

Second Quarter

Things were indeed going very well for the first 10—12 weeks of school. The overall academic grade average of the students in all three classrooms was at about a 70% (C/D range). There had only been one out of school suspension, and the average conduct grade was a “B”. However, whether it was due to the students “settling in” or the number of school holidays, (especially Thanksgiving), by the 15th week of school I began notice that the number of missing assignments began to steadily increase. According to my homeroom **C.A.S.E.** book records, in the first five weeks of the second quarter 251 assignments were not completed by my homeroom students alone! (this data is for all missing assignments in all subject areas). This rounded out to be an average of 9.3 assignments per student. The number of inappropriate behavior entries in the **C.A.S.E.** book was 19 (.7 incidents per student), and there had been three suspensions, (one student with two another with one). Things were not much better in Mr. DiPrima or Mrs. Szymanski’s rooms. One of Mr. DiPrima’s students was suspended for fighting and he also noticed an increase in the number of missing assignments from all of our students in social studies. Mrs. Szymanski was experiencing much of the same problem in science. Two of her students received out of school suspensions for fighting (one student burned another on the arm with hot food from the cafeteria) and she also noticed an increase in the number of missing assignments. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain exact numbers because all three of our **C.A.S.E.** books with the data from the first quarter were stolen by students within weeks of each other at the end of November (around the 14th week of school). Although both Mrs. Szymanski and I were able to find out who the guilty parties were in our rooms, Mr. DiPrima was never able to find out who had taken his **C.A.S.E.** book. Although the perpetrators of most of the inappropriate behaviors were the same 5-six students, what concerned most of us was the fact

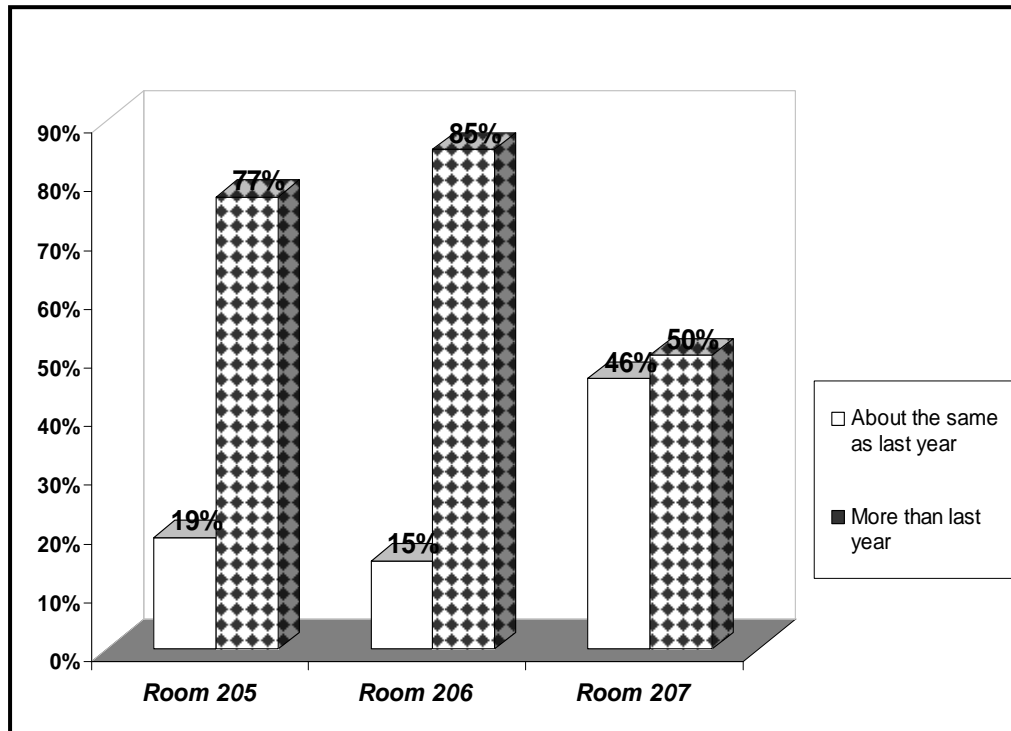
that their peers tended to give tacit approval to those disruptive students. There was also a decline in many of our students' academics. I define three categories of students within my room: the trouble makers and instigators (about 7% of the class), the followers (about 28%) and the well behaved that tended to sit back and watch things go wrong without intervening in any way (about 65%).

The number of detentions that all three of us had issued was so overwhelming that the principal discontinued the practice of assigning them for missing work and gave us a directive to only issue detentions for violations of the CPS discipline code. It was evident to all of us that the detention policy was ineffective, so we would have to find an alternative method to deal with students not completing work.

Experience had taught me that most students tended to lose focus right before the winter break, so in December, I felt that having the students complete the classroom scrapbook where each student created their own personal page that would be displayed in an album with the hopes of reinforcing a more familial atmosphere and help things get back on track. Almost all of Mr. DiPrima's students completed their pages, but only a little more than half of my students completed theirs, despite their positive feedback to me in their reflections about the project. As the science teacher, Mrs. Szymanski was in charge of the science fair and didn't have time to have her students complete their scrapbook but she intended to have them complete it after break. In my own reflections and in discussions with both Mr. DiPrima and Mrs. Szymanski we noticed that perhaps our own failure to further engage the students in additional projects on a more consistent basis could have been a contributing factor in the overall decline in both teacher and student morale.

As hopeful as I was about things improving once we got back to school in January, I still noticed that students continued to miss assignments and seemed unmotivated to improve. Classroom averages for all classrooms continued to decline and our frustrations as teachers were steadily increasing. After coming home many an evening feeling that things were bound to get worse before they got better, I realized that part of my problem in trying to analyze why things were going so wrong was that I was comparing my current students to the students I had the previous year who were exceptionally well behaved, thoughtful, considerate and much more mature. What I should have been doing is finding out how my current students compared their own behavior to that of last year. Since I wanted to know if students felt that the classroom atmosphere was any better or worse than the 2004/2005 academic year, I gave them another survey in February. The following charts are the results of the first question on the survey of whether these activities helped them to know and better understand their classmates. (Fig. 6)

Since participating in our Character Education projects, I feel that I have gotten to know and better understand my classmates “about the same as last year”, “more than last year”:

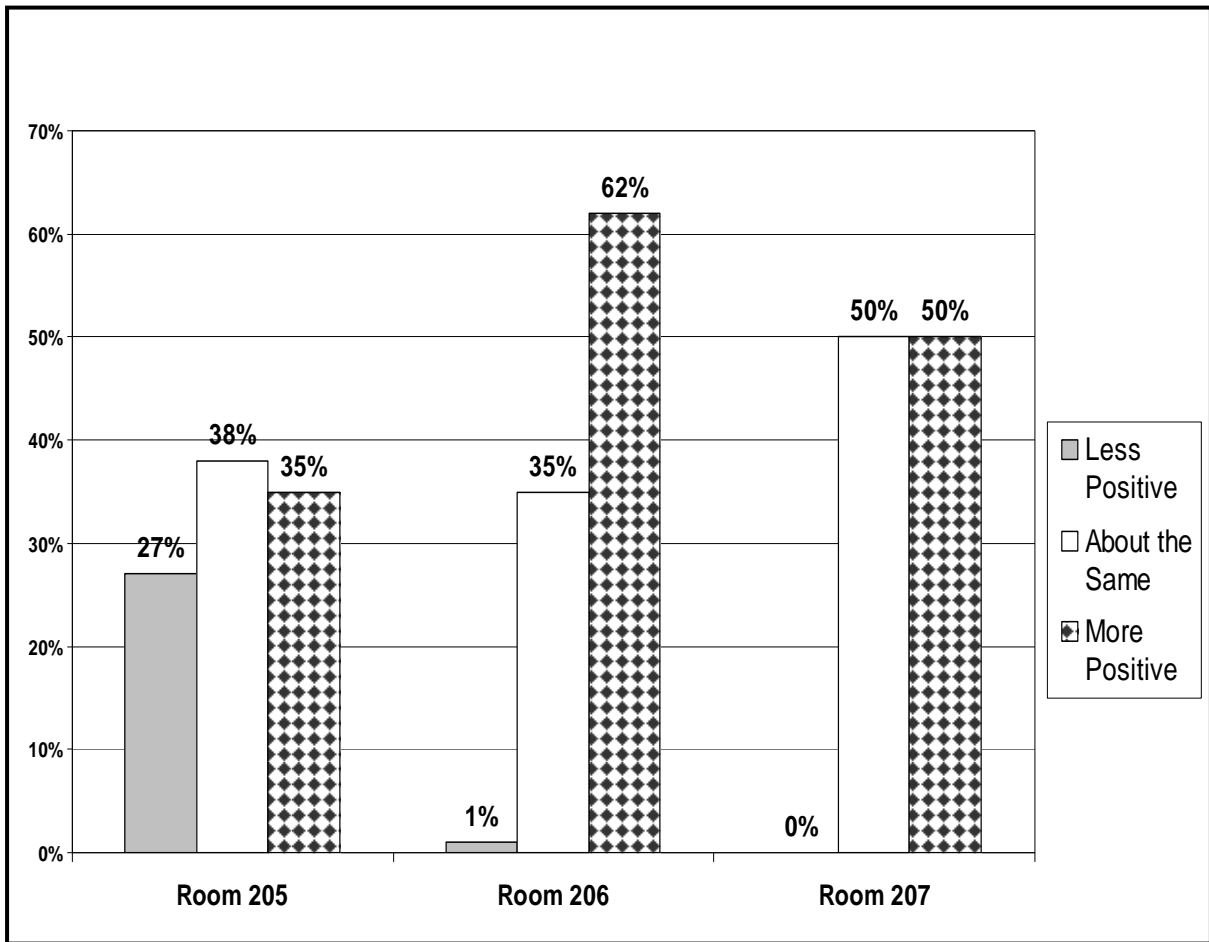


Mrs. Szymanski 205, my room 206 and Mr. DiPrima 207

Fig. 6

Although I had assumed that they did know one another better this year than last, I was quite surprised by the fact that they felt about half of them felt the classroom had become more positive than the previous year. (Fig.7)

Since September, I feel that our classroom has become “less positive”, “about the same”, or “more positive”



Mrs. Szymanski 205, my room 206 and Mr. DiPrima 207

Fig. 7

However, when I asked both my room and Mr. DiPrima’s students to further elaborate in written reflections over 80% of them felt that things were better this year (as seventh graders) than last year. Most of the comments consisted of, “As a whole I think the seventh grade classes is better than last year, because before almost everyone was a bully in the class and not they are not.” Another student wrote, “As a whole, I think the the seventh grade class is better...because people

have done their homework more. People haven't stole things much." Still another wrote, "...some of us were pretty rude and some were bullies (last year). This years everyone well most get along. There is still fighting but not as much as last year." Pauline wrote, "...last year the students were out of control, they [sic] was drugs involved and student didn't do work. And this year it like the same except for the drug part." While it was true that there were no reported incidences of drugs or weapons, I began to suspect that most of these positive responses were a form of "teacher pleasing," meaning that out of loyalty these students were telling us what they thought we wanted to hear. Alice, a student from 207 wrote:

So far during this school year I feel that 7th grade has been doing better than the sixth grade year. I am speaking for 207, 206 and 205. But this year I don't feel as comfortable with my class as I did last year. Over all I feel that all three classes have been more friendly with each other...and the teachers seemed to be less stressed out than the 6th grade teachers were last year.

Her response seemed rather contradictory to me. On the one hand she speaks of how great things were yet she said that she didn't feel as comfortable. Her last observation about us as teachers being less stressed out was also a puzzle to me. I wasn't sure what she was observing, but I was more stressed out about the decline in behavior and lack of student focus than I had been in years. Both Mr. DiPrima and Mrs. Szymanski had felt much of the same frustrations that I was feeling.

Maria, a student in my class, was a little more forthcoming when she wrote:

I think this classroom is worst than last year because last year it was one of my favorite years. I use to have a lot of friends and I was never called names. This year all of my friends went to different classes now I have less friends and I am called names by people.

Although I hadn't personally observed any problems between her and any other students (she also never indicated to me personally that someone was bothering her), I suspected that there were probably more incidences of bullying that was going on than any of the other students were willing to admit.

In terms of whether or not the projects motivated them to do better in school, I was also surprised by the results of the question in light of the large number of missing assignments from students. (Fig. 8)

I feel that the character education projects have motivated me to try harder in school

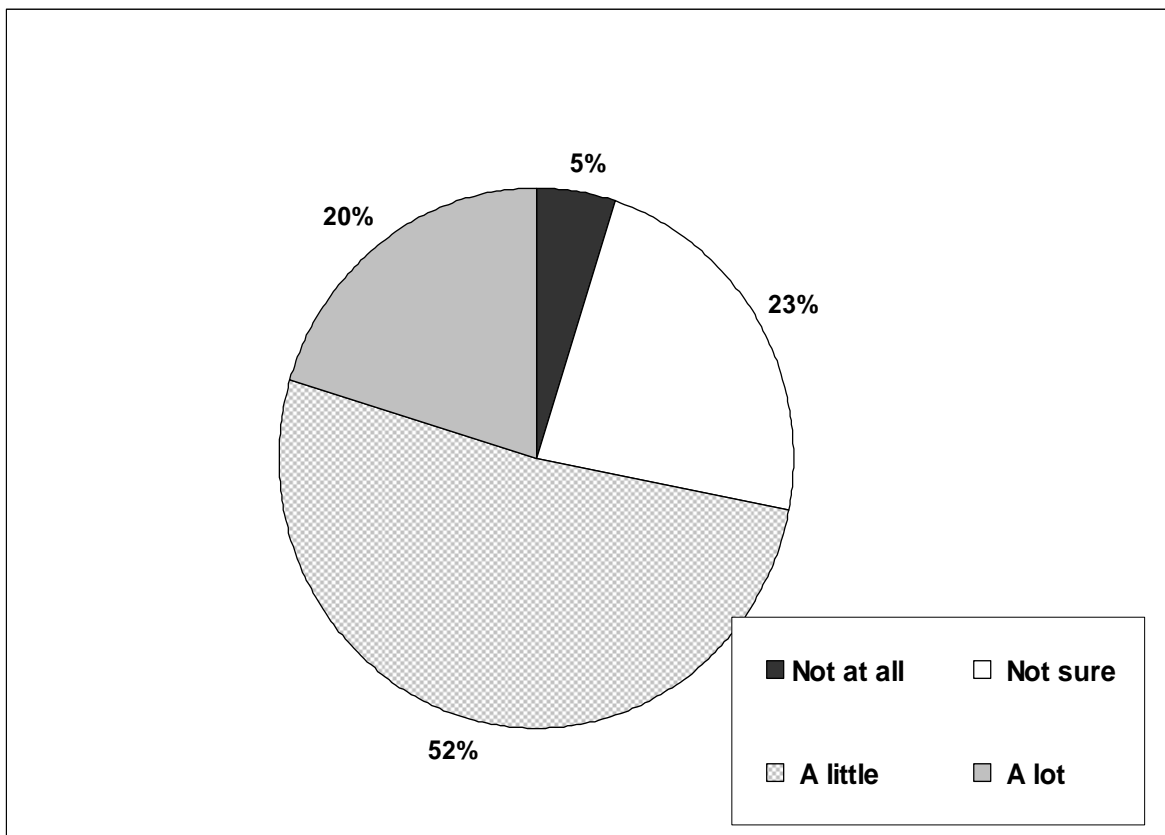


Fig. 8

According to this data 72% of the students felt that these projects have motivated them to try harder in school, yet by the end of the second quarter, there was no significant change in student

grade averages or in the number of missing assignments. Despite the fact I encouraged students to be completely honest in their responses, and that I allowed them to answer all surveys anonymously, I was beginning to suspect that most of the results were more of our students wanting to please us as teachers with positive responses rather than the truth.

Third Quarter

Although it appeared through my observations that the character education activities were having little effect on improving classroom climate, I was not ready to give up just yet. After reading through some of the student reflections I had collected since September, I noticed how many students wanted more opportunities to interact for the purpose of gaining a greater understanding of one another. Within each of our classrooms, we teachers, along with the students drew names in order to conduct one on one interviews. Over a week, we got the opportunity to conduct in depth interviews with our assigned person, observe any acts of kindness we had witnessed and write a positive letter to our partners expressing what we admired most about them. In return each student responded by thanking their partner for their kind thoughts. The students in my class were so pleased with the results that most of them wrote how good it made them feel to receive such positive, personal letters from someone that they didn't really know that well. In her letter to Joshua, Karen wrote, "I learned that you like to draw. I like that you helped Juan with his project since he can't draw." Cristopher wrote to Karina, "Even though we aren't friends, it was good to now [sic] that you want to be a vetrinarn (veterinarian) because I have two dogs, and I like animals too. I think you are really smart." In response, Karina wrote, "Thank you. I think you are nice and funny." After interviewing me, Jasmine wrote, "I didn't know that you like to watch T.V. and that you liked the Simpsons. I also like that show. I like that even though we sometimes get on your nerves, you still won't

give up on us. I used to think that you were mean, well sometimes, but I know that you are a good teacher.” This project was a good way for me to better get to know my students as well. I picked Timothy, a student that although had the capability of being a good student, but rarely did homework. During our interview, I learned that he had aspirations of becoming an artist. This indicated to me that he didn’t really see the connection between doing well in school and becoming an artist until I explained to him that many artists do indeed go study and hone their craft in Art school and grades were an important part in University or Art school admissions. I also told him that even learning math is useful to artists in terms of understanding geometry and measurement and that even architects were artists and used math in their work. When I told him that I admired his talents and that I at one time considered a career in art and had taken many art classes in college, I could tell that he was impressed. Another student wrote in her response to the letter I had written her, “Thank you Ms. Hardison for your letter. I’m glad that you like my writing. Even tough [sic] I don’t do my homework all the time, the nice things you said about me raised my self asteam [sic]. I will try harder.”

In their reflections about the project, the students indicated that they liked the project so much that they wanted to do it again within their own class again before exchanging letters with the other two rooms. One student wrote, “This project was really cool. I got to get to know my partner much more. I also liked that I got a thank you letter because it made me feel good.” Another wrote, “At first I was scared to talk to Antonio because sometimes he likes to talk about people. I found out that he has to do a lot of chores at home and watch his little brothers and sisters. I have to do that all the time too, so I understand him more. We should do this project all the time.”

Yet, it seemed when our classes took one step closer to improving, some event occurred to pull us back into a negative environment. One day a couple of weeks after the letter exchange, I found out that a male student had started an unpleasant rumor about Veronica, a student in my room. Not only did these students circulate these rumors verbally, one of them wrote a dramatization of this rumor (complete with illustrations), photocopied it and distributed it amongst several students in all three classrooms. Unbeknownst to me at the time, Veronica became so upset and embarrassed that she requested an early dismissal from school, complaining of dizzy spells. I learned the next day that she had suffered a panic attack and was hospitalized! I was so upset, disappointed and disheartened by this incident because not only was the perpetrator cruel, most of the students knew about the notes for at least two days yet said nothing. Having taught this grade level of students for a number of years, I knew that most adolescents don't want to be considered a "snitch", but I have always made clear to my students that they could always let me know if something was going wrong by anonymously leaving a note on my desk. Thankfully, I did learn of this incident after one of my students who had been involved in passing the notes around (in a pang of conscience I suppose), wrote me an anonymous letter telling me about the letters that had been circulated. After conferences with the parents and administration, the student who had written and distributed the photocopies received a three day suspension.

It took every ounce of my personal will not to lose my temper when I confronted the students in my classroom. I started off (as calmly as possible) by asking them if they realized the dehumanizing affect their actions (as well as their *inaction*) had on Veronica. I went on to explain that everyone was responsible for what had occurred because even if they didn't perpetrate the crime, they knew about it which made them just as culpable. I then went on to

say, “You know, I’ve been reading all of these glowing reflections about how great and wonderful things are going in this room, about how people are getting along and how there aren’t many bullies, etc., but I suppose that’s a lie. Maybe it’s my fault, but when I ask you if things are better this year than last and you tell me how great and wonderful things are, you’re just telling me what you think I want to hear.” After my lecture to them about how I needed them to be HONEST with me about the state of affairs in the classroom, I had them write reflections telling me what they did know about the particular incident with Veronica, what were there personal responsibilities they had in making sure such occurrences not happen again, and what were some of the major problems in the classroom that they had not revealed to me. I finally received some truthful responses:

- Things have and haven’t improved since last year. People copy each others homework, talk about each other. People don’t do their homework, they copy. While teachers are away kids talk and make fun of others even about the teachers.
- I think this classroom is not good because people do not respect each other. Also lot’s of people knew about it (the note) because they were reading it out loud in the lunch room.
- In this class people have been following the write [sic] path until like five weeks ago. My classmates have turned themselves around. They have made my class have a bad reputation on all of this. I wish this year won’t end up to be like last year. It was the worst year ever. Every body depressed and cry all the time. It just wasn’t fun. I just don’t understand why my friends like to get in trouble and not have any fun activities.
- This year I thought was going to be a better year for me. I was wrong, I’m still being made fun of and picked on. That hate has been spreading because last year it was only a few of us, but now it is half the class.
- I really feel bad because of what happened...I knew that it wasn’t right, but I didn’t say anything. The girl (one of the students who admitted to passing around the copies) told me she was going to make copies but I didn’t say anything because I didn’t think that she would actually do it. And even though I’m not the one who made the copies or passed the letter, but if I would of said something none of this would of happened. It could of all been prevented. I am promising to tell you anything if something like this happens again.

- Things in this room are the same as they were last year. All of the same people who were rude, stupid and didn't care about anything are the same people that are causing trouble this year. It is hard to make them change, but there is hope for the future

Most of the responses were similar in nature. Despite being disappointed that such a malicious trick had been played a student, I was finally glad to find out what was really going on with them. Was their initial lack of honesty due to their wanting to paint a rosy picture for this action research I was conducting (they were fully aware of this process), or fear of ridicule from their peer group if they were seen admitting to the problems in the class? This seemed to me the time to remove myself from the situation and call on Mrs. Garza, a school aide (her official title was student advocate) to conduct an open honest dialogue with them about the state of affairs within the class. Since Mrs. Garza wasn't a teacher and had years of experience conducting counseling sessions with many of my school's students, I thought they would be more forthcoming with her. She grew up and lived in the community all of her life and had known the students since they were in kindergarten. Even the previous year she had conducted a session from *The Bully Free Classroom* for some of these same students when they were in the sixth grade which at the time proved effective in getting the students to feel more empathy toward one another.

The following day, even though Mrs. Garza would be conducting the session, I stayed in the back of the room as a silent observer. She began the session by having students write down any insulting or hateful things they had witnessed or said themselves to other students. She then had them role play verbalizing these things to each other. At first the students thought it was pretty funny (especially since there was no restriction on using coarse or vulgar language), but after the role play she asked them if they truly believed those hurtful words had no effect on the

person they were saying them to. She then had the students write about any incident that had caused them fear, pain or rejection that year. She encouraged them to actually name the perpetrator in the responses and write down how they felt when they were being picked on. She then collected the responses and read them out loud without revealing who had written what but revealing the names of the bullies themselves.

“Do you like it when some one calls you a dumb-assed punk?” she asked Alejandro, a student of mine who was notorious for teasing other students. “Naw, I don’t care what people say to me,” was his response. To further engage him, she asked what he would do if someone had said mean things to his younger sister. This gave him pause, so he responded, “I would be mad.” “Well,” she continued, “when you call one of your classmates names, it’s no different if someone else would pick on your little sister. Don’t you think it makes them mad to be picked on? Some students don’t even feel like coming to school because they will be picked on. Do you think that’s right?” Mrs. Garza then asked the class, “How many of you had been picked on by Alejandro?” Initially no one answered, but when she assured them that they could be honest without fear of reprisal, several hands went up. She continued this line of questioning about several other students in the class who had been known to pick on others. Although, I wasn’t really surprised that this was happening to so many of my students, (because these type of things happen in most classrooms), I was amazed that they were willing to admit what had been going on. Once the flood gates more or less opened, I heard comments like, “It really hurts when Pauline talks about me,” and “I can’t even concentrate on my work because Carlos is always making stupid jokes, talking about people.” Comments went on for about fifteen minutes where several students had the courage to reveal incidents where they had been victimized by name-calling and gossip. They told of how much they dreaded coming to school because they felt so

awful about being teased. Mrs. Garza then asked if any of the bullies would like to be forgiven for the things they had done. One student, Jose, became quite emotional, stood up and said, “I admit, I used to pick on people last year, but then I thought about it I realized it was wrong. At first this year I didn’t do it too much, but lately I started again. I remember how bad I felt last year for being a bully. I’m sorry if I have been making fun of anyone this year.” Mrs. Garza said to him, “Thank you Jose, I’m proud that you were willing to stand up, admit your mistakes. This means that you are growing up, taking responsibility for your actions. I think we should all be proud of Jose and applaud him for admitting what he had done and saying that he was sorry.” Mrs. Garza’s praise and the thunderous applause from the rest of the class encouraged other students to stand up and admit the things they had done. After each “bully” had stood up and apologized for their actions, Mrs. Garza thanked and praised them and had the class applaud. The entire 40 minute session was a cathartic release of emotions for most of the class. Many students, both boys and girls even cried during their apologies. All in all eight (five boys, three girls) students admitted to picking other students, teasing or gossiping about others and asked to be forgiven. Only one student, Pauline (a notorious trouble maker who had at that point been suspended from school twice for vandalism, and stealing and destroying my **C.A.S.E.** book) denied any wrong-doing, however several students named her as one of the students who liked to tease others. Mrs. Garza said to the class, “Well, you can’t change anyone. Pauline has to admit the things she’s done herself if she truly wants to have friends. But you can’t give her the power over you. If she bothers you, or if you see her bothering anyone else, you have to have the courage to try and stop her, or let your teacher know.” Pauline, a student who normally has some flip remark, sat in silence.

After both Mrs. Garza and I debriefed the students, I told them how proud I was that so many of them were willing to be open and honest and that I was confident that they would begin to treat each other with more kindness and respect. Mrs. Garza then conducted the same sessions with the other two classrooms with similar results. The students were so emotionally drained that I postponed my scheduled math test until the next day. Instead, Mr. DiPrima, Mrs. Szymanski and I had the students write their reflections about the workshops. I was relieved to see so many positive responses:

- I thought what Mrs. Garza said was right and I learned that I should not be a bully and make fun of people because it could hurt someone's feelings and they might not come to school and they would be scared and interfere with their homework. She also was right because how would I feel if someone was bullying me. I wouldn't like it so I learned my lesson and I'm not going to make fun of people because no one is perfect.
- I really liked the program. I hope we can do this project once a week, once a month or once every other week. I might change a little by being a little more open to my friends. This program might change the classroom.
- What I liked about Mrs. Garza's workshop is how we were able to express our feelings toward one another. What I didn't like about the workshop was we had to express ourselves towards the bullies. I think it was useful because now I think the bullies sort of relaxed and won't pick on the kids they used to pick on.
- I am a little scared of what the bullies will say about it (but) I don't want to keep my head in the ground and still know that all of this is going on...I can't be scared anymore because if I keep hiding the bullies will say "Oh she's not gonna do anything so let's pick on her" and I don't want people to step all over me.
- What I liked about Mrs. Garza coming is that most of us talked out loud and let out what we had inside. And that people apologized to the people they called names and some cried, it's ok to cry but it doesn't mean that you're a wimp when you cry.
- When Mrs. Garza came in our classroom and started talking about our class I felt really bad that I didn't realize that I am letting this happen to our classroom...What I liked about it is that brought us all to thinking about the rest of the class...I (will) change from an ostrich* to a leader and learn to help others by giving them examples. Even though we are not little kids sometimes we do need the example of a leader.

* *My term for anyone who witnesses a wrong doing and not say anything about it*

Even though some students expressed trepidation about reprisals from bullies, the majority of the responses indicated to me that many of the students felt empowered to admit when they were being victimized and to help any other students that they witnessed being bullied. Because both my students and myself felt that Mrs. Garza's workshops were so effective, we had her return once a week for follow-up sessions where students discussed whether or not they noticed an improvement in the behavior of the class. At this point in time, she has conducted two additional sessions, both resulting in students complimenting the "bullies" on the progress they had made. One student said, "I have noticed that Antonio hasn't been talking about people lately." Another said, "Roberto used to call me big nose. He apologized and hasn't been doing it any more. I even received a positive comment about Pauline, the student who refused to take responsibility for her actions from the first Bully Free session, "Pauline has stopped making fun of me. We even worked together on our math project."

By April of 2006, things were not perfect, but I began to notice a change in the atmosphere. I observed that students were more helpful with one another and had the courage to scold someone when they saw someone being rude or disruptive. There were only 10 more weeks until the end of the school year which in my experience tended to be the toughest from a teaching standpoint. At this point in the year, adolescents tended to suffer from "spring fever", where all they care about is interaction with peers (especially the opposite sex), and were too easily distracted with their social lives and the changing weather to care about improving their academics. Because of this, I often try to be less demanding and incorporate more collaborative projects into the curriculum to help students stay focused on their learning without making it seem so much like "work". Mr. DiPrima, Mrs. Szymanski and I decided to teach the students the art of storytelling as a means of further improving their speaking, reading and interpersonal

skills. Students could work either alone or with a partner to perform folktales to students in the primary grades. I had had success in the past with this activity, and felt that providing our students the opportunity to work as role models for the younger students would inspire them to continue with their positive interactions. We also plan to have our students teach scrap booking to the primary students as a way to help them share the positive feelings they gained from creating an artifact that reflected their identities. When we told the students of these plans, most of them expressed their enthusiasm and looked forward to being part of these activities.

Conclusion

Upon returning to school after spring break in April, I braced myself for the general deterioration of positive interactions among my students that so often occur at toward the end of a school year. In my experience, students tend to think of this period of time after spring break as the school year being already over; therefore their motivation to behave appropriately and continue to improve their academic endeavors is usually very low. However, I did notice that my students were actually as kind to one another as they had been at the beginning of the school year in September. By the end of May, there was only one reported incidence of bullying which was quickly resolved because other students promptly reported it to me so that steps could be taken to solve it. There were also fewer missed assignments than there had been in the second and third quarters.

My experience with this teacher action research was at times frustrating because for every one step in the right direction, there seemed to be two in the opposite direction. I suppose the major limitation in a study as this is that there is no way to prove or disprove whether these activities caused them to become more positive in their interactions with one another. Despite their answers to the surveys, there didn't appear to be a correlation between their participation in

these activities and their motivation to improve their academics. Grade averages were pretty consistent from quarter to quarter, meaning that students who worked hard and completed all assignments were the same in September as in May. Students who usually didn't complete assignments in September still didn't complete them in May. Although there were fewer incidences of disruptive behavior, a number of other factors (such as student maturity and teacher classroom management styles) could have had just as much an effect on them as the character education activities.

Yet, I do feel that there was some positive benefit to incorporating some form of character education in the regular curriculum because it seemed to make them aware of how they were personally accountable for shaping atmosphere in their classroom. They did learn that the six tenets of character education (*Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship*) are necessary to create a positive classroom climate. Although this can't be scientifically proven, based on the responses of my students and my colleagues, our attempt at finding ways for students to learn how to better empathize with one another may have motivated our students to actively participate in creating a more positive learning environment. Although things did not go well all of the time (as they seldom do in any classroom), it makes me wonder what the outcome would have been had we not completed any of these activities. According to our students' previous teachers, by the beginning of the fourth quarter, both teacher and student morale was extremely low because of the continued instances of disruptive behavior and lack of respect between students. Things had become so bad that the administration felt it necessary to have a mandatory meeting with the entire sixth grade and their parents to discuss ways to reduce the number of discipline infractions. Although things weren't perfect this year, the majority of

the students had made strides in creating a more positive environment for everyone. At this writing, (June, 2006) there hasn't been a need for such a mass meeting to discuss discipline.

It is impossible to definitively say that it was due to our experience with character education activities, but I based on my observations and reflections, these activities did have a positive effect on them.

Policy Recommendations

Although there was no clear evidence that implementing character education activities had any direct influence on improving student achievement, if classrooms are not safe, democratic places, learning may not take place at all (Stowell, 2001). As a result of this action research I recommend the following:

1. Too often teachers (especially in the middle school) assume that their students really know one another because most often they have been together since the primary grades. However, this is not always the case. It is incumbent for teachers to provide *consistent* opportunities for students to regularly interact with each other for the purpose of expanding their knowledge of one another within the classroom as part of the regular curriculum, not just during lunch or other extra curricular activities. Building alliances among students and teachers reinforces the importance of learning even though young adolescents are not just academic beings (Stowell, 2001). If students are to learn to treat each other with respect, they must learn to better know and understand one another. Building empathy amongst students will most likely to occur if they are given many opportunities to “walk in each others shoes.”
2. Teachers must provide a consistent forum for students to express how they feel about the atmosphere in the classroom and allow them to have a say in making improvements to

the classroom community. The confidence students develop by communicating in non-threatening public arenas leads to greater self-esteem and a more positive self concept (Stone & Rottier, 1996).

3. Bullying is a major impediment to creating a positive classroom community. Oftentimes, teachers are unaware of the problem because middle school students tend not to reveal instances of bullying for fear of reprisal from the bullies or being seen by their peers as “snitches” or tattlers. Finding ways to empower both victims and bystanders to take an active role in curbing or eliminating bullying altogether will aid in making the classroom an environment of mutual respect and understanding.
4. Character education programs are not a “one size fits all” solution. Each year students come to teachers with their own “class personality” and history. What worked with previous classes may not necessarily work with current students. Rather than relying on a packaged curriculum, a more valid approach is to personalize the curriculum based on the character traits of the specific students involved (Helms, Hunt & Bedwell, 1999). Constant student feedback, careful observation and teacher reflection will help teachers find and implement strategies to help the students build a positive classroom community. Other school personnel (not necessarily school administration) whom the students trust and respect can be helpful in implementing character education activities in *conjunction* with the classroom teacher. Teacher collaboration serves as a positive model for students to learn how to get along with others. Effective character education approaches must be conducted within a more school climate by teachers who are positive role models and consistently provide authentic experiences for students (Milson, 2000).

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Answer each question by circling how YOU feel about how YOU learn best.

5-definitely agree 4-somewhat agree
3-neither agree or disagree
2-somewhat disagree 1-definitely disagree

1. I understand what it means to have a "positive classroom climate"
1 2 3 4 5
2. It is important for everyone to get along, regardless of differences.
1 2 3 4 5
3. Friends are always helpful

1 2 3 4 5
4. People learn more from each other than from books

1 2 3 4 5
5. People can accomplish great things together, even if they don't get along

1 2 3 4 5
6. Before you can respect others, you must respect yourself.

1 2 3 4 5
7. It is better to work alone (than in a group) because you can concentrate better without distractions from others

1 2 3 4 5
8. "Two heads are better than one"

1 2 3 4 5
9. "Too many cooks can spoil the broth"

1 2 3 4 5
10. Doing homework has nothing to do with being a good person
1 2 3 4 5

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11. You should receive a reward or treat for positive behavior

1 2 3 4 5

12. You can still learn in a classroom where you don't get along with most people

1 2 3 4 5

13. Before you can be kind to others, you must be kind to yourself

1 2 3 4 5

14. I learn best when I am given a choice in what I want to learn

1 2 3 4 5

15. I like most of the people in this classroom

1 2 3 4 5

16. Students who are good in school are always the easiest to get along with

1 2 3 4 5

17. I would rather the teacher make all of the decisions about discipline in class

1 2 3 4 5

18. I think our classroom is a good place to be

1 2 3 4 5

19. It is only the teacher's responsibility to help students

1 2 3 4 5

20. There are too many discipline problems in this class

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B p. 1

*Character Education
Student Survey*

Since September, you have participated in a number of projects to help you learn more about yourself, about your classmates and to create a more positive classroom community. Please answer HONESTLY about what you thought by placing an X under how you feel about each of these projects.

1. How did you like participating in these projects?

Project	Hated this activity	Didn't really like this activity	Neither liked nor disliked this activity	Liked this activity a little	Liked this activity a lot
Getting to Know You					
Hand Project					
Silhouette Poetry					
Name Project					
Birthday Buddy					
Scrapbooking					

2. How useful were these activities to improving how you feel about yourself?

Project	Not useful at all	A little useful	Not Sure	Useful	Very Useful
Getting to Know You					
Hand Project					
Silhouette Poetry					
Name Project					
Birthday Buddy					
Scrapbooking					

3. How useful were these activities in improving how you feel about your classmates?

Project	Not useful at all	A little useful	Not Sure	Useful	Very Useful
Getting to Know You					
Hand Project					
Silhouette Poetry					
Name Project					
Birthday Buddy					
Scrapbooking					

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4. Did any of these activities encourage you to do better in school?

Project	Not at all	Not really	Not Sure	A little	Quite a lot
Getting to Know You					
Hand Project					
Silhouette Poetry					
Name Project					
Birthday Buddy					
Scrapbooking					

5. Do you think any of these projects were helpful in building a positive classroom community?

Project	Not at all	Not really	Not Sure	A little	Quite a lot
Getting to Know You					
Hand Project					
Silhouette Poetry					
Name Project					
Birthday Buddy					
Scrapbooking					

Appendix C

Please read each question CAREFULLY and answer HONESTLY.

1. Since participating in our Character Education projects, I feel that I have gotten to know and better understand my classmates:

Less than last year about the same as last year more than last year
Why?

2. Since September I feel that our classroom has become:

Less positive about the same more positive
Why?

3. I feel that the character education projects have motivated me to try harder in school

Not at all not sure a little a lot

If you answered **a little** or **a lot**, which project(s)? (circle all that apply)

Getting to Know You Name Research Scrap booking
Silhouette Poetry Hand Project Letters to classmates
Why?

4. Since last year(2004-2005), disruptive behavior by students in this grade have occurred:

Less often about the same more often

5. Since **SEPTEMBER**(2005-2006) disruptive behavior by students in this grade has occurred:

Less often about the same more often.

6. Compared to September(2005), at this time, I like most of my classmates

Less about the same more

On the back of this survey please include any additional comments or suggestions of how to make the rest of the school year more positive.