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The Effects of Bibliotherapy on Students with Behavioral Problems: Combating Negative Behavior with Books

Alaina J. Peters

Abilene Christian University, ajp15d@acu.edu

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The Effects of Bibliotherapy on Students with Behavioral Problems: Combating Negative

Behavior with Books

Alaina Peters

Abilene Christian University

Abstract

At the time of the study, the researcher was a graduate student serving in a yearlong clinical teacher placement. The researcher sought to find an intervention to behavioral problems taking place in a third grade classroom setting. The aim of the study was to diminish the negative behavior occurring in the classroom setting through the use of bibliotherapy. For this study, the researcher collected data through the use of surveys, document collections, interventions, and observation with the addition of field notes. Using the constant comparative method with the addition of descriptive statistics, the author found common themes amongst the data collected that included the following: observable shifts in behavior, identifying with color spots, factors affecting behavior, and student perceptions of the intervention.

The Effects of Bibliotherapy on Students with Behavioral Problems: Combating Negative Behavior with Books

“I HATE THIS PLACE!” Logan (all names are pseudonyms) screamed as he plummeted his now-tattered-book-box across the room. This aggressive behavior was once a shock, but after numerous explosions in the classroom, this behavior had become as predictable as any other classroom routine. “Take deep breaths, go to the Zen Zone, and calm down,” was the typical response given to Anthony (or any other of his many classmates who struggled to meet behavior expectations) after a daily dose of explosive behavior. Once the adrenaline rush and circus-like atmosphere in the classroom had come to a quiet, mindful reflections on why these behavioral miscues were taking place and how to combat these happenings quickly flooded my mind. After time and time again of failed efforts in redirecting and meeting this undesired behavior with consequences, it became time to figure out another method in understanding and redirecting my students’ negative conduct. Being proactive rather than reactive became the name of the game after this aggression began to veer from unlucky book boxes and onto nearby classmates or bystanders. Whether it be verbal aggression or a physical altercation, undesired negative behavior was becoming the “normal” in our classroom and a solution was much needed.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to seek a behavioral solution within a classroom setting, raise students’ social-emotional skills, gain an understanding of students’ perceptions of the intervention, and work towards keeping our classroom book boxes in tact. While all of the students in my class struggled to meet behavior expectations, out of fifteen in-person students, four to five students showed signs that they were significantly struggling with behavior. The implementation of bibliotherapy, or using quality literature that represent children’s’ lives to

promote growth and healing, was implemented in hopes to work towards minimizing the undesired negative behavior being observed in the classroom. My research questions were as follows:

Research Question: How will reading quality literature that students can see themselves represented in and that teaches socio-emotional skills affect student behavior performance and perception of their self-efficacy?

Sub Question: What are the students' perceptions of the intervention?

During the time of the study, I had the privilege of serving as a graduate student clinical teacher in a yearlong placement in a small, West Texas town. At the time, the population of the town was roughly 123,420 people. Of the town's population, 58.3% were White, 26.7% were Hispanic, and 10.0% were Black. The average income per household in the West Texas town was \$47,689 while the percentage of households living in poverty was 17%.

Within the school I was serving, out of the 503 students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade, minority enrollment was 74% of the student body population. The majority of the students being served by the school were Hispanic (44.3%), 26% of the students were African American, 24.7% were White, and 10% were other mixed races. About 86% of the students at the school were considered economically disadvantaged, qualifying them for free and reduced lunches while 85% of the student population was considered at-risk.

Literature Review

Bibliotherapy, or the use of books and stories to support and develop social emotional skills and needs (Cornett et al., 1980) is a way to meet children where they are socially and emotionally. De Vries, Brennan, Lankin, Morse, Rix, and Beck (2017) explain that bibliotherapy, stemming from its Greek roots, *biblion*, meaning book, and *therapeia* meaning

healing, has the power to intercept and redirect social-emotional challenges, behavior difficulties, and more. Minor (2018) writes that when students feel and see that they are being represented, they are more likely to feel safe and comfortable enough to learn and grow, and implementing quality children's literature through the use of bibliotherapy is one way to accomplish this.

Using Bibliotherapy as a Classroom Management Tool

Bibliotherapy may aid teachers in productivity (Elsenman & Harper, 2016). To ensure that interruptions are minimal when learning is taking place in the classroom, it is important to be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to classroom management. One way to be proactive when it comes to classroom management is through the use of bibliotherapy. Rather than redirecting and punishing students with consequences when undesired behavior arises and assuming that children will learn from the consequences of their actions, it is often necessary to reteach children how to cope with the challenging emotions that are oftentimes felt when negative behavior is present (Elsenman & Harper, 2016).

Bibliotherapy On At Risk Students

Because of the shift in our society today, more numbers of students are considered at risk than ever before (Prater et al., 2006). When a student is at risk, he or she is said to have a higher chance of academic failure or of dropping out of school. Students are considered at risk when their families fall below the poverty line, come from single parent homes, are a part of a minority group, have a primary language other than English, or have a disability (Prater et al., 2006). Bibliotherapy is one way to reach these at-risk students and teach them the necessary skills to succeed.

As teachers spend a large portion of a child's day with them, it is necessary that these teachers know and understand how bibliotherapy can aid in growth in areas where the child may be lacking. Because, "... these individuals often lack the clinical training necessary to facilitate the therapeutic dialog that is an essential component of treatment," (Pola & Nelson, 2014, p. 342) bibliotherapy can be used as a layman's treatment intervention.

Other Existing Studies on Bibliotherapy

After researching the effects of bibliotherapy on children who have experienced various types of trauma, ranging from parental absence and humiliation to living through a worldwide pandemic or natural disaster, De Vries et al. (2017) found a significant decrease in the participants' social anxiety and depression, as well as found a significant increase in participant communication, coping skills, and self-expression. Pola and Nelson (2014) found that children who have experienced disaster showed positive signs of coping after being exposed to bibliotherapy. Betzalel and Schtman (2017) studied the effects of bibliotherapy on children with parental absence who showed signs of anxiety, violent behavior, and aggression and found that these children significantly decreased in their levels of anxiety and showed less violent behavior and aggression.

Heath et. al (2017) researched the effects of children's literature on young children's social-emotional health and found that the use of children's literature affects young children's mental health in a multi-faceted way. Sapra (2019) found that children with ADHD and other social-emotional disorders showed growth in self concept and confidence after implementing bibliotherapy (p. 2162). Akgun and Benli (2019) studied the effects of bibliotherapy on children in preschool and found that, "Bibliotherapy helps children in preschool express their emotions and thoughts, solve their problems, cope with their negative emotions, develop positive self

perception, support their self-confidence and overcome difficult situations" (Akgun & Benli, 2019, p. 109). Molton (2020) found several common themes among his data that point to students' social-emotional wellbeing after studying the effects of bibliotherapy on children. These themes included student needs that relate to the individuals' self efficacy and behavior performance. Molton (2020) found that students' behavior performance negatively reflected when their social-emotional needs were not being met.

The Need for This Study

While there is ample research on the benefits of reading quality children's literature to young children (Agosto, 2013), there is minimal research regarding the benefits of reading children's literature to teach social-emotional and self-regulatory skills through the use of bibliotherapy in a classroom setting. In addition, there is a lack of research relating to the implementation of this literature and its relation to student behavior performance. Because of the lack of research regarding the connection between social-emotional skills and behavior, this study holds a high level of educational importance.

The research and results found by this study will give new insight into the field of educational research by giving new information on how the implementation of high quality social-emotional literature affects student behavior performance. In addition to adding to the field of educational research, this study will benefit my class by allowing the students to grow in their social-emotional skills as well as provide an intervention to the behavioral problems being observed in the classroom. When less time is being devoted to redirecting negative behavior, more instructional time may take place.

Methods

During the time of my research study, I was serving as a yearlong graduate student clinical teacher in the second semester of the academic school year. Because of the uniqueness of the situation, I was able to form connections and relations between the students in the class before the intervention took place. This allowed me to view the participants of the study in a unique way, as I was both their teacher and researcher. The sections below explain the mixed-methods data collection and analysis used in this study.

Participant Selection

The participants of this study were the third-grade students in my homeroom class consisting of sixteen in-person students with an emphasis on four to five children in the class, Oliver (male, Hispanic), Michael (male, African-American), Ben (male, Hispanic), Logan (male, African-American), and Aly (female, African-American). Out of sixteen in-person students, nine were girls and seven were boys. The classroom demographics consisted of ten Hispanic students, three African-American students, two White students, and one mixed student. All ages of the students in the class ranged from eight to nine years old. Out of the sixteen students in the class, fifteen students assented to the study and received parent permission to participate.

Data Collection

The intervention took place once a day over a five-day week period for three weeks. The intervention consisted of reading one piece of quality literature that the students were able to see themselves represented in. The books used during these bibliotherapy sessions were chosen based on the needs of the students in the class. Data was collected through surveys, documentation collection, interviews, and observation with the addition of field notes. The same survey was given as a pre- and post-survey to all fifteen students and consisted of ten Likert

scale questions and two open ended questions. Questions were asked about social-emotional skills and students' perceptions of their own emotions in which students were invited to respond with their honest answers (see Appendix A).

Documentation was collected for five students in the class: Oliver, Michael, Ben, Logan, and Aly. I collected data from the students' behavioral RTIs, or Response to Interventions, and "Daily Behavior Rubric" where I analyzed the number of office referrals as well as daily behavior scores before and after the intervention. Documentation pertaining to the loss of Dojo points from the Class Dojo app was collected for the whole class. Class Dojo is an app that is used as a behavioral management system that aims to foster positive behavior. This app was used as a behavioral management tool within our homeroom class. The points from this app were collected as a means to track student behavior. Depending on student behavior, students may gain or lose points throughout the school day. During the implementation of the study, I collected the number of Dojo points lost for the whole class per day.

Interviews were conducted with four students in the class (see interview protocol in Appendix B). Two students were chosen randomly by the Dojo app. Out of the remaining ten students in the class, two students were then chosen at random depending on the severity of their behavior by the Dojo app. These interviews lasted a duration of about fifteen minutes and took place in the third grade book room. During the interview, the conversations were recorded. Once the interviews had concluded, these recordings were used to transcribe the interviews.

I observed the students within the classroom every day, Monday through Friday over a four week period during the spring semester of the 2021 school year. As these observations were taking place, I took very brief field notes throughout the school day and fleshed out these notes after each day. I watched as the students interact with one another and the environment around

them. I closely observed Julian, Jarred, Heavenly, and Shawn to obtain information on and how their behavior changed throughout the course of the intervention.

Data Analysis

The data I collected was both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data collected was analyzed by using the constant comparative method (Hubbard & Power, 2003). Descriptive statistics with the addition of percentages aided in the quantitative data analysis to describe the data collected in the study (Hubbard & Power, 2003).

I analyzed the pre- and post-surveys given to the students with the use of tally marks which stood for the responses given by the students. Tally marks standing for student responses were compared between the pre- and post-surveys. After the data had been tallied, the data was used to create bar graphs. These bar graphs were then compared to one another to find differences and similarities between the pre- and post-surveys.

To analyze the behavior documentation, I compared the amount of behavior referrals and loss of Dojo points throughout the intervention. To analyze field notes taken during classroom observation, I read through the notes and journals that I had collected throughout the study and coded 20% of these notes to find themes and helpful information to reach an answer to my research question (Tracy, 2013). The qualitative data generated from the interviews given to the students was coded to create 15 to 20 level 1 codes. These level 1 codes were overarching ideas or topics that appeared frequently throughout the data (Tracy, 2013). After finding the 15 to 20 level 1 codes, I used the themes found within this data to code the remaining 80% of the data collected. After creating the level 1 codes, I looked for overarching themes and topics within the data to create three to five level 2 codes. These level 2 codes stood for the major themes within the remaining data (Tracy, 2013). Coding the data allowed me to see common themes among the

responses given by the participants. Throughout the entire coding process, I generated memos (Tracy, 2013) for each level 2 code. After each level 2 code was created, I indexed the data where I gathered together all of the supporting data for each level 2 code. These memos then aided in my analysis of the data being coded. The coded data can be found in the codebook (see Appendix C) that gives the list of completed codes, definitions, and examples from the data.

Findings

After data collection and analysis, the following major themes emerged: observable shifts in behavior, identifying with color spots, factors affecting behavior, and student perceptions of the intervention. These themes developed based on the data pertaining to the Student Self-Perception Survey, student interviews, and the daily reflections that were written after daily observations.

Observable Shifts in Behavior

The “Observable Shifts in Behavior” code represents the shift in behavior that showed signs that the students learned lessons throughout the intervention period. These observable changes included various coping strategies and social-emotional skills that lead to positive or desired behavior in the classroom during and after the intervention period. Before the intervention had taken place, the students in my classroom were often negative, combative, and disrespectful to their peers, their teachers, and their surroundings. A typical outward emotional response given by a student before the intervention took place was to express the intense emotion on a classmate or classroom object close by. Because of this, the classroom book boxes and the contents inside of the book boxes could be found scattered on the floor, the classroom community was at an all-time low, and the students were unable to cope with their emotions.

Towards the end of the study, I had participated in various interactions with school staff and administration. During these interactions and conversations, the individuals explained to me the difference that they had observed with my classroom. One of our specials teachers explained that our class has shown significant growth in their listening, self-control, and social-emotional skills. Because of these changes, our class received a “golden award” for the most well behaved classes in the school during particular weeks.

Before the intervention had taken place, the students in the class oftentimes lost more Dojo points during their school day than they did gain them. Because of this, students Dojo Point scores were in the negatives, meaning the students had lost so many points that they would need to gain enough to break zero. After the intervention had concluded, the slope of the Dojo point Verses Date line graph (see Figure 1) was positive, meaning the class averaged an increasing score of behavioral points as the intervention took place.

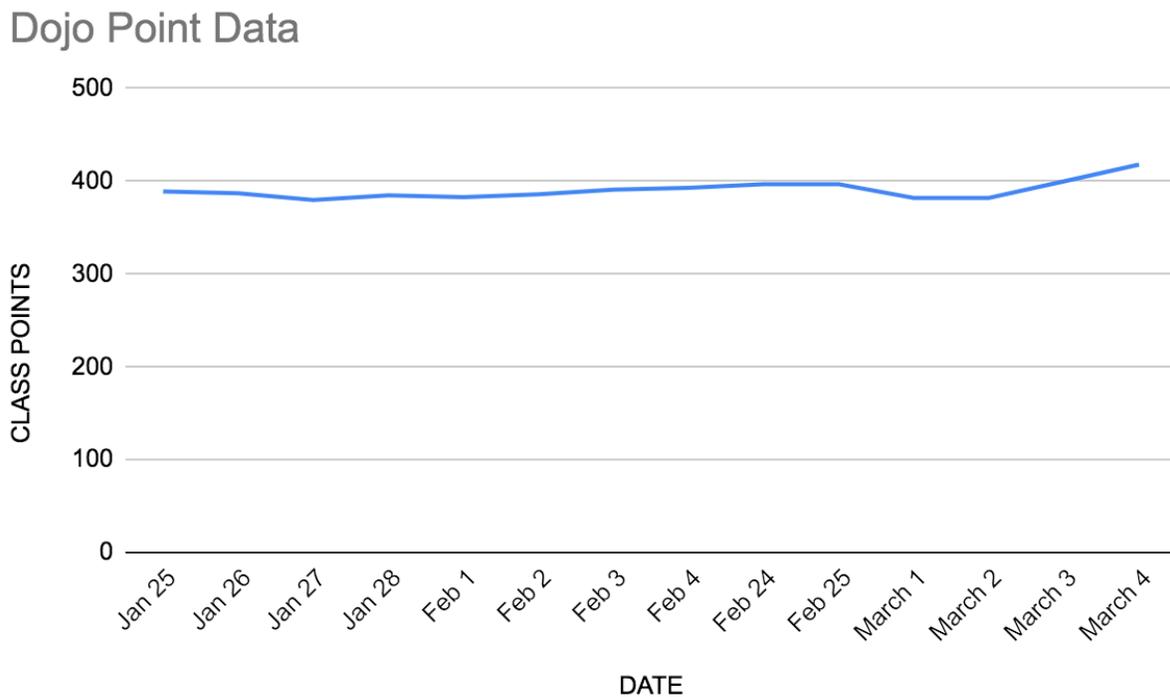


Figure 1. Dojo point data graph.

Because three out of the fifteen students who participated in the study were on behavioral RTIs were moved from their behavioral services and placed into special education services, they were no longer placed on a behavioral RTI. This left only one student in the class receiving daily behavioral intervention sheets. The one student in the class that remained on a behavioral RTI received daily check-ins that were carried out with the school’s behavioral interventionist. The student was able to score a daily point total and his behavior throughout the day determined how many points he would earn on his daily behavior check in sheet (see Figure 2).

My Daily Behavioral Progress

Name: Logan Date: 1-25-21

Daily Goal: 38 pts

What am I working for: Lunch with _____ and a friend _____

REPROACTIVE

2=Excellent; 1=Try Harder; 0=Needs Improvement

Target Behaviors	Check In	E.L.A.	Mrs.	Mrs.	Lunch & Recess	Specials	Math	Check out
Follow Directions (With 2 or fewer reminders.)	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0
Do My Work (I will work hard and keep focused.)	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0
Staying quiet in the classroom (I will raise my hand when I need to speak or have a question.)	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0
Did I throw a fit over the iPad, or get the iPad without permission?								2 ⁿ 0

Total Points 44 (4/50) Check Out Signature: _____

Additional Comments:
WJ had earned lunch ✓ for today.

Figure 2. An example of a daily behavior check in sheet.

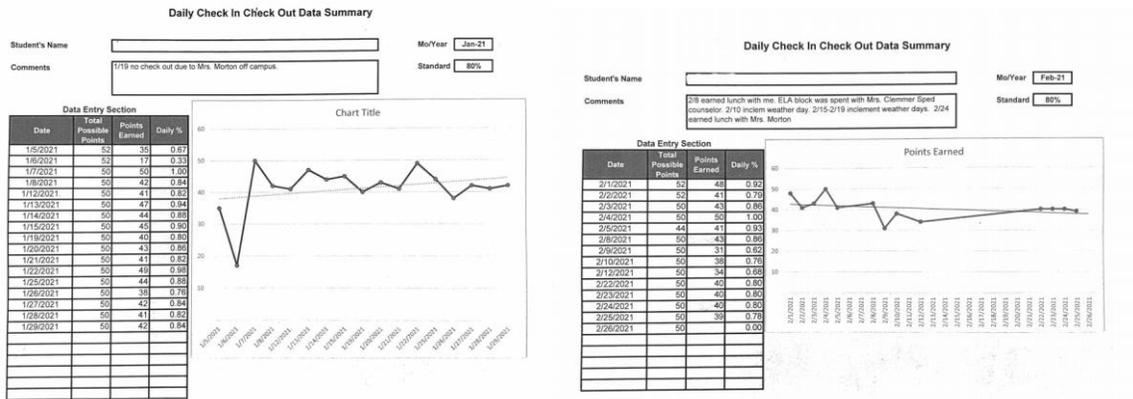


Figure 3. The graph on the left-hand side shows the data collected from the Daily Behavior Rubric for the month before and during the intervention took place. The graph on the right-hand side shows the Daily Behavior Rubric data for the month that the intervention took place.

When comparing the graphs pertaining to the daily check ins (see Figure 3), you can see that the student’s daily behavior score slowly declined over the progression of the month that the intervention took place. Over the course of the intervention, the student did not show any outward changes in his behavior relating to the categories being measured on the check in sheet: following directions, doing his work, and staying quiet in class. Though there were possible outliers that may have placed an impact on this data, there was no quantitative data that represented a positive shift in behavior for this specific child during this time. While this was the case, there were various shifts in this child’s outward social-emotional behavior that were not explicitly measured on the daily check in sheet. During the time of the intervention, only one office referral was issued to the students in the class while the class averaged 2.5 office referrals per month before the intervention. The data relating to this code holds significance to my study as it relates to the nature of my study by giving insight into the effects of the literature being read aloud to the students participating in the study.

Identifying With Color Spots

The majority of the books that were used during the whole-group read aloud sessions throughout the intervention were from the “A Little SPOT Of Emotion” (Alber, 2019) series. The books in the series were about emotions that my students often felt on a daily basis: anger, anxiety, sadness, confidence, love, happiness, peace, and scribble, an emotion that represents a jumbled mess of emotions (Alber, 2019). These books target children of all ages and explicitly teach their readers how to identify, cope with, and manage these emotions. Each emotion is portrayed as a “little spot” and is identified by color.

Before the intervention took place, the students in my class showed signs that they lacked the essential social-emotional skills that these books explicitly taught. Because of this, my students often found themselves facing the repercussions of their negative behaviors while not ever addressing the underlying emotional issues that either contributed or caused the problems in the first place. After the first few days of the intervention had passed, I started to notice that students were identifying their emotions by naming the color of which they were labeled as in the book. For example, rather than saying “I am feeling mad,” the student would say “I am feeling a red spot.” While the students did identify with other book characters that were not spot-related, no observable connections were made by the students in the class regarding book characters from books aside from the “little spots.”

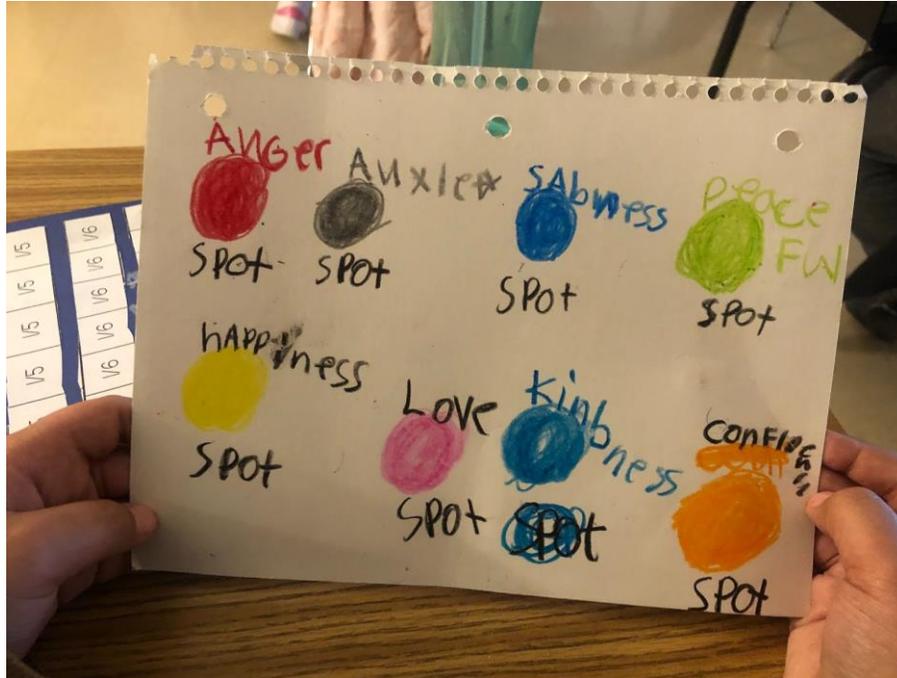


Figure 4. Aly’s “Emotion Identification” tool that she created and used throughout the time of the intervention.

When I came into the classroom one particular morning, Aly was excited to show me that she had created her own “Emotion Identifying Tool” (see Figure 4). She explained to me that she had created this tool to help her identify her emotions so that she can better identify the way that she is feeling which will allow her to cope with these emotions before any negative behavior occurs.

This finding relates to the nature of my research question by giving insight on the effects of this literature that teaches social-emotional skills and encourages students to grow in their social-emotional skills.

Factors Affecting Behavior

The “Factors Affecting Behavior” code represents the sudden shift in vulnerability that allowed the students to share about the outside factors affecting their behavior in the classroom setting. As the intervention took place, I noticed recurring themes that pointed to the root causes

of the undesired negative behavior. Before the intervention, regardless of the relationships that were made between myself and my students, I had little knowledge of the root causes of the negative behavior being observed.

As the intervention was being conducted, I realized that the students in the class were becoming very open about their lives outside of the classroom. During our sessions together, one of the students made a comment about how he could relate to the characters in the books being read because he "...knows what it feels like to have a mama who does not care." Another example was one afternoon during a bibliotherapy session, one of the students raised his hand and shared with the class about a time that he had felt uneasy while he and his family were living out of their car. Another time, a student explained that he feels angry because "Things are just different" when referring to COVID-19, and because of "...this damn mask."

In an interview with our Ben, our friend who escaped from his emotions by putting his hood up and his head down on his desk, I asked him why he wore his hood up. Before the intervention, this student explained to me that he wore his hood up because he liked it up. As the interview was taking place, the student explained to me that he wore his hood up because his, "Mama don't have time to do my hair because she be at work, and I gotta get everyone ready for school." The data relating to this code holds significance to my study and relates to the nature of my research question by giving me insight into the root of the behavioral problems occurring in the classroom setting.

Student Perceptions of the Intervention

This code represents the students' perceptions of the intervention. The data that was collected and used to create this code came from student interviews and classroom observation.

During one of the interviews about student perceptions of the books, a student explained that, “I really love the books. They help me a lot.” She also explained that before we started reading the books, when she would get mad, she would just yell and now that she has read the books, rather than yelling, she taps her fingers and breathes to calm down.

When comparing the pre- and post-social-emotional skill survey, I found that the students in the classroom averaged an increase of 1.46 points, which allows me to believe that the students' social-emotional skills were built upon during the study. Aside from the quantitative data that represented the social-emotional growth of the students in the classroom, the open ended questions served as a means to collect students' growth and perceptions of the intervention. Out of the fifteen students included in the study, five students showed significant growth by explaining that their coping strategies had improved. The coping strategies that the students wrote about were pulled directly from the books read aloud to the class. This allowed me to believe that the students learned important social-emotional skills that directly affected their behavior throughout the study.

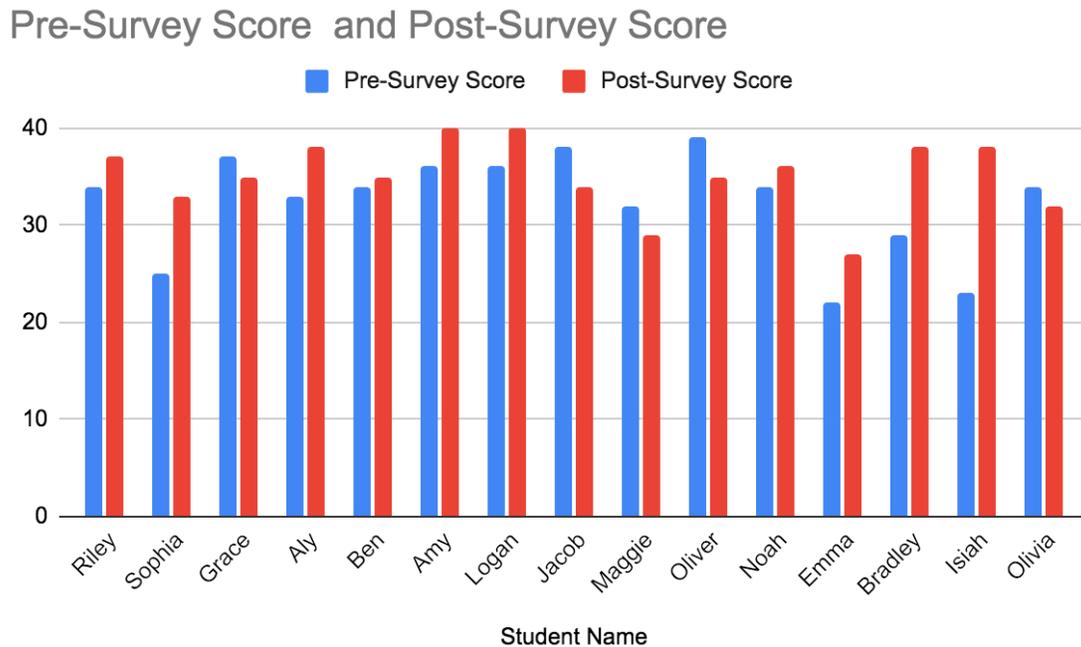


Figure 5. Pre-survey versus post-survey score graph.

The graph in Figure 5 stands for the student pre- and post-survey scores. As the two were compared, I noticed that the majority of students grew in their self-perception score after the interview, though some of the students' scores went the opposite direction as hoped after the intervention had taken place. Overall, the students grew in their self-perception score as a whole. Though some students declined in their scores, the class still grew by an average of five points. When comparing the open-ended questions between the pre- and post-survey, three students' responses stood out to me due to the shift in their responses before and after the intervention. The students' responses can be seen and compared in Figure(s) 6-11.

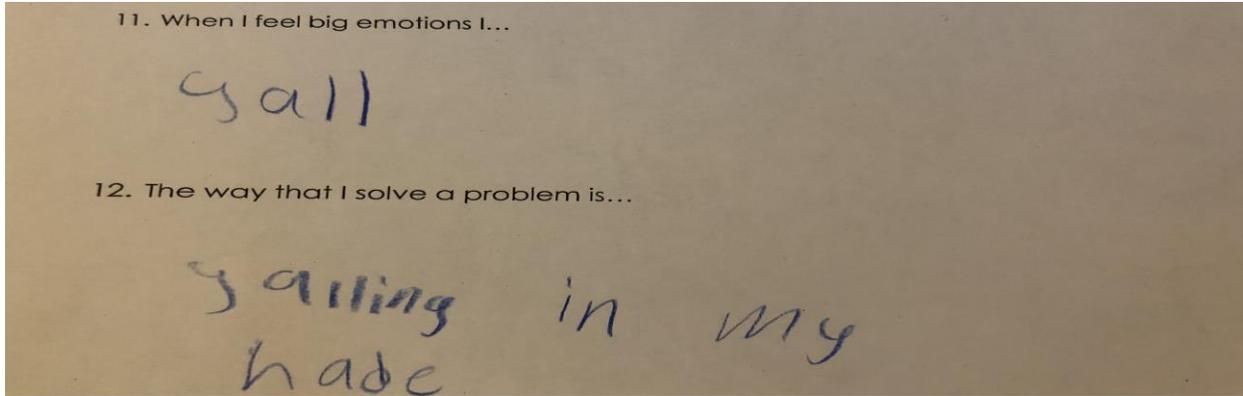


Figure 6. Emma’s response on the open-ended portion of the social emotional self-perception pre-survey. “When I feel big emotions I... yell,” and “The way that I solve a problem is... yelling in my head.”

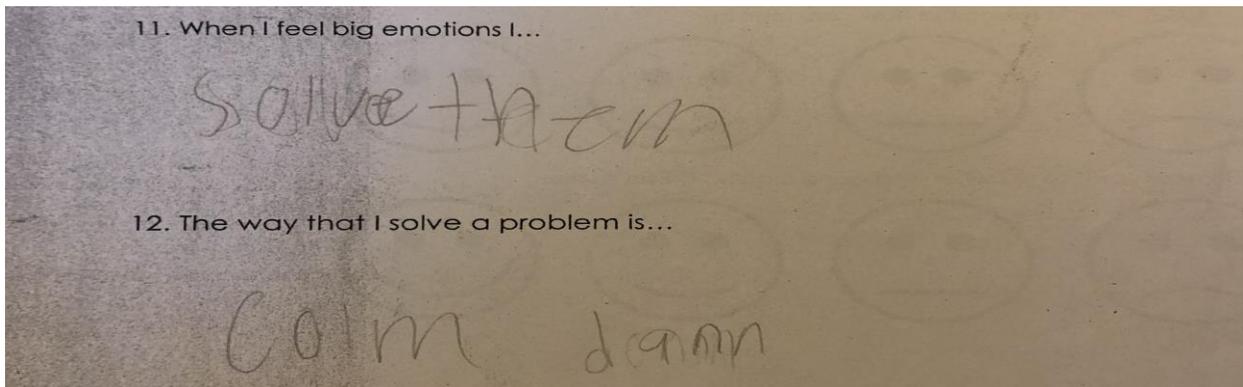


Figure 7. Emma’s response on the open-ended portion of the social emotional self-perception post-survey. “When I feel big emotions I... solve them,” and “The way that I solve a problem is... calm down.”

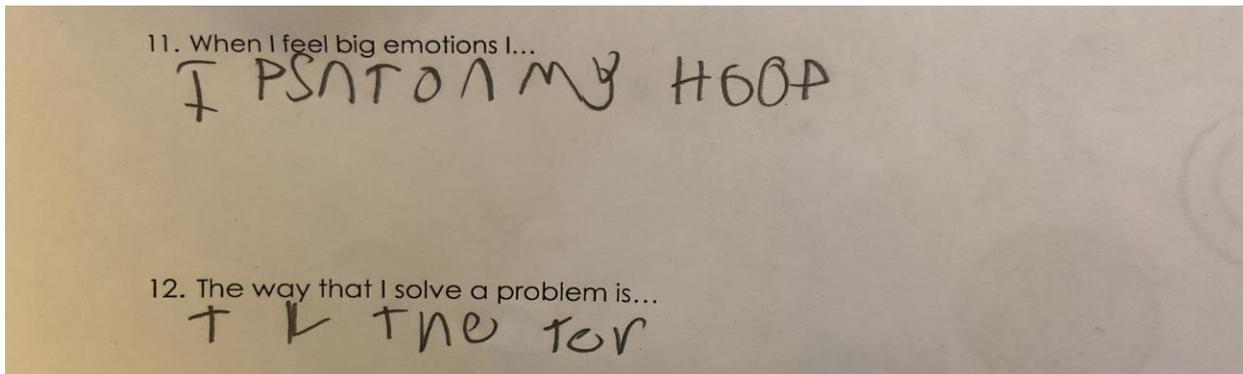


Figure 8. Logan's response on the open-ended portion of the social emotional self-perception pre-survey. "When I feel big emotions I...I put on my hood," and "The way that I solve a problem is...tell the teacher."

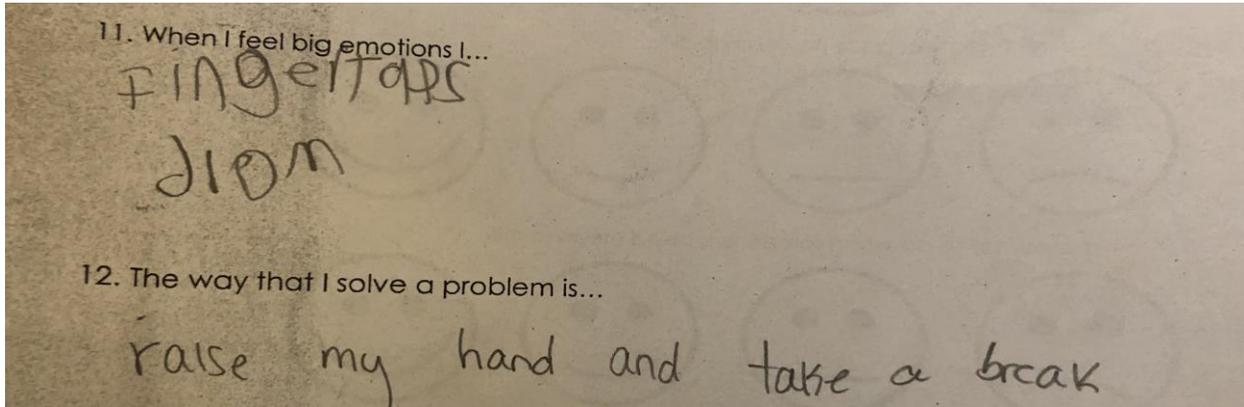


Figure 9. Logan's response on the open-ended portion of the social emotional self-perception post-survey. "When I feel big emotions I... finger taps and blow," and "The way that I solve a problem is... raise my hand and take a break" (second response transcribed by teacher).

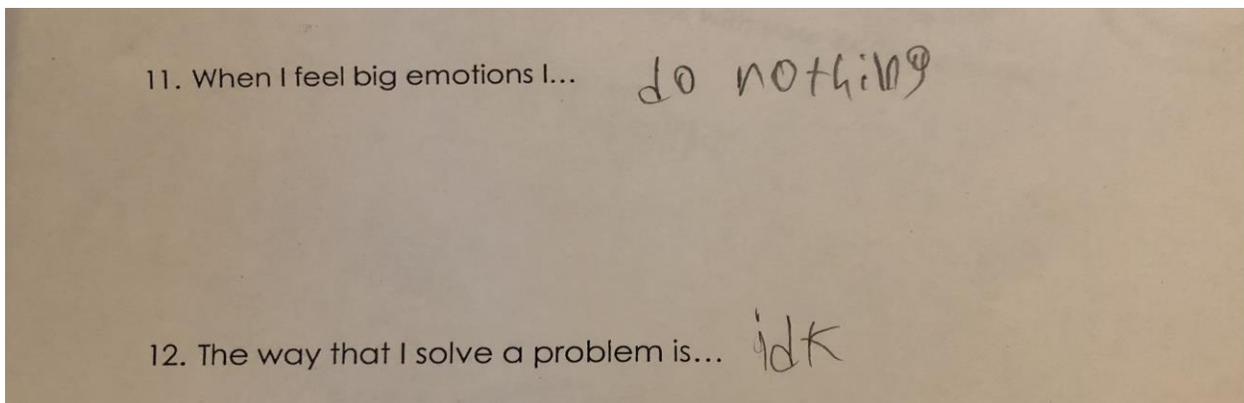


Figure 10. Ben's response on the open-ended portion of the social emotional self-perception pre-survey. "When I feel big emotions I...do nothing," and "The way that I solve a problem is...idk."

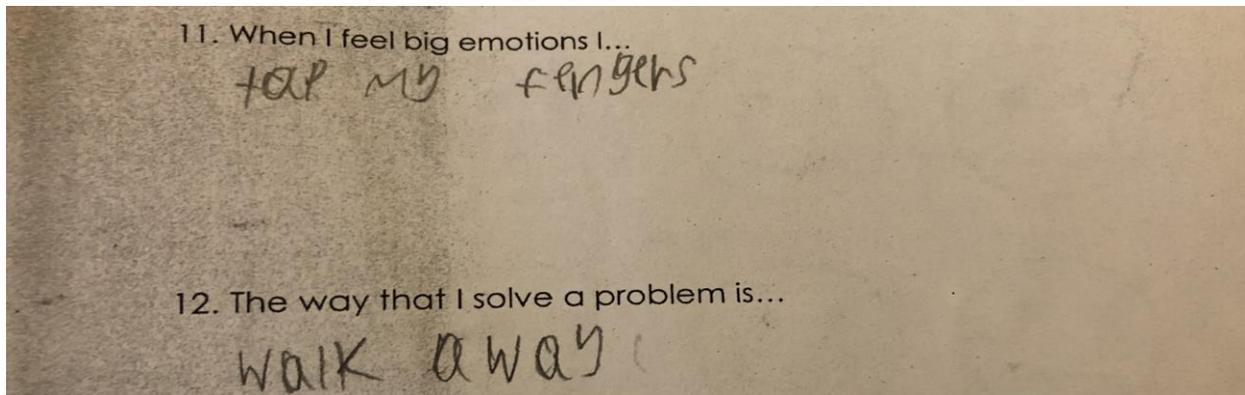


Figure 11. Ben’s response on the open-ended portion of the social emotional self-perception post-survey. “When I feel big emotions I... tap my fingers,” and “The way that I solve a problem is... walk away.”

The data relating to this code holds significance to my study because it relates to the nature of my research question by answering my sub-question of the students’ perceptions of the intervention. This data also gives me insight into how the students grew in a social-emotional sense by directly mirroring the skills being highlighted in the books.

The Relationship Between Behavior and Books

While I so desperately wanted the effects of this study to be easily observed when relating to student behavior, I could not say that they entirely were. Though there were shifts in student behavior, these shifts in behavior were minor. Before the intervention, the classroom oftentimes dealt with behaviors that would hinder both the student dealing with the challenges, as well as those around that child, from learning. This domino-effect in student behavior was one that affected the relationships within the classroom, resulting in a low classroom community with few ties between students. Students were not always excited to come to school, not willing to participate in lessons, and often isolated from the large group of students. This lack of relationships in the classroom contributed to the students not having any accountability in other students in the class, which related to the students’ negative behavior.

As the intervention was carried out, I did notice a shift in the relationships between the students in the class as they were building relationships with one another. Students began to show that they valued inclusivity, something that was not observed or felt in the classroom setting before the intervention. Students were practicing inclusion at recess and holding their peers accountable. Because of the inclusion and accountability being observed in the students, the culture of the classroom slowly began to shift from one where the students were often very negative in their nature to one where the students were beginning to acknowledge their peers and their struggles, and help these struggling students by becoming a friend to those who needed one.

Limitations

The following section explains the limitations that were present in the study. These limitations could have contributed to possible flaws that may have affected the data pertained from the study. One of the largest limitations of this study was finding the perfect book for each situation occurring in the classroom. Because of the lack of literature referring to the trials and tribulations that young children face in our current age (Agusto, 2013), it was not easy to find the perfect book that related to the students' struggles. In order to meet each child with a book that mirrors their situations or needs in a classroom setting, the teacher must already have these books on hand if he or she is going to meet the student in the exact moment that a problems arises.

Another resource that was lacking during this study was time. As our school days were already extremely busy and crammed full with lessons and activities, finding time to devote to the social-emotional construction of students was challenging at times. Because of the lack of time to devote specifically to reading to the large-group class, not every child was included in the readings. Trying to find time during the already-busy day to have time devoted to read to the

students and to have intentional conversations about the subject of the books was a difficult thing to do.

Though I am not sure of the reasoning behind multiple students' self-perception scores lessening, I think that the factor that contributed to scores falling was also a limitation. Because of the lack of time devoted to students completing this survey, the students were asked to hurry through the survey so that we could move into the first lesson of the day. This rushed atmosphere led to students hurrying through the survey and becoming upset that they did not have enough time to finish.

Also, the post-survey survey was not given at the same time of day as the pre-survey. The pre survey was given at the tail-end of a school day, right after the students left from school. This time of day is often exciting in the classroom, as the students just finished out their afternoons and are ready to go home for the day, while the post-survey was given in the morning time when the students were sleepy and not entirely thrilled to be at school.

Implications for Teachers

Before the intervention had taken place, I had little knowledge about what was driving my students' negative behaviors in the classroom setting. Knowing that something needed to be changed, I had decided that an intentional intervention needed to be implemented in order to meet the students where they were in hopes to minimize the disruptive behavior being observed. The reason for justifying the need for this study was simply because what we were doing in the classroom to combat negative behavior was not working. Consequences do not teach children how not to reoffend with their behavior. Throughout the study, I watched as my students learned the lessons in the books being read aloud in our bibliotherapy sessions and realized that while these lessons were in fact helping my students cope with the negative emotions that they were

experiencing that was causing negative behavior in the classroom, the books did not change the students' behavior altogether. While this was the case, the books that were used as an intervention during our bibliotherapy sessions were most definitely a factor that related to the rise in social-emotional skills and minor changes in behavior for my students.

While I was going into this study to seek a behavioral solution to the negative behaviors in the classroom through books, after assessing the data and spending time sorting through it, I realized that while there was a small shift of student behavior, the most prominent outcome that was seen at the end of the study was simple: the student behavior began to shift during the intervention because of the relationships that were being created from bibliotherapy sessions.

The books did not change the students; the relationships that the books created and cultivated between the students in the class allowed the students to find safety and accountability between one another, as well as with me as their teacher. These books gave the students a way to talk about the problems in their own lives that would not necessarily come out in conversations during the day. During the time being spent with one another sharing vulnerable topics, the students built new relationships and restored old relationships between one another in the class. The connections between the students in the classroom that were cultivated through our bibliotherapy sessions created the relationships that indirectly caused the negative behavior to decline in the classroom.

Smith et al. (2015) explains that when we know and understand the students in our classroom, we are better able to help these students with their struggles. Knowing our students and creating these connections among the classroom allows students to know that they are seen, understood, and cared for (Smith et al., 2015). When students feel this way about themselves and the environments that they are in, they are less likely to act out and will feel more comfortable to

ask for help or guidance from a more knowledgeable other. When we create relationships and connections with and among the students in our classrooms, we are taking proactive measures rather than reactive measures to classroom management and discipline both inside and outside of the classroom.

Because it is true that, "...rewards and consequences are two sides of the same coin: both are attempts to control students' behavior rather than teach them how to engage in productive learning" (Smith et al., 2015, p. 14), rather than giving and taking away rewards from children when they misbehave, teachers must approach behavioral challenges just as they would approach learning challenges within the classroom setting (Smith et al., 2015). If a student did poorly on an assignment on a particular day, would the teacher remove or take away his A+ grade that he had earned the day before? Children need scaffolding when approaching behavior, rather than rewards being revoked. Because, "...problematic behaviors signal a student's lack of skills for responding appropriately to difficult situations" (Smith et al., 2015, p. 42), we must create these relationships in order to understand the needs that are not being met for these students with problematic behaviors. The relationships created from the bibliotherapy sessions cultivated vulnerability that led to trusting relationships in the classroom.

This study has taught me that educators must explicitly teach young children how to control their emotions and behavior (Smith et al., 2015). It is necessary to teach these social-emotional skills and allow students ample opportunities to practice these skills in a safe environment. Smith et al. (2015) explain that, "Just as students need teachers to teach them grammar and math, they need us to teach them how to respond properly to events" (p. 90).

Because of the nature of our school year with the worldwide health pandemic, COVID-19, and the already busy schedule that we were dealt with, as we tried to make up for lost time in

the classroom, the social-emotional needs of the students were placed on the backburner so that learning could be the first priority. The largest implication for teachers that this study presented is simple and obvious, yet has an iceberg of implications to follow: teachers must be intentional about devoting time to meet the social-emotional needs of the students in the class. When we explicitly teach students how to handle difficult conversations and how to mend relationships by focusing on all aspects of conflict (Smith et al., 2015), we are setting them up for success beyond our classroom.

When the educators know and understand the students in their classrooms, they are better able to help these students with their struggles. Knowing our students and creating these connections among the classroom will allow students to know that they are seen, understood, and cared for. When students feel confident about themselves and the environments that they are in, they are less likely to act out and will feel more comfortable to ask for help or guidance from a more knowledgeable other. When we create relationships and connections with and among the students in our classrooms, we are taking proactive measures rather than reactive measures to classroom management and discipline both inside and outside of the classroom.

Moving forward from the study, I am curious as both an educator and a researcher about how student behavior might have been different if this study were implemented in a year-long setting. If social-emotional skills were directly taught to the students in the classroom from the first day of school, would these behavioral problems have arisen? My second question moving forward from this study is how this study might have been different if more time had been given to the class to discuss the ideas and topics in the books read aloud. I am curious to know how the classroom atmosphere, as well as the relationships between the students in the class would have shifted even further had the space for vulnerability been intentionally carved out from the busy

day, rather than having the bibliotherapy sessions at the tail-end of the day, or during random times of the day where we had just a few minutes to spare.

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Appendix A

Student Interview Protocol

- Tell me about the books that we have read as a class each afternoon community circle time.
- Tell me about what happens when you feel big feelings.
- What happens when someone is unkind to you?
- How does it make you feel when you are kind to someone?
- What do you do if your feelings have been hurt?
- How have the books that we have been reading helped you?
- Tell me about how you know how others are feeling.
- Tell me about when you lose Dojo points.
- Tell me about when you gain Dojo points.
- Tell me about how you solve conflicts.

Questions may vary and additional questions may be asked depending on the answers of the participants

Appendix B

Student Self-Perception Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

Shade in the face that best represents your honest answer.

1. I get along with others in the class.



2. I have multiple best friends in the class.



3. When I get angry, I know how to calm myself down.



4. When I get sad, I know how to deal with my emotions.



5. I know how to recognize how I am feeling.



6. I know what to do when someone is being mean to me.



7. I know how to make a friend.



8. I am able to solve conflicts



9. I can tell how others are feeling.



10. I enjoy working with my classmates.



Answer the following questions with your honest answer.

11. When I feel big emotions I...

12. The way that I solve a problem is...

Appendix C

Codebook

Level 2 Codes	Level 1 Codes	Definition	Example
Observable Shifts in Behavior	Coping strategies	This code represents the positive or desired shift in behavior that took place in the classroom during the intervention period that showed how the students learned how to cope with their emotions rather than taking them out in other inappropriate ways.	<p>“I think I need to go to the Zen Zone because I am feeling a little angry.” -Data pulled from daily reflections</p> <p>Rather than throwing his book box across the room (his typical response to becoming frustrated), he sat his book down and began doing his finger exercises. I watched for about two minutes. The student did a total of about 40 finger taps and after the last one, he took a deep breath and opened his book back up to begin reading again. -Data pulled from daily reflections</p>
	Identifying How Others Are Feeling	This code represents the positive or desired shift in behavior that took place in the classroom during the intervention period that showed how the students learned various social-emotional skills.	<p>I asked the school’s behavioral interventionist how his classmates responded to the situation and she said that each student was very supportive saying “It’s okay Logan, next time!” -Data pulled from daily reflections</p> <p>After an altercation between a group of girls in the class, I noticed two notes on the girls’ desks, where the girls wrote their apologies and forgiveness to one another. -Data from daily reflections</p>
	Taking Control of Behavior	This code represents how the students acknowledged their behavior and handled	“I am needing a few minutes in the Zen Zone. I am feeling mad. I need to get away and breathe.”

	Before it Escalates	their emotions before behavior escalated.	-Data pulled from daily observations
	Including Others In Activities	This code represents the shift in inclusivity that was observed in the classroom throughout the intervention.	“I could tell that he was feelin’ lonely ‘cus he was just sittin’ there all alone and so I asked him if he wanted to play with me.” -Data from student interview
	A Positive Classroom Community	This code represents the shift in the classroom community that was observed over the course of the intervention.	As students walked into the classroom, they were greeted by their classmates. One student shared that he was glad to see one of his classmates and was glad that he had come to school. -Data pulled from daily reflections It seemed that the relationships between students were becoming stronger as they were holding one another accountable throughout the day. -Data pulled from daily reflections
	Positive Changes Observed By Others	This code represents the changes that outsiders observed in the students’ behavior.	When looking at one of the student’s office referrals from the time of the intervention, she said to me, “He’s not had nearly the amount of referrals that he did a few months ago.” -Data pulled from daily reflections
Identifying With Color Spots	Do Like The Scribble Spot Does	This code represents how the students identify their emotions through spots that represent various emotions.	“I just need to do like the little scribble spot does.” -Data pulled from daily reflections “I need my confidence spot with me at all times.” -Data pulled from daily reflections “I think I am feeling a little red spot and need to go to the Zen Zone for a minute.” -Data pulled from daily reflections

	I Need My Orange Spot At All Times	This code represents how the students represent their emotions through colors.	“Don’t worry, I don’t need a dot on my hand. I have the orange one in my head.” -Data pulled from daily reflections
Factors Affecting Behavior	I Don’t Want to go to School	This code represents the sudden shift in vulnerability that allowed the students to share about the outside factors affecting their behavior in the classroom setting in their personal lives.	“He explained to me that earlier that morning before coming to school, his mom had told him that he was in charge of getting his siblings ready for school so that his mom could get ready for work. Because he was getting everyone ready for school, he did not have enough time to do his own hair. Because his hair was not done, he did not want to take his hood off.” - Data pulled from daily reflections
	This Damn Mask	This code represents the reasons behind the negative behaviors during a global pandemic.	“I mostly get mad because everything is just different. And these damn masks.” -Data pulled from student interview “I just get so mad because everything is so different.” - Data pulled from student interview
	Factors Within School Affecting Behavior	This code represents the factors within the school setting that affected the students’ behavior	“I get mad at school because it’s just too much. My work. There’s too much.” -Data pulled from student interview
	Factors Outside of School Affecting Behavior	This code represents the factors outside of the school setting that affected students’ behavior.	“I’m not doing my work because I’m too tired. I had to sleep on the couch and so I didn’t get any sleep.” -Data pulled from daily reflections

<p>Student Perception of the Intervention</p>	<p>I Am Confident Now</p>	<p>This code represents the students' self-perceptions after the intervention.</p>	<p>"I really love the books. They help me a lot." -Data pulled from student interview</p> <p>"Now I know how to help other people and be friends." -Data pulled from daily reflections</p>
	<p>Even Grown Ups Need Emotion Books</p>	<p>This code represents the students' perceptions of the books read during the intervention.</p>	<p>"Everyone needs books read to them. Even old people." -Data collected from daily reflections</p> <p>"We need emotion books." - Data pulled from student interview</p>
	<p>I Really Love The Books</p>	<p>This code represents the student perceptions of the individual books read during intervention.</p>	<p>"We have the same hairstyle!" - Data pulled from daily reflections</p> <p>"Miss Peters, can I please read one of the books that you read to us during independent reading time? I just really love it and need it today." -Data pulled from daily reflections</p>