responses to the program and ultimately their perceptions of students' changes in behavior. The following is a description of the results of those analyses.

**Teachers' Perceptions of Social Skills**

The first research question investigated teachers' perceptions: "Considering teachers' perceptions of the four identified social skills, how important were each of these social skills to the students in their classroom?" The four social skills included understanding that choices have consequences, resolving differences, showing appreciation, and accepting responsibility when something goes wrong. Teachers responded on a paper-pencil questionnaire that is included in Appendix A.

Descriptive statistics indicated that teachers strongly agreed that the social skills were important to the students in their classroom. All teachers ($N$=19), responded to four items concentrating on their perceptions of the four social skills focused on during the school year. Response options were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Teachers were asked to circle the number that described the strength of their agreement or disagreement to specific statements regarding each of the four social skills. The questionnaire included this statement: "The following social skills are important to the students in my classroom." Teachers rated "understanding that choices have consequences" as

the highest with a mean response of 4.75 (*SD*=.44).  This shows that teachers agreed to strongly

agreed that making good choices is an important social skill for the students in their classroom.

The teachers also rated "resolving differences" with a mean response score of 4.55 (*SD*=.60),

"showing appreciation" with a mean response score of 4.45 (*SD*=.60), and "accepting

responsibility when something goes wrong" with a mean response score of 4.55 (SD=.83).  This

also indicates that they *agree* to *strongly agree* that these other social skills are also important to

the students in their classes.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions of the Four Social skills*

| The following social skills are important to the students in my classroom: | Mean Response | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Understanding that choices have consequences | 4.75 | .44 |
| Resolving differences | 4.55 | .60 |
| Showing appreciation | 4.45 | .60 |
| Accepting responsibility when something goes wrong | 4.55 | .83 |

**Teachers' Perceptions of Strengths and Difficulties**

The second research question was, "Based on teachers' perceptions, what worked well

with the bibliotherapy lessons and what difficulties were encountered?" Descriptive statistics

revealed that teachers' perceptions of the social skills were that they strongly agreed that the BIB

lessons were an acceptable strategy to help their students learn the social skills.  All teachers

(*N*=19), responded to four items focusing on their perceptions of using pictures books as a

strategy to teach each of the four social skills.  Response options were recorded on a five-point

Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).  Teachers were asked to

circle the number that describes the strength of their agreement or disagreement with the

statement, "Considering my classroom needs, teaching social skills with children's picture books

is an acceptable strategy to help my students..." This introductory statement was followed by

each social skill. Teachers rated "learn how to resolve differences" as the highest with a mean

response of 4.55 (*SD*=.51). This shows that agree to strongly agree that using picture books is an

acceptable strategy for helping students learn how to resolve differences. The teachers also rated

"learn that choices have consequences" with a mean response score of 4.50 (*SD*=.51), "learn how

to show appreciation" with a mean response score of 4.50 (*SD*=.51), and "learn how to accept

responsibility for their actions" with a mean response score of 4.50 (*SD*=.51). This also indicates

that they agree to strongly agree that using picture books to help students learn these other social

skills is also an acceptable strategy.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions of Bibliotherapy as an Acceptable Strategy*

| Considering my classroom needs, teaching social skills with children's picture books is an acceptable strategy to help my students... | Mean Response | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Learn that choices have consequences | 4.50 | .51 |
| Learn how to resolve differences | 4.55 | .51 |
| Learn how to show appreciation | 4.50 | .51 |
| Learn how to accept responsibility for their actions | 4.50 | .51 |

**Strengths of BIB**. A qualitative analysis was also used to help answer this research

question. Three focus groups were conducted to help better understand the perceived strengths

and difficulties of the BIB program. The following is an analysis of the teachers' responses to

the question "What worked well?" in regards to the BIB program.

During the focus group, the first and second grade teachers agreed that they all really

liked the lessons because they helped initiate discussion, there was a good selection of common

books, they were easy to implement, and the social skills were well chosen. They explained that it was a "good place" to start talking about a social skill and how to use them in certain situations. One teacher explained, "Yeah some of the activities were really good and tied in well with the curriculum." They also appreciated that many of the books were commonly available in the library and could be read in the future by students. One teacher said, "They are easy to implement." Additionally, they all agreed that it was easier to focus on just four social skills throughout the year because students could remember them more easily.

Many of the third and fourth grade teachers also agreed that they liked BIB as well because the lessons taught social skills explicitly, provided positive reinforcement, were easy to implement, provided good book choices, helped initiate discussion, and the social skills were well chosen. One of the teachers said, "…it makes it an easy way for us to teach it and it gives the kids like an example of how it really works." Another teacher explained that she did not feel like she had to do a lot of prep for it. Several of the teachers explained that they would leave it for substitutes to do in class because it was a simple and easy plan for them to follow. They also shared that they liked having just the four social skills. One teacher explained that she felt the four social skills can branch out into smaller socials skills that you can relate back to the big ones they focused on with the lesson plans. They also agreed that they liked the positive reinforcement aspect of the program in that students were getting rewards for doing the skills; however, one of the teachers explained that he did not incorporate the positive reinforcement aspect into the BIB lessons.

The fifth and sixth grade teachers shared that they liked the lessons because they taught important social skills, provided helpful book choices, were easy to implement, helped initiate discussion, and provided important posters. One teacher stated, "Kids need social skills in this

day in age, even greater than they used to, so the fact that we can spend a few minutes helping

them to see why it's important to have social skills is fabulous." A few other teachers also

shared how they felt the lessons were easy to follow and they often left them for substitutes and

student teachers to do. These teachers also said they liked that the books were ones that students

did not already know. The fifth and sixth grade teachers also said they liked that the lessons

were easily generalizable and that it found ways for students to connect the social skills to the

real world. One teacher explained how she liked that she could use the books to solve problems

in the classroom. The teachers also shared that they really liked the posters and that they

reinforced the social skill steps. Furthermore, all the teachers agreed that they liked only having

four social skills that they focused on all year. They explained that it simplified the curriculum

and it was reinforcing to revisit each social skill a second time. They also liked reading the

picture books with their students because it did not take as much time to read with them and do

an activity.

Table 4

*Focus Group Themes of Strengths of BIB*

| First and Second Grade Teachers | Third and Fourth Grade Teachers | Fifth and Sixth Grade Teachers |
|---|---|---|
| • Initiated discussion<br>• Good book choices<br>• Easy to implement<br>• Good social skill choice | • Initiated discussion<br>• Good book choices<br>• Easy to implement<br>• Good social skill choice<br>• Taught social skills explicitly<br>• Positive reinforcement | • Initiated discussion<br>• Good book choices<br>• Easy to implement<br>• Good social skill choice<br>• Posters |

**Difficulties encountered with BIB.** Furthermore, a qualitative analysis of the focus

group transcripts was also used to help determine what difficulties were encountered. The

following is an analysis from each of the three focus groups in response to the question "What difficulties did you encounter?" in regards to the BIB program.

During the focus group, the first and second grade teachers explained that they felt the lessons lacked in a few ways including a poor connection between the social skill and the book, having a hard time fitting it into their schedules, knowing what materials they needed beforehand, not having enough books for everyone to teach the lessons, and not having enough information on the program. One of the teachers said she thought one of the books was a "huge stretch" to connect with the social skill. One teacher explained that especially for younger grades, the social skill should be easy for them to recognize because they had not yet developed inference skills. Another big concern among the group was that they had a hard time finding time to do the lessons and did not know exactly what was expected of them. Moreover, a few teachers were not fully aware of the steps that were included in each of the social skills. In general, teachers also noted that they would like more copies of the books and a larger selection of books. Due to the limited number of books, at times, they could not find the book they needed. Also, while some of the teachers liked only focusing on four social skills, others wanted to include more social skills across the school year.

The third and fourth grade teachers also explained that they also felt the lessons lacked in a few ways including a poor connection between the social skill and the book, having a hard time fitting it into their schedules, and not having enough books for everyone to teach the lessons. One teacher said in reference to connecting the book and the social skill that "… it didn't seem to correlate as well for me." Other teachers said they found it difficult to find extra time to read the book and give the social skills lesson. They also agreed that the limited number of books made it harder to do the lessons when they had the available time. They also felt like there was too much

emphasis on the grade level of reading.  Each book and lesson plan was geared to a specific grade-level curriculum.

Most of the fifth and sixth grade teachers also agreed that they found a few difficulties in implementing BIB.  A few reported a weak connection between the social skill and the book.  Some teachers reported having a hard time fitting the BIB lesson into their schedules.  There were not enough books for everyone to teach the lessons.  A few lacked information on the program and would have appreciating more information.  A few teachers desired more book choices and more targeted social skills.  In regards to the lack of connection between book and skill, one teacher noted that one of the showing appreciation lessons seemed to be the biggest stretch in communicating how to use that social skill.  Furthermore, some of the teachers also wanted a larger book selection.  They felt like having a different set of books for each grade level would facilitate better discussion and would provide students with new books to read as they increased in grade level.  They also explained how there were not enough books.  One teacher said she was not able to do the BIB lesson one month because there were never enough books to do the lesson.  They also shared that it would have been more helpful to know which materials are needed in advance because sometimes they would start the lesson and not have the materials (most specifically copies) they needed.  They also shared a need for having more social skills which revolve around the issue of bullying.  One teacher said that fifth and sixth graders deal a lot more with relational bullying and it's an issue that needs to be addressed but wasn't with the social skills that were chosen.

**Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Responses and Changes in Behavior**

The third research question was, "Based on teachers' perceptions, how did their students' social skills change across the 2011–2012 school year?"  In order to answer this research

question, a qualitative thematic analysis of teachers' focus group transcripts was performed. The following question was asked in each of the focus groups, "How have your students responded to BIB?" The following is an analysis of their responses in each of the three focus groups.

Table 5

*Focus Group Themes of Difficulties of BIB*

| First and Second Grade Teachers | Third and Fourth Grade Teachers | Fifth and Sixth Grade Teachers |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • Lack of connection between skill and book<br>• Finding time<br>• Lack of books<br>• Lack of information<br>• Needed materials | • Lack of connection between skill and book<br>• Finding time<br>• Lack of books<br>• Book choice | • Lack of connection between skill and book<br>• Finding time<br>• Lack of books<br>• Lack of information<br>• Book choice |

**Students' responses to BIB.** The first and second grade teachers explained during the focus group that the students enjoyed the lessons and started making connections. One teacher explained that the students really liked the BIB program because it is "relaxing for them." The teachers shared that they are usually the quietest during this time of day because they do not have to worry about doing class work or processing academic information. Furthermore, the teachers said that the students liked making connections between situations in the classroom and BIB lessons. However, two teachers did explain that they felt like some of the students did have a harder time making connections because the skills did not match the book very well so they did not understand how they connected to one another. Furthermore, teachers explained that their students were very excited to memorize the social skill steps. Memorizing the specific social skills was described as an "easy task," given that there are only four social skills. Teachers reported that their students really enjoyed the role-play activities and completing checklists with partners on whether or not they are using a particular social skill.

During the second focus group, the third and fourth grade teachers explained the students' responses to the books choices and their responses in regards to making connections. Several third and fourth grade teachers explained that the students like reading basic books (picture books), although this was not a unanimous judgment among the group. There was some controversy over using picture books with middle-elementary school-age students. Teachers explained that their students did not like the picture books as much because the students are just learning to read chapter books, so they preferred reading chapter books. Teachers stated that their students felt as though the picture books were too immature for them. One teacher said a student asked, "Why are we reading a baby book?" One of the teachers said her fourth grade class was okay with the younger books. However, one teacher shared that the students seemed to enjoy gathering together to read the featured book from BIB. Another teacher emphasized that she felt like her students remembered the social skills associated with the stories better than if they were only memorizing the social skills without an accompanying storybook. One teacher appreciated the way the stories affected her students and how the story made them feel.

The third focus group with the fifth and sixth grade teachers revealed the students' responses of the lessons by providing information on the discussions, their engagement in activities, the connections the students made during the lessons, and whether or not they liked the books. The fifth and sixth grade teachers unanimously emphasized the "great discussions" they had with students during and following BIB lessons. One teacher explained that she repeated one BIB lesson—and even though the students were familiar with the content—they were completely engaged and had a great discussion. Another teacher stated, "When we discussed their writing assignments, we found that a lot of them were thinking of events at home that they needed to work through and could take that [knowledge from BIB] home and I was thrilled with

that." Similarly, the other fifth and sixth grade teachers indicated that their students were

relating to the stories and likening the stories to their own lives.  Also, teachers explained that the

students loved the picture books.  One teacher said, "I think that's a fallacy that older kids don't

like picture books."  Moreover, another teacher stated that she thought the students might be

responding better to BIB this year because there were only four social skills, so it was easier for

students and teachers to remember the skills.

Table 6

*Focus Group Themes of Students' Responses to BIB*

| First and Second Grade Teachers | Third and Fourth Grade Teachers | Fifth and Sixth Grade Teachers |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • Made connections<br>• Enjoyed reading<br>• Enjoyed activities | • Made connections<br>• Enjoyed reading<br>• Books too immature | • Made connections<br>• Enjoyed reading<br>• Engaged in activities<br>• Engaged in discussions |

**Differences in students' social skills across the year.**  Furthermore, a second question

was asked in each of the focus groups in regards to this research question.  The teachers were

asked to "Describe differences in your students' social skills across this past year."  The

following is a summary of teachers' responses to this question.  Their feedback is organized

according to each of the three focus groups.

The first and second grade teachers reported during the focus group that they believed the

students' behavior was better as the year progressed because of a decrease in inappropriate

behavior, application of the social skill steps, and a perceived increase in social skill awareness.

One teacher explained, "We have data to support that our office referrals have gone significantly

down and the only big change we have made is adding social skills."  Another teacher also stated

that she noticed the students were memorizing the social skill steps and applying them.  She said,

"It made them more aware of what they can use instead of hitting and shouting and all those type of things."

Furthermore, in the second focus group, the teachers responded the lessons increased their awareness of desired social skills, but their changes in behavior were more due to an increase in maturity. One of the third and fourth grade teachers said she felt the changes in student behavior was a "gradual progress across time." Another teacher said, "I think they just like matured throughout the year and you know, some of it went along with the social skills but I think some of it just went along with getting older and maturing." However, one teacher said she saw how the books motivated kids to want to do things for others and do projects for other people. She gave an example in which she noticed students wanting to do projects for other people as a way to help them and she felt that this was motivated by the skills they learned from the books.

Last, the fifth and sixth grade teachers explained that they felt BIB lessons increased students' awareness of social skills and helped them apply the social skill steps. Teachers indicated that they believed the increase in awareness was because the students were memorizing the social skill steps and that memorization and BIB lessons kept social skills "in front of their brain a lot more." Furthermore, teachers indicated that students were generalizing the social skill steps beyond the classroom. Teachers noted that students were applying social skills across school settings and at home. One teacher relayed a story about a student who had a problem with her parents constantly arguing. However, after the story and lesson on resolving differences (one of the BIB lesson topics), she felt empowered to go home and share her insights on this topic with her parents. The student shared in class that she went home after the lesson on

resolving differences to talk with her parents about how they can stop arguing.  They also talked

about how students could use these social skills as they progress to Junior High.

Table 7

*Focus Group Themes of Changes in Behavior*

| First and Second Grade Teachers | Third and Fourth Grade Teachers | Fifth and Sixth Grade Teachers |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • Increased awareness<br>• Applied social skill steps<br>• Decrease in inappropriate behavior | • Increased awareness<br>• Increased maturity | • Increased awareness<br>• Applied social skill steps |

**Comparison across Grade Levels**

The last research question was "Based on quantitative survey data and information

gathered in focus groups, were there differences in teachers' perceptions across grade levels?  If

there were differences, what were those differences?"  The following is statistical data and focus

group information which was used to analyze this research question.

**Survey data across grade levels**.  To coincide with focus group data, grade levels were

grouped together into three sections when analyzing survey data in comparing grade levels.  The

three sections were first and second grade teachers, third and fourth grade teachers, and fifth and

sixth grade teachers.  A one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) revealed that

there was not a significant difference across grade level groups for understanding that choices

have consequences ($p=.07$), resolving differences ($p=.30$), showing appreciation ($p=.73$), and

accepting responsibility when something goes wrong ($p=.29$).

Furthermore, there was also no statistically significant difference across grade level

groups in their perceptions of teaching social skills using children's picture books as an

acceptable strategy for each of the social skills.  A MANOVA revealed that there was not a

significant difference across grade level groups in helping students to learn that choices have

consequences (*p*=.65), learn how to resolve differences (*p*=.71), learn how to show appreciation

(*p*=.88), and learn how to accept responsibility for their actions (*p*=.88).

Table 8

*Statistics Comparing Teachers' Perceptions Across Grade Levels*

| The following social skills are important to the students in my classroom: | Sum of Squares | Do | Mean Square | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Understanding that choices have consequences | .99 | 2 | .48 | .07 |
| Resolving differences | .92 | 2 | .46 | .30 |
| Showing appreciation | .25 | 2 | .13 | .73 |
| Accepting responsibility when something goes wrong | 1.75 | 2 | .88 | .29 |
| Considering my classroom needs, teaching social skills with children's picture books is an acceptable strategy to help my students... | | | | |
| Learn that choices have consequences | .24 | 2 | .12 | .65 |
| Learn how to resolve differences | .19 | 2 | .10 | .71 |
| Learn how to show appreciation | .08 | 2 | .04 | .88 |
| Learn how to accept responsibility for their actions | .08 | 2 | .04 | .88 |

**Focus group data across grade levels**.  Furthermore, focus group data also showed

differences and similarities in their perceptions.  In comparing across grade levels, all the

teachers found that the lessons were easy and simple to follow.  They all noted that they often

left them for substitutes or student teachers to do with the classes because they were easy to do

with little training.  Furthermore, all of the teachers also agreed that it was better having only

four social skills that they repeated during the school year because it was easier for the children to memorize the social skill steps. All of the teachers also indicated that the lesson plans helped children learn the social skills by providing examples of what each social skill looks like. The first and second grade teachers said they liked that the books were common ones that they could find in the library. On the other hand, the fifth and sixth grade teachers said they liked the books because they felt like they were new books that the students were not familiar with (*had not heard of before*).

The teachers from all of the grade levels agreed that some of the books did not seem to connect well with the social skill. Many of them described it as a "stretch." Furthermore, they also found that another barrier was not having enough books and some of them wanted more selections for each social skill. Furthermore, while the younger and older grades reported liking using picture books with their students, the third and fourth grade teachers said that they would've liked chapter books for their students because the students thought the picture books were too young for them.

All of the teachers said their students responded really well to the BIB lessons; however, it was for different reasons. The younger grades found the time to be very relaxing and that they were excited to memorize the social skill steps. The third and fourth grade teachers said that even though some of the students thought the books were too immature for them, they liked the simplicity of the books and that some of the students reported liking the way the books made them feel. The teachers explained that change happened across the year; however, one of them noted that the change was probably because they are maturing as well and not necessarily because of the lessons. On the other hand, one of the teachers noted that office referrals had gone down. In conclusion, the fifth and sixth grade teachers said the students liked the lessons

because they were able to engage in great discussions surrounding the topics.  They said the students were able to generalize the topics and they were a lot more aware of the social skill steps.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The data show that the teachers perceived the social skills and BIB as a successful

program in their school.  The quantitative data showed that the teachers agreed that the social

skills were important for the students in their classes and that using children's literature was an

appropriate way to teach those skills.  Furthermore, many of the teachers agreed that the lessons

provided an avenue for being able to have great discussions about the social skills and helping

students learn how to apply the social skills in their own lives.  Many of the teachers commented

on notable differences in the students' behaviors during the school year.  One teacher even

explained that office referrals went down for that school year and she attributed that to the

lessons.  Another benefit is that they also found the lessons easy to follow and simple to use in

their classes.  The teachers in the older grades also said they liked the posters and the middle

grades said they liked the positive reinforcement aspect of the program.

On the other hand, there were significant concerns and barriers to implementing the

lessons effectively.  Many of the teachers agreed that some of the books did not match the social

skills very well.  They also had a hard time accessing the books and lessons when they needed

them because there were not enough books to share with the other classrooms.  One notable

concern amongst the third and fourth grade teachers is that they felt like the students they taught

would prefer chapter books because they thought the books were too immature for them.

However, the younger and older grades liked the picture books.

**Comparison to Students' Perceptions**

Gaul (2015) performed research and analyses on the students' perceptions from this same

school year to identify their insights of the BIB social skills lessons.  By informally comparing

the teachers' perceptions and the students' perceptions, it can determined whether there is a

relationship between how the teachers perceived the program and how the students experienced the lessons.

Since there were no significant differences among the quantitative data regarding teachers' perceptions, the qualitative research provides further insight into any possible differences among the grade levels. The biggest difference in perceptions was among the third and fourth grade teachers who felt the books were too immature for their students and stated that students would prefer chapter books. This does match with some of Gaul's (2015) findings. Gaul (2015) found that "students in 1st through 3rd grades enjoyed the various methods of instruction a small degree more than the overall group and a large degree more than the students in 4th through 6th grade" (p. 24). However, Gaul (2015) also found that the biggest differences in student perceptions were between the 1st graders and the 5th and 6th graders. The fifth and sixth grade teachers felt that the lessons provided great discussions for their students. Therefore, this difference shows that teachers' perceptions do not correlate with students' perceptions in this instance.

Also important to note, there is a difference in perceptions on the social skill "resolving differences." The teacher survey data rates this social skill as the highest for using children's literature to teach this social skill. However, in Gaul's (2015) research he found that the students rated this social skill the lowest when self-reporting how much they implement the social skill steps. Furthermore, they also rated these steps as being only *sometimes* implemented among their peers as well. "In other words, students had personal difficulty in implementing this particular social skill and likewise saw their peers as having similar difficulties" (Gaul, 2015, p. 22). Therefore, even though the teachers felt as though the BIB lessons were an appropriate way to teach this social skill, the students had the hardest time implementing it into their daily lives.

**Limitations**

One notable limitation of this study is that data were collected at two different points in time.  Focus groups were held at the end of the 2011–2012 school year and questionnaires were completed at the beginning of the 2012–2013 school year.  The BIB project was a multi-year project.  Initially, the school agreed to allow researchers to collect data at the beginning of each school year to determine buy-in, and to collect data at the conclusion of the school year to help the researchers in making improvements for the following school year.  Data from teacher questionnaires were not available at the end of the 2011–2012 school year.  Questionnaire data were collected at the beginning of the 2012–2013 school year.  Questionnaire data were used to determine teacher buy-in.  However, in comparing this end-of-year data (focus groups) and beginning of year data (questionnaires), one must consider the three-month gap between the focus groups and administrations of questionnaires.  Therefore, the teachers' perceptions in focus groups and teachers' responses to the questionnaire must considered carefully and separately, not directly compared.

Moreover, the small data sample of 19 teachers responding to the survey and 18 teachers participating in the focus group interviews also limits the reliability and validity of the results.  It is difficult to determine whether a larger data sample (higher participation rate) with more teachers responding to the questions would yield the same results.  However, since participation was optional, and this school was the only school to fully implement BIB at this time; this limited data set gives a snapshot of how this program is functioning in this particular school.  Information gathered from this school may or may not generalize to other schools that choose to implement BIB.

Another limitation was the use of only indirect retrospective measures. Using direct observations of the teachers or validated pre and post measures of students' social skills in future studies would bring more understanding of the social validity and effectiveness of the program.

In addition, since the teachers taught the social skills, they may have held a positive bias towards the program. The teachers may have subconsciously implemented the social skills themselves, which resulted in more positive student-teacher interactions. The teachers' perceptions may have been influenced by the possibility that the adults were also learning to implement social skill steps with greater expertise, positively influencing consistency with student behavioral expectations.

Last, since this program was implemented in only one elementary school with a homogenous population of both teachers and students, caution should be used when generalizing the data to other schools with populations that are more heterogeneous. For example, teachers who work in urban areas may find the social skills to be more or less important to the students in their class, depending on their life experiences and attitudes. Considering this limitation, schools that implement this program should collect their own data to analyze their teachers' perceptions.

**Practical Implications**

Several practical implications arose from this study that informed future efforts with BIB. The first is that when implementing this program, using fewer targeted social skills throughout the year is easier for both teachers and students (i.e., four social skills in the participating school). Teachers in every grade level reported that the program based on four social skills was easier for all students to learn. Simplicity is greatly appreciated in school-based programs. Furthermore, the study also found that creating lesson plans that are easy to follow and that teachers can leave for substitutes is an important benefit for educators. Limited teacher time is a

universal barrier to implementing programs in schools, particularly non-academic programs. Time is a precious commodity. Respecting teachers' time necessitates making materials simple and easy to use. If materials are simple, available, and fun for the students, teachers are more likely to use the materials.

Moreover, BIB instruction should be more specific to the students' grade level and each group's particular likes and dislikes. While the younger and older grades enjoyed the picture books, the third and fourth grade students may learn better from reading chapter books since that is what they are focusing on learning to read at this particular time in their academic lives. Teachers in these grade levels may be more willing to give the BIB lessons if they perceive that the lesson and story are something their students are going to enjoy. When students complain that the selected story is too immature, teachers may not get the positive feedback and accompanying motivation needed to encourage their full participation in the program.

An important implication of this study, which informed future BIB efforts, is that adequate materials are necessary to implement this school-wide social skills program. One of the biggest barriers to this program, as reported by multiple teachers, was that teachers had a hard time getting the books and lessons that they needed to teach the monthly social skill. Even though the school provided them with the books and lessons, there simply were not enough, so some teachers ended up not teaching the lesson each month because they could not get the book that they needed when they wanted to teach the lesson. Overall, teachers provided the story and associated social skills lesson approximately 80% of the time. Therefore, schools need to consider the needs of the teachers when implementing programs that require materials and make sure there is an appropriate system in place to ensure teachers can easily access materials when needed.

In conclusion, this study shows that, in general, teachers perceived that the social skills were important to their students and that the BIB program was effective in helping teach their students the identified social skills. Overall, teachers agreed that the program benefitted their students. Most teachers reported positive changes in their students' behavior. More specifically, teachers indicated that students were able to generalize the social skills across settings (school and home). Teachers found that helping students practice the social skills and then expecting the students to use those skills was helpful in maintaining appropriate classroom behavior. Since research shows that interventions with good social validity are more likely to be effective, it is important to note that the teachers' buy-in to the BIB program also contributed to the program's success (Marchant et al., 2012). Considering both the survey data and the focus group data, the teachers perceive BIB as an acceptable and effective way to teach social skills in the classroom and to enhance SEL.

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APPENDIX A: Teacher Survey

**BOOK IN A BAG TEACHER SURVEY** Grade level: _____

| As a way to encourage classroom social skills instruction, this school year we are incorporating "Book in a Bag." These pre-made social skills lesson packets include selected children's picture books and short activities. Prior to participating in "Book in Bag," we would appreciate your feedback. Please complete this short survey. THANK YOU!<br><br>**Circle the number that describes the strength of your agreement or disagreement with each statement listed below.** | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social skills instruction is an important part of **school-wide** curriculum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Social skills instruction is an important part of my **classroom** curriculum | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| During a typical school day, teachers should be able to implement social skills instruction within their classroom | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I can implement social skills instruction with existing resources | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| In my classroom, social skills instruction makes a positive difference in student behavior | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Direct instruction is an acceptable model for classroom social skills instruction | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel confident in my ability to teach social skills to my students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I enjoy teaching social skills lessons to my students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My classroom of students enjoy social skill lessons | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Please circle the word that best describes the frequency of the following activities:**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Typically, I teach a planned social skills lesson (how often?) | Daily | Weekly | Monthly | A few times during the school year | Never |
| Ideally, I would like to teach a planned social skills lesson (how often?) | Daily | Weekly | Monthly | A few times during the school year | Never |

**1. Based on your experience, list barriers to implementing social skills instruction in your classroom.**

**2. Considering your students' and classroom's needs, list the most important social skills that need to be addressed.**

**3. Describe your past efforts to implement classroom social skills instruction and how students responded to this instruction.**

**_____#TOTAL years in teaching profession    _____# years you have taught at this school**

During this school year teachers are encouraged to use the prepared *Book in a Bag* social skills lessons.  These lessons incorporate children's picture books and activities associated with a monthly theme.  Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements regarding the proposed *Book in a Bag* social skills lessons.

| Circle the number that describes the strength of your agreement or disagreement with each statement listed below.<br><br>THE FOLLOWING SOCIAL SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE STUDENTS IN MY CLASSROOM: | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| understanding that choices have consequences | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| resolving differences | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| showing appreciation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| accepting responsibility when something goes wrong | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| CONSIDERING MY CLASSROOM NEEDS, TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS WITH CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS IS AN ACCEPTABLE STRATEGY TO HELP MY STUDENTS... | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| learn that choices have consequences | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| learn how to resolve differences | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| learn how to show appreciation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| learn how to accept responsibility for their actions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

APPENDIX B: Teacher Focus Group Guiding Interview Questions

 30-45 minute focus groups with participating teachers, 4-5 teachers per group

Introduction: *We are interested in how the "Book in a Bag" materials are being used and how well they are working for planned instruction (allotted time, teacher initiated, outcomes specified, activities from the bag).  We are also interested in the impact you perceive these lesson plans, materials, and your instruction have on the social and emotional skills of your students.*

1.  Describe your perceptions of classroom-based social skill instruction.

2.  Tell me about your experience with Book in a Bag (BIB) this past year.  How did instruction using the bags go?

       a. What worked well?  Which one (BIB) worked best?  Why?

       b. What difficulties did you encounter?

       c. What extensions or modifications did you make?

       d. What additional books or materials did you use?

       e. On average, how many minutes daily did you use?

       f. When (during the day) did you use the materials?

3.  How have your students responded to BIB? Could you share some specific stories that would describe your students' responses to BIB?

4.  Describe differences in your students' social skills across this past year.

5.  What changes would you recommend for next year's BIB efforts?

# APPENDIX C: Teacher Focus Group Consent Forms

Teacher consent from to participate in focus group

## PART E   Consent to be a Research Subject

**Introduction**

This research study is being conducted by Michelle Marchant and Melissa Allen Heath, Associate Professors in the Counseling Psychology and Special Education Department at Brigham Young University. Focus groups are being conducted to assess teachers' perceptions of Book-in-the-Bag. You were invited to participate because your school participated in Book-in-the-Bag social skills instruction this past year.

**Procedures**

If you agree to participate in a focus group, the following will occur:

- You will be interviewed in a group of 4 - 6 teachers for approximately thirty (30) minutes about Book-in-the Bag social skills instruction.
- The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements,
- The interview will take place in one of your school classrooms at a time convenient for you.
- The researcher may contact you later (if needed) to clarify your interview answers for approximately 10 minutes.
- Total time commitment will be 30 to 45 minutes.

**Risks/Discomforts**

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. You may, however, feel some discomfort when answering questions about personal perceptions about Book-in-the Bag or when being audio recorded. In focus groups, it is possible that you may feel embarrassed when talking in front of others. If you feel embarrassed about answering a particular question, you may choose to decline or excuse yourself from the study.

**Benefits**

There will be no direct benefits to you. It is hoped, however, that through your participation researchers may learn more about using children's picture books and related classroom activities for social skills instruction.

**Confidentiality**

Because focus groups include discussion of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect each participant's privacy. The researcher will begin the focus group by asking the participants to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the focus group confidential. The researcher who conducts the focus group will then ask each participant to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential and will remind them at the end of the group not to discuss the material outside.

The research data (audiotapes and notes) will be kept in a file cabinet in a locked room. Only the primary researcher and research team members will have access to the data. At the conclusion of the focus group, all identifying information will be removed from notes. Data (tapes and notes related to the focus groups) will be kept in the researcher's locked office.

Only the researcher will have access to the data collected. Any tapes and transcripts of the focus group will be destroyed after one year after the study is completed.

**Compensation**

No compensation is offered for participation.

**Participation**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely with no negative repercussions.

**Questions about the Research**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Michelle Marchant at 801-422-1238 for further information.

**Questions about Your Rights as Research Participants**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant contact IRB Administrator at (801) 422-1461; A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; irb@byu.edu.

**Statement of Consent**

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Name (Printed): _____ Signature _____ Date: _____

Brigham Young University IRB
APPROVED                    EXPIRES                    Ver. 3/11

MAR 2 9 2012        MAR 2 8 2013

APPENDIX D: International Review Board Approval

Institutional Review Board
for Human Subjects

Brigham Young University
A-285 ASB Provo, Utah  84602
(801) 422-3841  /  Fax: (801) 422-0620

March 29, 2012

Michelle Marchant
340B MCKB
Campus Mail

Re:   Book in the Bag: An Integrated Approach to Social Skills Instruction

Dear  Professor Michelle  Marchant

This is to inform you that Brigham Young University's IRB has approved the above research study.

The approval period is from 3-29-2012 to 3-28-2013.  Your study number is X120134.  Please be sure to reference this number in any correspondence with the IRB.

Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements.

1. A copy of the 'Informed Consent Document' approved as of 3-29-2012 is enclosed.  No other consent form should be used.  It must be signed by each subject prior to initiation of  any protocol procedures.  In addition, each subject must be given a copy of the signed consent form.

2. All protocol amendments and changes to approved research must be submitted to the IRB and not be implemented until approved by the IRB.

3. A few months before this date we will send out a continuing review form.  There will only be two reminders. Please fill this form out in a timely manner to ensure that there is not a lapse in your approval.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

Lane Fischer, PHD,  Chair
Sandee M.P. Munoz, Administrator
Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects

APPENDIX E: Focus Group Coding Table

| THEMES | | | | |
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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| **First and Second Grade Teacher Responses** | **Initiate Discussion**<br>• My input is I think some of my students come in not with good social skills not being able to cope with certain social issues.  So it was very helpful sometimes to talk about these certain subjects they had to help them learn that there are social coping skills that they can learn to help them get over anger management you know these type of things.<br>• And that gives you a place to start from to something you know to talk about the situation.<br><br>**Book Choice**<br>• I think it is nice to have books that they will see in a library.  Sometimes you get programs where you attach literature to a concept and it is some book that somebody wrote specifically for that | **Lack of Connection Between Skill and Book**<br>• Some of the books were a little bit of a stretch I felt.<br>• It seemed like you needed a book so you put that in there. So a lot of times I would just ask them well how would you apply the social skill to this situation even though it wasn't necessarily in the book, it didn't really match.<br>• There was one with my student teacher and I think it was called "Suddenly" and just a bunch of things kept happening, and I think it was one of the, what was the first one we did? Was it resolving differences or the second one? And it was just like this happened, and then this happened, and then this happened but there was nothing to resolve.  And you know maybe that's what you were supposed to pull out of it but it was a huge stretch, it just seemed like the silliest book. | **Students Enjoy Reading**<br>• They like them, I mean, you know like (teacher) said at the beginning, they like to be read to and they are quietest then usually.  I could read all day.[Students enjoyed being read to]<br>• Yeah, they don't have to worry about doing the work, decoding and everything [easy for students to understand the intended teachings].<br>• Yeah, my kids have gotten really excited about actually memorizing them.<br>• I feel that children always like to read uh… have a book read to them.  They like literature so that | **Decrease in Inappropriate Behavior**<br>• We have data to support that our office referrals have gone significantly down and the only big change we have made is adding social skills.<br><br>**Application of Social Skill Steps**<br>• The steps, yeah, and then they use them after they have memorized them, they say, oh, did I do this, did I do this?<br>• We have always had four steps with each of our twelve social skills, which that is impossible to memorize, but with four they can, they really can and we have them repeat them.<br>• I knew we had [steps]…but they didn't ever actually memorize them.<br><br>**Increased Awareness**<br>• I think like she said it just made them more aware of what a social skill is you |

| THEMES | | | | |
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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
|  | and you'll never see it again and so it is not applicable.  But these are actually stories the kids either know or they will see in the library and so they can interact with it and realize that it's actual… you know what I mean? They will see it again.  When they read it again they will go, "Oh yeah! I remember!" <br>• I liked the showing appreciation ones, they all seemed really good. Like, I liked, "The Big Al." <br><br>**Easy to Implement** <br>• I think it was great to give a substitute or a student teacher and just say here is the lesson, teach it and have it already planned. <br>• They are easy to implement I think. <br>• Yeah some of the activities were really good and tied in well with the curriculum. | • Yeah they [the students] haven't developed their inference and all those things. <br><br>**Finding Time** <br>• Mine was time**.** (*General agreement from the group*) I… This was put on us like at the beginning of the year and we already probably had our whole schedules set out.  It was finding time.  I have a person who comes in, my husband comes in, once a week and do social skills with the kids.  And he would take one or two of these, but it was just time.  Unless I planned for it, it was time. <br><br>**Materials** <br>• The only thing that would be barriers for me that I noticed would be on occasion there were some that needed copies made of something to support it and so… <br><br>**Lack of Books** <br>• And then I just think sometimes I know we didn't really have this problem in the | was something that was a positive. <br><br>**Making Connections** <br>• Yeah, and I think that at this age too, they like making connections.  So when they hear a book, they are connecting them to ones we read that covers the same situation or, "Hey that one book" or connecting it back to Book in a Bag when we talk about something later. <br><br>**Hard to Make Connections** <br>• With younger grades, I think they need it so specific that they can pick it out, that I don't have to like pick it out for them, you know? <br>• Because they [the students] don't get it | know.  Because in first grade they really don't know those things and like that saying thank you and you know just those basic things is what a social skill is and just give them a basic beginning of what it is and how to deal with certain situations and because the big steps that they memorize they are able to apply those and have something specific rather than just oh this is what you do but how to do it. <br>• And it made them more aware of what they can use instead of hitting and shouting and all those type of things. |

| THEMES | | | | |
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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| | Like guess "how much I love you" and it talked about tall taller tallest and we went off and did comparisons. And word endings for phonics and then it was also science with big bigger and biggest or strong stronger and strongest or something.<br><br>**Social Skill Choice**<br>• I think that you've streamed them pretty well that you can fit most of those problems into one of those four.<br>• I like that there is a focus of just four social skills, because last year when I went and interviewed the sixth graders about the social skills, they only remembered about four anyway, it's just more of a focus. | lower grades but I know that in upper grade they mentioned some of these hard to find books or I know someone who is asking there aren't very many or there aren't enough.<br>• I think more choices because there are um and I know that's hard finding books the right age but sometimes I go and I'm like, "there are no books in this social skill and my grade " and you know, or even close because I know we can go up and down, but, um<br><br>**Lack of Information**<br>• What was expected, I think expectations would be the main thing. We weren't communicating with them. Yeah, we just didn't know.<br>• Yeah, I think if someone got one out and showed us all that was in it and actually did it, then we would know and get excited about it.<br>• I had no idea that it was like they all had steps, did you know that, the other twelve? They all… | [the books were a stretch to make the connection with a social skill. It was not easy for the student to understand.<br><br>**Students Enjoy Activities**<br>• Yeah, I think that [role play] was the favorite.<br>• They enjoyed the checklist in one of them where they got to check off with a partner like if they were doing the social skills, did I do this, did I do this, and then showing appreciation was the last one and they wrote what they were grateful for.<br>• With a partner, yeah, like actually working with somebody and using the social skill [during the social skill lesson activity, students practiced the social skill]. | |

| THEMES | | | | |
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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| | | • I didn't [know there were steps]. | | |
| **Third and Fourth Grade Teacher Responses** | **Teaching Social Skills Explicitly**<br>• It's important that we teach that explicitly in our classrooms, social skills.<br>• And then following up with it after it has been explicitly taught I think is also important.<br><br>**Positive Reinforcement**<br>• You know, I think looking for the habits in school and maybe reinforcing those, you know, positive behaviors, those good social skills.<br><br>**Easy to Implement**<br>• I've liked it. I've liked it because it makes it an easy way for us to teach it and it gives the kids like an example of how it really works.<br>• I didn't feel like I had to really do any prep for it.<br>• I would leave a Book in a Bag for them | **Lack of Connection Between Skill and Book**<br>• I haven't necessarily felt like, um the books matched the social skills as well as I would have liked, um, I would say pretty consistently, I had a hard time going, "oh ok, this matches whichever social skill it was," it didn't seem to correlate as well for me,<br>**Finding Time**<br>• Time is always.<br>• finding time to, to, do it<br>• Carving out time to do it<br><br>**Book Choice**<br>• I mostly read chapter books to my class, so<br>• And I had a hard time finding books that were an appropriate level and that I hadn't already done with my class, so, yeah.<br><br>**Lack of Books**<br>• Um, there aren't any 4th grade books so trying to use the 3rd and 5th grade books and then trying to find books that match | **Making Connections**<br>• I can't remember what it was called but it was when they were, umm the kids were wanting to get a hat for their grandmother I think, I can't remember. But it was like the Easter Hat, and they were working hard to earn money and do things like that in order to buy it. My kids really liked that one, they thought like, you know, what fun projects can we do for other people?<br><br>**Books Too Immature**<br>• One thing is if my kids saw the actual bag and it was not leveled at 3rd grade, like if it was leveled lower than 3rd grade | **Increase in Maturity**<br>• Probably small things, but I wouldn't say I had a really hard student who is all of a sudden an angel, I wish but.<br>• Yeah, I think they just like matured throughout the year and you know, some of it went along with the social skills but I think some of it just went along with getting older and their expectations.<br>**Increased Awareness**<br>• I tried to give out our Positive Paws [praise notes], that's what he's talking about, that I tried to give those out often, so I think it's a little bit more on my kid's mind of if they are doing it or not because I try to point it out. |

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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| | [substitutes] as part of my sub plans.  So my substitute teachers were the ones that did most of my Book in a Bag teaching so I don't have a whole lot to add because I usually wasn't the one who did the instruction, but.<br>• It was super easy and the plan was already written completely out so all you had to leave in your sub plan was Book in a Bag.<br>• I think they were pretty simple, that it didn't seem like we would need it too much [training].<br>• Yeah, I don't think it [training] would be necessary.  I think they're pretty straight forward.<br><br>**Book Choices**<br>• Uhh, I can't remember the name of it, it was the one that was about Jackie Robinson, what was that called, do you remember? | because somebody else has the book so…<br>• it is availability sometimes | they'd be like, "why are we reading a baby book, that's for first graders," so I think that the leveling, because they told us in the beginning there's not as many for this grade so just pick whatever grade level and adapt it to your own grade level so my kids would be hesitant to talk about a book that they perceived and it like wasn't even content, you know, you could have one that was a picture book leveled at a 4th grade level and a picture book leveled at a 2nd grade, but they would see it on the bag and be like, "that's not for us."<br><br><br>**Students Enjoyed Reading**<br>• See, I don't think, I wonder if that is a | |

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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| | • Yeah and then there was one other one that I really liked.  Uhh, Chicken Sunday, is that what it's called?<br><br>**Initiate Discussion**<br>• I liked doing it in the morning, my kids weren't quite as crazy yet, so we'd come in and we were able to have a serious conversation about it without people joking which happens later in the day.<br><br>**Choice of Social Skills**<br>• The 4 that we're doing right now, really branch into all these other smaller social skills, that you can relate back, that's why I like having just the 4 because you can really focus in on that and then you can relate those to all these other underlying things as well. | | maturity thing, because I don't think 4th graders would have that issue at all, I think they'd be like, huh, whatever<br>• My kids like reading super basic books.<br>• And they seemed to enjoy the Books in the Bag, like they liked when we would just sit down and read a story and talk about it, so it's not like they don't like it, yeah they do.<br>• The kids enjoy them.<br>• Yeah, [kids remember books] because of the way it affected them, the way it made them feel. | |

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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| **Fifth and Sixth Grade Teacher Responses** | **Choice of Social Skills**<br>• I think it's great. Kids needs social skills in this day in age, even greater than they used to, so the fact that we can spend a few minutes helping them to see why it's important to have social skills is fabulous.<br>• It's good to have the guidelines of the four main social skills too and um good to have them posted and do everything else that we do to culminate with the Book in a Bag. It sort of all kind-of works together.<br>• I like that there's not too many [social skills]. There's four main ones.<br>• But they're [the social skills] open enough that you can include other stuff as well.<br>• They're [the skills] specific. I like them.<br>• I don't have a problem with them [the skills].<br>• I didn't think that I would like that we paired | **Lack of Connection Between Skill and Book**<br>• Uh some of the books um uh, well there were a couple of books and I can't remember the exact one that I felt like it was a little bit of a stretch. It was one that had to do with, it might have been, you know I don't remember if it was making good choices or showing appreciation. But all through the book it is kind-of the gathering of people in school and crazy things happened. It reminded me of the um uh the field trip that went bad that book um and um. It was showing appreciation because by the end we were like, "Okay. I guess we would thank the custodian for cleaning having to clean this up, I mean it was a stretch to get it to it to work.<br><br>**Lack of Books**<br>• I um feel that I think I would like to see um a certain amount of books for each grade that is used just for that grade because with some of the | **Engagement in Activities**<br>• Cause it [role play] does get them a little bit charged-up, so [reason why this one teacher did not want to have role play activities]<br>• I actually think that helps lower grade more than upper grade. Um because they're having to learn from scratch what these are and how they relate to themselves and their world around them because they're still very much, you know, they're the center of the universe and and so I I feel like role playing helps lower grade more than…<br><br>**Making Connections**<br>• One thing I do a lot with upper grade kids | **Application of Social Skill Steps**<br>• One of them was on resolving differences. And um the particular student that discussed that um had a problem with her parents arguing all the time in front of the kids and was really really worried about it, and she knew after uh practicing the steps of resolving differences that she could go home and tell them, "You know what, I feel worried when you talk this way. Could you either not argue or do it without us around?" And they… You know problem solved.<br>• And when we discussed uh their writing assignments we found that a lot of them were thinking of events at home that they needed to work through and could take that home. And I was thrilled with that.<br>• We also sent students to uh look at the steps that were charted on the wall and talk them over together and come back and report… |

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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| | down the social skills to only four this year out of the eight I think we used to have.  But I actually do like it a lot more because they're more broad so you can fit everything…<br>• So it's great.<br>• And then we get to repeat them too…<br><br>**Book Choices**<br>• The last one on Jackie Robinson [went well].<br>• And um we really liked it [*Teammates*] for sixth grade.  It was easy to have quite a discussion and relate it to playground issues and um um school and home issues as well.<br>• I prefer the picture books. [*general agreement*]<br>• That reminds me of in the making good choices, the no cussing club.  We really liked that.  We used it in our classes as well as um adapted it for the assemblies. | choices, like resolving differences, we did not have enough books for the school.<br>• There was month we were supposed to focus on resolving differences, and I did but I didn't use a Book in a Bag because there weren't any in here.  So that was the one social skill where we didn't seem to have enough books.<br><br><br>**Finding Time**<br>• Well sometimes it [was time consuming] depended on the discussion.<br>• That's why I like the idea of maybe some specific ones per grade level so that it is new when they receive it in their grade.<br><br>**Lack of Information**<br>• The only thing about the training that I heard feedback was that we didn't like is that she spent a lot of time in the morning um part of the training just talking about social skills in general, and we | is um about the world around them, so like that would be a modification, not just using the social skill.  So if there's something happening in the news that fits one of our social skills, kids in the fifth and sixth grade are starting to be more aware of their world and good and bad decisions that people make, so we talk about those and why that was a good or bad decision.<br>• And the kids really picked-up on that and it was nice to see that they picked up that "oh maybe we don't want to do those kind of things either."<br>• And the, you know, they related to it starting somewhere else and it's meant to be spread throughout the | • I find a lot of times when you do it at the beginning of the month, given the nature of how schools work, that situation [kids using the skill] is gonna happen.<br>• Saved us a ton of time having to intervene and being a part of that resolving.<br>**Increased Awareness**<br>• I think this year, given that we've been memorizing them and not giving them the warm and fuzzies, they're in the front of their brain a lot more.[increased awareness; students seem to be aware of the skills, conscious of the social skills]<br>• Yea they're more aware.<br>• But they're there in the front of their brain a lot more, I think, I feel like this year.  Cause I've actually, I mean I've heard the students say the step.  One, I mean not go through them all, but "Number 3…" miss, you know [students had the skills memorized and could report the skill by the number associated with the skill] |

| THEMES | | | | |
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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| | • I did like that a lot of the books in the bag um kids didn't know already. So I did like that because it was engaging cause they have not read it a hundred times.<br><br>**Easy to Implement**<br>• I like the outline. Um you know the purposes, the objectives, and and a basic outline of a lesson so anyone could step in and do it.<br>• I like that too. If I wanted to I could leave it for a substitute to do and it was easy for them to follow.<br>• Our student teachers did them and that was a good experience for them.<br>• It's cool. And it's something they [student teachers] can take with them when they get their first teaching job.<br>• Find a spot and fit it in.<br>• I have, before, had a time once a week where I had a class meeting and | all felt as a faculty that that part wasn't needed because we've been doing social skills for so long. And then we only got like, what was it, five minutes to look at the books, and that was the part that we really wanted to look at. So I think for another school that this was new for that would be appropriate, but our school, we kept going, can we just look at the books? Can we just look at the books? Like we were just wanting to see what the books were. Cause we've been doing social skills for now ten years.<br>• My one question is, are they supposed to leave their posters up from past months? [confusion]<br>• I like the copy sticker idea.<br><br>**Need More Book Choice**<br>• It's just having the choices.<br>• And I like more books for……specific grade levels. I like that.<br>• So we're not passing them down through the grades. | nation.[generalizing--being aware of the world around them, that the story might be about one person, but there are universal applications]<br>• Well and for my kids they were like, "Well we don't really cuss." But, so we talked about how important it will be next year in junior high.<br><br>**Engaged Discussions**<br>• Positive.[children respond positively]<br>• I even used the same book twice to teach accepting responsibility. I used, the first time a sub had done it so in part I was doing it again so I could kind-of be there for the conversation. Even though we were reading the same | • I think they're in the front of their brain a lot more this year. [increased awareness]<br>• Well and because we we're supposed to memorize the steps to the social skills and then sometimes we get called on at assemblies to recite those steps, I find that my students are just thinking about the social skills more… like something will come up and they'll remember the steps… and they'll talk about it. |

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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| | teach social skills really during that time.  So usually when I'm doing the Book in a Bag lesson it's in place of my class meeting that week.<br><br>**Initiate Discussion**<br>• If they went alive with it and we um you know ran with it than we spent more time.<br>• So we end-up talking about it again… it's not like you do it once and its and we're done for the month.  It always seems to pop-up again, just, I mean randomly.<br>• Well you know the way I use them I had a parent come in with a problem that was happening that I was unaware of and I just pulled out a character ed book.  And that's how I solved it.<br><br>**Posters**<br>• I like the posters.<br>• They're [posters] good. | • So maybe just adding some more books, not necessarily saying just that grade.<br>• Yea, I don't you should be limiting that grade.<br>• Also, the more subtle uh bullying things, like you know talking behind people's backs, rumors, gossiping, um um, yea.<br>• And um so we were sharing books so I got it from a fourth grade teacher and so those fourth graders will have already had that book when they come up.  Of course by sixth grade the discussion will be different, revisiting it will be done in a different way, but I kind of like having a different set of books according to that grade level.<br>• And you want them to be engaged, and sometimes if they've already read it they aren't as engaged, even though discussions might be different. | book, they were still totally engaged and we had great discussion and…<br>• So that, my classes responded really well to it.<br>• The discussions were wonderful.<br><br>**Students Enjoyed Reading**<br>• They always love picture books.<br>• I think that's a fallacy that older kids don't like picture books and that's totally wrong. | |

| THEMES | | | | |
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| **Grade levels** | **Strengths** | **Difficulties** | **Student Response** | **Changes in Behavior** |
| | • I like that they're [posters] just out here, right outside my door.<br>• There was feedback from a first grade teacher that um uh said that they were starting to talk about uh the steps to one of the social skills and the student in the class knew all the steps.  And she says, "How did you know that?" "Well I read the poster in the hall."<br>• It [posters] keeps them [social skill steps] in their minds. | | | |