The Effects of Bibliotherapy-Based Class Meetings

on

Students' Self-Concept and Perceptions of Peers

By Emily Canatella

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if students' self-concept and perception of peers would be impacted positively by implementing daily bibliotherapy-based class meetings over a four-week period. This study utilized a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design with no control group. The researcher hypothesized that there would be no significant change in self-concept or perception of peers based on the intervention. Data were collected using a pre- and post-intervention survey and daily student reflections. After completing the intervention, students demonstrated improvement in the areas of self-concept and peer perceptions, and all five null hypotheses were rejected, suggesting most notably that ratings of selves and peers increased, and gains in peer ratings were statistically significantly higher than gains in self-ratings. Self-ratings were higher at pre and post testing intervals (32.591 and 34.455, respectively) than ratings of peers (21.091 and 26.909, respectively), although t-tests revealed that the mean gains for both self (3.994) and peer (5.395) ratings increased statistically significantly over the study. The significant increase in ratings of peers may indicate that bibliotherapy has implications for enhancing peer relations as well as students' self-concepts. Further research appears warranted to learn more about the nature of the potential benefits of bibliotherapy-based meetings in the classroom for more diverse samples.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Character education has been an important component of the educational experience of students as an addition to content-focused curriculum. Schools, school systems, and states have implemented various strategies and approaches to character education, but with the ever-changing population of schools, communities, and regions, it has been challenging to gauge the effectiveness and success of particular strategies used to implement character education. Many character education programs are not tailored to meet the needs of the particular school or community and lack assessment tools to demonstrate the efficacy of the implemented program. (Lewis, Robinson, & Hayes, 2017) The current nationwide increase in juvenile crime suggests that schools are failing to provide the necessary character education supports to assist many students to become productive members of society.

The role of character education in the nation's schools has evolved over several years. Initially, character education was embedded primarily in religious practices and strived to teach children morality. Currently, character education is focused on encouraging children to recognize their own social and emotional needs so that they are enabled to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong. Additionally, the focus on academic rigor, the pace of instruction, and addressing assessment requirements leaves little time for character education in present day classrooms. Teachers must try to make time to address the social and emotional needs of their students when teachable moments arise. The "teaching of civility can serve to shape future citizens… to act with respect toward others and take responsibility for their environment and social institutions." (Wilkins, Caldarella, Crook-Lyon, & Young, 2010, p. 542) Additionally,

Wilkins et al. stated that "civility can be a major buffer against school violence." (p. 542) Through conducting this study, the researcher hoped to demonstrate that a brief implementation of class meetings, if done consistently and with integrity, could improve students' behavior and effort in present day elementary classrooms, and as a result, improve their academic performance.

The character education program utilized in the researchers' school has been in place for several years and minor adjustments have been made to further promote positive student behaviors and keep students motivated. For example, her school implemented class meetings as a strategy to engage students, promote positive behavior, and address classroom conflict, but little structure for the meetings was provided. The school community has limited parent involvement and participation, but efforts continue to be made to engage families. In spite of these efforts, behavior referrals and disruptions due to negative student behaviors actually have increased during the past several years. Teachers at the researcher's school expressed a need for more effective strategies to be proactive in avoiding non-preferred student behaviors.

The specific areas of social and emotional needs within the classroom include, but are not limited to, diversity acceptance, self-esteem, friendship, and social behaviors such as interrupting and blurting out. These social and emotional needs were addressed through this study by the implementation of class meetings. The class meetings in this study were structured using bibliotherapy and engaging activities focused on the character trait or skill being addressed that particular week. The use of bibliotherapy encourages a climate in which students are free to discuss the characters of the text without students feeling as if they may be the subject of the discussion. Often, when holding a class meeting that involved discussion of a negative behavior, students would argue or blame their peers. Through this study, the researcher sought to

determine if using bibliotherapy would eliminate or reduce the occurrence of this behavior during class meetings.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine whether daily class meetings using bibliotherapy would positively affect students' behaviors and their self-concept. Bibliotherapy includes using literature in the form of picture books pertaining to a character trait, skill, or problem to generate thinking and discussion about such behaviors within the classroom.

Hypothesis

The main null hypothesis was that implementation of bibliotherapy-based daily classroom meetings would not impact the participants' self-concepts or perceived behaviors of their peers. It was tested by testing several related null hypotheses which assessed the similarities between self and peer ratings before and after the intervention, changes in self and peer ratings over the intervention, and self-ratings of effort on target skills.

ho1: Mean Ratings of Self = Mean Ratings of Peers on behavior/self-concept PRE survey

ho2: Mean Ratings of Self = Mean Ratings of Peers on behavior/self-concept POST survey

ho3: Mean Gains in Ratings of Self on behavior/self-concept surveys =0

ho4: Mean Gains in Ratings of Peers on behavior/self-concept surveys=0

ho5: Mean gains in Ratings of Self on behavior/self-concept surveys = Mean Gains in Ratings of Peers on behavior/self-concept surveys

Operational Definitions

Picture books used within this study were pieces of literature, carefully selected by the researcher, that contain illustrations and characters to portray varying character traits, behaviors, or skills.

Self-concept and **behaviors** refer to student's individual thoughts and perceptions of self in regard to the targeted skills and behaviors identified in the study. These thoughts and perceptions were assessed with a five-point rating scale survey administered both before and following the intervention (see Appendix B and Appendix D). Participants were asked to respond to eight parallel questions, giving themselves a rating and their classmates a rating as well. An example of the statements to be rated were "I show concern for others." The parallel statement to rate stated, "My classmates show concern for others."

Bibliotherapy is the use of books and literature to teach lessons and stimulate thinking.

Bibliotherapy based-classroom meetings follow the structure of a class meeting, while utilizing literature to guide the discussion and application of targeted skills.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review discusses character education and using class meetings as a strategy to offer character education in the upper elementary school setting. The first section of the review defines character education, identifies the roles of various individuals as these roles relate to character education, and discusses the evolution of character education. The second section of the review focuses on the effectiveness of character education as a behavior intervention strategy. The third and final section examines the specific character education strategy of class meetings and bibliotherapy within class meetings.

Character Education

Definition

Character education is challenging to define. The terminology is ever-evolving and changing due to political affiliations, public views, and disagreements regarding definitions of previously established terms (Berkowitz, Bier, & McCauley, 2017). Berkowitz et al. state "character education, as defined here, is intended to promote student development. The aspects of student development of relevance are those that enable and motivate the individual to be a moral agent" (p.30). Although the definition of character education varies among authors who discuss it, each definition encompasses the same general concept. A broader, more widely used definition is "the attempt to influence the development of desirable qualities or traits of an individual" (Wilkins et al., 2010, p.542).

Involved Participants

Teachers who have implemented character education programs successfully identify and describe it as "a joint responsibility between home and school" (Brannon, 2008, p. 58). The

concept of character education encompasses all individuals involved in students' lives. Character education requires the entire school staff, including administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and aides, to work closely with parents and guardians to ensure the most effective implementation of character education programs. Role models are needed in every aspect of a child's life to model appropriate behavior and guide each child toward positive outcomes. Lewis et al. (2011) identified parents, school personnel, and community members as role models for children to facilitate development of their character.

Practitioners affirm that school leaders and the type of leadership provided are the most critical factors in the success or failure of a character education program within a school (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). Berkowitz and Bier also identify the importance of appropriately training teachers and staff members on the character education initiative so that it can be implemented with fidelity. Teachers are valuable and essential contributors to the success of character education programs when they have received appropriate training and are committed to the specific program and/or strategy being implemented by their schools.

Evolution of Character Education

Character education has evolved over time and continues to evolve, as do the needs of students. Initially, character education was focused on moral values and religion played a substantial role in character education initiatives (Smith, 2013). Smith noted that in the 19th century, character education began to blend the two goals by "promoting such 'virtues' as love of God, love of country, honesty, duty to parents, thrift and hard work" (p. 351). As the United States has become more diverse with regard to religion and culture, the nature of character education has changed in some respects. The separation of church and state was the primary factor changing the nature and content of character education. In the 1960's, character education

began to include an emphasis on values clarification. Smith explains that this emphasis involved having students focus on development of their own feelings and thoughts regarding right and wrong. Teachers were to encourage students to work through their own thinking of right and wrong.

The interest in character education continued to increase in the 1980's and into the 1990's (Smith, 2013). The Character Education Partnership was founded in 1993 and President Bill Clinton, followed by President George W. Bush, continued to expand character education in schools. Smith (2013) stated, "building moral character was a way for schools to help students become good, ethical people, while performance character helped schools with their core mission to teach students to work effectively and be academically successful" (p.353). Performance character focuses on developing traits that improve overall academic performance, such as perseverance, while moral character focuses on developing students' perceptions of right versus wrong. Although the definition, purpose, and impact of character education within the elementary school evolve as more is learned about children's needs and their development, performance character and moral character continue to play a vital role in character education.

Need for and Impact of Character Education

In response to questions about why character education is needed in elementary schools, Stiff-Williams (2010) states, "as educators and parents, we all share a concern that our children will risk their lives and futures by making poor or even life-threatening decisions" (p.115). Further, Stiff-Williams maintains that high-quality character education, implemented with fidelity, has been shown to be correlated with improved school climate, increased academic achievement, and improved relationship and peer interactions. Additionally, according to Lewis et al. (2017), the rising rates of crimes committed by juveniles and increased reports of bullying

support a growing need for the infusion of character education within the school setting. Civility within elementary classrooms assists in building rapport between students and staff, which supports establishing a more harmonious and positive society (Wilkins et al., 2010). "Peace and safety will likely become more prevalent in schools as civil behaviors increase. Educators must work for the remediation of civil behaviors in the same way they would work for the remediation of academic skills" (p.542).

There is a wide array of positive outcomes linked to effective implementation of character education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). Berkowitz and Bier noted that effective character education impacts academic motivation, academic achievement, prosocial behavior, prosocial values, conflict-resolution, moral reasoning, respect, self-esteem, social skills and also has had positive effects on the school system in which such education is offered. These researchers report that effective character education has had a positive influence on reducing rates of absenteeism, referrals, suspensions, anxiety, and substance abuse. According to Kaveney and Drewery (2011), through character education, students become more aware of their own behaviors and the potential for their behaviors to affect themselves and others. The positive effects of character education rely on the fidelity of the program implementation and the teachers' delivery of the program. Berkowitz et al. (2017) identify socio-moral cognition, pro-social behaviors and attitudes, and problem-solving skills as the top three significant outcomes of various scientifically supported character education programs.

Purpose and Structure of Classroom Meetings

Class meetings have been found useful in resolving problems in relationships between and among pupils (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011). The overarching goal of class meetings is building a positive classroom environment. The inclusive aspect of class meetings allows

students to feel as if they are part of the team (Davis, 2018). The structure of class meetings enables conflict amongst peers to be addressed, discussed, and corrected. Students and teachers acknowledge that their voices are heard, and their feelings are valid. This positive context supports building rapport between and among teachers and students. Kaveney and Drewery explain that the structure of a class meeting is a circle-type setting that symbolizes unity, healing, and power. Additionally, they state that the circle enables students to be positioned in a manner that encourages all to participate actively in the meeting. Each individual is an equal contributor and facilitator of the class meeting and plays a vital role in how the meeting continues. Kaveney and Drewery emphasize that one universal requirement of class meetings is using positive body language and speaking in a respectful manner. Class meetings have a range of appearance, topics, and structures depending on how they are presented to the particular class, but many of the basic features of the meetings remain the same across these variations.

Teachers who use class meetings that include small group conflict resolution, and a focus on social problem solving, are able to create encouraging classrooms where students are valued members and learn from their mistakes (Gartrell, 2006). As class meetings are implemented, students begin to develop the perception that they are valued, participating citizens, working cohesively together with their classmates to solve problems. Gartrell further maintains that teachers have learned that if students "buy in to" specific rules and activities, or feel as though something was their idea, they are more likely to be receptive to it. Class meetings can create within students a feeling of empowerment and control in addressing and solving class problems and responding to class needs. Edwards and Mullis (2003) note that extensive research related to character education implies that "explicit instruction in social problem-solving, especially those that teach empathy skills, averts subsequent problem behavior" (p.20). Class

meetings support development of character traits and focus on conflict resolution in ways that enable students to address problems without violence.

Bibliotherapy

One particular application of class meetings incorporates the concept of bibliotherapy during the meeting time. "Bibliotherapy is the use of books and literature to stimulate healing across all ages and has been used in educational and psychological disciplines" (Elley, 2014, p. 92). Elley noted that using children's literature enabled application of a more structured, formal approach to discussing behaviors in a non-threatening way. Further, Elley noted that "bibliotherapy appears to be an effective intervention for teaching a variety of social skills" (p. 94). Literature provides an opportunity for topics and specific issues to be addressed as needs within the classroom arise without identifying individuals who may be the specific cause of the problem or concern. This approach encourages students to address the concern from the character's perspective instead of blaming classmates.

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Summary

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In conclusion, character education is ever-evolving and changing as the needs of students change and evolve. Influences on character education include, but are not limited to political stances, moral standards, and cultural and religious beliefs. Children benefit from direct instruction and modeling of appropriate behavior to help them develop their own perceptions of right and wrong. Adults must act as role models for children and work in a cohesive group to support their character development. School administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and all members of the community are vital in shaping the future of the nation's children and have tools, such as books and programs at their disposal to do so. There is ample evidence to indicate that education focused on building character will strengthen the country and its people.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether daily class meetings using bibliotherapy would positively affect students' behaviors and their self-concept. Bibliotherapy included using literature in the form of picture books pertaining to a character trait, skill, or problem to generate thinking and discussion about social behaviors within the classroom.

Design

The design of this study was a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design with no control group. Students were given a pre-assessment before participating in any bibliotherapy-based class meetings and completed the same survey as a post-assessment following treatment. The independent variable for this study was the implementation of bibliotherapy-based class meetings. The dependent variable for this study was the students' scores on the survey which reflected their self-concept and perceptions of their own and classmates' behavior.

Participants

The students comprising the sample attended an elementary school in suburban Maryland. At the time the study was conducted, the school had an enrollment of 562 students with a 94.8% attendance rate. Student enrollment included children from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. Each grade level from kindergarten through grade five, had four teachers per grade level team. The school had a free and reduced meals (FARMS) percentage of 41.6%.

Due to the nature of the study, convenience sampling was used, and the researcher's homeroom class comprised the sample. The group included 22 students of mixed ability, four of whom were receiving special education services. The sample contained 10 males and 12 females who ranged in age from nine to ten years old.

Instrument

The instruments used were a pre- and post-intervention survey and daily reflection sheets which were created by the researcher. The survey required students to use a five-point scale to rate their behavior and self-concept as well as the behavior of their classmates. Additionally, students were asked to list their top three choices of classmates with whom they preferred to work in a cooperative environment before and after the intervention on the pre and post survey. Copies of the pre and post survey are found in Appendices B and D. The daily reflection sheet required the students to rate their effort on the target behavior from low to high with a three-point scale. A copy of the daily reflection sheet is found in Appendix C.

Procedure

Prior to beginning the study, parents were given information about the implementation of bibliotherapy-based class meetings. All participating students completed the pre-intervention assessment (see Appendix B). Forms were coded with numbers assigned to each student to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Post-intervention surveys were coded with the same numbers.

This study involved the use of class meetings, specifically incorporating the strategy of bibliotherapy, or book-based instruction, to target specific skills. Each class meeting began with a greeting, such as, "Good morning students!" Students then participated in an activity to greet at least one other peer within the classroom before the meeting began. For example, one day students completed a snow-ball greeting. This greeting involved each student writing his or her name on a piece of paper, crumpling it, and tossing it into the center of the room. Students then picked up a "snowball" and greeted the person whose name was on the paper. This type of activity kept students engaged and created interactions with peers who may not have been the

student's first selection with whom to interact. After completing a greeting activity, students

formed a total group circle. At this time, the teacher introduced the text being read to address the

targeted skill. The teacher read the book aloud to the class with prompting and discussion

occurring as needed or desired to ensure the targeted skill was identified. Following the initial

day of reading the text to students, the teacher and students discussed the main character, his/her

choices, and the impact those choices had on others. Students discussed how to address the issue

presented in the text and made a plan to improve their individual execution of the skill needed to

resolve the issue. The remainder of the week's class meetings began the same way with

introductions and greetings, but the activities varied. Students participated in role-playing,

cooperative learning activities, and continued discussing the behavior from the text. Specific

sections of the text were re-read throughout the week to emphasize certain aspects of the story.

Each week of the study focused on a different social skill to address five targeted skills of

diversity acceptance, self-esteem, friendship, teamwork, and social behaviors.

At the end of each day, students reflected on their own behavior and whether or not they had

worked to improve the targeted skill of that particular week using the form in Appendix C.

Students rated how well they implemented the targeted skill that day. Assessments of behavior

and self-concept were quantified using student's pre-and post-intervention survey scores.

Students completed a rating scale (located in Appendix B), to quantify their thoughts about their

own behavior and the behavior of their classmates. Additionally, students were asked to list the

three classmates with whom they most preferred to work for cooperative learning activities

before and after the intervention. This was intended to gauge individual students' growth in

status as desired peers with whom to work during cooperative classroom activities. At the end of

the four-week intervention, students were given the same survey in order to assess whether there

were any changes in self-concept and perception of classmates.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether daily class meetings using bibliotherapy would positively affect students' behaviors and their self-concept. Bibliotherapy included using literature in the form of picture books pertaining to a character trait, skill, or problem to generate thinking and discussion about social behaviors within the classroom.

Ratings of behavior and self-concept were collected before and after the four-week long bibliotherapy intervention using the surveys in Appendices B and D, respectively. Responses were recorded and totaled for self and peer ratings, then descriptive analyses were run. Descriptive statistics for the responses to the items and for the survey totals, calculated by summing the items' ratings, follow in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics regarding self and peers' behavior and self-concept prior to and after the

Bibliotherapy Intervention

Item/Score	Interval	N	Mean	S.D.	SEM	Range
I try my best every day.	Pre	22	4.318	.646		3-5
	Post	22	4.318	.839		3-5
I demonstrate excellent behavior.	Pre	22	3.773	.922		2-5
	Post	22	4.000	.873		2-5
I show concern for others.	Pre	22	3.864	1.246		1-5
	Post	22	4.318	.568		3-5
I wait patiently for my turn to talk.	Pre	22	3.864	1.125		2-5
	Post	22	4.318	.995		1-5
I tolerate the views and differences of others.	Pre	22	4.273	1.032		1-5
	Post	22	4.273	1.077		1-5
I respect others' property.	Pre	22	4.318	.839		2-5
	Post	22	4.546	.671		3-5
I obey the rules.	Pre	22	4.182	1.006		1-5
	Post	22	4.546	.671		3-5
I listen carefully to others.	Pre	22	4.000	.873		2-5
	Post	22	4.136	.640		3-5
SELF Sub-Score	Pre	22	32.591	3.750	.800	26-40

	Post	22	34.455	3.900	.832	26-40
GAINS in SELF ratings (Mean post-Mean pre)	---	22	1.864	2.189	.467	
My classmates try their best every day.	Pre	22	2.864	.941		1-5
	Post	22	3.273	.985		1-5
My classmates demonstrate excellent behavior.	Pre	22	2.455	1.011		1-4
	Post	22	3.046	.950		1-5
My classmates show concern for others.	Pre	22	2.636	1.255		1-5
	Post	22	3.818	1.140		1-5
My classmates wait patiently for their turn to talk.	Pre	22	2.273	1.120		1-5
	Post	22	3.182	1.006		1-5
My classmates tolerate the views and differences of others.	Pre	22	2.955	.950		1-5
	Post	22	3.227	1.020		1-5
My classmates respect others' property.	Pre	22	2.500	1.439		1-5
	Post	22	4.000	.926		2-5
My classmates obey the rules.	Pre	22	2.773	.973		1-4
	Post	22	3.273	.550		2-4
My classmates listen carefully to others.	Pre	22	2.636	1.136		1-5
	Post	22	3.091	.868		1-5
PEERS Sub-Score	Pre	22	21.091	5.182	1.105	11-31
	Post	22	26.909	4.418	.942	17-35
GAINS in PEER ratings (Mean post-Mean pre)	---	22	5.818	5.058	1.078	

As can be seen in Table 1, mean pre and post ratings for gains in self and peer ratings remained the same or increased from pre to post intervention. The overall gains in ratings of peers showed greater improvement than did the gains in students' self-perceptions. However, students' overall ratings of their own self-concept were consistently higher than their mean perceptions of their peers for each question about either.

Three paired samples t-tests were run to compare the participants' self -ratings to their ratings of peer ratings before (ho1) and after (ho2) the intervention and to compare the mean gains in participants' self-ratings to those in their ratings of peers. The results of these t-tests follow in Table 2 and indicate that the probability of finding each of the three mean differences was less than .05, so null hypotheses1, 2, and 5 all were rejected. This means that the self and

peer ratings differed before and after the intervention, and in both cases the participants' mean self-ratings (32.59 pre and 34.45 post) were higher than their mean ratings of peers (21.091 pre and 26.909 post). The results also indicated that although the mean ratings of peers were lower on both the pre and post intervention assessments, the mean increase or gain in ratings for peers of 5.818 points was statistically significantly higher than the mean increase or gain in self-ratings of 1.864.

Table 2

Results of t-tests comparing self-ratings and ratings of peers before and after the intervention and gains in self and peer ratings

Comparison	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed) (p value)	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Pre self vs. peer ratings (ho1)	11.5000	7.652	21	.000	1.503	8.375	14.625
Post self vs. peer ratings (ho2)	7.5455	6.624	21	.000	1.139	5.176	9.914
Gains in self and peer ratings (ho5)	-3.9546	-3.422	21	.003	1.156	-6.358	-1.551

The descriptive statistics for the gains in self and peer ratings follow in Table 3. The results of the two one sample t-tests run to compare the magnitude of the gains in self-ratings (ho3) and gains in peer ratings (ho4) to zero follow in Table 4.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for the gains in self and peer ratings

Variable	N	Mean	s.d.	SEM
Gains in self-ratings (ho3)	22	1.864	2.188	4.67
Gains in peer ratings (ho4)	22	5.818	5.058	1.08

Table 4

Results of one-sample t-tests comparing mean gains in self and peer ratings to zero

Variable	N	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed) (p value)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Gains in self-ratings (ho3)	22	3.994	21	.001	1.864	.893	2.834
Gains in peer ratings (ho4)	22	5.395	21	.000	5.818	3.576	8.061

The results of these t-tests indicated that the mean gains in self and peer ratings were positive and differed significantly from zero (p<.001 and p<.000 for the self and peer rating gain comparisons to zero, respectively). Therefore, hypotheses 3 and 4 were also rejected, suggesting the assessments made by the group of their own and their peers' self-concept and behaviors increased over the course of the bibliotherapy intervention.

Additionally, mean ratings of daily effort on the targeted skills were calculated. Each day of the intervention, participants rated their effort on a scale ranging from 1 (I could have done a much better job today) to 2 (I did okay today. Not my worst, not my best) to 3 (I had a good day and did my best) using the form in Appendix C. These statistics follow in Table 5. Notably, all

of the mean daily ratings fell above 2, suggesting there was not a large upward trend in effort, however, the range of possible responses was narrow, which could have minimized the opportunity to reflect changes in effort.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics for ratings of daily effort

Day	N	Mean	Range
1	24	2.33	2-3
2	24	2.33	1-3
3	24	2.38	1-3
4	24	2.33	1-3
5	24	2.38	1-3
6	24	2.46	1-3
7	24	2.29	1-3
8	24	2.38	1-3
9	24	2.5	1-3
10	24	2.5	1-3
11	24	2.46	1-3
12	24	2.46	1-3
13	24	2.46	2-3
14	24	2.38	1-3
15	24	2.42	2-3
16	24	2.46	1-3
17	24	2.5	2-3

Finally, students were asked to select the three students from class who were their top partner choices when working in a group or pair. This data was gathered to identify whether students' concepts of peers and friends changed throughout the course of the bibliotherapy intervention. Only four of the 22 students had their preferred peers remain the same from pre to post intervention, whereas 18 of the 22 students showed at least one change in preferred peers. This data represents the students change in peer perception during the course of the bibliotherapy intervention.

Table 6

Summary of frequencies of changes in peer partner selections

Number of changes in peer choices from pre to post survey *(possible range 0-3)*	Frequency
0	4
1	5
2	10
3	3

These tallies indicated that only four students' choices remained unchanged and over half of the class selected at least two different peers as partners after the intervention. These results, along with observations are discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if class meetings had an impact on student's self-concept and perception of peers. Null hypotheses1, 2 and 5 all were rejected, meaning that the self and peer ratings differed before and after the intervention. Null hypotheses 3 and 4 also were rejected, as the participants' mean gains in self-ratings and ratings of peers increased significantly over the course of the bibliotherapy class meeting intervention.

Implications of Results

The sample of students who completed the intervention demonstrated improvements in self-concept and perception of peers as the study progressed. There is anticipated continued growth as the bibliotherapy intervention will continue within the classroom throughout the duration of the school year. The researcher noticed improved relations among students in the class and students demonstrated a more accepting attitude towards their classmate's differences. The researcher has brought this class meeting approach to the school staff as a way to incorporate literature and guided social skills lessons focused on needs of the current population of students. The ability to use bibliotherapy techniques as a tool and resource for conducting class meetings has the potential to improve the overall quality of the researcher's school and student experiences.

Theoretical Consequences

Restorative practices have been used throughout school systems to improve learning environments in buildings. Wilkins (2010) stated "national concern for school safety has increased as disturbing acts of violence are widely publicized" (p.541). School violence has risen in the past decade and restorative practices are needed in our school system to prevent further

catastrophic events from occurring. Additionally, Wilkins noted that "civility may be an answer to controlling and reducing acts of violence" (p.541). Educators work to improve restorative practices within the school system, thus ultimately shaping the future citizens of our country and other countries around the globe. Bibliotherapy-based class meetings might be a restorative practice that would improve character education within the school setting and help reduce the amount of violence currently being seen in schools across the United States.

Threats to Validity

One internal threat to validity was due to the study's design. Due to the time constraints and small convenience sample of students available for this intervention, the one group study with no control group was the convenience sampling method used. Unfortunately, this design does not enable the researcher to state conclusively that all of the null hypotheses being rejected were due to the bibliotherapy intervention as students were selected based on their enrollment in the researcher's homeroom and no control group was available. Additional threats to the internal validity were the time constraints during which the intervention was offered and the fact that inclement weather affected four school days during the intervention time. Specifically, there were two inclement weather closures and two inclement two-hour delays. This reduced the study by two days and reduced the time available for the intervention on the two-hour delays. This time restriction threatens the validity of the study due to resulting inconsistencies in the research procedure. The limited time for the research to be conducted also limited the opportunity for significant change or growth to occur in students' perceptions of self and peers.

External threats to validity that may have impacted the study included the effects of outside factors that affected student's self-concept, as well as conflicts among peers that influenced students' peer perceptions. Students in the researcher's fourth grade class experienced outside

factors including, but not limited to divorce, anxiety, outside counseling services, and relocation. These factors potentially could have had an effect on the findings and validity of the research. Additionally, students' responses on the pre and post survey were subjective and had the potential to be influenced by outside factors.

Connections to Previous Studies and Existing Literature

Previous literature and studies note the benefit of class meetings when they are utilized consistently within the classroom. Two recent studies, Elley (2014) and Davis (2018), identified improvements in behavior, self-concept, and peer perception associated with class meetings. Elley (2014) stated that "implementing this structured intervention (bibliotherapy class meetings) in conjunction with follow-up activities helped my students to work better during cooperative learning group activities" (p. 94). Additionally, Davis's 2018 study identified similar results. She noted "Daily classroom meetings were beneficial in rebuilding both students' perceptions of themselves and their perceptions of school" (p. 21).

Kaveney and Drewery (2011) identified classroom meetings as a restorative practice. They stated that "teachers noticed an improvement in student awareness of their own behavior and the impact and effective they have on themselves and on other people" (p. 9). Additionally, Kaveney and Drewery stated that teachers noticed improved learning environments where students were more relaxed and prepared for the day. Similar changes also were noted in the researcher's classroom throughout the duration of the study, suggesting that class meetings may affect student's self-concept and perception of peers positively and be a productive restorative practice.

Implications for Future Research

This study presents itself as a starting point for additional research in the area of character education, specifically class meetings that include the strategy of bibliotherapy. The

structure of class meetings varies amongst teachers and schools, but this study suggests that bibliotherapy, as a structure for use within class meetings, can improve students' self-concept and perception of peers. This study could be implemented on a larger scale, incorporating entire grade levels or schools and providing more time for providing the intervention. The short duration of the study conducted by the researcher revealed growth among student participants, thus suggesting that a longer study with a more diverse sample might yield additional benefits. Additionally, inclusion of control groups in future research that investigates the effects of the bibliotherapy intervention would enable researchers not only to observe changes but to understand more conclusively what may have caused resulting changes.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to determine if daily bibliotherapy-based class meetings would have an effect on students' ratings of their self-concepts and perceptions of peers. Results from the study suggested that bibliotherapy-based class meetings had a positive effect on both constructs for a sample of fourth graders. Future replications and extensions of this research appear warranted, given the results suggested this relatively simple intervention has potential for addressing personal and social needs in today's schools in an engaging and cost-effective manner.

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Appendix A

Information for Parents

February 13, 2019

Dear Parents and Guardians,

  I am currently working towards my master's degree through Goucher College. Part of the requirements are to complete action research on a particular topic of interest. I will be collecting data through student surveys over the course of approximately 4 weeks. The topic I am researching is the impact of bibliotherapy class meetings on student's self-concept and belief. Bibliotherapy, in this context, will simply be using books to base our class meeting's character trait and/or topic. For example, we will read <u>Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon</u> by Patty Lovell to discuss being confident in ourselves. This is not a change in our daily schedule, but I will be tracking data throughout and wanted to inform you of what we are working towards. Student's participation is voluntary of course, but valuable to identifying if using books throughout our class meetings is a value to other educators.

  If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me via phone, e-mail, or Class Messenger. I appreciate your support!

Sincerely,

Emily Canatella
Emily.canatella@hcps.org

Appendix B
Pre-Intervention Survey

Student Number : _____ Statement	Rating Scale Never, Not often, Neutral, Sometimes, All the time				
1. I try my best every day.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
2. I demonstrate excellent behavior.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
3. I show concern for others.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
4. I wait patiently for my turn to talk.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
5. I tolerate the views and differences of others.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
6. I respect others' property.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
7. I obey the rules.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
8. I listen carefully to others.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
Sub-Score					
9. My classmates try their best every day.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
10. My classmates demonstrate excellent behavior.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
11. My classmates show concern for others.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
12. My classmates wait patiently for their turn to talk.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
13. My classmates tolerate the views and differences of others.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
14. My classmates respect others' property.	😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃

15. My classmates obey the rules.	😞 😣 😐 😊 😃
16. My classmates listen carefully to others.	😞 😣 😐 😊 😃
Sub-Score	

List 3 classmates who are your top partner choices when working in a group or pair.

_____

_____

_____

My goal for my behavior the next 4 weeks is

_____

_____

Appendix C
Goal Sheet and Daily Reflection

Reflect on your behavior at the end of the day. How do you feel you did today?

☹ = I could have done a much better job today.

😐 = I did okay today. Not my worst, not my best.

😃 = I had a good day and did my best!

Focus Skills:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Think about the following skills: - diversity acceptance - self-esteem - teamwork - social skills (ex. interrupting, blurting out) *Have you done your best to demonstrate the above skills?*	18 School Holiday	19 ☹ 😐 😃	20 ☹ 😐 😃	21 ☹ 😐 😃	22 ☹ 😐 😃
	25 ☹ 😐 😃	26 ☹ 😐 😃	27 ☹ 😐 😃	28 ☹ 😐 😃	1 ☹ 😐 😃
	4 ☹ 😐 😃	5 ☹ 😐 😃	6 ☹ 😐 😃	7 ☹ 😐 😃	8 ☹ 😐 😃
	11 ☹ 😐 😃	12 ☹ 😐 😃	13 ☹ 😐 😃	14 ☹ 😐 😃	15 ☹ 😐 😃

At the end of each day, think back to our class meeting, how did you do on the target skill?

Appendix D
Post-Intervention Survey

Student Number : _____ Statement	Rating Scale Never, Not often, Neutral, Sometimes, All the time				
1. I try my best every day.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
2. I demonstrate excellent behavior.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
3. I show concern for others.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
4. I wait patiently for my turn to talk.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
5. I tolerate the views and differences of others.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
6. I respect others' property.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
7. I obey the rules.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
8. I listen carefully to others.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
Sub-Score					
9. My classmates try their best every day.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
10. My classmates demonstrate excellent behavior.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
11. My classmates show concern for others.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
12. My classmates wait patiently for their turn to talk.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
13. My classmates tolerate the views and differences of others.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄
14. My classmates respect others' property.	☹	☹	😐	🙂	😄

15. My classmates obey the rules.	😞 😞 😐 🙂 😄
16. My classmates listen carefully to others.	😞 😞 😐 🙂 😄
Sub-Score	

List 3 classmates who are your top partner choices when working in a group or pair.

_____

_____

_____

Did you achieve your goal? If so, how? If not, what can you do in the future?

_____

_____

_____