

Promoting Positive Identity Among Children in A School Curriculum

BY

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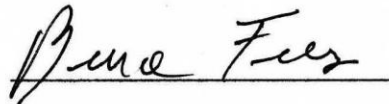
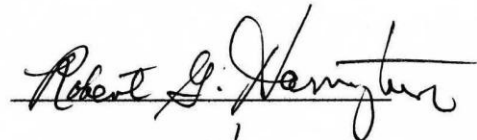
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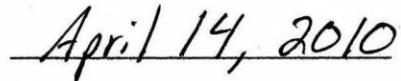


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Abstract

Positive identity development is the social-emotional process of forming a healthy self-awareness including high self-esteem and self-efficacy. This study examined the impact of a Best Possible Selves class - that involved identifying individual strengths and setting goals - on third and fourth graders' self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Participants included 112 private school third and fourth grade students ranging from 9-12 years of age. There were 56 participants in the intervention group (41 third grade and 16 fourth grade students) who attended the Best Possible Selves class twice a week for four weeks. Lessons and activities addressed social roles and life skills that each individual uses in his or her life and how to improve other life skills that are important for future goals. The control group (15 third grade and 40 fourth grade students) did not participate in the Best Possible Selves class. Pre-test and post-test scores were compared between the control group and the intervention group. Post-test scores revealed no differences between the control and intervention conditions in self-esteem or self-efficacy, but post-test scores did indicate an increase in self-concept reflective trait descriptions that increased over time among students in the intervention condition. This implies more self-awareness or understanding of individual traits due to the Best Possible Selves curriculum.

Appreciation

Thank you for the support from my friends and family who were my constant cheerleaders throughout this demanding chapter of my life. To my committee and professors; especially Dr. Meagan Patterson for her knowledgeable advice and guidance through this process, as well as to Dr. Lacy Johnson, whom without her help I would not have been able to organize and reorganize my thoughts onto paper. Thank you to the faculty, students and parents of Pembroke Hill School for your cooperation and permitting me to implement this study, without which my goals and passions could not be fulfilled.

My research was focused on self-concept and positive identity development among third and fourth graders, but I found myself also on a journey of personal self-discovery. I have reexamined my personal strengths, weaknesses and have overcome many obstacles I was afraid to attempt. This project gave me an opportunity to work with young students and teach them about themselves. The Best Possible Selves class has become a personal goal I will continue to improve in order to allow children to better understand how they are important in this world.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The extant research on identity primarily examines the maturation of social emotional cognition during adolescence (e.g. Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2008). Although identity formation is poignant to adolescents, the constructs of identity begin developing from birth and are molded during childhood. It is in childhood that the journey to self-discovery begins. The sense of self must be nurtured properly in order for a child to adjust healthily and be able to regulate his or her own feelings and behaviors during life or environmental changes. Environmental factors, personality development and how one reacts to life challenges is part of what makes an individual different from any other, and that individuation can be difficult to negotiate during childhood (Anderman, Hicks & Maehr, 1994).

In order to promote healthy and positive identity development, it is important that individuals understand themselves and learn to differentiate themselves from others. This includes identifying important skills and strengths they have that are important in the way they contribute to daily activities in learning, peer and family environments. School age children are still dependent on their parents and other adults to model behaviors that will help them to respond to problem-solving and decision-making challenges. Schools are an important environment for learning and developing these skills, given the amount of time spent in school and the growth and learning that occur in school. The skills that a child learns and develops in school will be utilized later in life, as the child grows and becomes more independent and discovers a sense of individuality during adolescence; a discovery that will influence

future stages of adulthood. If a child can understand how to regulate behaviors triggered by external stressors and major environmental changes, the school learning environment can be easier and more enjoyable. Since so much of a child's experience is concentrated around the school day, a school-based curriculum focused on social-emotional development can contribute to positive identity processes. The research in this paper conducts such a program of study that will teach self-awareness and understanding to school-age children, as well as provide support and motivation for learning. The curriculum will be based on possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and will be administered to third and fourth grade students. Half of the participants will receive training in a Best Possible Selves program, which will directly address self-concept and self-esteem constructs, and may indirectly address social roles. The other half of the participants will be the control group and will not receive training in Best Possible Selves, but will be administered assessments to compare outcomes. By comparing pre-test and post-test results, measuring identity constructs, we will then discuss effective ways of implementing positive social-emotional development into the school curriculum. It will be determined if it is effective to teach Best Possible Selves to improve constructs.

Implementing Best Possible Selves into a school curriculum may also bring awareness to teachers of particular students that may need extra encouragement or support in their efforts of self-awareness and importance in the contributions they make to daily activities. New students who are adapting to new peers, teachers, lessons and surroundings as well as children who struggle making friends could

benefit from a class in which the teacher is aware of these needs and goals. A Best Possible Selves class can create a bridge to close the gap between teacher and student and facilitate a caring bond to enhance learning as well as self-esteem for those who would otherwise be overlooked.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Identity and Positive Identity

The three major elements of identity are self-concept, self-esteem and identity formation (e.g., how one relates and contributes to society; Alsaker & Kroger, 2006). Positive identity is defined as having a strong and healthy self-perception and a sense of well-being. Positive identity is thought to determine, at least partially, how individuals' regulate behaviors, reactions or responses to environmental factors and surroundings. "Positive identity" is the focus of this research. After defining the constructs of this study, a review of literature and research will evaluate previous studies linking interventions to promoting positive identity.

Self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy constructs are not only significant in child and adolescent development, but are influenced by parents, school and environmental experiences. Identity formation is the progression of social roles, and contributing to society (Erikson, 1966). The intention of the Best Possible Selves class is to promote healthy self-concept, higher self-esteem and higher self-efficacy during childhood. By incorporating lessons and activities with these objectives in school, not only are children building social-emotional development, but it can also lead to early detection of mental health problems, lowered self-esteem, unhealthy self-perception and social problems.

Self-Concept

Self-concept is the sum of cognitions about the self, how one understands and perceives the self (Montemayor & Eisen, 1977). It is manifested through personality

traits and beliefs in social, emotional and physical competences. A young child is more likely to define him- or herself with concrete descriptors (gender, name, color of his or her hair and eyes, his or her address, etc.) than with abstract descriptors such as traits and beliefs (Montemayor & Eisen, 1977). As a child continues to grow, thoughts about the self increases and self awareness becomes more abstract; descriptions are more complex and differentiated by interpersonal characteristics and personality traits, moods, and beliefs (Montemayor & Eisen, 1977). Self-concept relates to self-esteem and social roles because it is the description that portrays how one understands the self, which must occur before an individual can differentiate him- or herself from others.

Social-Roles

Social Roles are defined as ways an individual defines him or herself amongst a group by individual skills and interests and how one can contribute these strengths globally (Erikson, 1966). During childhood, children's social roles are practiced among peers especially at school. How one acts, behaves and responds to social situations is a major construct of identity formation and important to social roles (Erikson, 1966).

Self -Esteem

Self-esteem is defined as how individuals evaluate self-worth and value (Alsaker & Kroger, 2006). When a child has high self-esteem, the child will also have a high self-respect and will feel important individually and important to others.

Much of the literature on this topic describes how self-esteem relates to social development and how building social skills can increase self-esteem. Self-esteem affects goals of identity development, motivation and belief in one's ability to achieve.

Self-Efficacy

The feeling and belief in one's individual capabilities to attempt and complete a task defines self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Tasks can include anything from learning, playing a sport, regulating and monitoring behaviors in order to achieve (self-regulation), interacting with peers or meeting the expectations of self and others. If a child feels capable among peers and able to partake and complete tasks then the child is more willing to work or play with others and values him- or herself and values him- or herself among friends, exhibiting high self-efficacy (Fraser, 1995). Low self-efficacy indicates that an individual does not believe in his or her abilities and may avoid tasks or activities because of this, and can then hinder self-esteem, grades and future goals (Fraser, 1995), and possibly social roles if it is not addressed. Identifying true individual strengths and differences in a classroom curriculum, could help students recognize personal skills and encourage children in their capabilities. Understanding personal competencies creates an additional dimension of self-concept by how one understands and perceives his or her capabilities (Anderman, Hicks, & Maehr, 1994).

Studies and Interventions

Interventions can support positive identity development because they can help establish and prevent mental health problems, such as negative self concepts and social issues amongst youth. Interventions take place in a variety of settings, including school-based programs, after school programs and as therapeutic activities with counselors. Studies have found that programs that emphasize social competency help build self-esteem, confidence and positive attitudes towards school (Elias & Gordon, 2009). Interventions bring awareness, to researchers, teachers and parents, about children's needs or at-risk situations.

Self Concept. Coover and Murphy (2000) conducted a longitudinal study investigating social identity and social context and its influence on academic achievement among African American and Mexican American inner-city students. The 12-year-old students were evaluated once a year throughout their adolescence for six years. The researchers evaluated participants with the Twenty Statements Test (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), self-description surveys to measure self-concept, and the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenburg, 1965). In this group of participants, students who had a positive self-concept - or more complex self descriptions - often had high academic achievement scores by age 18. Self-esteem did not prove success in academics. According to the study, communication, due to cultural and environmental factors, could lead to unclear definitions of the self and difficulty relating to others. Communication between peers and others promotes positive self-concept, which relates to high academic achievement. Mexican American students

who described themselves as poor communicators reported lower self-concepts and lower academic achievement. The students who felt they had lesser capabilities than peers (and therefore low confidence and low self esteem) also developed low self-concept or poor self-image.

To promote healthy self-concept in this case means emphasizing communication skills, language and expression in school age children in order to encourage industry and feelings of competence among classmates. The ability to assign words to feelings and emotions can help children better understand their own feelings and gain self-awareness, as well as to learn how to express their feelings to others (Coover and Murphy, 2000).

Self-esteem and social roles. A study by Mouratidis and Sideridis (2009) evaluated social achievement goals and how they relate to peer acceptance, perceptions of loneliness, and classroom belongingness. Belongingness makes a child comfortable around others, encourages motivation, achievement and value within oneself (Faircloth, 2009), therefore, classroom belongingness makes a child feel important among peers in the classroom. Mouratidis and Sideridis' study focuses on the relation between social achievement and social emotional adjustment among elementary students. Students who are inclined to make social achievement goals are more likely to feel that they belong to their class group and tend to focus on positive peer relationships. Those who avoid social goals feel more loneliness among their classmates, and therefore tend to be poorly adjusted, reporting negative self-

acceptance (identity), relationships and peer-acceptance; all signs of lower self-esteem.

Some schools, after-school programs and interventions are geared towards building self-esteem, making children feel that they “belong” to the classroom or social group (Faircloth, 2009; Elias & Gordon 2009). Increased self esteem leads to healthy positive development and can be promoted by feeling competent and working well with peers. Low self-esteem may inhibit social achievement goals and show a lack of positive social skills; therefore the child may avoid social activity, contributing to his or her lower adjustment. It is important to build high self esteem by creating a positive learning experience and providing opportunities for students to set social goals, encourage peer acceptance, creating a community in which students feel like they belong.

Social Emotional Development through Possible Selves

Possible Selves theory links cognition and motivation through self-knowledge (Markus & Nurius, 1986). When an individual acknowledges personal skills, and how those skills can contribute to future goals or prevent success, then a person can understand the importance or effects of regulating behaviors for the “future self”(Markus & Nurius, 1986). The Possible Selves Theory presents the thoughts about who or what one might become in the future (Hock, Deshler, Schumaker, 2003), a deep reflection of “what I want to be when I grow up”. It involves students evaluating and identifying individual constructs of self-efficacy, motivation and cognitive goals. When a child has ideas and goals about the future, this can give that

child a sense of motivation for the future. Cognitive Goal Theory (Seifert, 1995) found that “student behavior, mastery and performance is the outcome of the desire to attain individual goals.” Underachievement can occur if a student is not interested in school work, therefore he or she does not put forth effort. The child may disengage because he or she does not find the relation of a subject to one’s own personal goals. In order to engage a student, it is important for a teacher to make the subject relatable in order to motivate the student to work well.

An example of this technique is found in a study of the Possible Selves Program (Hock, Deshler & Sschumaker, 2003). This intervention program was designed to help students regain motivation to learn and study in school. This intervention encouraged middle and high school students to explore their own insights and inner strengths, and figure out a way they can contribute those strengths globally. Students were asked to think and describe themselves as a learner, person, worker, and depict the strengths they have in these roles. They then described what they hope, expect and fear to achieve in each role. The descriptions were recorded so the child could look at them and then sketch their descriptions in a metaphorical tree. The limbs from the trees were hopes and expectant ideals for each strength, and fears were sketched as things that could be harmful to a growing tree (lightning, poison, animals eating roots). Within the Possible Selves Curriculum, discussion and reflection helps children view learning as a way to guide themselves and plan a way to get to their possible self by building short-term and long-term goals. The teachers

continued to work with the students so they would keep to their plan of action in order to achieve their short-term and long-term goals.

This kind of self-reflection is similar to the idea of self-concept. The children have to think a little more abstractly by thinking about hopes, expectations and fears. By understanding inner strengths and successes, a child can develop a more positive sense of self and focus on those strengths in order to relate it to other school experiences. Understanding how to contribute personal strengths in school and how to achieve future goals is a good way to boost self-efficacy and motivation while building a healthy self-concept.

Activities and programs that focus on social-emotional development help children – especially those with more difficult living or family situations – not only with understanding of self and others, further building self-esteem, and personal motivation but could also improve outcomes in learning. This project intends to foster a curriculum that could promote healthy social-emotional development and provide tools for coping skills, communication and self-awareness.

Summary

Existing research on identity processes primarily explores the adolescent years because that is the stage of identity formation and maturation. Research explains maladjustments and confusion that happens throughout the life span, often due to environmental, social, psychological, cultural heritage and biological factors that children face. In order for a child to develop a healthy and positive self-concept, self-

esteem and social role, it is important to learn and cultivate these skills in childhood, most opportunely at school. When a child understands individual proficiencies and interests, the child can build on those skills and learn how to contribute them to academics and social groups. This promotes a healthy self-concept as well as self-esteem to improve learning and problem-solving.

When a child develops coping strategies to deal with stressors, feeling less anxious and understands feelings and social cues, then it is easier to regulate behavior and understand one's surroundings. The educational atmosphere will become more appealing and the mind will be more able and ready to learn. By understanding social-emotional development and the needs to foster positive maturity, schools can become more functional to a child's needs and hopefully cultivate smooth processes into adolescence and possibly into adulthood. The interventions and learning activities will create a better classroom environment, more successful achievement and positive development in young students.

Skills learned in childhood related to identity processes can influence future development that occurs during adolescence. Trying to cope with environmental challenges can have severe repercussions if proper skills are not addressed.

The Present Study

This study created an intervention approach focusing on possible future selves by encouraging children to examine their strengths as learners and friends to increase constructs of identity. It is argued that through a Best Possible Selves class, students

will learn strategies for better understanding themselves and relating to others. Students will learn to communicate and express themselves appropriately, all the while creating a sense of community in the classroom. Lesson activities were designed based on several existing interventions (Hock, Deshler, Schumaker, 2003; Houghton Mifflin Company, n.d; Johnson & Lammert, 2009). Lessons were modified for the objectives of the Best Possible Selves class; lessons incorporated labeling roles students currently play, skills and strengths needed for those roles and goals individuals want to gain and improve.

This research investigated how well a school intervention program based on “possible-selves” increases constructs of positive identity in comparison to a control group who will not receive any lessons on this subject. By administering surveys that measure self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy and comparing pretest and posttest scores of the control and intervention group, it is hypothesized that scores will reveal an increase in constructs over time for the intervention group. The goal of this research will be informative to parents, teachers, and counselors alike, in order to promote healthy positive development for young children into adolescence.

Chapter 3: Methods

Methods

The intervention conducted for the study was designed to promote positive identity development among third and fourth graders. In this class the participating group of students learned to identify and label individual strengths, roles and goals and develop an understanding of how those strengths and goals apply to learning and socialization as well as future aspirations. Pretests and posttests were distributed to course participants and the control group a week before and a week after the course. Pretest and posttest questionnaires measured self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.

Participants

Participants consisted of a convenience sample of 112 students; 56 third graders and 56 fourth graders from a private school in Kansas City, MO. The participants' parents received consent forms electronically through emails as well as a hard copy that was sent home with students. Parents had to sign and return the form or respond electronically to allow their child to take part in the class or testing (see Appendix D for consent form). Among students with parental consent, two sample groups were formed. Sample 1 totaled 41 third grade and 16 fourth grade participants in the intervention course, and Sample 2 totaled 15 third grade and 40 fourth grade participants in the control group that did not participate in the course. All students completed pretest and posttest questionnaires.

Pretests and Posttests

Pretests were administered to course participants and control group one week before the program took place and measured self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Posttests were administered to participants a week after the Best Possible Selves class was completed by the intervention group. Each questionnaire was administered to students in groups (approximately 10-20 students per group) and students took one survey per day over three days during the school week. Questionnaires were distributed in counterbalanced order to avoid possible carryover effects. Testing times were scheduled according to convenience of the homeroom teacher. Directions and an example item were read aloud to the students; students then completed the measure without oral direction. Time was allotted for students to ask any questions they had about the questionnaire.

Self-concept. To measure self-concept, children were administered a condensed version of the *Twenty Statements Test (TST)*. This widely used test shows how an individual identifies him/herself among social systems by answering the question “Whom Am I?” in twenty statements (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). For this study, instead of having students write 20 statements, the participants were asked to write up to ten statements. This change was made due to the writing abilities in third and fourth graders and to avoid stressors of spelling, writing or completing the survey itself (see Appendix A for measure).

Each written response was coded into one of four categories; A = physical being (i.e., weight, looks), B = social character (e.g., student, athlete), C = reflective (i.e., action, habit, or mood) and D = oceanic (i.e., irrelevant to social behavior), using a coding system developed by Grace and Kramer (2002). Grace and Cramer (2002) report inter-rater reliability for this coding system at 95% or better. After objectively examining responses, there was noticeable difference to the researcher within subjects' responses that were not being measured in the Grace and Cramer coding system. Two subscales were created to measure these differences; subscale *C1* measured reflective descriptions of action and habit or likes (e.g. I like running, I like eating pizza) and subscale *C2* measured reflective descriptions of mood, emotion or trait (e.g. I am giggly, I am artistic).

In studies with adult participants, the C category is the most frequently occurring (Grace & Cramer, 2002). In this current study it was thought that the children would use more concrete labels (category A and B) and descriptions rather than the more abstract, interpersonal and psychological descriptions (category C and D) when completing the pretest. Percentages of responses falling into each category have been measured to compare differences.

The TST is a widely used test (Watkins et al., 1997). Most users of the test report high inter-rater reliability, but many users devise their own coding systems so the amount of data available is somewhat limited (Grace & Cramer, 2002; Watkins et al., 1997). Criterion validity assessments have shown the TST to be related to other

personality tests (Spitzer et al., 1973). The TST also shows a fair degree of test-retest reliability, with data using different coding systems and time periods ranging from two weeks to three months between tests showing correlations ranging from .38 to .85 (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954; Spitzer et al., 1973).

Self-esteem. The *Perceived Competence Scale for Children* (Harter, 1982) was used to measure self-esteem. This scale measures cognitive competence (school competence), social competence (peer relations), physical competence (skill at sports), physical appearance, behavioral competence (interacting with others) and general self-worth.

The scale presents two columns of descriptions and statements in which a child must decide if he or she is more like the statement on the right side or the left side. The child then decides if the description on the chosen side is sort of true for or really true for him or her. Directions were read aloud to students before they completed the survey (see Appendix A for measure). Each item is scored on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 indicating a low perceived competence and 4 indicating a high perceived competence. Scores were summed and averaged for each subscale, totaling six different subscale scores.

This scale was developed with several large samples of third through sixth graders from upper-middle-class populations: a) a combination of 341 Connecticut-California students, b) 714 New York students c) 470 Colorado students and one large sample of third through ninth graders: d) 746 California students (Harter, 1982).

Every sample had around the same amount of boys and girls from each grade. In Harter's sample, inter-item reliabilities for the four subscales were: cognitive, $\alpha = .76$ to $.83$; social = $.75$ to $.84$; physical = $.77$ to $.86$, general = $.73$ to $.82$. Test-retest reliability from the Colorado sample of 208 students was conducted after 3 months and the sample from New York retested after 9 months. The Colorado correlations were: cognitive = $.78$, social = $.80$, physical = $.87$ and general = $.70$. The New York correlations were: cognitive = $.78$, social = $.75$, physical = $.80$ and general = $.69$. These correlations show significant inter-item reliability. See Table B for reliability data with the current sample.

Self efficacy. Students' domain-specific self-efficacy was measured with a subset of questions from the Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, et al., 1999; Pastorelli et al., 2001). These questions assess children's perceived self efficacy in the academic achievement, self-regulated learning, social, self-assertive, and others' expectations domains (30 items total). Response to items were rated on a scale of 1-5, 5 meaning one can learn or do something really well, 1 meaning one cannot learn or do something well at all.. See Appendix A for measure. For the purposes of this study and due to age appropriateness, items measuring self-efficacy for leisure and extracurricular activities and self-regulatory efficacy related to antisocial behavior (e.g., smoking) were be omitted. See Table A for reliability data on this measure with the current sample.

Curriculum Unit

Best Possible Selves. The curriculum included activities and discussions about adult roles and roles students play in their present lives. The objective of this class was for students to learn to identify and label individual strengths, roles, goals, and develop an understanding of how those strengths and goals apply to learning, socialization as well as future aspirations.

Week 1: Adult Roles. During the first week of class, a diagram was presented to students with visual images of example adult roles to be discussed together. These roles included parents, teachers, and business workers. Children were then asked to come up with other examples of adult roles they have encountered (occupations, responsibilities etc.). After discussing different adult roles students helped to label the life skills each role needs and strengths they have. These discussions and activities have been used in classrooms and are based on materials from the All of Me curriculum (Houghton Mifflin Company, n.d.). A Smartboard was used as a visual aid presenting examples of adult roles as parents and the in the workforce and students helped create and fill in the web or list, matching the skills and strengths to each of the adult roles.

Week 2: Your Roles. In class it was presented and discussed with children the fact that each individual in the room fills many different roles as a family member, learner and within their community. Child roles of learner, friend and family member were displayed on the Smartboard and further discussed that a girl may be a daughter,

a sister, and a boy may be a son, a brother, a nephew etc. Connecting adult roles to roles children play in their own lives has been presented as part of the All of Me curriculum (Houghton Mifflin Company, n.d.). Children then shared and wrote down the different roles they fill in their families, at school and outside of school. Many responses included roles as athletes, dancers and siblings. As in the Adult Roles lesson, they then applied the different life skills needed to use for each role and the strengths they have in each role they play. Students shared example skills of responsibility as a sibling or learner, respect as a friend, and perseverance or endurance as an athlete. Students were also able to connect the same skill to multiple roles, showing how much one life skill can help us in life. As we concluded this lesson, students had to think of 2-3 individual skills that are their strongest for each different role they play in life, and list them in their notebooks.

Week 3: Role Models. Having discussed roles, skills and strengths, students defined what a role model is and the characteristics a role model has. Addressing role models has been used in a possible selves curriculum with adolescents to encourage participants to think about people and themselves in a different way (Nagy, 2002). Students created a role model collage using photographs or cutting pictures from magazines of people or things that make someone a role model. Role model collages have been presented in curriculum and previous classroom lesson plans (Jonhson & Lammert, 2009). Students labeled collages with the strengths of their role model and what they admire about their role model. Next, on the back or same side of the poster, they wrote how they felt they were similar to the role model and which

strengths or accomplishments they wish to achieve that their role model has. This allowed students to connect personal strengths and goals to their role model and to truly understand the characteristics of a real role model. Role models chosen include family members (e.g. mothers and fathers, sisters), teachers, authors, political figures and athletes.

Week 4, Day 1: Goals. Students either added to their collage or created another poster/collage of their own individual roles and labeled their strengths for each one. They then set a goal for each role they play in their lives and identified a life skill they wanted to work on. We talked about how to build up those strengths and when they want to achieve those strengths (near future, high school, college, adulthood). Students sketched a timeline and collage to illustrate how they can use personal strengths to build on others. Timelines or visual maps included discussing the future and describing “who I want to be” and “who I do not want to be/fear to be”, and creating a timeline of what happens before they can get there. Hopes and fears of the future helps to distinguish consequences and relevant timeline. Creating time lines has been used in previous possible selves interventions with adolescents (Oyserman et al., 1995). This process allows children to refocus on the near future and what will be happening in the next few years.

Week 4, day 2: How I see Myself. The last class students were given a worksheet with a blank face on the front. One side stated “How I see myself” and the other said “How others see me”. Students were instructed to fold the face in half so it

was divided symmetrically and draw their portrait on the “how I see myself” side. After they drew their self portraits, the students were gathered together in a circle and instructed to write their name at the top of the blank side of “how others see me” side face up. The students were then instructed to pass their portraits around (with name at the top) and peers wrote how they see that person. Students were reminded to think of the life skills, strengths and roles that have been discussed throughout the class. They were told to write something different than anyone else had already put on the portrait and it had to be thoughtful and kind. When students received their portrait back they unfolded it and read what their peers had written. Students were asked if they saw anything they already knew about themselves, if someone had put something they did not know about themselves, and if they saw something that made them feel good about themselves. The majority of students responded “yes” to all three questions (see Appendix B for lesson plan).

Hypotheses

Self concept. In terms of categories represented, it was hypothesized that children in the intervention condition would write more statements and more abstract statements coded under category C and possibly D on the posttest than the pretest, but that the control condition children’s self-concepts would not change over time. In terms of positivity and negativity, it was hypothesized that children in the intervention condition would write more positive statements and fewer negative

statements at pretest than posttest, but that for children in the control condition, children's self-concepts would not change over time.

Self esteem. It was predicted that children in the intervention condition would show higher self-esteem on posttest than on pretest, but that in the control condition, children's self-esteem would not change over time. Teaching the children how to label their strengths and how they can contribute their strengths to future endeavors would help them think more abstractly about themselves while building general self worth.

Self efficacy. Because the course addresses individual strengths and provides opportunities for students to discuss and demonstrate these strengths and interests, it was hypothesized that children in the intervention condition would show higher self-efficacy on the posttest than on the pretest, and the self-efficacy of children in the control condition would not change over time.

Chapter 4: Results

Analyses were calculated by repeated measures ANOVA, comparing the pre- and posttest scores of control and intervention participants on measurements of constructs. Means and standard deviation measures of pre-test scores were compared for 3rd vs. 4th grades and intervention vs. control groups. Although slight differences are seen between groups the scores do not signify developmental factors that could affect research hypotheses (see Tables I, II, III).

Self concept. Students' descriptions of self-concept were analyzed using 2 (condition: intervention vs. control) x 2 (pretest vs. posttest) repeated measures ANOVAs, with the last factor as a within subjects variable. Analyses were conducted of the total number of responses given, and percentage of responses falling into each of the five coded categories: i.e. physical being (A), social character (B), reflective actions/habits (C1), reflective emotion/traits (C2) and oceanic (D).

Total responses. Students were instructed to write at least ten descriptions on the TST, but were allowed to write more or less if need be. Response rate averaged 9.4 out of 10. Results indicated that the average number of total responses per subject was consistent over time $F(1, 110) = 0.56, p = .455$, revealing no significant time by condition interaction, $F(1,110) = 0.00, p = .989$.

Physical being. When a student's response was a physical description (i.e., weight, looks), this was recorded into category A. Results indicated that there was a decrease in number of physical descriptions over time, $F(1,107) = 5.59, p = .020$, and

a marginally significant time by condition interaction, $F(1,107) = 2.92, p = .090$. For the control group, means were .061 at pretest and .053 at posttest, but for the intervention group it was .117 at pretest and .065 at posttest. Responding did not change over time for the control group, but decreased for the intervention group.

Social Character. Responses that depicted social character (e.g., student, athlete) were coded in category B. Results indicated that there was an increase in the number of category B responses over time, $F(1,107) = 6.57, p = .012$, but no interaction with the condition, $F(1, 107) = 0.59, p = .442$. Means for the control group were .102 at pretest and .140 at posttest, means for the intervention group were .127 at pretest and .197 at posttest.

Reflective. Reflective descriptions (i.e., action, habit, or mood) were coded in category C. Results indicated no change over time, $F(1, 107) = 1.28, p = .261$, or time by condition interaction, $F(1, 107) = 0.10, p = .748$.

Subscale C1. Reflective responses describing actions and habits showed different interactions for the different groups. Results showed a significant effect of time, $F(1,107) = 15.82, p = .00$, and a significant time by condition interaction, $F(1,107) = 17.46, p = .00$. The means indicate differences in change over time for the control and intervention conditions. For the control group, means were .370 at pretest and .375 at posttest, but for the intervention group it was .432 at pretest and .200 at posttest. Responding did not change over time for the control group, but a decrease in reflective responses over time for the intervention group.

Subscale C2. Responses describing mood, emotion or trait showed a significant effect of time, $F(1,107) = 10.72, p = .001$, and a significant time by condition interaction, $F(1,107) = 11.17, p = .001$. The means for control group were .448 at pretest and .446 at posttest, means for the intervention group were .338 at pretest and increased to .525 at posttest. The control group's responses in this category remained the same, but the intervention group's responses in this category increased.

Oceanic. Category D consisted of oceanic responses (i.e., irrelevant to social behavior). Measures showed that there were no changes in effects over time, $F(1, 107) = .15, p = .695$, or significant time by condition interaction, $F(1, 107) = .15, p = .695$.

Self-Esteem. The Harter scale measures children's perceived self-esteem in six different domains (i.e. school, social, athletics, appearance, behavior and global competence). Each domain was analyzed using 2 (condition: intervention vs. control) x 2 (pretest vs. posttest) repeated measures ANOVAs, with the last factor as a within subjects variable.

Scholastic Competence. Six different items asked subjects questions regarding how well an individual does in school (e.g. "some kids feel they do very well at school work OR some kids worry about getting all their school work done"). Reliability was measured for this subscale, $\alpha = .76$, showing high reliability among questions in this scale (see table B). Children's perceived scholastic competence

revealed an increase over time, $F(1, 104) = 6.13, p = .015$, but no time by condition interaction, $F(1, 104) = .043, p = .835$

Social Competence. Six items show two different statements in which one has to choose the statement that is somewhat true or very true regarding social competence (e.g. “some kids make it hard to make friends OR other kids find it easy to make friends”). Reliability was measured for this subscale, $\alpha = .75$, showing high reliability among questions in this scale (see table B). Social competence measures showed no significant effect of time, $F(1, 104) = 0.04, p = .848$, or time by condition interaction, $F(1, 104) = 0.02, p = .891$.

Athletic Competence. Six different items within the survey show two different statements regarding individual athleticism in which one must choose the statement that is somewhat true or very true for him or herself (e.g. “some kids do very well at sports OR other kids feel they are not very good at sports”). Reliability was measured for this subscale, $\alpha = .80$, showing high reliability among questions in this scale (see table B). Perceived athletic competence results also indicated no change over time, $F(1, 104) = 1.79, p = .183$, and no significant time by condition interaction, $F(1, 104) = 0.06, p = .815$.

Physical Appearance. Six different items within the survey show two different statements in which the subject has to choose the statement that is somewhat true or very true regarding the individual’s appearance (e.g. “some kids are happy with the way they look OR other kids are not happy with the way they look”).

Reliability was measured for this subscale, $\alpha = .83$, showing high reliability among questions in this scale (see table B). Results indicate an increase in physical appearance scores over time, $F(1, 104) = 6.47, p = .012$, but no significant time by condition interaction, $F(1, 104) = 0.11, p = .739$. Both groups' perceived physical attractiveness increased over time.

Behavioral Competence. Six items show two different statements in which one has to choose the statement that is somewhat true or very true regarding behavioral competence (e.g. "some kids often do not like the way they behave OR other kids like the way they behave"). Reliability was measured for this subscale, $\alpha = .83$, showing high reliability among questions in this scale (see Table B). Results indicate that there was no change in perceived behavior over time, $F(1, 104) = 0.05, p = .823$, or significant time by condition interaction, $F(1, 104) = 0.06, p = .81$.

Global Competence. Six items show two different statements in which one has to choose the statement that is somewhat true or very true regarding global competence (e.g. "some kids are often unhappy with themselves OR other kids are pretty pleased with themselves"). Reliability was measured for this subscale, $\alpha = .77$, showing good reliability among questions in this scale (see table B). Results indicated no significant effect of time, $F(1, 104) = .15, p = .695$, or time by condition interaction, $F(1, 104) = 0.43, p = .512$.

Self-efficacy. The Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura et al., 1999; Pastorelli et al., 2001) was a questionnaire measuring five subscales of

perceived self efficacy: academic achievement, self-regulated learning, social, to meet others' expectations, and self-assertiveness, totaling 30 items. Each subscale was analyzed using 2 (condition: intervention vs. control) x 2 (pretest vs. posttest) repeated measures ANOVAs, with the last factor as a within subjects variable.

Perceived Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement. Students answered seven items that asked subjects “how well can you” learn specific subjects (e.g. math, reading, geography). Inter-item reliability for this subscale measured $\alpha = .60$ representing good reliability among questions (see Table A). Academic achievement results showed an increase over time from all participants, $F(1,109) = 5.75, p = .018$, but no significant time by condition interaction, $F(1,109) = 0.22, p = .638$. Means for the control group were 3.99 for pretest and 4.11 for posttest, and means for the intervention group were 3.91 for pretest and 3.98 for posttest. These means show the increase in overall academic achievement efficacy over time.

Perceived Self-efficacy for Self-regulated Learning. This subscale asks subjects “how well can you” regulate behaviors regarding learning (i.e. organizing school work, taking notes, following directions, preparing homework). Reliability was measured for this subscale, $\alpha = .80$ showing high reliability among questions in this scale (see Table A). Results indicated that there were no effects over time $F(1,109) = 0.162, p = .688$, or time by condition interaction. $F(1,109) = 0.004, p = .949$.

Perceived Self-efficacy to Meet Others' Expectations. This subscale asks questions “how well can you” live up to what others think or expect of you (e.g. teachers, parents peers, yourself etc.). Reliability was measured for this subscale, $\alpha = .69$, showing high reliability among questions in this scale (see Table A). Results indicated that there was a decrease in self-efficacy to meet expectations of others over time, $F(1,109) = 5.34$, $p = .023$, but no significant time by condition interaction, $F(1,109) = 0.411$, $p = .523$. The means for the control group were 4.49 at pretest and 4.42 at posttest, the means for the intervention group were 4.43 at pretest and 4.30 at posttest. This reveals a decrease over time for all participants.

Perceived Social Self-efficacy. This subscale asked questions about “how well can you” make and keep friends of the same and opposite sex, and working with others. Reliability was measured for this subscale, $\alpha = .3$ showing low reliability among questions in this scale, especially item 25; “How well can you make and keep male friends” (see Table A). There were no effects over time, $F(1,109) = 0.13$, $p = .72$, or time by condition interaction, $F(1,109) = 2.05$, $p = .155$.

Perceived Self-efficacy for Self Assertiveness. This subscale asked subjects “how well can you” stand firm to others, or stand up for yourself. Inter-item reliability for this subscale measured $\alpha = .71$, representing high reliability among questions (see Table A). Results indicated no effects over time, $F(1,109) = 0.59$, $p = .443$, or time by condition interaction, $F(1,109) = 0.63$, $p = .429$.

Discussion

Results did not show significant support of hypotheses of a Best Possible Selves class improving self-esteem and self-efficacy in the intervention group, some interesting discoveries and thought provoking questions did come across during the course of the study. It was hypothesized that self-efficacy and self-esteem would increase over time in the intervention group and remain the same in the control group. For self-esteem, all participants showed an increase in self-esteem in the areas of academic achievement and physical appearance, but not due to the Best Possible Selves class. The posttests occurred the week leading up to spring break so there was a lot of positive energy that could lead to increase in positive attitudes. Overall means of self-esteem measures in participants averaged 3.4 out of a 4. Since the majority of participants showed high self-esteem, there was not much more for students to increase or improve. Children at this age are constantly learning new concepts and ideas and seem to enjoy learning and engaging in school activities. Physical appearances are not changing so much at this time and image does not seem as poignant during this stage. Results may imply that during this stage in development young students display more resiliency and general growth in self-esteem of pre-adolescent students over time.

Self-efficacy among both groups of the third and fourth grade participants showed an increase in academic competence and a decrease in self-efficacy to meet others' expectations. This may have resulted from the amount of assignments and

projects that accumulated over the weeks before spring break. Students may feel smart, but in turn may feel the pressure to do well and meet the standards of teachers and parents.

Self-concept showed a decrease in all participants' physical appearance responses, with a marginally larger decrease in the intervention condition. It was hypothesized that category A terms would be described less over time by students in the intervention condition, the responses did show a more well-rounded description compared to pretest results. In the pretest some students never included any physical description and a large amount of reflective responses consisted of habits and actions rather than traits they considered about themselves. There was also an increase in social descriptions over time for all students which is interesting because social roles were talked about frequently in the Best Possible Selves class. This could imply the students' more direct understanding of how to describe themselves by answering the question "Who am I?" on the post-test.

A sense of awareness was presented to students in the intervention condition through language and vocabulary. By talking about examples and discussing different roles and skills, students were able to build from their own vocabulary and recall other skills they have or know through previous regular classroom lessons. Students described different roles people play as children and adults that may explain the marginal decrease in physical descriptions in self-concept as well as in an increase in descriptions of traits and emotions for the intervention condition. The belief was

that students would describe themselves in more general terms in the physical and social roles categories (A and B) rather than the reflective or abstract categories (C and D). Although pretests scores showed more responses in the reflective or C category, the content of the descriptions did not seem to reflect the concept of an individual as proposed in the methods section. Descriptions in this category seemed to consist of actions, habits or hobbies rather than reflective traits, e.g. “I like hot dogs”, “I like watching t.v.”, “I like chocolate.” Post-test showed similar rates of responses in the C category, but many responses seemed to be significant traits rather than habits or “likes”, e.g. “I am silly” “I am loveable” “I am creative”. Due to the differences, two sub C categories were added; sub C1 coded actions, habits, hobbies or “likes/dislikes” and sub C2 coded the traits and moods. The intervention condition, or Best Possible Selves class participants, did show an increase in responses indicating traits at the C2 level and a decrease in C1 responses of habits and actions, whereas response rates for the control group remained the same. The application of language and identification of strengths in the class may have brought a clearer perception of who they are as individuals.

Adding sub categories to show thoughtful or insightful descriptions over time depicts the language and connections children made in their reflections. It progressed from likes and habits to personal traits and characteristics they see in themselves. This supports the idea that this class does allow children to really think about what they have to offer to society; a part of identity formation that typically occurs in adolescence.

Although goals and interests change over time, if children understand how to set goals and what strengths or skills they need to improve in order to succeed, they can then use these tools throughout life and prepare themselves for success in the future, or cope with failures and set new goals. Students who participated in the class were engaged and seemed to enjoy spending a part of the school day reflecting on themselves and discovering their own personal strengths as well as setting personal goals.

Further research on the Best Possible Selves class should use a more qualitative approach and investigate the effects that the class has on classroom belongingness and community as well as self-regulation. It would be interesting to see how the lessons incorporated in BPS would affect individual development over longer period of time or full school year. The conversations and projects showed individual interest and self-knowledge that could contribute to new ideas and contributions to the classroom community and an understanding of how to regulate behaviors for future successes.

Limitations

Ideally, this course would be best suited and better tested over a longer period of time. Due to time and scheduling, classes could only occur twice a week for four weeks. It was made so a teacher could incorporate activities and concepts within her homeroom class during the week over the year. This way, children are exercising

self-awareness around peers which will allow classmates to learn about each other and develop a sense of community in the classroom.

There were three classes that were divided in half in order to provide a control and intervention group in each class. The intervention group stayed in the homeroom to participate in the Best Possible Selves class while the control group was in a regularly scheduled resource class. A possible explanation for lack of effects of condition is that, when the groups came back together for the remainder of the day, the intervention participants may have shared the activities or spoken about ideas to the other children in the control group which made them start thinking about their own strengths and aspirations. Teachers who remained in the room during the lessons may have been influenced to talk about strengths or goals throughout the day to students, including the control group.

The self-concept instrument was designed for use with adolescents and adults and the coding categories used may not have been the most appropriate to use with children. More research should be done in order to test the effects of self-concept and its effect on learning and socialization. This class was meant to be included in homeroom classes throughout the year. If the curriculum was extended and practiced in classrooms, would the effects be different? Self-concepts may change over time, would this affect self-esteem in those few who scored low? The research conducted has brought many thought provoking questions and ideas that could help students

discover and help themselves as well as helping teachers create a positive learning community.

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Tables

TABLE I

Self-Concept

Self-Concept Pre-Test

| Group | 3rd grade | | 4th grade | | Intervention | | Control | |
|---|-----------|------|-----------|------|--------------|------|---------|------|
| N = | 56 | | 56 | | 57 | | 55 | |
| Measure | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Cat A <i>Physical</i> | 1.3 | 1.67 | 0.45 | 0.8 | 1.11 | 1.64 | 0.64 | 0.99 |
| Cat B <i>Social roles</i> | 1.44 | 1.72 | 0.77 | 0.91 | 1.12 | 1.55 | 1.11 | 1.29 |
| Cat C <i>Reflective</i> | 6.68 | 2.64 | 8.08 | 2.21 | 7.33 | 2.29 | 7.71 | 2.40 |
| Cat C1 <i>Habits/actions</i> | 3.77 | 2.8 | 3.66 | 3.11 | 4.05 | 2.86 | 3.51 | 3.00 |
| Cat C2 <i>Traits/emotions</i> | 2.89 | 2.68 | 4.42 | 3.28 | 3.26 | 2.90 | 4.20 | 3.19 |
| Cat D <i>Oceanic</i> | 0.03 | 0.18 | 0.03 | 0.18 | 0.05 | 0.23 | 0.02 | 0.13 |

TABLE II

Self-Esteem

Self-Esteem Pre-test

| Group | 3rd grade | | 4th grade | | Intervention | | Control | |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| N= | 56 | | 56 | | 57 | | 55 | |
| Measure | Means | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Scholastic Competence | 2.99 | 0.93 | 3.26 | 0.87 | 3.07 | 0.92 | 3.11 | 1.01 |
| Social Competence | 3.10 | 1.04 | 3.13 | 0.99 | 3.02 | 1.06 | 3.12 | 1.10 |
| Athletic Competence | 3.03 | 1.04 | 3.02 | 0.98 | 2.94 | 1.08 | 2.99 | 1.08 |
| Physical Attractive | 3.18 | 1.03 | 3.31 | 0.88 | 3.18 | 1.05 | 3.22 | 1.01 |
| Behavioral Competence | 3.27 | 0.78 | 3.22 | 0.81 | 3.24 | 0.88 | 3.17 | 0.87 |
| Global Competence | 3.45 | 0.86 | 3.40 | 0.81 | 3.42 | 0.90 | 3.31 | 0.97 |

TABLE III

Self-Efficacy

Self-Efficacy Pre-test

| Group | 3rd grade | | 4th grade | | Intervention | | Control | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| N= | 56 | | 56 | | 57 | | 55 | |
| Measure | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Academic achievement | 3.87 | 1.03 | 4.04 | 0.89 | 3.90 | 1.04 | 3.98 | 0.94 |
| Self-regulated learning | 4.02 | 0.93 | 4.15 | 0.82 | 4.05 | 0.94 | 4.09 | 0.88 |
| Meet others' expectations | 4.39 | 0.75 | 4.54 | 0.65 | 4.43 | 0.78 | 4.48 | 0.74 |
| Social self-efficacy | 4.32 | 0.91 | 4.35 | 0.8 | 4.31 | 0.88 | 4.35 | 0.89 |
| Self-assertiveness | 4.04 | 1.01 | 4.23 | 0.88 | 4.10 | 1.05 | 4.14 | 0.94 |

TABLE A

Reliabilities for Self-Efficacy Subscales

| Self-Efficacy Subscale | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Academic Achievement | .60 |
| Self-Regulated Learning | .80 |
| Meet Others' Expectations | .69 |
| Social Competence | .30 |
| Self- Assertiveness | .71 |

TABLE B

Reliabilities for Self-Esteem Subscales

| Self-Esteem Subscale | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Academic Competence | .76 |
| Athletic | .80 |
| Physical Appearance | .83 |
| Social Competence | .75 |
| Global | .76 |
| Behavior | .83 |

Appendix A
Pre-test and Post-test Questionnaires

Ten Statement Test

(Based on Twenty Statement Test (TST))

There are ten numbered blanks on the page below. Please write ten answers to the question “Who am I?” in the blanks. Please write ten different answers to this question; answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself- not someone else. Write your answers in the order that they occur to you. Don’t worry about logic or “importance.” Don’t worry if you cannot complete all the lines.

WHO AM I?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Based on the test from: Eleen A. Baumann, Richard G. Mitchell, Jr., and Caroline Hodges Persell. 1989. *Encountering Society: Student Resource Manual* to accompany Persell, *Understanding Society*, Third Edition. New York: Harper & Row. Exercise 5, “Twenty Statement Test,” p. 305.

| | Really True for me | Sort of True for me | | BUT | | Sort of True for me | Really True for me |
|----|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids feel that they are very <i>good</i> at their school work | BUT | Other kids <i>worry</i> about whether they can do the school work assigned to them. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids find it <i>hard</i> to make friends | BUT | Other kids find it's pretty <i>easy</i> to make friends. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids do very <i>well</i> at all kinds of sports | BUT | Other kids <i>don't</i> feel that they are very good when it comes to sports. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids are <i>happy</i> with the way they look | BUT | Other kids are <i>not</i> happy with the way they look. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids often do not like the way they <i>behave</i> | BUT | Other kids usually <i>like</i> the way they behave. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids are often <i>unhappy</i> with themselves | BUT | Other kids are pretty <i>pleased</i> with themselves. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids feel like they are <i>just</i> as <i>smart</i> as other kids their age | BUT | Other kids aren't so sure and <i>wonder</i> if they are as smart. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids have <i>a lot</i> of friends | BUT | Other kids <i>don't</i> have very many friends. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 9. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids wish they could be a lot better at sports | BUT | Other kids feel they are good enough at sports. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Reall y True for me | Sort of True for me | | | | Sort of True for me | Reall y True for me |
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- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 10. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids are <i>happy</i> with their height and weight | BUT | Other kids wish their height or weight were <i>different</i> . | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids usually do the <i>right</i> thing | BUT | Other kids often <i>don't</i> do the right thing. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids <i>don't</i> like the way they are leading their life | BUT | Other kids <i>do</i> like the way they are leading their life. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids are pretty <i>slow</i> in finishing their school work | BUT | Other kids can do their school work <i>quickly</i> . | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids would like to have a lot more friends | BUT | Other kids have as many friends as they want. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids think they could do well at just about any new sports activity they haven't tried before | BUT | Other kids are afraid they might <i>not</i> do well at sports they haven't ever tried. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids wish their body was <i>different</i> | BUT | Other kids <i>like</i> their body the way it is. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids usually <i>act</i> the way they know they are <i>supposed</i> to | BUT | Other kids often <i>don't</i> act the way they are supposed to. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids are <i>happy</i> with themselves as a person | BUT | Other kids are often <i>not</i> happy with themselves. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Really True for me | Sort of True for me | | | | Sort of True for me | Really True for me |
-
- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 19. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids often <i>forget</i> what they learn | BUT | Other kids can remember things <i>easily</i> . | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids are always doing things with <i>a lot</i> of kids | BUT | Other kids usually do things by <i>themselves</i> . | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids feel that they are <i>better</i> than others their age at sports | BUT | Other kids <i>don't</i> feel they can play as well. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids wish their physical appearance (how they look) was <i>different</i> | BUT | Other kids <i>like</i> their physical appearance the way it is. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids usually get in <i>trouble</i> because of things they do | BUT | Other kids usually <i>don't</i> do things that get them in trouble. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids <i>like</i> the kind of <i>person</i> they are | BUT | Other kids often wish they were someone else. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 25. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids do <i>very well</i> at their class work | BUT | Other kids <i>don't</i> do very well at their class work. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids wish that more people their age liked them | BUT | Other kids feel that most people their age <i>do</i> like them. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | In games and sports some kids usually <i>watch</i> instead of play | BUT | Other kids usually <i>play</i> rather than just watch. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Really True for me | Sort of True for me | | | | Sort of True for me | Really True for me |
-
- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 28. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids wish something about their face or hair looked <i>different</i> | BUT | Other kids <i>like</i> their face and hair the way they are. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids do things they know they <i>shouldn't</i> do | BUT | Other kids hardly <i>ever</i> do things they know they shouldn't do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids are very <i>happy</i> being the way they are | BUT | Other kids wish they were <i>different</i> . | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids have <i>trouble</i> figuring out the answers in school | BUT | Other kids almost <i>always</i> can figure out the answers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some kids are <i>popular</i> with others their age | BUT | Other kids are <i>not</i> very popular. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

33. Some kids *don't* do well at new outdoor games **BUT** Other kids are *good* at new outdoor games right away.
34. Some kids think that they are good looking **BUT** Other kids think that they are not very good looking.
35. Some kids behave themselves very well **BUT** Other kids often find it hard to behave themselves.
36. Some kids *are* not very happy with the way they do a lot of things **BUT** Other kids think the way they do things is *fine*.

Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale
(Pastorelli et al., 2001)

Scale of 1-5

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Cannot do at all | | Can do Somewhat well | | Can do very well |

How well can you:

1. learn general mathematics?

1 2 3 4 5

2. learn geography?

1 2 3 4 5

3. learn science?

1 2 3 4 5

4. learn English literature (reading, writing, language skills, books)?

1 2 3 4 5

5. learn English grammar (spelling, punctuation) ?

1 2 3 4 5

How well can you:

6. learn history?

1 2 3 4 5

7. learn foreign languages?

1 2 3 4 5

8. finish homework assignments by deadlines?

1 2 3 4 5

9. study when there are other interesting things to do?

1 2 3 4 5

10. concentrate on school subjects?

1 2 3 4 5

11. take class notes of class instruction?

1 2 3 4 5

12. use the library to get information for class assignments?

1 2 3 4 5

13. organize your school work?

1 2 3 4 5

14. plan your school work?

1 2 3 4 5

How well can you:

15. remember information presented in class and textbooks?

1 2 3 4 5

16. arrange a place to study without distractions?

1 2 3 4 5

17. motivate yourself to do school work?

1 2 3 4 5

18. participate to class discussions?

1 2 3 4 5

19. stand firm to someone who is asking to do something unreasonable or inconvenient?

1 2 3 4 5

20. live up to what your parents expect of you?

1 2 3 4 5

21. live up to what your teachers expect of you?

1 2 3 4 5

How well can you:

22. live up to what your peers expect of you?

1 2 3 4 5

23. live up to what you expect of yourself?

1 2 3 4 5

24. make and keep female friends ?

1 2 3 4 5

25. make and keep male friends?

1 2 3 4 5

26. carry on conversations with others?

1 2 3 4 5

27. work in a group?

1 2 3 4 5

28. express your opinions when other classmates disagree with you?

1 2 3 4 5

29. stand up for yourself when you feel you are being treated unfairly?

1 2 3 4 5

30. deal with situations where others are annoying you or hurting your feelings?

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B
Best Possible Selves Intervention Lesson Plan

Possible Selves Curriculum

Objectives: Over the course of four weeks, children will learn to label and identify personal strengths while focusing on the three main concepts on what the children a) roles they play now, b) skills and strengths they need, c) goals of skills they want to gain or improve. Children will then learn how to use individual strengths towards learning and socialization, while also gaining self-esteem and building self-concept.

Time: classes will meet three times a week for 30 minute sessions. This will be a 4 week program.

Week 1: Unit 1 Adult Roles

Introducing children to the concept of thinking about the future, thinking about themselves in the future, and what they have to do to get there.

- What are some roles and occupations that adults play?
 - discuss roles and occupations of adults; show pictures of adults in different role and occupations
 - what adult roles do you encounter everyday?
 - what skills and strengths do these roles/occupations need?
- What does an adult have to do to get there?
 - discuss roles and occupations of the class; show pictures of children in different roles (friends, learner, family member, athlete, musician, dancer)
 - what skills and strengths are necessary? How do learn or acquire them?
 - demonstrate a timeline to the class with an example goal
- **Week 2: Unit 2** Your Roles
 - discuss roles and occupations of the class; show pictures of children in different roles (friends, learner, family member, athlete, musician, dancer)
 - what skills and strengths are necessary? How do learn or acquire them?

- What do you want to be as a 3rd/4th/ grader?
 - discuss roles, hopes and expectations of present and near future
- What about next *year*? What about as an adult?
 - demonstrate timeline to class and let students sketch and create individual timelines for near future.

Week 3: Unit 3 Role Models

Define what a role model is and the characteristics a role model has. Create a role model collage, cutting pictures from magazines of people or things that make someone a role model. Discuss the characteristics, strengths and people chosen. Ask the questions:

- What strengths does this role model have?
 - define role model, define strengths
 - students will select pictures/objects that symbolize strengths
- How are you similar to your role model?
 - students will label and identify strengths they have in common with their role model
- What strengths/accomplishments do you wish to achieve that your role model has?
 - students will discuss/write/reflect on what they admire about their role model

Week 4: Unit 4 Goals/How I see myself and how others see me

- Think of something you want to strengthen or improve? How can you build up those strengths?
 - students will use a timeline and collage to sketch how they can use personal strengths to build on others
- How I see myself and how others see me:

-children will receive a blank face folded in half. One side, they will draw in the half regarding “how I see myself:

-the other half, children will gather in a circle and pass portraits around and write something (skill, strength) on the half regarding “how others see me” for each person.

-discuss with the class if they saw anything they already knew, didn't know or were surprised to find in how other see them.

Appendix C
Consent Form

Approved by the Human Subjects Committee University of Kansas,
Lawrence Campus (HSCL). Approval expires one year from 1/22/2010.
HSCL #18100

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Best Possible Self Class

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Psychology & Research in Education at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish your child to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not allow your child to participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw your child from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

I am a teacher's assistant at Pembroke Hill School. As part of my master's degree program at the University of Kansas, I will be conducting a research project by administering a program created for third and fourth grade students. The program is focused on possible selves; in this program, children will talk about their personal strengths and how those strengths can be used for learning and socialization. This study is part of a research effort to understand learning processes that promote positive identity development. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary.

PROCEDURES

The class is aimed at promoting the development of positive identity (a positive sense of your self and abilities and positive self-esteem). Children who will participate in the course will attend twice a week for 30 minute sessions over four weeks during the regular school day. Your child will fill out questionnaires that measure self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Participants will be asked to complete the surveys at two different times. The first time will be a week before the class is administered and the second time will be a week after the class is administered. Your child will not be asked to put his/her name on the questionnaire – it is anonymous.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks in participating.

BENEFITS

If your child participates in the Best Possible Selves class, the activities will encourage personal strengths and goals. Your child will benefit from the study by developing personal strengths and promote skills to be the best student and friend to others.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's name will not be associated in any way with the information collected about your child or with the research findings from this study. The researcher(s) will use a study number or a pseudonym instead of your child's name. The researchers will not share information about your child unless required by law or unless you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your child's information, excluding your child's name, for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, your child cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to allow participation of your child in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose information collected about your child, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: jniebergall@pembrokehill.org. If you cancel permission to use your child's information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about your child. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my child's rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429, write to the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, or email mdenning@ku.edu.

I agree to allow my child to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

Type/Print Participant's Name

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

[If signed by a personal representative, a description of such representative's authority to act for the individual must also be provided, e.g. parent/guardian.]

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