

Spring 5-11-2019

# Utilizing Classroom Meetings to Understand Student Values and Perceptions

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## Recommended Citation

Spink, Stacy, "Utilizing Classroom Meetings to Understand Student Values and Perceptions" (2019). *Masters of Education in Teaching and Learning*. 19.  
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Utilizing Classroom Meetings to Understand Student Values and Perceptions

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**Abstract**

This study addressed classroom meetings in order to teach social skills and address specific behavior issues. The author was completing a yearlong clinical teaching placement in a kindergarten classroom. The goal of her study was to observe what happens when class meetings are implemented to teach specific problem-areas in the classroom. In the study data was gathered through observations, student surveys, sociograms, and student interviews. The students participated in a class meeting twice a week for about thirty minutes. During the class meetings needed social skills were taught through play and role-playing activities and discussions were had to cooperatively solve specific behavior issues that happened in the classroom. Utilizing the constant comparative method the author analyzed data for major themes, which led to a better understanding of friendships, classroom meetings, difficulties encountered with kindergarten students, and insight into her students' perceptions and understandings of school, relationships, values, and class meetings.

### **The Utilization of Classroom Meetings to Understand Student Values and Perceptions**

It was a Wednesday afternoon, but more importantly it was the first afternoon we had seen the sun all week, and we were in need of recess. We had not been outside for more than five minutes when Tyler approached me weeping. After getting on his eye level and getting him calm, he was able to explain to me that Ben was being mean. When I asked him to describe what it meant to be mean he further explained that he wasn't sharing the ball, and when he fell down Ben didn't help him up. I called Ben over, and I helped the two boys talk through their issues and find a solution to their problem. As they ran off Ben looked back at me and stated, "Look Ms. Spink, we can synergize!" It was moments like this that led me to believe my students needed more than me simply teaching them academics, I needed to find a way to engage the whole child, and help them grow as individuals.

As I watched my students learn and grow in their knowledge, I also saw that there were gaps in their social skills. I also found that students in my kindergarten classroom who seemed to consistently be in trouble also struggled to keep and maintain friendships with their peers. I realized my students needed a safe place to learn these practical skills that, as adults, we take for granted. I quickly became determined to find the best way to meet my students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Throughout my undergraduate education program we learned about the gaps in language students arrive to school with, and I wondered if those same students were also coming in with gaps in their social-emotional skills (Colker, 2013). As I started to realize my students' need, I saw a lack of curriculum or solutions that involved the whole class to introduce these skills to my students, and I quickly pursued different ideas to directly teach social-emotional skills and specific behaviors to my students.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to observe what happens when class meetings are implemented in a kindergarten classroom to teach specific social skills and address specific behavior problems. I sought to understand how class meetings could be used to teach social skills and address problems that arose in the kindergarten classroom. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

- What happens to a group of kindergarten students when specific social skills are taught and behavioral issues are addressed in a class meeting?
- Sub Question: What are students' impressions of class meetings?
- Sub Question: How do class meetings affect student relationships within the classroom?

The main research question addressed the possible benefits of implementing a classroom meeting in order to teach and encourage the development of social skills as well as a positive way to address problematic classroom behaviors. The sub questions looked to examine the students' views of this intervention and the affect class meetings had on the students. Primarily this study sought to examine the effectiveness of using classroom meetings in a kindergarten classroom to teach specific social skills and address behavior problems.

At the time, I was a graduate student fulfilling a yearlong clinical teaching placement and conducting action research. I was co-teaching in a classroom with twenty-two kindergarten students. My clinical teaching placement was at an elementary school in a mid-sized West Texas town, with a population of about 120,000 people. I taught at Creekview Elementary School (all names have been replaced with pseudonyms), which served about 600 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. White students represented a little more than half of the school's student population. Forty-six percent of the school's population at the time was considered economically

disadvantaged, 2.9% of the school's population was English Language Learners, and 6.6% of the population was considered special education.

Something I quickly noticed in my kindergarten classroom was the need for the teacher to mediate and intervene in disputes among students. Eventually, the tattling slowed down, but then I noticed other social issues. The same kids always played alone at recess and weren't making any connections with their classmates. In addition, I noticed that these students who seemed to lack friendships also seemed to be the students who had disruptive behaviors. I found the students' disputes interesting, without a lot of rhyme or reason. I discovered behaviors were harder to manage some days rather than others. I quickly learned that my students needed a safe place, with guidance and security to try out things socially, and to engage with their peers in new and potentially challenging ways. They also needed a place to voice their struggles appropriately and have guidance from their teacher and peers in order to find solutions. I believed the kindergarten classroom was in desperate need of classroom meetings, a place where they can come not only to increase their academic knowledge, but also their social-emotional skills and improve their behavior for better success not only in school but also in life.

### **Literature Review**

Researchers have found that there is a correlation between students who are withdrawn socially and are at risk behaviorally and their academic success. Social withdrawal includes behaviors such as, "shyness, social resistance, inhibition, anxiety, and depression" (Hall, Welsh, Bierman, & Nix, 2016, p. 751). At risk behaviors are considered to be aggressive and disruptive behaviors. These at risk behaviors impact the pace at which students can acquire literacy and other academic skills. Low levels of social and emotional functioning have been found to not only affect students' ability to acquire academic skills but also contributes to several public

health problems such as obesity, substance abuse, and violence (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). A study conducted by Jones et al. (2015) found that social competence measured in kindergarten predicted outcomes of students' success nearly two decades later. Social competence is a valuable and essential life skill, which starts to develop as early as preschool and kindergarten.

Kindergarten is a foundational year for students; they are expected to learn how to do school, succeed socially, and learn academically. The development of social skills early in life is a necessity in order to see success later in school and adult life. According to Bailey (2018), social-emotional skills are one of the greatest predictors of success in life. Success in life is dependent on an individual's ability to peacefully solve problems and have positive social skills (Edwards & Mullins, 2003). Knowing that social-emotional skills are one of the most important skillsets we can equip our students with, we should determine, how we can incorporate that learning into the classroom.

Several programs, curriculums, and strategies are available to teach social-emotional skills as well as address specific behavior problems. Researchers have advocated for social-emotional curriculum and interventions in all schools. One effective way shown to increase appropriate classroom behaviors is play interventions. Allen and Barber's (2015) study found that students on task behaviors increased after eight sessions of guidance lessons and one-on-one play sessions. In addition, Kinder Training has been proven to be an effective intervention to teach social-emotional development as well as improve student-teacher relationships in order to increase positive classroom behaviors. Kinder Training uses methods like role-playing and play intervention strategies to increase positive classroom behaviors (Chen & Lindo, 2018). Lastly, research shows that video self-modeling and the use of peer groups have helped to increase

social skills in young students. Lemmon and Green (2015) found that teaching social skills in a small-group peer pull out sessions, and then videoing participants using the learned social skills proved to be effective in order to increase positive social interactions among young students.

All of the listed methods and programs have several benefits and have proved to be successful in teaching social-emotional skills and address behaviors in the kindergarten classroom. A commonality among all of these programs is that they require additional teacher training, they cost money, or they require an intervention that takes place outside of the classroom. I needed an in-class solution, and that's when I discovered class meetings. Class meetings are a time for teachers and students all to come together in order to build community, solve problems, and create positive classrooms (Vance, 2013). Classroom meetings are typically broken into four parts. First, students have time to greet each other in a variety of ways. Second, there is time for students to share information about themselves and their feelings. Third, there is time devoted to a group activity in order to build that sense of community. And lastly, a meeting is held where specific previously chosen topics are addressed, these topics can be academic or topics, or relate to problem-solving skills, social-emotional development, and behavioral issues (Kriete & Davis, 2014). Meetings have been effective in helping develop language and creating a safe environment in the classroom. Furthermore, classroom teachers need the freedom to mold the curriculum to meet their students' needs, rather than be confined to "prepackaged generic programs" (Boyd & Smyntek-Gworek, 2012, p. 4).

Although there is a significant amount of research on the importance of social skills and classroom meetings, few studies have examined the use of classroom meetings in a kindergarten classroom to teach specific social skills and address specific behavior problems. This study

examined the use of class meetings as a free and easy-to-integrate strategy in a kindergarten classroom to specifically teach social-emotional skills as well as address specific behaviors.

### **Methods**

In this qualitative action research study, I used surveys to examine 22 kindergarten students' perceptions of classroom meetings. From those surveys, I chose six students to interview in order to gain a better understanding of their views of meetings and friendships at school. In addition, I did a sociogram before and after the implementation of classroom meetings in addition to observations during and after the classroom meeting. After collecting the data, the data was analyzed through the constant comparative method (Hubbard and Power 2003) and level 1 and level 2 coding (Tracy 2013).

### **Participant Selection**

The participants in my study included all of the students in my kindergarten class, who returned parent permission forms. I sent home a parent information letter and consent form to be signed. After receiving parental consent the students were asked to sign an assent form to agree to participate in the study. Of the 22 students in my class, I received all of my students' parent permission and assent to the study. My class consisted of fourteen boys and eight girls. Sixteen of the students in my class were Caucasian, five students were Hispanic, and one student was African American. One student received special education pull out services twice a day for math and language arts. Four students attended speech therapy twice a week, and one student was on a tier two-behavior intervention plan.

The participants each completed a survey about their perceptions and feelings towards school and classroom meetings; from the survey, six students were selected using purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to complete interviews. Participants were selected for interviews based

on their perceptions of school and class meetings. Two students who had positive views of school and class meetings were selected, two students who had neutral views of school and class meetings were selected, and two students who had negative views of school and class meetings were selected.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection lasted for a little over four weeks. I used four methods to collect data. The first method I used was classroom observations. I held class meetings every Monday and Wednesday for three weeks. Classroom meetings lasted between ten and thirty minutes. During the meetings, I took notes on student engagement level and their responses to the discussion. In addition, during the remaining school hours, I took observational head notes on how students responded to the class meetings and if they used any of the skills addressed in the meeting. During class meetings, and after they were held, I carried around a notepad to write things down that I observed my students doing that was a reflection of the classroom meeting. At the end of each day, I took some time to flesh out the notes and observations I took that day in a journal.

The second method of data collection was surveys. I gave the same survey before and after the implementation of class meetings. I read the survey questions aloud to my students in small groups of four to five students, and they selected one of the following emojis to express how they felt about the question or statement: a happy face, a scared face, or a sad face and a thumbs up or thumbs down. The survey asked questions about how they felt about school, friendships, moving their clip, and class meetings (see Appendix A for survey).

The third form of data collection was student interviews. Based on my survey I picked six students to interview. I used purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to select two students who had positive views of school, two students who had average views, and two students who had

negative views of school, classroom meetings, and their social standing. I determined if their views were positive, negative, or average based on their survey answers. If they had answered at least five of the six questions with a happy face or thumbs up on the survey I determined they had positive views. If they had three to four happy faces or thumbs up on the survey I determined they had average views. If they had less than three happy faces or thumbs up on the survey I determined they had negative views. I interviewed each student for about ten minutes. The interviews were semi-structured, with pre-planned, but open-ended questions (Hendricks, 2012). Additional questions were asked based on the responses of the participants. I audio recorded and transcribed all six interviews.

My final form of data collection was a sociogram. Prior to the implementation of classroom meetings I created a sociogram. I pulled students out into the hallway and asked my participants if they had to pick three friends in our class to play with at recess who they would pick. Then after the three weeks of class meetings, I asked them the same question again and looked to see if there were any changes in their answers.

### **Data Analysis**

After all data was collected and transcribed it was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Hubbard & Power, 2003), and coded with level 1 and level 2 codes (Tracy, 2013). The constant comparative method allowed me to find common themes throughout my data analysis. The themes that emerged from the coding of the data determined what additional data was collected. Level 1 codes were the most basic codes that described the data. Level 2 codes served to explain, create theories, and synthesize the level 1 codes. Through this coding method, I created a list of 15 to 20 codes from the first 20 percent of my data. I then applied these codes to the rest of my data and created level 2 codes to explain and synthesize the level 1

codes (Tracy, 2013). In addition, I wrote memos about each code, in order to gain a better understanding of the themes that arose in my data. The codes created were then compiled into a codebook (see Appendix B), which created a better understanding of each code through examples and descriptions. The quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### **Findings**

After a significant amount of time was given to reading, analyzing, and coding the data, I found. Ultimately, I was seeking to gain insight into what happens to a group of kindergarten students when classroom meetings are used to teach and address specific issues. In addition, I sought to understand students' perceptions of class meetings and how the meetings affected student relationships. My data provided me with an abundance of information on student relationships and their views on friendships. In addition, I acquired a better understanding of students' perceptions of classroom meetings, but I also learned about the challenges that came from the implementation of classroom meetings. Lastly, I acquired a significant amount of insight into my students' perceptions of school, relationships, values, and classroom meetings.

### **Friendships**

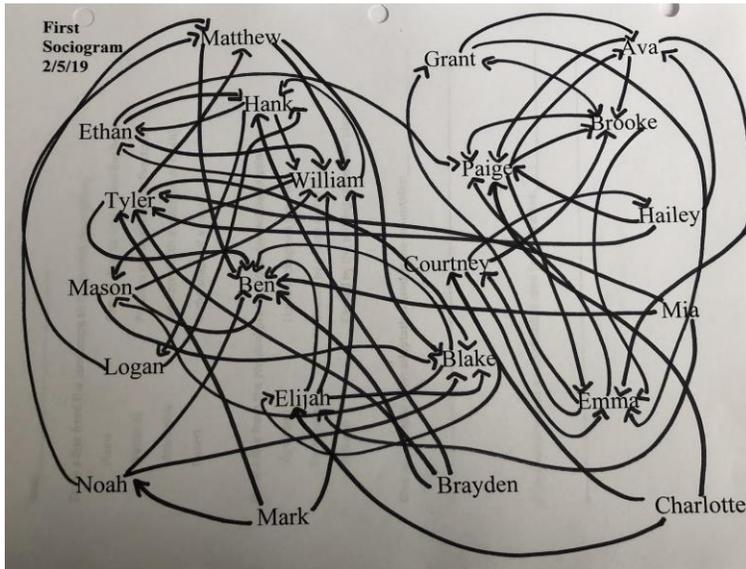
The idea of friendships between my students appeared consistently throughout the coding process. This was a very broad theme that encompassed many different aspects of student relationships, such as their values in relationships, how they initiate friendships, what being a good friend means to them, and how several students prefer to play alone. I was curious to see how class meetings affected student relationships within the classroom, and therefore, a large part of my data looked to examine relationships between students and how they changed over the three weeks I gathered data. As I started my research I felt like my students were struggling to

create lasting and meaningful friendships, which is partially developmentally appropriate. Yet, I found for a lot of my students their kindergarten experience was the first time they had the opportunity to make friends independently, and they seemed to lack some of the necessary skills to do so. At the beginning of my research, I noticed there was a lot of hitting, pushing, tattling, and students playing alone, as I implemented class meetings and directly talked about some of these issues I hoped for some drastic changes.

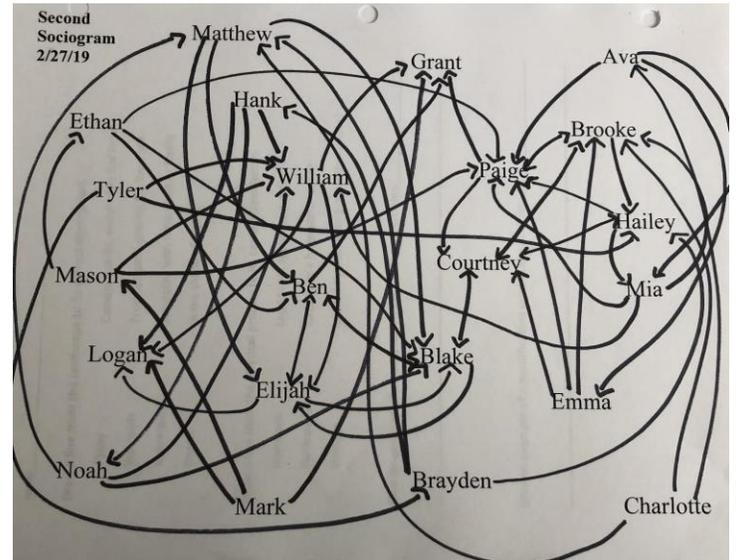
However I found that before I could implement change I had to first understand what peer relationships looked like for five- and six-year-old students. I discovered that “best friends” were easily made and just as easily abandoned. I completed two sociograms, one prior to implementing class meetings and a second one after the implementation of class meetings. For both the first and second sociogram, I pulled my students aside and asked them if they had to choose just three friends from our class to play with at recess who they would play with (see Appendix C). I was hoping to discover how class meetings impacted friendships, and to see if more students would reach out to different students and engage in new friendships. I found that not one student said the same three students for the first and second sociogram. Some of my students didn’t even mention the same people in the second sociogram that they did in the first one (see Figure 1 and 2). I’ve concluded that this has little to do with classroom meetings, and more to do with the dynamics of their relationships, and how quickly relationships change and fluctuate.

I also learned that the only true requirements for friendship are that there are commonalities or fun found in playing the same things and that peers must be nice or kind. I found it interesting that often times, when I asked students what made a good friend they would be confused, not sure what I meant or they, would simply state, “a good friend helps someone up

when they fall down” or “good friends use kind words.” I have seen my students have deep explanations for so many aspects of life and their behaviors, but when it came to friendship it was simple; a good friend is kind, enjoys playing the same things as you, and helps you up if you fall down or get hurt.



**Figure 1. First sociogram.**



**Figure 2. Second sociogram.**

In addition, I found that we had several students in our class who played alone on a daily basis and were identified as isolates on both of the sociograms I conducted (see Figures 1 and 2). Charlotte and Hailey were both identified as isolates on the first sociogram, and were both are on the Autism Spectrum. I found that they both struggled to initiate and remain engaged in play with their peers for an extended period of time without occasional assistance from an adult. Brayden was also identified as an isolate on both sociograms and has been tested for gifted and talented services and was reading on a third-grade level. Brayden was one of the smartest students I’ve seen but had a lot of trouble engaging in play with his peers without tattling or getting his feelings hurt. Lastly, Mark was one of my students who was identified as an isolate on both of the sociograms. Mark received speech therapy services but remained

extremely hard to understand, and he would become easily frustrated when others didn't understand what he was trying to say. When I asked Mark if he could only choose three friends to play with at recess he stated, "No one, I always play by myself, I don't have friends at school." This was challenging to hear and digest, and I was motivated to better understand the development of relationships and encourage students to reach out to others and make more friends. As I continued to examine relationships, Elijah told me in our interview that he preferred to play alone at recess, although he was not identified as an isolate, because no one liked the same games as him. I told him that there were other students who played alone and that I thought they would enjoy playing the games he was describing to me. He informed me that Mark was the only person he could think of that played by himself. I agreed and encouraged him to ask Mark to play with him, but Elijah replied saying, "I don't want to because he's like...he talks weird." This surprised me. I felt like so many of my students were unobservant or unaware of their differences, so I was shocked that Elijah was able to easily and simply isolate Mark for his differences.

Throughout the data, I was shocked to discover how simple, yet complex and exclusive friendships could be between kindergarten students. Through the implementation of classroom meetings, I saw new friendships were developed, and several students made an effort to reach out or connect with someone new that they had never played with before. By the second sociogram Mark was able to quickly identify three friends he would want to play with at recess; after he named his three friends he expressed "...they're not my friends yet." I saw several other students making an effort to intentionally use kind words, to help others up when they fell, or to synergize at stations. I think my students also became more aware of others. About halfway through the research process, we were playing at recess and Noah was sitting on the bench

crying because he didn't want to be playing outside. Hank approached me and told me that Noah was crying, and he just wasn't sure how to comfort him. It was encouraging to see that Hank genuinely cared about his peer, and wanted to help, but just needed some support. I suggested that he should ask him to play, and maybe even let Noah pick the game. I watched as Hank nervously approached Noah and engaged in a kind conversation. Noah hopped right up, and the two played together the rest of recess. Hank listed Noah as one of his three friends on the second sociogram. It was in small moments like this, that I believed slowly, but surely, my students were progressing in their social skills and ability to create meaningful friendships.

Ultimately the rapidly changing dynamics of friendships made it difficult to determine what role classroom meetings played in the development and changes in friendships. With that being said, it appeared that our classroom dynamics did change after the implementation of classroom meetings. The students seemed to value their peers in a more positive light than they did prior to the implementation of classroom meetings.

### **Class Meetings**

I was interested to see how class meetings would affect peer relationships, social skills, and specific behaviors taking place in our classroom. In addition, I was curious to see how my students perceived classroom meetings. Before I discuss what I learned from the implementation of class meetings, I want to first share what class meetings looked like in our classroom. Class meetings typically started with a game or quick activity, to get my students thinking and engaged. Then I would discuss a topic, typically a problem I'd seen taking place within our classroom, and we would attempt to break down the problem and develop a solution together. We talked about being a good friend, blurting out, solving our own problems, tattling, and lining up. Based on my second survey, after three weeks and six classroom meetings, seventeen of my

twenty-two students (77%) had positive views of classroom meetings. They expressed that classroom meetings were fun, and a good learning opportunity.

Classroom meetings were helpful in creating a structure where we could talk about our struggles or problems in an open and honest way. Having meetings twice a week gave me the opportunity to address specific problems in a positive manner. I would say more than anything else, my greatest take away from implementing classroom meetings was the community and love I felt in the classroom. Playing games, role-playing, engaging in honest conversations and developing and implementing solutions with my students created a warm and welcoming environment. My students and I laughed together a lot in our classroom meetings, and I think it is safe to say we all gained some insight into each other's perspectives. Classroom meetings also helped to lay a foundation to revisit hard problems as they came up. I often found myself referring back to classroom meetings when students were engaging in behaviors we had previously addressed, like blurting out, tattling, or struggling to be a good friend.

Yet, I quickly realized that talking about a topic once with students for about twenty to thirty minutes was just not enough time. I found that I needed several reinforcements, reminders, or scaffolds in order to help my students be more successful in growing in these areas. I also found that several of my students had mixed opinions about classroom meetings. For example, in my interview with Mason, he told me that he was sometimes sad about classroom meetings ending because he loved them so much. Yet later, he explained to me that sometimes he didn't like class meetings, because they required him to give up things he liked doing, like talking to his friends on the carpet. I found it was interesting how much my students enjoyed certain aspects of class meetings, like playing games and engaging with their peers. All of my classroom meetings were driven by data or problems I had noticed in the classroom, but expressing them

appropriately and adequately to students in a twenty minute time period was more difficult than I anticipated. Which, led straight into my third major finding, the difficulties I encountered as I implemented class meetings.

### **Difficulties Encountered**

As I was implementing and then coding my research I ran into several problems or struggles. The first and greatest struggle was a lack of time. I implemented classroom meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays for about twenty to thirty minutes for three weeks. Six thirty-minute meetings was just not enough time to experience long-term change and growth among my students. Something I learned this past year with my kindergarten students is that change takes a lot of time, practice, and reinforcement. A repeated theme I found in my observational notes was a need for time. On February 19<sup>th</sup> I wrote, “I constantly think about what a different group we would be if we started this the first six weeks of school. Three weeks has just not been enough time to teach and address everything I want to.” One of my students mentioned the same thing in our interview, Hank stated, “Well I don’t really remember anything...we don’t have that much class meetings...” The lack of time had a direct effect on the second difficulty I encountered. I found that it was difficult for my students to apply what we were learning in class meetings to situations outside of class meetings. In most of my interviews with my students when I asked them what they learned from classroom meetings, several of them responded with “I don’t know” or “I can’t remember.” I was disappointed; I worked hard to create meaningful and engaging lessons so that my students would remember the information being taught. With that being said, I did find that if I prompted my students and reminded them of a specific topic they were quickly able to discuss that topic more in-depth with me. I found that even when we

role-played scenarios or practiced certain skills it was difficult for them to apply that learning to outside scenarios.

In addition, I found that my students' lack of self-control and regulation skills impacted our classroom meetings, and their ability to apply the topics we were learning in meetings to other scenarios. Several of our class meetings started with a game, and although the students loved the games, playing them was often a struggle. Many of them had a hard time engaging in the game and even more so applying the skills we learned in the games to concepts outside of the meeting. We played several games where the students had to listen and follow directions quickly or needed to use teamwork in order to be successful in the game, but when I asked what they learned from the game, they couldn't quite piece it together. Eventually, I would help them make the connection, and it really seemed like it would stick. But, I discovered in my interviews most of my students remembered playing the game, and even specific things about the game, but not the lesson that was taught from the game. Their struggles with self-control impacted their ability to participate as well as later apply the concepts learned. Ultimately, there were several difficulties that affected the implementation of class meetings and the way my students grew.

### **Gaining a New Perspective**

Throughout the research process, I learned a lot about my students and how they viewed school, friendships, and class meetings. I also learned a lot about how they viewed consequences, what motivated them, and their need for scaffolds and continual reinforcements. Prior to my research study I thought I knew my students and understood them and their motives well, but after gathering data, talking to them, doing surveys and sociograms, and closely observing them for three weeks I got to know my students on a deeper level than ever before. Implementing classroom meetings gave me the opportunity to examine student relationships and behaviors on a

deeper level; because of those meetings, I gained some insight into their perspectives. A recurring theme was how they absolutely loved games and the opportunity to play and engage socially with peers and adults. Ultimately, I knew this about my students; what five-year-old doesn't like to play, but I had no idea how much they truly valued it. One of my greatest takeaways from implementing classroom meetings was the value of play, and the way it simply builds a community within the classroom. When I would ask my students why they liked classroom meetings or participating in them, almost all of them expressed, "They're fun because we get to play games!" Although I was disappointed that the students did not always make the connection between the game and the topic at hand, they did enjoy the games and the opportunity to engage in play with their teachers and classmates.

Something else I found throughout my research was the need for scaffolds or reinforcements produced by the teacher. I often had to remind my students what we had talked about in our classroom meetings, or even give them a signal. Giving my students a signal for tattling I think was one of the most successful interventions. After we did a classroom meeting about tattling and read the book *Tattle Tongue*, I told my students if they approached me and were tattling I would tap my nose three times, and that signal meant they needed to go and solve their own problems. My students loved this and even viewed it as a game, and ultimately the amount of tattling in our classroom decreased significantly. In addition, I used things like tallies to keep track of competitions between Mrs. Barrie and me and our students. These tallies motivated them to synergize, follow directions quickly, and not blurt out on the carpet. In addition, I created an incentive for when my students showed kindness or were being a good friend. I hung up a donut in our classroom, and I added a sprinkle to it when I saw students being "a sweet friend". When the donut was full of sprinkles I brought the class donuts; this was so

motivating for them. I found that these reinforcements ended up being directly related to their motivation. When talking about class meetings Elijah expressed in his interview that he was motivated by these things to be good at school, “Like surprises, you be good at school all the time...you get surprises.” I discovered that several of my students were motivated extrinsically, which led to more questions for further study. My students’ perceptions and values were eye-opening to me. Creating opportunities for students to engage in play and conversations through classroom meetings allowed both my students and me to better understand each other and our intentions.

### **Implications for Teachers**

The data I collected and analyzed led to four impactful findings regarding classroom meetings, relationships among students, and student perceptions. Based on my findings classroom meetings is an effective way to address specific needs in the classroom. In addition, classroom meetings gave me the opportunity to engage positively with students and create meaningful relationships and a positive classroom culture.

I discovered that my young students were capable of having honest conversations. I was able to present a variety of issues I saw taking place in our class and address them in a straightforward way with my students. With that being said, I learned it takes so much more than a simple conversation or game to help make the learning stick. Just like with any concept we teach students, there must be scaffolds, reinforcements, and lots of practice for social-emotional learning as well. My students constantly needed to be reminded of the things they learned, they occasionally needed my help scaffolding conversations and interactions, and they sometimes needed some motivation too. I discovered that a great deal of my students’ motivation came from

extrinsic things, but once I got the ball rolling and motivated them, they became prideful in being a good friend and a leader in the classroom.

My students grew through the implementation of classroom meetings. It took a lot of time, a lot of reinforcement, and a lot of patience, but now looking back I've seen the ways they've grown and improved as both individuals and as a whole class. But maybe even more than my students' growth, I've grown. I've learned to not miss a single teaching opportunity. Classroom meetings presented the opportunity to have honest conversations, through which both my students and I grew. After implementation of classroom meetings, I found small moments to teach big things, like empathy, honesty, and the power of teamwork. Through the implementation of classroom meetings I also learned about my students' perceptions and values. I was able to see things from their eyes and the high value they placed on playing and interacting with their peers and teachers. Their love for play alone was enough to reshape the way I teach and strive to incorporate more games and opportunity for play and playful engagement in my classroom.

There is still a lot more for us to learn on this topic and all of the effects classroom meetings have on students and their social-emotional learning. This study only looked into one kindergarten class. While this study is an accurate depiction of the participants in it, a great deal of it was dependent on the teacher and the structure of classroom meetings. This study led to several other questions and led me to try different things within my classroom and our classroom meetings.

As I wrapped up my research project, I developed several more questions and topics that I believe call for further study. As our culture is shifting and there is a greater reliance on technology, I would be curious to see the impact and correlations between technology and

students' social and emotional learning. I fear that although T.V. shows and games are attempting to teach social and emotional skills, several students are not being given opportunities to practice those skills with their peers. In addition, as I analyzed my students and their interactions on a deeper level I discovered that a majority of the students in my class are the oldest sibling or an only child. I would be curious to see how sibling order affects social and emotional skills and development. Courtney was easily one of the most socially well-adapted students that was in my class. She was a natural leader among her peers and had been since the first day of school. But, Courtney was also the youngest of three siblings. I'm curious if there was a correlation between her relationship with her older brother and sister and her ability to develop friendships at school. After analyzing student relationships for three weeks I now have more questions. I would be curious to do more research on the patterning and development of relationships between young peers. As our culture is ever changing, and our priorities are constantly shifting, it is my hope that studies like this one will remind us that children still need to be taught these basic social, emotional, and behavioral skills. I hope that as educators we can remember they still need time and opportunities to learn and practice social and emotional skills that will lay a foundation for their lives and future.

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Appendix A

**Classroom Meeting Survey**

How do you feel about coming to school?



How do you feel about your friends at school?



Do you like to make friends?



How do you feel about having a class meeting?



How do you feel when you have to move your clip?



How do you think others feel when you have to move your clip?



**Appendix B**  
**Codebook**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Friendships</b>	2	This code was used when students described or discussed any of their friends at school or things I observed about their relationships and values.	“Hank came and told me that Noah was crying, but he wasn’t sure how to comfort him. I suggested that maybe he should ask him to play a game, and even let Noah pick the game. I watched as Hank approached Noah, and asked him to play. Noah hopped right up and smiled and the two played together the rest of recess.”
Being a good friend	1	This code represents a topic discussed in class meetings, and was used when students described or modeled what it meant to be a good friend.	“We can be a good friend by helping each other...and playing with each other too.”
Values in friendship	1	This code was used when students expressed why they are friends with the people they elected as their friends.	“Because they love to play with...the same things I like to” (In response to the question why are you friends with them?)
Playing alone	1	This code was used when students described playing by himself or herself without	“I like to play by myself...because no one likes to play my games.”

		another peer.	
Initiating friendships	1	This code was used when students described how they made a friend, or how they initiating in play with someone for the first time.	“I was like watching it, and it’s like so cool, and then I started wanting to play with them.”
Friends at school	1	This code was used when students talked about who their friends were at school.	“Who are your friends at school?” “All of them...everyone in our class.”
<b>Class Meetings</b>	2	This code is used to describe any of the topics we discussed in our class meetings and the students’ perceptions of class meetings.	“When I explained to my students that we were going to skip calendar on Wednesday’s and do class meetings instead, nearly all 22 of them cheered. I think they like the class meetings, because we play a game and it is a bit chiller than other activities.”
Solving our own Problem	1	This code represents a saying we used in our classroom to remind students they can be problem-solvers without needing their teachers.	“I reviewed using our big voice to solve our own problems, ‘Stop I don’t like it when you___.’”
Positive views of Class Meetings	1	This code was used when students shared positive (or things they liked) things about our class meetings.	“I would want a class meeting everyday...because they’re so much fun and we always get to learn lots of different things...”

Negative views of Class Meetings	1	This code was used when students shared negative (or things they didn't like) things about our class meetings.	"We just talk about stuff...and I don't like talking."
Tattling	1	This code was used when students tattled, talked about tattling, or we discussed tattling in our class meeting.	"Oh yeah, if you tattle too much, then no one wants to play with you."
Blurting out	1	This code was used to describe when students spoke out of turn or talked about the effects of speaking out in class or on the carpet.	"When kids were giggling or making noise or being distracting we continually reinforced the idea that they are 'stealing others thinking or learning time'."
<b>Difficulties Encountered</b>	2	This code described a variety of difficulties encountered throughout the study and challenges that were presented during the implementation of classroom meetings.	"The game was a flop. The problem was everyone wanted to be in the middle, so they would stand up and walk and then just freeze in the middle. I tried to explain that was not the objective, but it continued to be a struggle, so I had to change the game."
Lack of time	1	This code signifies the struggle of time to complete class meetings in order to grow socially and	"I constantly think about what a different group we would be if we started this the first six weeks of

		improve behaviors at school.	school. Three weeks just has not been enough time to teach and address everything I want to.”
Self-regulation skills	1	This code was used to represent when students showed they were struggling to regulate their own behavior or thoughts in order to be successful at school.	“I’m just thinking about stuff in my head, and my brain just kind of ignores y’all, and it just comes up with different stuff…”
Application of learning	1	This code was used to describe when students used or struggled to use the things we learned in our classroom meeting outside of the meeting setting.	“Did you learn anything from that game?” “No, not really.”
Boredom	1	This code was used when students expressed that they were bored during school or class meetings.	“I would not want to do a class meeting every day...because I think it’s sometimes kind of boring.”
Self-control skills	1	This code was used when self-control skills were taught or discussed, or students expressed difficulty using self-control.	“The game ended up being a flop, the problem was everyone wanted to be in the middle, so they would just stand up and stop, creating a crowd in the middle of the circle.”
<b>Through their Eyes</b>	2	This code was used to describe the students’ perceptions of	“I like to participate in classroom meetings because

		school and my understanding of how students perceived and grew throughout the implementation of classroom meetings.	of all the games we play!”
Views of school and learning	1	This code was used when students expressed their perceptions of school, their teachers, or learning opportunities.	“My favorite thing about school is having the best time and my teachers!”
Scaffold	1	This code was used to describe teacher support given to reinforce ideas or topics learned in the class meeting.	“We decided if we see or hear tattling, we are going to give them a little signal to remind them, so they could solve their own problems. The signal was to tap our nose 3 times.”
Loves games/playing	1	This code was used when I observed or students discussed how much they loved to play games or play with their classmates in class meetings or at school.	“Cause I like to play games and have fun!” (Referring to why he likes to participate in class meetings)
Growth	1	This code was used when the students or I noted how the class, or individual students improved in a specific area.	“We still need a lot more work, but as a whole, I would say tattling has decreased, some are working hard at being kind, and we’ve really made self-control a focus

			in our classroom.”
Motivation	1	This code was used when outside factors encouraged students to engage, perform, or participate in specific behaviors.	“...And when we fill it all the way up, we would get a sweet treat (like a donut). The kids were ecstatic, and instantly began encouraging each other to be a good friend.”
Consequences	1	This code was used when students described how one event or occurrence led to another event or action.	“Because that don’t make me move my clip, when I am in the habit of participating.”
Rules/Expectations	1	This code was used when we talked about our classroom rules and expectations, or created new rules and expectations based on our classroom meetings.	“We talked about how one of our rules is ‘follow directions quickly’ and how we need to be good listeners to that we can follow directions quickly.”

## Appendix C

### First Sociogram February 5, 2019

If you had to choose three friends to play with at recess who would you choose?  
Why would you choose those friends?

Student	3 Friends	Why
Hailey	Ava, Paige, and Tyler	"I don't know, I really wanted to pick my leader buddy."
Paige	Ava, Brooke, and Emma	"They're my favorite friends."
Brayden	Tyler, Hank, and Ben	"I like to play with them."
Matthew	Blake, Ben and William	"I like them."
Mark	William, Tyler, and Noah	"I don't have any friends I just play alone, so I guess..." (Picked using class picture)
Hank	Logan, Ethan, and William	"They love to play what I love to play."
Logan	Hank, Matthew, Ms. Spink	At first he said, "I don't know anyone who wants to...but if I had to pick..."
Noah	Ben, Blake, Matthew	"They're my best friends"
Emma	Grant, Paige, and Courtney	"They're my friends."
Courtney	Brooke, Hailey, and Emma	"They're nice."
Mia	Elijah, Ben, and Tyler	"They're my best friends." *I would like to note I've never seen her play with Ben.
Ava	Paige, Brooke, and Emma	"They're nice."
Charlotte	Courtney, Paige, and Elijah	"I like to play with them."
Mason	William, Ben, and Blake	"They're my best friends."

William	Hank, Mason, and Ethan	"They're my very best friends."
Elijah	Blake, Ben, and William	"I like to play the same things as them" *To note, when I interviewed him he said he plays alone because he doesn't like the "baby games" everyone else plays
Brooke	Paige, Grant, and Emma	"Paige is kind and special, Grant is kind, and Emma cares for lots of people"
Ethan	Hank, Paige, and William	"They're nice."
Grant	Emma, Brooke, and Ava	"They're my favorite."
Ben	Blake, Elijah, and Matthew	"They're kind of nice, and they like to play with me."
Blake	Ben, Mason, and Elijah	"They're my friends."
Tyler	Blake, Matthew, and Ben	"My friends..."

## Second Sociogram March 5, 2019

If you had to choose three friends to play with at recess who would you choose?  
Why would you choose those friends?

Student	3 Friends	Why
Hailey	Courtney, Paige, and Mia	NA
Paige	Grant, Courtney, and Brooke	"They're my best friends."
Brayden	Hank, Matthew, and Hailey	"They're nice."
Matthew	Blake, Ben, and Elijah	"We play silly games together."
Mark	Logan, Mason, and Grant	"I would maybe choose to play with these people because they're fun."
Hank	William, Noah, and Logan	"They like the same games as me."
Logan	Elijah, Hank, and Matthew	"They like to play Ghost Busters and they're nice."
Noah	William, Blake, and Matthew	"They like to play football too."
Emma	Courtney, Brooke, and Paige	"They're good friends."
Courtney	Hailey, Brooke, and Blake	"They're fun!"
Mia	Paige, Brooke, and William	"They're my best friends." *Note same response as last time but all different people
Ava	Paige, Emma, and Mia	"They play with me and they're nice."
Charlotte	Ava, Brooke, and Matthew	"I like them."
Mason	William, Paige, and Ethan	"They like to play the same things as me."
William	Logan, Grant and Elijah	"They're kind and they

		follow the rules.”
Elijah	Ben, Blake, and Logan	“They’re nice.”
Brooke	Courtney, Hailey, and Paige	“Courtney is generous and kind, Hailey is always nice, but not when she’s mean, then I don’t play with her, and Paige is always kind.”
Ethan	Paige, Blake, and Ben	“They’re nice.”
Grant	Blake, Matthew, and Hank	“I like all the boys.”
Ben	Blake, Elijah, and Grant	“They’re nice and funny.”
Blake	Elijah, Ben, and Courtney	“They’re nice.”
Tyler	William, Hailey, and Brayden	“They’re my friends.”

**Key**

Isolate – 0 people said them

Isolate – only one person said them