

1989

A Primary School Curriculum To Enhance Self-Concept, Decision-Making, and Locus of Control

Debra McElreath
University of North Florida

Suggested Citation

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A PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM
TO ENHANCE SELF-CONCEPT,
DECISION-MAKING, AND LOCUS OF CONTROL

by

Debra McElreath

A thesis (project) submitted to the Division of
Curriculum and Instruction in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

August, 1989

Signature Deleted

Dr. Marianne Barnes, Advisor

Signature Deleted

Dr. Elinor Scheirer, Committee

Signature Deleted

Dr. Janice Wood, Committee

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Abstract

The curriculum developed in this project was designed to meet the needs of primary students in the areas of self-concept, decision-making, and locus of control. It provides activities that enhance these areas in the hope of positively influencing school achievement. The related literature and research review attempts to show the interrelationships between self-concept, school achievement, decision-making, and locus of control.

The project consists of 10-15 minute activities that do not require lengthy teacher preparation or numerous materials. The activities take into consideration Piaget's and Kohlberg's stages of development for kindergarten through second grade students. The content of the activities is not arranged in any particular sequential order. The focus of the content is in the affective domain with the activities dealing primarily with feelings, values, relationships with others, self-awareness, and making choices.

The curriculum was evaluated by surveying a team of primary teachers. Feedback was gathered concerning

the appropriateness of the activities for primary students and the practicality of its use in the classroom.

Chapter One

Children are in need of experiences where they can meet with success and develop more positive self-concepts. Teachers are in the position to offer these positive experiences through classroom activities. "The self is learned. What is learned can be taught. What can be taught is fair game for the public schools" (Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, 1962, p. 101). If a school accepts the development of a positive self-concept as one of its goals, teachers will need to deal much more with feelings, attitudes, and values. This task will not be easy for some teachers.

Early childhood experiences are important in forming a person's self-concept. Children are affected by the responses received from important others with whom they spend much time, such as parents, teachers, and peers. "School provides children with a rich source of new ideas to shape their sense of self" (Entwisle, Alexander, Pallas, & Cadigan, p. 1190). When children start first grade, they have the opportunity to develop a larger view of themselves because they are evaluated in several different areas. Teachers' written marks and verbal remarks provide the children with feedback about their performance.

Further, by comparing themselves with others, children learn about their own abilities.

Children who develop a positive attitude towards school and about themselves as successes may persist in the face of failure or may remain in school longer. Children with negative attitudes may reject school and what a teacher is trying to teach. If a person has been successful in the past, that person will be able to deal with future decisions more effectively. "People learn that they are able, not from failure, but from success" (Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, p. 53).

The literature repeatedly notes that a person's self-concept helps with decision-making. Learning to choose what to do when there are important issues involved, such as whether or not to use drugs, requires the ability to make "good" decisions. Today's elementary child is being confronted with problems and decisions that were previously encountered at an older age. Current research suggests that the problem of drug abuse may be one result of a poor self-concept and poorly developed decision-making skills. It is the people who see themselves as unwanted, unworthy, or unable who seem to have problems making decisions in today's society.

As a result, teachers cannot escape the fact that the school influences a child's self-concept. Teaching deals not only with subject matter but also with feelings, values, attitudes, and decision-making skills. Since children discover who they are from their experiences, the school contributes positively or negatively to their self-concepts on the basis of experiences offered.

People with positive self-concepts behave more decisively. People can also make decisions with more certainty when they feel in control of the situation and feel sure enough of themselves through positive self-concepts to be unafraid of a commitment to their decisions. Once a decision is made, a person needs self-confidence to implement it. This required self-confidence is usually not developed unless the person has experienced success in school or at home. Without self-confidence, failing children are not as able to make decisions about puzzling issues that confront and confuse them. In learning to solve problems, which is essential to attaining a feeling of self-worth, children may gain enough self-confidence so that they can tolerate some rejection from others, such as their peers.

Education needs to prepare students to live successfully in the world and learn not to make "bad" choices through building self-concepts and decision-making skills. Unfortunately, as students progress through school, more emphasis is given on factual textbook content instead. Students are given fewer opportunities to make choices or decisions even though they have gained more experience and are increasingly able to make decisions. Therefore, there is a need for teaching decision-making skills in the elementary school.

However, learning to choose what to do when there are important issues involved requires the ability to make rational decisions. Children may tend to choose what seems best at the moment and have little concept of future implications. Decision-making skills are the result of a gradual development that needs to begin in childhood. Some children and adults handle new situations and difficult problems emotionally instead of rationally because education has not given them the practice or training in making decisions.

Research (Clabby & Elias, 1986) shows children do much better in solving problems if they have been trained in decision-making skills. When children do

not know how to think through problems, it can cause them unhappiness or confusion. Feeling helpless can also affect the way they feel about themselves. The school can contribute much in preparing children to make decisions. "If we can prepare our children for those times when we or another adult will not be there, then we have done something important for them" (p. 3).

The purpose of this project is to develop a set of curriculum activities involving self-concept, decision-making skills, and locus of control, because there is a need for adapting existing curriculum activities to my own school context. The curriculum plan has been developed for primary elementary students for use within the classroom setting. It includes activities designed to enhance and develop more positive self-concepts, decision-making skills, and a more internal locus of control throughout the school year. The activities are not limited to any one student type or group size but, hopefully, are flexible enough to meet most classroom conditions.

Definitions of Common Terms

Self-concept(s) or self-esteem--a system of internal beliefs and attitudes which individuals hold true about themselves

School achievement or academic achievement-- student behaviors in school, such as grades, achievement test scores, motivation to succeed, and/or effort that would lead to the attainment of a goal

Locus of control--the concept of how individuals perceive reinforcements or events as contingent upon their own behaviors (internal locus of control) or upon luck or significant others (external locus of control)

Decision-making--the selecting of choices, from among alternatives, based on judgements which are consistent with the individual's beliefs

Chapter Two

Introduction

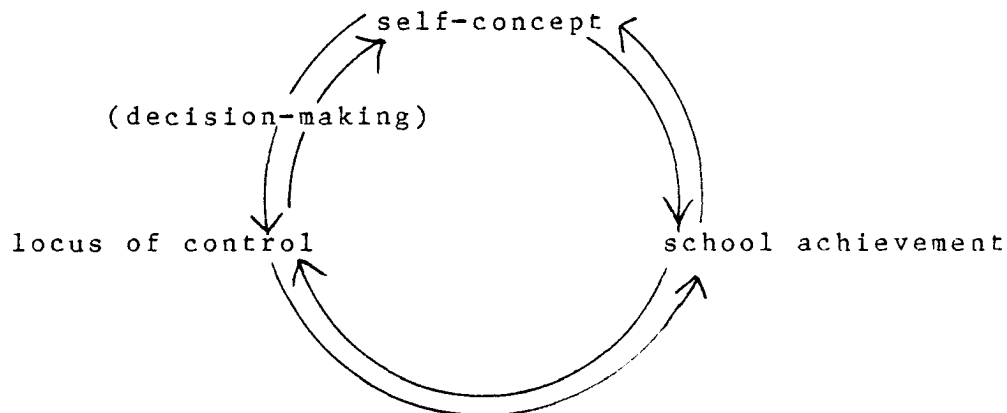
The available research and literature suggest a relationship among self-concept, school achievement, and locus of control through the process of decision-making. These cause-effect relationships may well be circular. An external locus of control perception, continuous school failure, combined with a low self-concept can become a vicious cycle for some students.

The students with low self-concepts who feel they have little control over their school achievement wonder what they can gain by continuing to try. Low self-concepts and an external locus of control have a negative effect on the students' efforts in school; such a situation leads to continuous failure experiences. A positive self-concept and an internal locus of control are related to higher school achievement.

Providing the opportunity for decision-making to students creates an environment that enhances the self-concept through feelings of success. If students receive school experiences that stimulate their self-concept and decision-making skills, the students will

feel they have more control over events in their lives which, in turn, could interact positively with their efforts in school.

Below is Figure 1 which depicts how these constructs may relate to each other. Subsequent sections in this review will discuss in greater detail how the related literature describes these relationships.



The Importance of Positive Self-concepts

Research from Maslow to Purkey has established the importance of positive self-concepts. It is not the purpose of this project to discuss all of the related research or literature on self-concept but rather to set the stage for the relationship of self-concept to school achievement and locus of control.

Over 25 years ago, Arthur Combs, in Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming (1962), found that the kind of self-concepts individuals possess determine to a large

measure whether they are maladjusted or well-adjusted people. He stated that it is those people who see themselves as unworthy or unable who constitute society's major problems. Observing that an improvement in mental health was correlated with a more positive view of self, Combs stated, "to produce a positive self, it is necessary to provide experiences that teach individuals they are positive people" (p.53). A person with a positive self-concept has certain advantages in dealing with life. By feeling positively about themselves, these persons can meet life expecting to be successful. Because they feel more sure about themselves, they have fewer doubts in times of stress or decision-making.

According to Canfield and Wells (1976), it is evident that a person's self-concept is learned. From the time people are born, they collect data about themselves through their experiences with significant others, such as their parents. Because the self is developed through accumulated experiences, early childhood experiences at home and at school are vitally important in forming a child's self-concepts.

Purkey (1970) presented evidence that indicated that many of the failures which students face in school

are the consequences of their perceptions of themselves. He discussed how closely-held beliefs about the self are difficult to change, but that there are some beliefs about the self that are more loosely held, less stable, and more amenable to change. This is true especially in the early elementary school years when the academic self-concept is just beginning to emerge.

Purkey's research suggests a reciprocal relationship between self-concept and school achievement and lets us assume that enhancing self-concepts is an important influence in improving academic achievement. Self-concepts can be changed if the conditions are favorable. If children see school as self-enhancing, then they are more likely to develop positive self-concepts and grow in their academic achievement.

Self-concept and School Achievement

There is a strong and persistent relationship between self-concept and school achievement that suggests ability is not the only factor influencing academic success. There is considerable evidence that student failure in basic school subjects, as well as lack of school-related motivation, is a consequence of

poor self-concepts. Many students have difficulties, not only in academic school activities, but in other activities, such as sports, dramatics, music, and clubs, not because of low intelligence, but because of the beliefs they have about themselves.

Purkey (1970) and Entwisle, Alexander, Pallas, and Cadigan (1987) stated that the research does not provide clear-cut evidence about which comes first--a positive self-concept or academic success, especially in the early grades. A child's self-concept can be seen as just one outcome of school. How the child conceptualizes "self" influences other outcomes, such as school achievement. A positive academic self-concept can enhance learning.

Entwisle et al. (1987) analyzed first-graders to determine the kinds of information these children used to form their academic self-concepts and whether the emerging academic self-concepts affected their school achievement. There was no significant difference found in academic self-concept according to race or parent background, but first-grade girls seemed more responsive to significant others than boys in defining their academic self-concepts.

Entwisle et al. concluded that the role of the academic self-concept appeared to be limited up to the end of first grade, and therefore, affective factors influenced cognitive outcomes in first grade more than the reverse. This causal order was different for third grade and up where school achievement did seem to influence children's perceptions about themselves. First-graders were found not to use grades to shape their academic self-concepts. The process of feedback from grades had apparently not started in first grade. However, this processing of grades into the academic self-concept was used eventually by older children.

Literature (Schuncke & Krogh, 1983) on stages of development, such as Piaget's and Kohlberg's, would seem to agree with conclusions of Entwisle et al. Because of their limited cognitive abilities, first-grade children may not use the information they have gained from their daily school experiences in an entirely rational way from an adult viewpoint. Most first-graders are just moving into the concrete operational thought stage and their cognitive immaturity affects and limits their ability to construct an academic self-concept. Children must

achieve a certain level of cognitive maturity before they can use grades to shape their self-concept.

Citing numerous studies to establish a relationship between self-concept and school achievement, Purkey (1967, 1970) found differences in underachievers' and achievers' self-concepts. A relationship between academic under-achievement and low self-concepts was established with the relationship being clearer for boys than girls. Purkey concluded that such underachieving behavior that was related to poor self-concepts began in the early elementary school years and that the students' self-concepts must be enhanced before teachers could bring about desired improvements in academic performance.

Locus of Control

In 1976, Lefcourt attempted a review of the available locus of control research. Lefcourt felt it was the perception of one's ability to "do something" that gave rise to the concept of perceived control. The concept of internal versus external control developed out of the social learning theory by Rotter (1975). According to Rotter, individuals with an internal locus of control believe they have some direct control over their lives. On the other hand,

individuals with an external locus of control believe that the consequences of their lives are controlled by outside forces.

Using this theoretical base and the current research, Lefcourt stated that people with the two different perspectives would differ in the degree to which they are able to learn from their experiences. Persons who are "internals" are more trusting of their own judgements and more likely to resist social pressures. "Externals" have more confidence in the judgements of others.

Lefcourt cautioned the reader to regard the concept of locus of control as a self-appraisal to the degree to which individuals perceive themselves as having some causal role in determining specific events. In other words, people are not totally "internals" or "externals." People may hold both internal and external control expectancies about different aspects of their lives. If we limit the concept of locus of control to these boundaries, we may be better able to draw appropriate conclusions from the research.

Self-concept and Locus of Control

By the time children enter school, they have already formed many of their self-concepts. Some

children will enter school for the first time with the feeling they are helpless and unable to cope due to low self-concepts. The unsuccessful students will generally lack self-confidence in their ability to cope successfully with problems in their lives. The successful students, on the other hand, will possess confidence in their ability to cope.

Phares (1976) also used Rotter's social learning theory to explain how the achievement behavior a student chooses was determined by the degree to which the student expected that behavior to achieve a goal. Successful past experiences with a given behavior would lead the student to expect that the behavior would be successful in the future. An important example of this expectancy is the degree to which people believe in internal or external control--whether they believe what happens to them is dependent upon their own behavior and thus controllable by them or whether what happens is dependent upon luck or the influence of others.

Using an internal-external control scale, Phares correlated several achievement-oriented behaviors to locus of control. In general, "internals" appeared more self-reliant and less susceptible to influence from others. Research suggested a greater resistance

to group pressure and a greater self-confidence level on the part of "internals." Internal people also appeared to make greater efforts at coping with their environment. On the other hand, people with an external locus of control could develop an awareness that their efforts to cope with their environment were not as effective. Therefore, the effects of these types of achievement-oriented behaviors on learning would be considerable.

Fitch (1970) agreed with Combs on the relationship between self-concept and locus of control. Both stated that people with low self-concepts tended to hold a low estimate of their ability to cope with problems. As a result, these people developed even more negative feelings about themselves. Those people with positive self-concepts tended to see themselves as able to cope with problems and as competent to deal with their environment.

In addition, Fitch's study of undergraduate students found that self-concept enhancement activities influenced students to attribute success outcomes to internal sources to a greater extent than failure outcomes. Finding that those students with low self-concepts tended to score toward the external end of the

scale, Fitch stated that students with high self-concepts tended to internalize success outcomes but not failure ones, while those with low self-concepts internalized both success and failure outcomes.

School Achievement and Locus of Control

Studies on the relationship between locus of control and school achievement have used different theoretical approaches, different sample populations, different vocabulary, different internal-external control scales, and different achievement measures. Such a situation often suggests that there is a relationship but makes it difficult to summarize the variety of evidence or to recognize similarities in findings.

Like Fitch (1970) and Crandall, Katkovsky, and Crandall (1965), Dweck and Reppucci (1973) studied the relationship between student behavior and outcomes in achievement situations. Their results indicated that the concept of "learned helplessness" may help understand the behavior of some children in achievement situations. When faced with continued failure, those children who attributed failure to external factors, such as the teacher, persisted less. The children felt helpless in controlling the outcomes of the events.

Persistent children placed more emphasis on the role of their own personal efforts in determining outcomes more frequently than the low achievement-oriented group. In his discussion of Dweck and Reppuci's work, Lefcourt (1976) suggested that the children who felt failure was due to their inability considered that failure insurmountable, whereas those children who felt failure was due to lack of effort or motivation thought failure outcomes could be changed.

In 1985, Kennelly and Mount's study of sixth-graders found that children with an internal locus of control perceived teacher rewards as contingent upon their behavior. Their perceptions of this contingency were predictive of good academic achievement and of teacher ratings as competent, not helpless. On the other hand, while an external locus of control was predictive for both boys and girls who were rated by teachers as helpless, an external locus of control was found to be a good predictor of academic achievement for boys only. The results suggested that the children's perceptions of the contingency with which teachers administer rewards were related to their motivational state of helplessness or competence.

Further, this motivational state, in turn, was related to their academic performance in the classroom.

Lefcourt (1976), Phares (1976), and Stipek and Weisz (1981) all attempted to discuss and point out the similarities between some of the locus of control research and school achievement research. Phares cited numerous studies to support the basic assumption that internal locus of control beliefs are significantly related to academic achievement. In summarizing the results, he asserted that "internals" tended to show better academic achievement than "externals" when related to school grades instead of standardized achievement test scores. He suggested that teacher grades were more likely to reflect effort and persistence, which figured directly into children's locus of control beliefs.

Furthermore, the relationship between internal locus of control and achievement was stronger for boys than girls. The different socialization of the two sexes was suggested as a possible explanation for the differences in scores on the internal-external scale.

There seemed to be some successful prediction, with ability controlled, of achievement in early grades as a function of locus of control (Rotter, p. 60). But

as the child grew older and entered college, the relationship between locus of control and grades or college entrance test scores was not as apparent.

Crandall, Katkovsky, and Crandall (1965) concluded in their study of grades 3-12 that the belief in personal responsibility for events differed in regards to age and sex. They suggested that young children would ascribe reinforcement responsibility to significant others but with age and experience, children should begin to develop a belief that their own actions could influence the reinforcements they receive.

Using the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire (IAR), Crandall et al. also suggested that the belief in self-responsibility constituted a motivational influence upon achievement performance and thus would predict behavior on tasks where motivation accounted for a large proportion of any variance above ability. Motivational factors as boys grew older would then account for the consistent, although low, prediction to grades, since many teachers grade partially on the effort displayed by the student.

Using many of the same studies as Phares, Stipek and Weisz (1981) felt that if students' motivation were

more amenable to change than their ability, then achievement might be enhanced indirectly through educational practices that positively affected motivational development. "Perceived control of events is one motivational variable that seems to affect children's academic achievement" (p. 101).

Stipek and Weisz concluded their summary by stating that success and failure experiences had important effects on children's perceptions of their ability and their future expectations for success; the children's perceptions, in turn, affected their achievement behavior. Ensuring a number of success experiences for children was important, but the children also had to perceive the causes of their success as related to, or contingent upon, their behavior. Academic performance was optimized when the children accepted responsibility for their successes and understood that their effort and persistence could overcome failure.

Self-concept, School Achievement, and Locus of Control

In his 1969 book, Schools without Failure, Glasser also stated how important previous success experiences were to a child's success in school. If children only experienced failure in their early elementary years,

they would lose their self-confidence and motivation which, in turn, would affect their self-concepts. Glasser suggested using problem-solving as a way for children to experience success in school and feel that they had some control over their world.

Research has since established a relationship between self-concept, locus of control, and achievement. Gordon (1977) wanted to examine self-concept as a possible variable that would account for the variances found in locus of control and achievement research. Studying fourth-grade elementary students, he found that an internal locus of control orientation was significantly related to greater academic achievement and higher self-esteem. Boys' locus of control scores were related to grades and not to achievement test scores, while the reverse was true for girls.

In conclusion, Gordon suggested that maybe the socialization process of the sexes was affecting locus of control and self-esteem in similar ways, and that both characteristics were associated with academic competency. Since grades were a more subjective measure of academic behavior and were influenced more by motivational factors, he felt that it was possible

that the higher grades which the internal boys received added to their positive self-concepts. Further, the relationship between achievement and locus of control for girls had not been found to be as consistent because females were socialized into the role of being dependent and less competitive than boys. Gordon felt that understanding the socialization process of locus of control, self-esteem, and achievement motivation for each sex was the key to explaining the different findings. Lefcourt (1976) also had suggested that the socialization of the sexes could account for the differences in internal-external control scores in various studies, but added that the different scales used in the studies could also have accounted for some of the differences reported.

Although his study did not include sex differences, Marsh (1984) measured fifth-grade students for causes of academic outcomes, self-concept, and academic achievement to determine the causal ordering of these relationships. He found that students who attributed academic success to effort and ability were found to have higher academic self-concepts and better academic achievement. Trying to establish a path model between attribution of outcomes, self-concept, and

academic achievement in order to depict causal orderings, Marsh stated that the orderings were consistent with a dynamic equilibrium model. He proposed that academic achievement, self-concept, and self-attributions were "interwoven in a network of reciprocal relations such that a change in any one will produce other changes in order to reestablish an equilibrium" (p. 1307).

Omizo and Omizo (1987) wanted to attempt just such a change in learning disabled children. Using Purkey's and Lefcourt's research findings, the purpose of their study was to determine how group counseling that emphasized eliminating self-defeating behaviors would affect self-esteem and locus of control. They believed that the group counseling sessions would make the children feel better about themselves and make them believe they had more control over events in their lives.

Omizo and Omizo's results indicated that the participants did feel better about themselves and had a more internal locus of control. Because a more internal locus of control had been shown to be related to variables of positive academic achievement behavior, they hoped that the children's increased self-esteem

would perpetuate a positive cycle. They believed that this strategy of improving children's self-concepts and locus of control might also benefit other populations besides the learning-disabled.

Locus of Control and Decision-making

According to Miller (1984), people never have absolute control. Circumstances do play a role in what is or is not possible. A good decision, though, improves the odds. Developing good decision-making skills gives one an enhanced ability to cope with the results, whatever they may be. Learning to weigh alternatives and consequences provides people with some control over how they will be affected by possible failures.

Providing children with this skill for exercising control over their lives is crucial to developing their sense of responsibility. They need to come to see a relationship between their actions and what subsequently happens to them. Therefore, teachers can provide opportunities for students to make meaningful choices. Teaching children to make decisions is another way of telling them that they can influence how "things" affect their lives.

Like Omizo and Omizo, Arlin and Whitley (1978) also sought to examine the effects of changes in students' locus of control beliefs. Studying students in grades 5, 6, and 7, they suggested that if students perceived the classroom as a place where they could make decisions, then they were more likely to accept responsibility for their academic successes or failures.

They concluded that under certain conditions students' perceptions of the opportunity to make decisions about their learning in the classroom would influence their academic locus of control. If students, at the beginning of a school year, perceived that they had some control over their learning, then they were more likely to develop a greater willingness to accept responsibility for their academic success and failure.

The Importance of Decision-making

Purkey (1976), Glasser (1969), and Combs (1962) agreed that children had to be given some degree of decision-making in the classroom to be able to cope with life's problems successfully. In order for children to grow, adults had to make it possible for them to make choices and had to give them the

opportunity to make meaningful decisions. It was only as teachers developed faith in the students' ability to make decisions that an atmosphere which was self-enhancing developed. A greater opportunity for decision-making by students created an environment that enhanced self-concepts through feelings of success.

Kurfman (1977) reported that to the extent teachers provide students with decision-making skills, they help the students build self-esteem. As students practice making thoughtful decisions, they develop a sense of personal worth. In turn, to use thinking skills in making decisions, people need positive attitudes about themselves and a willingness to accept the consequences of their actions.

Parents and teachers generally agree that making "wise" choices and accepting responsibility should begin in the early years (Veach, 1977). But usually parents and teachers tell the children exactly where they have made a mistake so that next time they will make a "wiser" decision. Veach questions whether this is the way to help children learn to make choices with responsibility.

As suggested by Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories, (Schuncke & Krogh, 1983) the age at which a child is

allowed to make various choices and accept the consequences of those choices depends upon the child's developmental level. Freedom of choice and assumption of responsibility must be gradually expanded depending on the child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth. In extending this line of reasoning, teenagers who have never had a chance to decide are not equipped to make logical decisions.

Elias and Clabby (1988) initiated a program in Middlesex Borough, New Jersey, in 1979, based on the following ideas:

1. Children's capacity to make thoughtful decisions is related to their ability to cope with every day problems.
2. These skills can be successfully taught.
3. Adults are in the best position to teach children these skills. (p. 8)

The program was documented a success based upon meaningful gains in children's problem-solving abilities, teachers' reports of improvements in children's social behavior, and reports from children that they enjoyed the lessons.

Elias and Clabby assert that many of children's problems originate in concrete decision-making

situations that usually occur in the absence of adults. Thus, children who learn decision-making skills develop a sense of "can do" which would prevent those who experience difficulty in school from giving up.

The Influence of the Classroom on Self-concept and Decision-making

The classroom is and must be a "kind of microcosm of the world" (Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, 1962, p. 105). Students will be able to deal with the future if they have been successful in the past. Students can be made to feel more successful through self-concept enhancement and decision-making activities in the classroom.

From research, Canfield and Wells (1976) made generalizations about effective teachers. Effective teachers have a more favorable view of democratic classroom procedures, and they do not see students as persons "you do things to" but rather as persons capable of doing for themselves.

Stipek and Weisz's (1981) examination of classroom interventions found that students who were given more responsibility for their own learning experiences by teachers improved in reading achievement and shifted toward a greater locus of control. These interventions

demonstrated that an educational environment that encouraged students to take responsibility could positively influence their achievement.

In his review, Lefcourt (1976) also cited research of modified classroom procedures that encouraged children to develop feelings of internal control. His review showed locus of control scores were susceptible to influence when teachers pointed out to students how reinforcements were contingent upon their academic behavior.

The effects of the classroom environment on children's self-concepts could well be a project by itself. Teachers need to involve students from the beginning in decision-making in the classroom and provide experiences which give children the opportunity to see themselves as people who "can do." Teachers, as Glasser and Purkey asserted, can not depend on the home environment to provide all the successful experiences children need to develop positive self-concepts and "good" decision-making skills.

Chapter Three

Procedures

The curriculum plan developed includes strategies and activities designed to enhance self-concepts, social decision-making, and locus of control in the classroom. The need for this curriculum was based upon classroom experience, teacher observations, and information gathered from related literature. The need was established by observing the inability of many older elementary and junior high students to make "good" decisions. Educators and society in general accept that students need positive self-concepts and well-developed decision-making skills. Therefore, there is a need for a collection of activities that teachers can use to help build a self-enhancing classroom climate.

The comparison of existing needs and potential solutions offered by the related literature helped to determine the objectives of this curriculum plan. The objectives provide something that students should learn to help them meet a current demand of society--the skill of making decisions. This demand should be a shared responsibility with the home, but as professionals have pointed out, teachers cannot make

the assumption that parents can and do teach their children decision-making. The school then is mandated to try to influence the character of its students in this area.

Thinking skills are included in the Duval County (Florida) elementary curriculum guides. At the highest level of the skills' hierarchy is the process of making decisions. The process is described as the careful appraisal of a problem or situation that cites consequences and implications along with a plan of action. The curriculum plan developed includes decision-making in its objectives so that students will better understand themselves and others, as well as base their decisions on valid information and be able to identify alternative solutions to their problems.

Since the plan deals with feelings and values, the content would be found in the affective domain of learning. This is an often neglected area of instruction in many schools, even though it extends throughout all subject areas.

The content is organized by taking into consideration Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories of

stages of development (Schuncke & Krogh, 1983) for the primary elementary grades. Building upon these theories, the objectives and activities are matched to the students' needs and abilities. Students learn best by manipulating concrete materials and focusing on issues close to them.

This means that the learning activities should be hands-on experiences involving all of the children and concerning topics of personal significance to them. The activities are not designed to be used in any sequential order but rather as a particular need or situation arises in the classroom. The activities are also designed to provide successful experiences with practical problems and personal issues so that the student may build new decision-making skills, more positive self-concepts, and a more internal locus of control.

Based upon classroom curriculum experience, the lessons are short in length, need no prior-to-the-lesson preparation of materials, except for paper, pencils, or crayons, and have no formal written student evaluation. Evaluation of the success of the lesson should consist of the amount of student participation in the oral discussions. A peer review by primary

classroom teachers of the appropriateness and feasibility of the activities was conducted at the conclusion of this curriculum plan to provide oral feedback in the evaluation process.

Chapter Four

The material for this curriculum plan has been organized into activities. The activities are not arranged sequentially, but are related by content. Activities 4-8, 17-18, and 27-34 were used by permission from Prentice-Hall Inc., Jack Canfield & Harold C. Wells, 100 Ways to Enhance Self-concept in the Classroom, (c)1976, pp.47, 49, 65, 94, 107, 117, 127, 151, 177, 178, 209, 211, 221, and 226. Activities 26, 35, and 36 were used by permission from Good Apple, Inc., P.O. Box 299, Carthage, IL 62321. Activities 19-24 were used by permission from Scott, Foresman and Co., George Schuncke & Suzanne Krogh, Helping Children Choose, (c) 1983. Other resources are cited in the list of references.

1. Activity: Finger Puppet Family

Objective: The children will become sensitive to the actions and feelings of family members in different situations.

Materials: 1" oval-shaped pieces of paper, pencils, tape

Procedure: Invite the children to practice drawing faces on the oval-shaped pieces of paper with different expressions. Present them with a family situation. Invite the children to each select a role and draw a face expressing the feeling in that situation. Attach each completed face to the children's fingers with tape. The children should then improvise a dialogue to

match the situation. The following is a list of situations:

- Requesting to do chores.
- Going to bed.
- Brushing teeth.
- Eating a disliked meal.
- Getting up in the morning.
- Saying goodbye when parents go out.
- Being left out of a family activity.

2. Activity: Helping Others to Be Happy

Objective: The children expand their understanding of ways their actions can influence how others feel and how they feel about themselves.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask the children to show angry, sad, happy, and surprised facial expressions. Invite them to describe some of the things that make them feel angry. They should also describe things that result in their feeling surprised, happy, and sad. Discuss with the children things they can do to make other children happy (taking turns, sharing, etc.) Suggest that they each plan to do something to make someone in the class happy. Follow up later and have the children describe what they did, if they believe they succeeded, and the personal feelings they had afterwards. Point out how helping others feel happy brings about a personal happiness.

3. Activity: Feelings Game

Objective: The children will learn that people sometimes show their feelings.

Materials: none

Procedure: Name several feelings and ask the children as a group to role-play each. After the children role-play feelings as a group, have them take turns role-playing the following situations. Point out in a final discussion how people sometimes show their feelings about things and sometimes hide their feelings.

Wanda looks everywhere for her blue socks. She looks in drawers, under the bed, in the toy box. After

looking for a long time, she becomes very sad and feels like crying because she cannot find her blue socks.

Bobby works fast to help his father. He picks up the tools, puts them in a box, sweeps the floor, then takes a quick bath. He feels very happy because his father is taking him to see a movie.

Rosa feels sleepy. She falls asleep and later wakes up. She looks around and sees the older girl from next door. The girl is to stay with her while her parents are away. Rosa feels so lonely.

Robin is sleeping. He wakes when he hears some strange noises. He looks around the room but can't see what is making the noises. He begins to feel scared.

4. Activity: Success a Day

Objective: The children will share with the rest of the class the successes they experienced that day.

Materials: none

Procedure: At the end of each day, have the students briefly share with the rest of the class the successes they have experienced during that day. The teacher or other classmates can also point out a student's successes. A variation of this activity is to have the children share with the class what they feel they have learned that day. If you are trying to build writing skills, have the students write a paragraph recording their successes.

5. Activity: Meaningful Symbols

Objective: The children will discuss something that is meaningful to them.

Materials: drawing paper, pencils, crayons

Procedure: Divide a blackboard or sheet of paper into as many sections as there are students and then ask the students to draw a picture of something that they are concerned about, that they like, dislike, hate, or love. One by one, ask the students to explain their drawing and to tell the class why it has meaning for them.

6. Activity: Positive Feelings

Objective: The children will share positive experiences.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask the children to arrange their chairs in a circle so that everyone can see everyone else's face. Ask them to tell about something that makes them feel very good. You might first ask them to draw a picture about it and then share it in the circle. A variation is to ask the children to share something they did that made someone else feel happy or ask the children to respond to the question "Can you think of something that a grownup did or said to you this week that made you feel good?"

7. Activity: Wishing

Objective: The children will begin to realize with the use of goal-setting some wishes can be attained.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask the children to imagine that they have three wishes. What would they be? Ask them to imagine that they had three wishes for someone else whom they liked very much. What would they wish for that person? If they could relive the previous day, what would they wish to have been different? To have been the same? Ask them the following questions: Did you ever wish to be someone else? Who? Why? Do you think someone might wish to be you? Why would they want to be you? Did you ever have a wish come true? Tell about it. Is there anything you can do, besides just wishing, to help get your wish?

8. Activity: Happy Package

Objective: The children will share experiences that made them feel happy.

Materials: none

Procedure: Have the class sit in a circle. Ask the students to pretend that they can have a package any size or shape they want. Inside this imaginary box they are to place whatever it is that would make them happy. Ask the students to share with the rest of the group what would be in the box and why it would make them happy. Ask the students to share with the group a happy incident that happened to them in the past week. Ask the students to tell the class about a person who makes them happy. Ask the students to describe how it feels to be happy. Where do they feel it? How do they know?

9. Activity: I Can Do It Too!

Objective: The children will interact with one another and imitate the patterns created by others.

Materials: paper, crayons

Procedure: Demonstrate what copying is by asking one child to draw something simple then by your copying what was drawn. Show the children the two drawings and explain what you did. Have the children pair off. Give each pair a sheet of paper divided into four sections. Ask the first child to draw something in one square; have the second child copy it in the adjacent square. Reverse the roles. Ask the children to discuss the similarities and differences in their drawings. Point out that we learn to do many things by watching what others do and imitating them.

10. Activity: Rules are Valuable for Everyone

Objective: The children will learn to value the rules that give direction to their lives.

Materials: none

Procedure: Explain the meaning of the word rules. Cite several examples of school rules. Ask the children to tell why they think schools have rules (solving problems, protecting rights, ensuring safety, and working together). Select three school rules and discuss with the children what might happen if they did not have these rules. Involve the children in playing a familiar game. Review the rules of the game before they play. After playing, discuss the value of rules

to the success of the game, and how the game may not have been an enjoyable experience without everyone's observing the rules.

11. Activity: Cumulative Drawings and Courtesies

Objective: The children will learn to identify ways they were courteous and/or discourteous during a cumulative drawing activity.

Materials: paper, pencils, chalkboard, chalk

Procedure: Draw a large rectangle on the chalkboard and a simple scribble inside the rectangle. Then invite several children, one at a time, to add to your scribble to create a design of some kind. Organize the children into small groups. Each child should be given a piece of paper with a scribble on it and a pencil. They add lines to the scribble and then pass their cards to the next child. They then add lines to the new cards they have. This procedure continues until all of the children in the small group have contributed to each of the cards. Ask the children to identify some courtesies they might have shown (gently passing the cards, not destroying what another child has contributed, not making fun of the lines another child has drawn). Point out how in group activities courtesies will contribute to the enjoyment of all and help everyone have a good feeling about the experience.

12. Activity: Manners Game

Objective: The children will learn how good manners are important in our relationships with others.

Materials: none

Procedure: Explain to the children that the ways we act when we are with other people can result in others accepting or rejecting us in the future. Introduce the idea of manners as those behaviors that help us to get along with people we know and those we do not know. Read the following situations. After each situation is read, select one child to suggest something to say or do that will show good manners.

Suzy bumped into Robert.

Terry wants Koreen to pass the juice.

Carol makes a loud noise while the teacher is talking.

Alan takes Donna's book by mistake.

David drops his favorite pen but doesn't know it.

Ralph sees a very old woman trying to open a door.

13. Activity: Showing Respect

Objective: The children will learn to recognize the value of showing respect in relations with others.

Materials: none

Procedure: Use the following situations to stimulate discussion about showing respect in relations with others. Use the children's responses to discuss ways to show respect.

What would you do if...

You wanted to tell your mother something but she was talking on the telephone?

You were trying to tell somebody something but another child kept interrupting?

Somebody got a cut while playing on the swing?

There were only two cookies left and three children wanted to eat them?

You were waiting a turn to ride the seesaw but others jumped in line in front of you?

A child in your group lost something and was crying?

A teacher scolded you for something you did not do?

Another child said something about you that was not true?

14. Activity: Friendly or Unfriendly

Objective: The children develop an understanding of the importance of building friendships by acting friendly toward others.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask the children to describe things they like and dislike about the ways dogs and cats sometimes act. Later ask them to describe things they dislike about the ways other children sometimes act. They should next describe things they like about the ways other children sometimes act. Lead the children to the understanding that the ways they act determine whether

others see them as friendly or unfriendly persons. Ask, "Do you want other children to like you? If so, how should you act so they will like you?" Point out that it is important to have friends and that friendships can exist only between people who act friendly toward each other.

15. Activity: The Time Cycle

Objective: The children expand their understanding of personal needs that are met during each day.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask the children to share the kinds of things they do from day to day. Lead them to discover how the kinds of things they do are related to meeting their personal needs (learning, relaxing, sleeping, eating, exercising). You could have the children pantomime meeting each of the needs you name and then share how their bodies are affected if they fail to meet the needs. You might ask the following questions:

Do you need to sleep every night? Why?

Do you need to eat? Why?

Do you need to learn? Why?

Do you need to exercise your body? Why?

Do you sometimes need to rest? Why?

16. Activity: Learning Skills are Important

Objective: The children identify skills essential to learning.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask the children to name the school activities they participate in. Discuss why learning activities are important and why all children need to develop learning skills. The following suggestions are provided for illustrating the learning skills they need to develop.

Listening--Play Simon Says.

Observing--The children could observe your actions and describe what they see.

Thinking--Present several problems (clean up, too much noise, wasting food), and ask the children to help you solve them by describing what they think would be good solutions.

Remembering--Make a short statement and ask students to repeat in unison the statement you made. Ask children to do specific things and ask them to state what you asked them to do.

17. Activity: Mirroring

Objective: The children will participate in leading and following their peers.

Materials: none

Procedure: Have the class stand in two evenly matched rows, facing the same direction. Have the students in the front row begin to move their whole bodies, including their arms and their legs. Have the students in the back row try to exactly copy every move of the student directly in front of him. Now have all the children turn and face the opposite direction. Repeat as above, having the students in the front row move and the students in the back row copy. Explain to the students that this is called mirroring. Take a few minutes to talk about a real mirror and what happens when we look into one. Ask the students to talk about which role was easier for them--leading or following. What was difficult about leading (feeling pressure to be creative, feeling awkward) and about following (giving up control to another, not doing it well)?

18. Activity: Friends

Objective: The children will develop skills used in building peer relationships.

Materials: paper, pencils, or crayons

Procedure: Have the class discuss the methods they use to make friends. Role-play the best ones. Ask the students to draw a picture of a friend. Lead a class discussion around the following questions:

Do you have a best friend?

Do you like to do the same things?

Did you ever want to do something that he didn't want to do? What happened? Were you still friends?

How do you make friends?

What is a friend?

What makes a good friend?

19. Activity: The Ice Cream is Melting

Objective: The children will discuss the issue of rules.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask "How many of you have rules at home? What are some of the rules you have? This is a story about a boy whose family had some rules. One of those rules caused him a problem one day." Read the following story:

Tony was home alone for just a little while. Usually his mom and his big sister were there. But they had wanted to go shopping, and Tony hated to shop. Mom had said he could stay home by himself because it would be only an hour, but he was to remember the rules.

Tony knew the rules. Number one was that he shouldn't do anything dangerous like using a knife. Number two was that he should stay in the house. And number three was that he shouldn't let anybody else in the house.

When his mom and sister left for the store, Tony began playing with the video game he'd gotten for his birthday. He was having a good time when the doorbell rang. Tony ran to the door and just as he started to open it, he remembered the rule about not letting anybody in. So he called, "Who's there?"

"Tony," said a familiar voice. "This is Mrs. Morgan from next door. I have a problem. We made some ice cream and we had too much, so I brought some over for your family. It needs to go in the freezer right away, or it will melt."

"I don't know what to do," Tony told her. "I told mom I'd obey the rules, and not letting anybody in is one of the rules."

Mrs. Morgan answered, "But you know me, Tony, and you know nothing will happen if you open the door. This ice cream needs to be taken care of right away."

What should Tony do?

20. Activity: Should Travis Tell?

Objective: The children will discuss the issues of friendship and truth.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask, "How many of you have ever tried to ride a two-wheeled bike? What happened? Today we're going to hear a story about a boy who is just beginning to learn to ride a two-wheeled bike." Read the following story:

Travis had a perfectly good tricycle. It was red and shiny, there were hardly any scratch marks on it, and it was just the right size for him. But that's not what he wanted. Travis wanted a real two-wheeled bike like the one his friend George had. Travis had tried to ride George's bike a couple of times, and it wasn't easy, but he could stay on a little bit. Travis just knew that if he had his own bike he could stay on for sure.

One day Travis walked over to George's house. "Can I try the bike a little bit?" Travis asked. "I will be real careful, I promise."

"Well, okay," George said. "But you'd better not let anything happen to it, because it's my favorite toy in the whole world."

So Travis got on and started to ride around the yard. He was doing pretty well, too, when George's mother called, "George, come here a minute."

"I'll be right back," George said to Travis.

Travis took off on the bike again, and everything was going fine when, suddenly, bang, he hit a rock. The bike tumbled over. Travis picked up the bike and saw a bad scratch all along the side that had hit the rock.

He was really scared about what would happen when George came back out. He quickly put the bike back in the garage where it belonged, leaning it against a wagon. When George came out, Travis said, "I got tired of riding the bike. Let's go over to my house and play soccer for a while."

Although they had a good time playing soccer, Travis kept thinking about the ugly scratch. It made him feel bad inside that he hurt his friend's favorite toy. What should Travis do?

21. Activity: Come on, Kevin!

Objective: The children will discuss the issues of authority and sharing.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask, "Do any of you have toys at home that could break easily? Are you afraid to let anyone play with them? Do you wish you could share them or do you like keeping them just to yourself? Listen closely now while I tell you the story of a boy who had some very breakable toys that he couldn't share." Read the following story:

Sometimes Kevin's grandmother gave him special presents when he visited her. Kevin's favorite was a set of little race cars that she had given him last Saturday. He liked them because you could open the doors and move the steering wheels, and they had little men you could take in and out. Kevin had to be careful not to lose the little men or break the tiny steering wheels. In fact, his grandmother said to him, "Kevin, these cars cost a lot of money. Take very good care of them. I think this is one set of toys you'd better just play with yourself, just to make sure they don't get hurt."

So Kevin played with the cars only at home. One morning he played with them so long he almost missed the school bus. "Hurry," his mother called, "you're going to miss the bus!" Without thinking about it, Kevin put the cars into his jacket pockets, grabbed his lunch, and raced out the door to the bus stop.

He didn't think about the cars again until it was time to go out on the playground after lunch. On the way out, Kevin stuck his hands in his pockets, and there the cars were.

All the kids he liked to play with seemed to be going off to play kickball. Kevin didn't like kickball much, so he took the cars out of his pockets and started playing with them on the grass. He was having a good time, too, when he suddenly realized that someone was standing in front of him.

"Hey," said Kevin's friend Richard, "those are sure great-looking cars. Could I see the red one?"

Kevin started to put the cars back in his pocket and said, "No, I'm just supposed to play with these myself."

"Come on, Kevin," said Richard. "I'm your best friend. You know I won't hurt them."

What should Kevin do?

22. Activity: But You Promised!

Objective: The children will discuss the issues of friendship, promises, and sharing.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask, "Do you ever have to wait for any of the toys or equipment at recess? How do you feel while you're waiting? Today we're going to hear about some children just like you who had to wait their turns at recess. Listen carefully, because they had a problem that you might have been able to help them with." Read the following story.

Megan had just gotten a large red ball for her birthday. It was a playground ball, and you could play soccer or dodgeball or kickball with it. She decided to take it to school to use at recess. It seemed there were never enough balls to go around at recess time.

Megan got to school a little early, and only one other child was there. It was Ben, a boy nobody played with very often. She had been hoping that one of her good friends would be there to show the ball to.

"Hey," Ben said, "I'd really like to try out that ball. It looks like a really good one. Could I borrow it at recess time?"

Megan wasn't sure she wanted him to, but she didn't know what to say, so she just answered, "Okay."

"Promise?" Ben asked.

"Yeah, okay," Megan said. But when recess came, Megan wished she hadn't said okay. By then all her friends were there, and they all wanted to play dodgeball together.

Just then, up came Ben, straight for Megan and the ball. "Here I am," he said with a big smile on his face. "Don't forget you promised I could play with the ball."

"Oh, come on, Ben," said one of the other kids. "We want to play dodgeball with it. And Megan's our friend."

What should Megan do?

23. Activity: The Car Crash

Objective: The children will discuss the issues of friendship and truth.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask, "Can anyone tell us about a new toy you have? How would you feel if your new toy broke?"

I'm going to tell you a story today about some boys who had just this problem." Read the following story:

Robert was playing in the block corner, building a small house. He was watching Mitchell and Brian build a garage and heard Mitchell say, "I'm tired of building this garage. I'm going to the easel and paint."

"Okay," said Brian, "but will you leave your red racing car here? I want to play with it."

"Sure," Mitchell answered, "but take good care of it, because I just got it for my birthday." Then Mitchell went to the easel.

Robert kept on building his house and watching Brian build the garage. He saw Brian start to zoom the red racing car around and over the garage. Suddenly the car crashed into a block wall, and a car door fell off.

"Uh-oh," Robert said. "Mitchell's going to be mad at you."

Brian looked very worried. "Don't tell on me," he begged. "I didn't mean to break it!" Then he took the red racing car and put it in Mitchell's cubby. He tried to make the door look as though it was still on.

After a while, the teacher said it was time to clean up. "Where's my racing car?" Mitchell asked Brian.

"I put it in your cubby," Brian answered.

Mitchell went to his cubby and took the car out. The door fell to the floor with a clatter. "Oh, no!" Mitchell cried. "What did you do to my car, Brian?"

"Nothing," said Brian. "I didn't break it."

The teacher gathered all the children around her. "Who broke Mitchell's car?" she asked. "If someone knows what really happened, please say so. It's very important to tell the truth."

What should Robert do?

24. Activity: Robby's New Friends

Objective: The children will discuss the issues of friendship and truth.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask, "How many of you didn't know many people when you first came to this school? How did you feel not having many friends? What are some ways kids use to make other kids their friends? Here's a story about Robby, who didn't have many friends. Let's

listen to what happened when he was just about to get some." Read the following story:

Robby was a very quiet boy. Nobody seemed to want to play with him much because he was so quiet. He had one good friend, whose name was Todd. Todd liked to play with Robby, but he also liked to play with a lot of other boys in their class. All the boys liked to play with Todd, too. This was good, because whenever Robby was with Todd, the boys would let Robby play with them. But if Todd wasn't around, they wouldn't play with Robby, and he felt lonely. He was glad that Todd was his friend.

One day when Robby got to school, Todd wasn't there. At recess, some of the other boys called Robby to come play dodgeball with them. It was the very first time they had ever asked Robby to play with them without Todd. He ran to their circle feeling very, very happy. Robby looked at the ball they were using. "Where'd you get that ball? Isn't it Todd's?" he asked.

"Oh, he forgot it yesterday," one of them said. "It's okay, though. He won't mind if we use it."

Robby wondered if it really was okay but decided not to worry and joined in the game. Suddenly, the ball bounced out of the game, over the fence, and into the street. Just then, a car came along and ran right over Todd's ball! There was a loud pop and that was the end of the ball.

The boys all looked at each other. "I don't think we should tell Todd," said one. "He won't be mad if he doesn't know about it."

The biggest boy suggested, "Let's all agree not to tell Todd and he'll just think he lost the ball. You better not tell, Robby, or we won't play with you ever again."

What should Robby do?

25. Activity: Self-assessment Game

Objective: The children will learn the value of self-assessment.

Materials: paper, pencils

Procedure: Ask the children to name some things that make it fun to be with other children. Ask questions such as the following:

Do we...

Help people when they need help?
 Help to keep our room clean?
 Share with others?
 Take turns and give everyone a chance?
 Run and bump into others when we are supposed to
 be walking?
 Give mean looks to others instead of smiles?
 Bother others when they are in our way?
 Say "Excuse me," or "I'm sorry" when we
 accidentally disturb others?
 Write on the chalkboard the things named. Near
 the end of the school day ask the children to answer
 yes or no to indicate whether they believe they did
 these things to make school fun for the other children.

26. Activity: Making Choices

Objective: The children will decide which activities are important to them, helping them to develop a value system.

Materials: paper, pencils (A worksheet can be prepared for older children.)

Procedure: Read the following statements to the children. Have them decide if the statement is very important to them or not very important to them.

I like spending time with my family.
 I like listening to music.
 I like having friends.
 I like being alone.
 I like spending money.
 I like learning new things.
 I like traveling and seeing new places.
 I like helping people.
 I like making things.
 I like doing things outdoors.
 I like reading a book.

27. Activity: Pride Line

Objective: The children will express pride in something they've done.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask each student to make a statement about a specific area of behavior, beginning with, "I'm proud

that I..." For example, you might say, "I'd like you to say something about your handwriting that you're proud of." Students may pass if they wish. Below are some suggested areas.

1. things you've done for your parents
2. things you've done for a friend
3. work in school
4. how you spend your free time
5. how you've earned some money
6. how you usually spend your money
7. something you do often
8. something you have shared
9. something you tried hard for

28. Activity: Unfinished Sentences

Objective: The children will express their feelings to their peers.

Materials: none (The sentence stubs could be printed on cards for older children to draw from a stack.)

Procedure: The teacher and the students form a circle. The game calls for students to finish a sentence as they wish. It should be emphasized that there is no right answer. The teacher says an unfinished sentence. The students take turns responding if they wish by saying a finished sentence aloud. Some sentence stubs to be used are the following:

- If I were older...
- My favorite place...
- When I make a mistake...
- I wish...
- I can't understand why...
- Reading...
- Other kids...

29. Activity: Personal Evaluation Sheet

Objective: The children will clarify and verbalize their feelings about themselves.

Materials: none

Procedure: The personal evaluation is composed of questions intended to stimulate responses about the concerns and attitudes shared by all children. Listed below are some suggested questions that can be used.

The children's answers are often useful for future planning and follow-up.

Do you like school?

Do you like yourself?

Are you a quiet person? A noisy person?

Are you usually happy? Unhappy?

Do you have many friends? A best friend?

Do you have fun at school? At home?

Do you like answering these questions?

30. Activity: Who am I Questionnaire

Objective: The children will discuss their individualities.

Materials: none

Procedure: Ask the children to answer the following questionnaire.

School is...

This class is...

The thing I like best about my class is...

Something I'd like to tell my teacher is...

I don't like people who...

I like people who...

Right now I feel...

When I don't like something I've done, I...

When I like something I've done, I...

I would like to...

31. Activity: If I Could Be

Objective: The children will clarify who they are, what they want to be, and what they want to do.

Materials: none

Procedure: Have the students work in pairs and talk about their responses to such questions as the following. When done, have them form a large group to share their choices and reasons.

If I could be any animal, I'd be a _____ because...

If I could be a flower, I'd be a _____ because...

If I could be a piece of furniture, I'd be a _____ because...

If I could be a musical instrument, I'd be a _____ because...

If I could be a building, I'd be a _____ because...

If I could be a car, I'd be a _____ because...
 If I could be a game, I'd be a _____ because....
 If I could be a TV show, I'd be a _____ because...
 If I could be a food, I'd be a _____ because...
 If I could be any color, I'd be _____ because...

32. Activity: Incomplete Sentences

Objective: The children will discuss the concept of identity.

Materials: none

Procedure: Incomplete sentences provide the students with an opportunity to get more insight into themselves. Incomplete sentences, such as the following, can be used as a basis for starting a discussion.

If I were President, the first thing I would do is...

My idea of a good job is...
 I'd like my friends to...
 I am cool when I...
 I am happiest when I...
 I like to hear stories about...
 Something I'm really good at is...
 I like my parents to...
 I want to be...

33. Activity: Identity, Connectedness, and Power

Objective: The children will discuss the concept of personal power.

Materials: none

Procedure: Listed below are more incomplete sentences emphasizing the area of power. Use the sentence stubs to stimulate discussions and for future follow-up.

Something I'm getting better at is...
 I can...
 I get people's attention by...
 I get my way by...
 I can help other people to...
 I taught someone how to...
 I need help on...
 I feel big when...
 When people try to boss me around, I...

Something I can do all by myself is...
 People can't make me...
 I got into trouble when I...

34. Activity: Friendly Sentence Stubs

Objective: The children will discuss positive relationships with others.

Materials: none

Procedure: Have the children complete the following unfinished sentences.

One thing I like about my friends is...
 Other people are important because...
 I like my family because...
 Helping others is...
 I can help other people most by...
 I like my parents when...
 When somebody is nice to me, I...
 One way I am like everybody else is...
 One way I am different from everyone else is...
 One thing I could teach someone else is...

35. Activity: Taking Control

Objective: The children will discuss their opinions about statements regarding who has control of their lives.

Materials: none (The statements could be duplicated on a worksheet for older children.)

Procedure: Have the children answer yes or no to the following statements. If they answer all the odd numbers with a yes and all the even numbers with a no, then they probably feel in control of their lives.

1. Parents should allow their children to make most of their own decisions.
2. If someone doesn't like me, I am unable to change that.
3. Planning ahead makes things turn out better.
4. A good way to handle a problem is to ignore it.
5. It's better to be smart than lucky.
6. Teachers should decide what and when I should learn.
7. I can influence tomorrow by what I do today.

8. Most people are just born good at sports.
 9. I have a lot to say about who my friends are.
 10. I have little to say about what my family decide.

36. Activity: Making Daily Decisions

Objective: The children will make a list of the choices they make in a day.

Materials: chalk, chalkboard (Older children can write their own lists on a separate sheet of paper.)

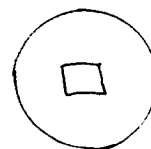
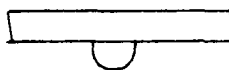
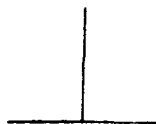
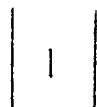
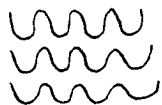
Procedure: Discuss with the children that everyone has to make decisions or choices everyday. Have them suggest decisions they make in a single day. Some examples are the following: what to wear to school, what to eat for breakfast or lunch, what to do when their work is finished, what book to check out of the library, what to play outside. Lead them to conclude that they can and do make choices for themselves. Have them pick their most important decisions or their most enjoyable decisions from the list on the chalkboard.

37. Activity: Using Pictures to Teach Alternatives

Objective: The children will list possible alternative names to identify pictures.

Materials: paper, pencils

Procedure: One easy way of generating alternative ideas is in reacting to pictures. Draw some pictures like these and have the children generate ideas with you. Ask, "What could this be?, What does this look like to you?, What are all the different things this might be?, or What do you think this is?"



38. Activity: Alternative Alternatives

Objective: The children will name possible alternative answers to a question.

Materials: none

Procedure: Help the children to realize that they are able to think of more than one answer to the following questions.

How many kinds of soda can you think of?

Let's think of all the games you can play with a ball.

How many ways can you think of to use eggs?

Think of all the different uses you could have for an old tire.

Name some different ways that you could use a shoe box.

What could an empty ice-cream cone be used for?

Think about how you could use the inside roll from a package of paper towels.

39. Activity: The "What If" Game

Objective: The children will practice considering consequences.

Materials: none

Procedure: This game encourages alternative thinking and consideration of consequences. Have the children answer the following What If questions:

What if you could read minds?

What if you found a thousand dollars?

What if you could breathe underwater?

What if you could jump as high as a house?

What if you had your own horse?

What if you had a car?

What if you could run as fast as a deer?

What if birds could talk to us?

What if it snowed every day all year?

What if fish could walk?

What if you met someone from outer space?

What if it rained roses?

What if you had your own television show?

40. Activity: Decisions Decisions

Objective: The children will practice making choices.

Materials: none

Procedure: In this game, one person is the "Problem Giver" and another person is the "Decision Maker." The Problem Giver thinks of a situation that requires a decision. The Decision Maker must give a response.

Listed below are some suggested questions:

What's your favorite color?

What's your favorite TV show?

What's your favorite food?

Where do you like to visit the best?

Who do you like to talk with on the phone the most?

Who is your favorite singer or group of singers?

Chapter Five

Evaluation and Implications

Because of the required time line of this project, a student evaluation of the activities was not included. Student responses to the activities in a pilot classroom will be used later to assess the usefulness of the various experiences in promoting the desired objectives.

A peer evaluation was conducted to provide feedback about the appropriateness of the activities for primary students and the practicality of their use in the classroom. The peer teachers were given the following survey questions:

1. Would you consider these activities appropriate for kindergarten through second grade students?
2. Would you consider these activities practical for classroom use?
3. Would you use these activities in your own classroom?
4. Do you have any concerns about any of the activities?

All six of the teachers interviewed felt the activities were appropriate for primary students and were practical for classroom use. All surveyed also stated that they would use the activities and desired copies of the curriculum plan for their own personal classroom use.

Some of the teacher evaluators felt the activities would be helpful and appropriate for students older than second grade. They stated that there was a need for self-enhancement activities in the upper grades also. One teacher expressed a concern that some of the activities would be too difficult for kindergarten children. However, it was noted that if the curriculum plan were begun at the start of the school year and were ongoing and consistent throughout the year, the activities would then be more successful with kindergarteners.

The team of peer teachers agreed that the reasons why they felt the activities were practical and why they would use the curriculum plan in their own classroom were the minimal need for a collection of materials and no extensive planning. It was also felt by the team that since the activities were short in length, the curriculum plan could be used readily, not

only on a regular, planned basis, but also during those "extra" moments that sometime occur in a classroom.

Since curriculum development is ongoing, the activities should be revised and supplemented to meet student needs. The activities could be placed on file cards for easy retrievals, additions, or deletions in the future.

One of the purposes of this curriculum project was to enhance self-concept and a more internal locus of control. An implication of this project then would be to measure these two areas in a pilot classroom in the fall and again in the spring to see if the activities had any positive effect on the students.

The students' self-concepts could be assessed by using either the Piers-Harris Children's Self-concept Test or the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory. Both of these measurements were used in the research described in Chapter Two. The Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire (Crandall et. al., 1965) could be utilized to measure the older students' locus of control. An enhancement of both self-concept and a more internal locus of control would be the desired effect of the activities.

Since one of the tasks of an educator is to prepare children for the "real world," most educators would agree that students need to be able to draw upon decision-making skills inside and outside of the classroom. If children have had practice in discussing their feelings, values, and issues, in thinking about solutions to problems, and in making "good" choices, then they are less likely to feel helpless. They are more likely to feel confident, in control, and "good" about themselves.

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Vita

Debra McElreath graduated from Iowa State University in 1974 with a B.S. degree in Child Development. She then came to the Duval County School System and taught kindergarten for ten years.

Desiring a directional change in her employment, she began teaching second grade in 1984 and her masters of education program at the University of North Florida in 1985. She is presently teaching first grade at Fort Caroline Elementary School.